

Insecurity in the Niger Delta

**A Report on Emerging Threats in Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa,
Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers States**

Adonis & Abbey Publishers Ltd

24 Old Queen Street,
London SW1H 9HP
United Kingdom

Website: <http://www.adonis-abbey.com>
E-mail Address: editor@adonis-abbey.com

Nigeria:
Suites C4 – C7 J-Plus Plaza
Asokoro, Abuja, Nigeria
Tel: +234 (0) 7058078841/08052035034

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-913976-03-3

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Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers States**

Edited by

Tarila Marclint Ebiede, Celestine Oyom Bassey and Judith Burdin Asuni



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Acknowledgements

This publication is the product of efforts by many people. The European Union has funded the work of the Niger Delta Dialogue since we first mooted the idea in May 2016 with Amb Michel Arrion and his deputy Richard Young. EU officials patiently walked us through the process of writing proposals, meeting the legal and financial requirements, reporting and accounting according to EU standard. Over the past 4 ½ years we have had many brainstorming sessions with Richard Young and later with Isabel Candela-Rodriguez, Amb Ketil Karlsen, Uwe Brettschneider, and Luigi Brogi.

The EU staff members in Abuja and Dakar were very flexible when we said, in early 2020, that the major problem in the Niger Delta is insecurity and we sought permission to shift our focus in that direction. They also were very flexible in helping us adapt our plans in order to continue work during the completely unexpected pandemic and lockdown during most of 2020. We could not have asked for more cooperative international partners.

The first Niger Delta Dialogue, held in June 2016, was to be a one-off event, but the chairman of that occasion, HRM King Alfred Diète Spiff, expressed the wish to continue the dialogue and his enthusiasm and support have continued over the years, as has the support of HRM King Dandyson Jaja, Amb Dr. Godknows Igali, and HH Anabs Sara Igbe. These and other leaders have played a key role in opening doors and gaining cooperation for the dialogue and for this research in particular.

This research was planned with Dr. Tarila Marclint Ebiede, who unfortunately was not able to be on ground for the actual research due to Covid travel restrictions. However, he read and edited all chapters numerous times from a distance. Amb Nkoyo Toyo oversaw the research in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States. The peer reviewers, Prof Oshita Oshita, Ms Ineba Bob-Manuel and Dr. Ebiede provided useful guidance in tightening the research analysis. Prof. Celestine Basse wrote the initial introduction and conclusions, adding his decades of experience to the analysis.

The scholars themselves were a team of highly committed and thorough researchers who came up with creative ways of continuing the

fieldwork under very challenging conditions. They include: Ndifon Neji, Obi, Ken Henshaw, Felix Oyosoro, Nelson Okene, Sofiri Joab-Peterside, Kiale Nyiayaana, Jackson Jack, Tokpo Coronation, Ebi Seiyefa, Sam Ogege, Iro Aghedo and Oarhe Osumah.

Members of the Academic Associates PeaceWorks/Niger Delta Dialogue staff have been very helpful in introducing and supporting the research teams. They include Tega Edeki, Lizzy Jarikre, Ken Omas, Lucky Duumaa, Utavie Jeremiah, Fortune God'sSon Alfred, Frank Nelson. Sam Osung also assisted in Akwa Ibom State.

Long-term members of the Niger Delta Dialogue have assisted the research process including Donben Donyegha and Ani Esin; as have our colleagues in PANDEF especially Ken Robinson; and our BRACED Commission colleague Amb Joe Keshi. During presentation of the reports at the six town hall meetings, several federal and state government agencies participated actively and have received the reports with appreciation; we hope that they will follow through on the recommendations.

And of course, I must thank my longtime colleague in activism over the past 25 years and co-facilitator of the Niger Delta Dialogue for the past 4 ½ years- Amb Nkoyo Toyo. It is lovely to have an intelligent, articulate and committed colleague who can work and think at the same speed as I. We also thank our families for the patience and tolerance with our preoccupation with work, which we hope will indeed help to bring peace and development to the Niger Delta. This work does not reflect the official position of our partners, especially the European Union.

Dr. Judith Burdin Asuni

Executive Director,
Academic Associates PeaceWorks and
Co-facilitator of the Niger Delta Dialogue.
Warri December 16, 2020

Foreword

Is Insecurity in the Niger Delta receiving the attention needed?

Insecurity across the country has reached an all-time high during 2019-2020. In 2018, the International Crisis Group (ICG) urged the European Union and its member states to encourage the Federal Government (FG) of Nigeria to prioritise engagement with regional leaders and other stakeholders on the state of insecurity. This call came even as militants in the Niger Delta have not launched any major attacks on oil installations since 2016, when key stakeholders from the region, working closely with the FG reached a truce with the militants. Through the involvement of the Niger Delta Dialogue (NDD) with that process, NDD was exposed to various stakeholders who complained about the declining responsiveness of the FG to the Region, pointing to the non-funding of PAP and its linkage to insecurity as an example. They also identified the exploitation of insecurity by different agencies of the state to deepen the crisis in the region. In a sense, the lack of coordination within the security agencies has been a recurring point as widespread restiveness among the different factions of “boys” with arms continues unabated. Many of these “boys” have transited from militancy into political violence, petty crimes, kidnapping, piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, oil theft, illegal refining, cultism, and multiplicity of dubious activities. At the same time, promises made by the FG remain not only unmet but with no credible channels of communication with governments at all levels. Take the cases of the polluted Ogoni environment, NDDC, PAP and calls by local communities to set up modular refineries which all seem to be stuck within government. These developments have direct consequences for the peace and development of the Region and today the Region’s security situation remains very fragile and responses grossly inadequate.

How did the NDD get involved?

In view of the above and given some renewed warning by the militants, the NDD which was established in 2016 and has operated as a credible and open space for state and non-state actors to discuss issues affecting the Niger Delta in a non-adversarial manner with the intention of

achieving solutions, decided to act. NDD has been a major source of credible information on the Region and has provided resources to PANDEF, BRACED Commission, NDDC, Ministry of the Niger Delta, PAP, National Assembly Committee on the Niger Delta and some other groups in the Region. It held a regional meeting in September 2019 in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State for the leadership of the Police in the Region. This involved AIGs, Police Commissioners and other senior officers of the Police. The meeting demonstrated the need for an updated authentic action by the Police to be guided by well researched policy briefs. Whereupon NDD engaged independent researchers for the 6 states of the South South Region, who conducted six weeks of intensive field work in all of these states; this publication is a compendium of those reports. The report is expected to inform leaders on appropriate policy and programme interventions relating to insecurity. It recognizes the huge gap between informal engagement with security through isolated case matters, and the absence of comprehensive and detailed account which is available to all policy and knowledge actors, whether in the police, military agencies, informal security formations, private security outfits, community vigilantes and myriad of other para-military bodies working within the Region. It is the hope of NDD, that this work will provide content, as well as point to actions to be undertaken.

What's new?

In the absence of a body of knowledge about the state of insecurity in the Niger Delta and the weakness of the response from the FG, states have bridged this gap by devising programmes including setting up state managed security bodies. Only recently, the Governors of the six states met in Asaba and resolved to establish a regional organization to address insecurity. This pronouncement was not backed by details and it is believed that one of the ways to improve upon the Amotekun experience in the South West Region would be to have more recent and relevant information on the state of insecurity in the Niger Delta. This report represents a new and major contribution to this regional proposal.

Why does it matter?

It is important that the formation of a new Regional Security outfit or architecture based on the existing agencies, does not proceed from the ineffective responses and seeming lack of capacity of the current system. A better response means knowing what is not working and dealing with it. The current security situation has failed in many regards to deal with the problem but has rather heightened and fueled growing alienation of the police from the citizens, particularly the youth. The Youth of the South South have joined others to demand for #ENDSARS and their actions are now feeding into highly inflammatory rhetoric, which is further entrenching mistrust and disequilibrium in the country.

What should be done?

The Federal and State governments, and all manner of security bodies should be encouraged, based on the findings in this book, to initiate consultations with regional leaders and state stakeholders. In particular, they should:

- Encourage the governments to come up with new policy informed by the research, ensure that the strengthening of measures to protect citizens is a priority. This will also involve work to improve service delivery by the military, police and other paramilitary outfits, including community vigilantes.
- Produce policies to be used by leaders of relevant security agencies in the Niger Delta to reorganise the security architecture of the states and halt the menacing level of violent crimes, particularly those associated with cultism, herdsman, communal clashes over farmlands, politically induced violence, criminality and others. This publication is aimed at getting all the players to refocus their energies on stemming the huge decline in security governance in the Region.

The NDD hopes also that this publication will serve to update the current knowledge base of the region on insecurity, both for the

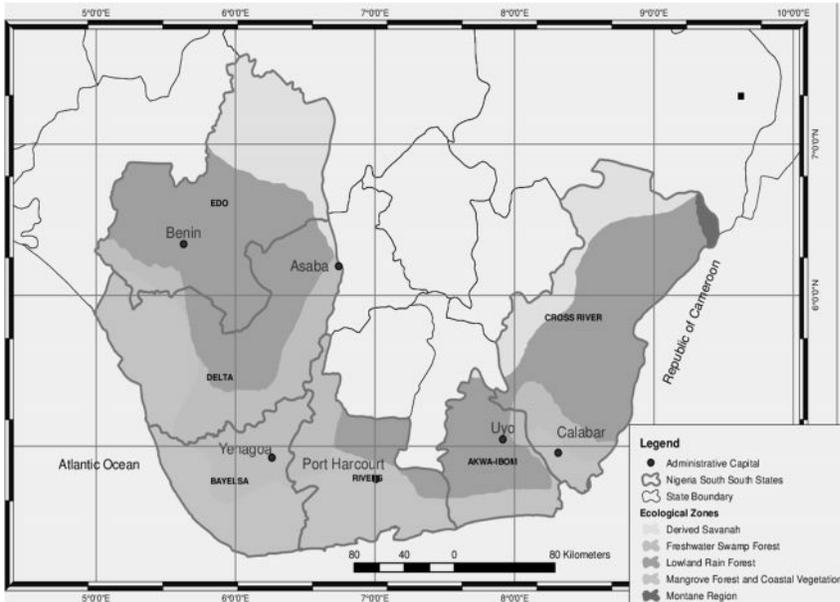
stakeholders in government as well as academics, leaders and citizens seeking to engage more precisely with the insecurity problems of the region.

Amb Nkoyo Toyo

Co-Facilitator, Niger Delta Dialogue

General Introduction

Celestine Oyom Bassey, Tarila Marclint Ebiede, and Judith Burdin Asuni



Map 1: South-South Nigeria

Nigeria is struggling with the problem of insecurity across all geopolitical zones within the country, including the South-South which this study deals with. The South-South region is experiencing multi-dimensional insecurity. Having been the hotbed of an armed militant insurgency that peaked in 2009, other security challenges such as armed robbery, kidnapping, sea piracy, farmer-herder conflicts, violent youth gangs, and cult groups, intra and inter-communal clashes, and land disputes now forms a complex web of insecurity that shapes everyday lives of people in the villages, towns, and cities that are spread across the six states of the South-South region.

From January to December 2019, data shows that criminality (including piracy and armed robbery) records the highest number of incidences in the states across the South-South (PIND, 2020). This is

followed by gang and cult clashes. Communal and ethnic tensions and agitations, political and election-related violence, and violent mobs make up the third-highest incidences of insecurity in the region. This is followed by sexual assault and armed militancy. Violent protests report the least incidences of insecurity in the states across the South-South region (PIND, 2020). On the other hand, violent clashes involving youth cult and gangs constitute the most lethal form of insecurity with the highest rate of fatalities. Militancy and insurgency record the second highest fatalities associated with insecurity in the region, while communal clashes contribute the third-highest fatalities (PIND). These incidences of violence are outcomes of everyday insecurity in states across the South-South region and reflect the issues that were empirically researched in this study.

In terms of range and complexity of security challenges, the South-South zone is reflective of the broader Nigerian condition as mirrored in the threat dynamics in the Nigerian state since the Boko Haram insurgency surfaced in 2009 (National Security Strategy Policy Document, 2019). According to the National Security Threat Index (NSTI) in the National Security Strategy policy document, Nigeria faces a rapidly changing world with diverse range of threats, including terrorism and violent extremism; armed banditry, kidnapping, militancy, and separatist agitations; armed banditry and kidnapping; militancy and separatist agitations; pastoralists and farmers conflicts; transnational organized crime; piracy and armed robbery; porous borders. Except violent extremism, all other threats identified in the NSTI are part of the landscape of insecurity in the South-South geopolitical zone.

The range of security challenges in the South-South zone in the six states analysed in this volume, reveals a disturbing continuum of an accelerated rise in the intensity of violence, social upheaval, corruption in governance, failure of traditional governance mechanisms, breakdown in socio-cultural norms, and delinquency and restiveness among young people. In essence, incidences of insecurity documented in this report are symptoms of more fundamental structural problems that are plaguing the body-politic of the South-South geopolitical zone. As the case studies show, each state has different drivers and symptoms of insecurity. In most cases, both drivers and symptoms are shared by more than one case study.

The first chapter deals with the case of Akwa Ibom State. The chapter identified inter-ethnic agitation, gang violence, cultism,

kidnapping, sea piracy, human and drug trafficking, and land disputes as the key types of insecurity experienced by people of Akwa Ibom State. The research identified the key actors as follows: politicians, militias, security agents, cultists, kidnappers, pirates, traffickers, and traditional rulers. These identified actors play different roles in facilitating the drivers of insecurity. Cultists, pirates, militias, and traffickers are directly engaged in organised crime for mainly economic benefits. The actions of politicians and traditional rulers that contribute to insecurity are mainly linked to competition for political and traditional power and control in state and community level politics. In some instance, politicians and traditional rulers are also likely to gain economic benefits because of their actions that contribute to insecurity through state funding or rents from customary land. The involvement of security agents in actions that contribute to insecurity is mainly attributed to economic motivations, inefficiency, lack of accountability, and the abuse of power. The intersection of both actors and their motivations defines the problem of insecurity in Akwa Ibom State. The chapter on Akwa Ibom concludes with recommendations that include the implementation of the 16-point agenda of 2016, the constitution of a panel of inquiry into the grievances of the Oron nation, the design and implementation of a Community-Based Security (CBS) system involving traditional rulers, the disarmament and demobilisation of armed groups and the reintegration of repentant militants.

Chapter Two is focused on Bayelsa State. The researchers show that the problem of insecurity in Bayelsa State includes: sea piracy, kidnapping, cultism, gang clashes, militancy, election violence, drug trafficking, oil bunkering, communal conflicts, and armed robbery. In the research, they identify key actors to include: politicians, community leaders, and chiefs, international oil companies (IOCs), militants and ex-militants, cultists and gang members, drug lords, and youth leaders. These actors are all motivated by economic and political interests at different levels of society. The chapter recommends that the challenges of insecurity can be addressed if the government enforces existing laws against criminality, design and implement job creation schemes for youth, and stop rewarding violent actors with state patronage. The chapter also made specific recommendations that can enable communities to contribute to a more secure environment. This includes,

fighting crime through localised solutions that can be accommodated within the laws of Nigeria, increased sensitization against social vices at the community level, and strengthening of community-based security systems such as vigilantes. The authors recommend the effective, transparent, and inclusive implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The recommendations include a call for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to collaborate with local governments and communities to build capacity on conflict tracking, early warning systems, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding.

The third chapter is a study on Insecurity in Cross River State. In analysing incidences of insecurity in Cross Rivers State, the authors identified land contestations, chieftaincy tussles, cultism, kidnapping, electoral violence, farmer-herders' conflicts, and conflicts between host communities and refugees. Key actors identified in these conflicts are politicians, cultists and gangsters, militants, and traditional rulers. The recommendations of the study include the establishment of Community Early Warning and Response System, strengthening Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms to fast track peaceful settlement of disputes, the implementation of community-based security system or community policing, urgent mapping and delineation of contested community boundaries, design and implementation of skills acquisition and employment schemes for unemployed youths, reconciling host communities and refugees and resolving farmers-herders' conflict. The authors also recommend that the Nigerian government should revisit the Greentree Agreement and accelerate the implementation of resettlement and rehabilitation programs for Nigerians displaced from the ceding of Bakassi to Cameroon. Furthermore, the Nigerian government should consider actions to contain the Ambazonia crisis in Southern Cameroon and its security and social fallouts in Cross Rivers State. The chapter also recommends that the State government should implement existing laws against criminality and illicit circulation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and called on the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) to effectively act against illegal drugs and narcotics. The authors concluded with a recommendation that the Ministry of Social Welfare in Cross River State should embark on the documentation and rehabilitation of street kids (Skolombo/ Lacasera Kids).

Chapter four is a case study of insecurity in Delta State. In this chapter, the authors found that there is a growing upland/riverine dichotomy in insecurity in Delta State. The chapter shows that while

insecurity in the last decade was mainly linked to armed militancy and criminality in the riverine areas, the phenomenon is now becoming more prevalent in urban towns and cities across Delta State. In the chapter, the authors identified kidnapping, farmer/herder clashes, cult and gang clashes, leadership tussles in communities, inter-ethnic clashes, armed robbery, militancy, oil bunkering, piracy, and human and drug trafficking as ways in which insecurity manifests in Delta State. Actors that perpetuate the various forms of insecurity include political leaders, herdsman, cultists and gangsters, security officials, traditional rulers, militants, and international oil companies (IOCs). The study made the following recommendations:

- Federal Government/State inquiry into electoral violence
- Enact and enforce laws banning those indicted for involvement in acts of violence or criminality from political office
- Establish clear communal land boundaries
- Enact and enforce environmental laws to protect communities
- Encourage and support facilitative mediation in conflict situations as opposed to the use of military or coercive measures
- Evolve social welfare programmes to support youths' skills acquisition workshops
- Swift public prosecution of conflict officers for human rights violations

Chapter five is focused on a study of insecurity in Edo State. The chapter identified land boundary dispute, criminal violence, political (electoral) violence, attacks by herdsman, kidnapping, internet fraud, human and drug trafficking, chieftaincy tussle, and armed robbery as major drivers of insecurity in Edo State. Major actors identified by the study include politicians, religious and traditional leaders, members of armed criminal gangs, cult gangs, cyber fraudsters, and herders. The authors recommend the empowerment of community-based vigilantes, decentralisation of security government, youth employment programmes, infrastructure development, and value re-orientation as mechanisms that could be applied by the Edo State government to address the issues of insecurity identified in this report.

The sixth chapter is a study on insecurity in Rivers State. The chapter takes a chronological approach that focuses on the historical roots of insecurity in Rivers State. In the study, contemporary forms of insecurity are identified as follows: oil bunkering, cultism, sea piracy, cult violence, land dispute and communal clashes, farmer-herders conflict, and electoral violence. The study found that key actors involved in perpetuating insecurity include politicians, violent youth, members of secret cults, international oil companies (IOCs), traditional leaders and members of cultural groups, security personnel, and officials of Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The analysis concludes with a set of recommendations that deals specifically with the ongoing conflicts or events that perpetuate insecurity in Rivers State. These recommendations are as follows: Rivers State government should constitute a judicial commission of enquiry on communal/land dispute across Rivers State and chieftaincy tussles (specific emphasis on Ekporo and Okiri communities); the Federal Government should expedite action on its facilitation of the environmental remediation in Ogoniland, the implementation of local peace-building mechanisms by Rivers State Government through NGOs and CBOs and the peaceful resolution of election-related disputes across different parts of Rivers State.

The final chapter concludes the six case studies that constitute this research. The chapter highlights cross-cutting issues while also identifying the unique context of each of the six states. The report sets an agenda for understanding the prevailing insecurity in Nigeria's South-South geopolitical zone. The various studies that constitute this report show that there are at least three layers of drivers of insecurity in the South-South geopolitical zone in Nigeria. Table 1 below summarises these three layers of insecurity. These are macro, meso, and micro layers. While macro issues have to do with factors that are determined at the national, and in some instances international level, meso issues are related to factors that are formed at the level of the sub-national state. Micro issues are factors that are more at the level of the individual and how he or she chooses to respond to the macro and meso issues that shape their communities.

Table 1: Drivers and Dimensions of Insecurity in South-South

Macro Issues	Meso Issues	Micro Issues
Nigeria's Federalism	Violent politics at state level	Drug abuse
Weak Institutions	Youth unemployment	Breakdown of family and social values
Environmental Pollution	Armed robbery	Political reward from violence
Absence of Rule of Law	Militancy	Financial incentives
Corruption	Internet fraud	Lack of education
Poor Security Sector Governance	Communal and ethnic conflicts	Local power struggles
Violent Electoral Process	Land disputes	
Inter-Country Border Disputes	Cultism	

Most of the issues analysed in this study are recurring within the economic and political history of the South-South geopolitical zone. For more than five decades, the Nigerian state and organised groups in the region have been debating how to address these challenges. The question, which is now historical, that remains unresolved is how all stakeholders can address the deeper, long-term root and proximate causes of the recurring dysfunctional conditions in the South-South zone. At the national level, the Nigerian government has developed different “masterplans” for the transformation of the area. This development planning approach culminated in the design of the Niger Delta Regional Development Master Plan (NDRDMP) as an “integrated and comprehensive approach to the development of the region”. This is because development deficits in the region have been linked with the problem of insecurity (Ibaba, 2008). Several years after, development remains a mirage in the oil-rich region, and communities and people in the region continue to suffer in poverty.

The study concludes by highlighting findings from the six case studies that constitute this research. The concluding analysis emphasizes that the situation in the South-South zone calls for a structural transformation. This structural transformation entails that the security policy response of the Federal Government to the unsettled condition in the Niger Delta must address a range of factors beyond the traditional concern for the defence of petroleum installations against attacks by

militants and criminal groups. These include a set of interrelated issues and policy formation and planning at the national and sub-national levels. The conclusion highlights cross-cutting issues while also identifying the unique context of each of the six states. The report sets an agenda for understanding the prevailing insecurity in Nigeria's South-South geopolitical zone. This report is both an intellectual exercise and a call to action to policymakers at the national and sub-national state level, civil society activists, community leaders, private sector actors, youth groups, international development actors and diplomats in Nigeria, religious leaders, and other independent stakeholders with interest in the Niger Delta. Although the current realities paint a gloomy picture, a collective action that seeks to address the underlying drivers of insecurity identified in this study will go a long way to create a more secure society for people and businesses in the towns, villages, and cities across the South-South geopolitical zone.

CHAPTER ONE

Insecurity in Akwa Ibom State: Issues, Actors and Solutions

Felix Idongesit Oyosoro and Nelson V.C Okene

Executive Summary

This chapter is concerned, mainly, with investigating insecurity in Akwa Ibom State as one of the six states of the South-South zone of Nigeria. The aim is to better understand the issues and actors, and proffer solutions. Insecurity is not new to states in the South-South. Beyond everyday criminality, the people of the region have been engaged in different forms of agitations leading to armed militancy against the Nigerian state and international oil companies (IOCs) operating in the area. The Nigerian government initially adopted a military response to the outbreak of insurgency in the region. However, this did not end militancy. Militant groups in the region, instead, grew in strength and carried out bolder attacks against oil installations. Recognising the limitations of a military approach and in consultation with the political actors in the Niger Delta, the Nigerian government offered an amnesty and implemented a disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) programme for armed militant groups in the region. While the DDR programme contributed to the reduction of hostilities against the oil industry in the region, there is substantial evidence that violence and restiveness across the oil-rich region, including Akwa Ibom State, remains. This necessitates a further enquiry into the problem of insecurity. This chapter presents findings from research conducted to facilitate an understanding and proffer solutions to the problem of insecurity in Akwa Ibom State.

1. Introduction

This study is mainly concerned with examining insecurities in Akwa Ibom State as one of the six states of South-South Nigeria with the

intention of better understanding the issues and actors and proffer solutions. The South-South states of Nigeria are part of the geographical area known as the Niger Delta (ND) but have also become a coinage that has political and increasing administrative relevance as Nigeria's Federal system continues to search for durable political cum administrative structures for its development administration. This introduction is divided into the background to the study, research setting, aim and objectives of the study, significance, and finally scope and limitations of the study.

1.1 Background to the study

The focus of this study is to examine the problem of insecurity in Akwa Ibom State, one of the six states of South-South Nigeria, with a view to better understanding the issues, patterns, causes, and actors, and proffer solutions. The South-South states of Nigeria are part of the geographical area known as the Niger Delta (ND) but have also become a coinage that has political and increasing administrative relevance as the Nigerian Federal system continues to search for durable political cum administrative structures for its development. In this study, the reference to the South-South can be a reference to a pseudo-ethnicity otherwise known as minorities, it could also be a reference to a political/administrative delineation that appropriate the proximate experiences, cultures, and values, and expectations of the six states that occupy what is geographic Niger Delta (Okoko, 2004; Nna, 2008; Ibaba, 2001). The Niger Delta is divided into core (made up of four states Akwa Ibom, Rivers, Bayelsa, and Delta), geographic Niger Delta (made up of the four core plus Cross River and Edo states), and finally the political Niger Delta (which includes the geographic ND plus the oil-producing states of Abia, Imo, and Ondo states) (RTCOTND, 2008, p. 78; see also Okoko, 2004, pp. 3-4). In this work, a reference to Niger Delta is a reference to the six-state geographic Niger Delta. The Niger Delta is recognized as one of the world's largest wetlands. This reference accords more with what is known as the geographic ND, but since the area has become synonymous with oil production, the other states, although with fringe deltaic landscape and also oil-producing, have become known as Niger Delta (Okoko, 2004).

Geographically and politically, the Niger Delta region comprises of minority ethnic groups. The 2006 national population census puts the

Niger Delta states at 31 million out of a national figure of 140 million people (NPC, 2006). The Niger Delta is blessed with abundant natural resources and has based on these resources continued to play leading roles in the economic sustenance of the country since colonial times. Under colonialism, palm oil, and rubber palm (two leading cash crops and key export products) were primarily produced in the Niger Delta region (Nte, 2017). Since 1956 when oil was discovered in commercial quantity at Oloibiri in Bayelsa State, oil and subsequently gas, which are found in large deposits in the Niger Delta, have become major foreign exchange earners for the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) (Dode & Cletus, 2017).

Due to her rich natural endowments and minority status in a multi-ethnic country, the South-South states or the Niger Delta region in Nigeria, have, since the days of colonialism been known as a hotbed of agitations and violent protestations over resource justice and other injustices (Dode & Cletus, 2017). The high point of these agitations in colonial Nigeria was the setting up of the Minorities Commission in 1957 to look into the fears of the minorities and to find ways of alleviating them; those fears were not alleviated and were carried over to independent Nigeria. Several other commissions and panels have also been set to address what has become known as the Niger Delta crisis. Some of these include the Belgore report, the Don Etiebet Report, Popoola Report, Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights situation in Nigeria, Ogomudia Report, Presidential Panel on National Security, National Political Reform Conference (NPRC) report 2005, UNDP: Niger Delta Human Development Report 2006, the Niger Delta Regional Development Masterplan 2004, Report on Coastal States of the Niger Delta 2006, Report of the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta 2008, amongst others.

However, these efforts by various governments of Nigeria failed to bring meaningful and lasting solutions to the Niger Delta crisis. The result was increased agitations which ultimately led to militancy in the 90s (Ukoha, 2007). The impact of the Niger Delta militancy on the national economy was the reduction in the production of oil and subsequent slump in the nation's revenues. This, amongst others, prompted President Shehu Musa Yar'Adua's government to institute the amnesty programme, which is credited for the restoration of peace and reflation of the nation's economy (Dode & Cletus, 2017). Even though Akwa

Ibom was not at the epicenter of the Niger Delta militancy, she was not completely immune from the crisis (RTCOND, 2008, pp. 116- 119; Dode & Cletus, 2017). Beyond the amnesty programme, there seems to be a growing resurgence of violence and restiveness across the region, Akwa Ibom inclusive, prompting the need for fresh thinking on the Niger Delta crisis (Dode & Cletus, 2017). For instance, how do we challenge insecurity and put an end to the regionalization of insecurity in the South-South or Niger Delta? (Joab-Peterside, 2011) What kind of change should we seek for Akwa Ibom State in particular? How do we look beyond the popular narratives to stemming the multi-layered crisis in the state? How do we identify which conflict issues are at their tipping point and nip them in the bud with effective policy responses? To answer these questions which, concern insecurities in Akwa Ibom State creditably, we are using the human security theory (Fukuda-Parr & Messineo, 2012) as our theoretical framework in this study.

This work, therefore, examines the challenge of insecurities in Akwa Ibom State. It is expected to shed new light on patterns and drivers of insecurity amongst others while assisting us in making policy recommendations to address concomitant issues such as the demands for resource justice, dearth of good governance, the challenge of unemployment, political and economic empowerment, and others that tend to exacerbate insecurities in the state.

1.2 Research Setting

The focus of the study is Akwa Ibom State. The state is one of the six states which presently constitute the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria or one of the nine states of the Niger Delta region. It was created by the military government of General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida on September 27, 1987, from the old Cross River State. Akwa Ibom is one of the 36 states of Nigeria. It is located in the coastal southern part of the country, lying between latitudes 4°32'N and 5°33'N, and longitudes 7°25'E and 8°25'E. The state is bordered on the east by Cross River State, on the west by Rivers State and Abia State, and the south by the Atlantic Ocean and the southernmost tip of Cross River State.

The 2006 national population census put the population of the state at five million, four hundred and eighty-two thousand, and one hundred and seventy-seven (5, 482, 177) (NPC, 2006). The state is endowed with oil and gas resources and is currently the highest oil-producing state in

the country, accounting for about 31 percent of total production. Its capital city Uyo has a population of over 500,000 inhabitants and is home to all Akwa Ibomites. The major groups in the state are the Ibibio, Annang, and Oron. The people of Akwa Ibom state are predominantly fishermen and farmers.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study is guided by the following overarching aim and the under listed objectives: To look for those issues that may be obscure but relevant, that are new narratives on the insecurity and conflicts in the Akwa Ibom State as against the salient factors.

- a. To provide clear evidence that would explain the security dynamics in Akwa Ibom State.
- b. To provide clear explanations of the prevailing forms of insecurities and conflicts in the States.
- c. To seek out and report the activities of the dominant actors, from all sectors, in Akwa Ibom State, including shadow actors and groups.
- d. To contribute to understanding the impact of these conflicts on socio-economic and political life & how they are linked.
- e. To form a broad-based understanding of the insecurities in Akwa Ibom State through a ‘state-centric’ analysis.
- f. To seek and justify policies that would address insecurity and conflict issues in Akwa Ibom State.

1.4 Scope and limitations of the Study

This study on ‘Insecurity in the South-South states of the Niger Delta: Issues, Actors, and Solutions’ is aimed primarily at contemporizing Niger Delta security challenges as it concerns the six South-South states. In this case, the focus is on understanding the security situation in Akwa Ibom State and also proffering solutions to these problems. It is deliberately set in the Post-Amnesty period between 2011 and 2019. It is acknowledged that some of the conflict issues date back even before the Niger Delta militancy and the ensuing Amnesty declared in 2009 under the Yar Adua / Jonathan presidency, and so much has been written on that period and the Amnesty period (see for instance Ibaba, 2001; Alapiki, 2008; Joab-

Peterside, Okodudu, Ekekwe & Zeb-Obipi, 2011; Okoko & Nna, 1998; Okoko & Nna, 2011). This is why we are more concerned with the post-Amnesty ‘peace’ and /or insecurity in Akwa Ibom State between 2011 and 2019.

One of the limitations of this research is the level of survey respondents' fatigue in Akwa Ibom State. Some persons originally billed for Key Informants Interviews opted out while those that kept the appointments had to be persuaded that this research would not be like past ones where numerous fact-finding teams come to them over time and in the end, there is nothing to show for it. This atmosphere was compounded by the fact that the fieldwork took place in the wake of the relaxation of restrictions of movement and social gathering because of the novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. The result was that some persons were afraid to meet with us and some KII's and FGD's that could have been held in private accommodations had to be moved to paid commercial spaces with sufficient space for social distancing. These limitations, however, have not affected the integrity of the research because they were anticipated and a broad range of key and alternate informants was mapped out before the fieldwork commenced.

Understanding Insecurity

2.1 The concept of Insecurity

The traditional notion of security evolved and revolved around states in terms of their ability to defend their boundaries or territories, institutions, and citizens. It was then conceived that the might of nations ensured they negotiated from a position of strength and also deter aggressor nations from attacking them. This was the theme of Hans Morgenthau's seminal work 'Politics among Nations' (1985), where he opined that, "through its 'monopoly of organized violence', the state would protect the citizens and the institutions of the state" (Chester, Hampson & Aall, 2012, p. 342). This conception of security, essentially as a military term, did not give privilege to the human person but rather the abstract entity - the state and relied heavily, if not completely, on force and other elements of might and power (Mac-Ogonor, 2000). This conception of security has its theoretical forebearer in the realist theory (Waltz, undated; 2000). For the realist, security or peace was a product of domination in a world without supranational government, where the

pursuit and advancement of the interest of political actors, units or nations as the dominant or unitary actors, using their military might or prowess, dictated how they fared (Viotti & Kauppi, 2009; Slaughter, 2011; Donnelly, 2000). This rather aggressive or realist notion of security which reigned in the post-WW2 cold war environment finally came to its zenith in the September 9th, 2011 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon building in the United States of America (Barnett, 2004). This 9/11 terror attack forced the need for new thinking on security globally and locally. In Nigeria, this new era coincided with the immediate post-amnesty era and the de-escalation of militancy and organized anti-state violence, better known as militancy or insurgency, in the Niger Delta region.

Internally, therefore, security meant the rigid enforcement of order and the maintenance of the relevant architecture (Police, Navy, Airforce, Army and other para-military forces), for the forceful and sometimes violent enforcement of state and/or regime-oriented laws (Atelhe, Etefiong & Omojarabi, 2016; Viotti, 1994). This is manifested in the suppression of dissent, demonstrations and other forms of mass protest against unjust policies and laws by a regime bent on maintaining order (Atelhe, Etefiong & Omojarabi, 2016). Although the dictates of survival of states in an anarchic world system have largely influenced security concerns, defining security remains a huge task. According to Viotti (1994, p.3):

In its broadest formulation, the term security goes well beyond military considerations. Security can be understood as a defense against external (or internal) threats as well as the overall socio-economic well-being of a society and the individuals who compose it.

He goes on to explain that the term ‘security’ is more inclusive than the term ‘defense’; they are often used interchangeably, but in reality, the military component, defense is dominant. For Yanet & Oisamoje (2016, p. 245), “national security centers on protection from threat or any situation that is capable of causing a change to occur. It denotes the ability of a state to address the threats to its sovereignty”. This is reflective of a state-centric realist perspective. Security has also been defined more broadly as “all measures of design to safeguard and protect the citizenry and the resources of individuals, groups, businesses and the

nation against sabotage, or violent occurrences” (Kinge & Nweke, 2019, p.357). This definition appears more nuanced except that it is only the state that is in a position to guarantee these conditions, making the state an all-powerful arbiter, whose positions will be difficult to fault. A more nuanced definition of security is given by Nwaolisa (2007) as “safety, freedom from danger or risk, protection from espionage, infiltration, sabotage, theft, etc” (Kinge & Nweke, 2019, p.358).

This paper will settle for the definition of security that prioritizes the human person. Accordingly, Kinge & Nweke (2019, p.357), citing the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and others define human security as,

The protection from hidden and hurtful disruptions in the daily activities, at home, offices, or communities. That is, it is a state of being safe or secured from danger...it is the absence of the threat to peace, stability, national cohesion, political and economic objectives of a country”. Human security is focused on “identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood, and dignity of their people.

According to the UN, human security is a people-centered, comprehensive, context-dependent, prevention-oriented approach to strengthening and empowering people. Typically, human security views everything as being capable of affecting and influencing human dignity, and freedoms and, therefore, requires deliberate efforts to achieve and protect.

Insecurity, therefore, will come from threats to people’s capacity and ability to live a meaningful life, free of fears, anxieties, and lack. Insecurity comes from anything that threatens people’s survival, livelihood, and dignity. It is exacerbated by social, economic, political, legal, and other forms of injustice perpetrated against a person, group, or nation. Insecurity is the absence of security on both militarily and on human security perspectives. We “believe life consistently improves for humanity over time, but it does so only because individuals, communities, and nations take it upon themselves not only to imagine a future worth creating but actually try to build it” (Bernett, 2004, p.8), and that it is up to the society at large, rather than only the state, to guarantee human security and better manage acts that cause insecurity.

2.2 Akwa Ibom and Insecurity

Ikporukpo (1983), Ikein (1991), and the World Bank Reports (1995) indicate that oil exploration and production have induced environmental degradations that have had consequences on oil losses, exacerbated poverty, caused occupational disorientation, social conflicts, population displacement, and violations of human rights amongst indigenes of oil-producing communities in the Niger Delta region and elsewhere in the world. Oil-producing companies operating in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria have enjoyed the federal government's protection above other government regulating agencies and thus, tend to operate with impunity and flout environmental protection laws at the detriment of their host oil communities whose polluted environments are left neither compensated for nor remediated (Okaba, 2005).

The oil industry is the main-stay of the Nigerian economy as it attracts over 75% of its national revenues. Thus, the oil sector in a state like Akwa Ibom that generates such huge national revenues often attracts federal government attention and protection of oil companies operating in such a state (Okowa, 2007). Abali, (1996) observed that crude oil contributes to public revenue in Nigeria through the following sources; rents, royalties, direct sales of government equity oil, NNPC earnings, and petrol subsidy, depending on the level of production, and on-going oil prices. However, according to Osuoka, (2003), all stages of oil production from exploration, and drilling to transportation, results in the destruction of the natural environment and the livelihoods of the local, host communities who depend on the land, fishing, and the often-polluted rivers and creeks for their survival. Today, the people of the Niger Delta region and indeed Akwa Ibom State remain emasculated and their God-given resources expropriated. The discovery of crude oil in the state and indeed Niger Delta has become a curse to the people as the events in the country continue to show.

The criminal exploitation of the Niger Delta region has turned the area into a hotbed of crises with the emergence of militant social movements such as the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), the Niger-Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF), and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-Delta (MEND), among others (Ekpenyong, 2010). Agbu, (2005) sees the combined incessant oil spills and accidental blowouts resulting from ill-maintained and over-

aged oil pipelines and oil wellheads, as factors that make Akwa Ibom State and other parts of the region record the highest incidences of oil spillages and environmental pollutions. The UNDP report (2006) indicates that oil spillages and gas flaring are common occurrences in the Nigerian oil industry and that there were 6,817 oil spill incidents in Nigeria between 1976 and 2001. It noted that over 70% of the spilled oil was not recovered and very few of these spill sites were remediated to date.

Socio-economic deprivation, human rights, and the crises prevalent in the Niger Delta region are within the ambit of the federal government of Nigeria. The state laws for instance, which had resulted in the spate of violent protests (insecurity) in Akwa Ibom State in particular and the Niger Delta in general, have empowered the federal government of Nigeria to dispossess and disempower the oil-producing communities (Awosika, 2008). It is such unwholesome scenarios indicated above that often pitch the host communities against these oil-producing companies. This leads to recurring spates of youth restiveness and violent reactions in demand for redress of environmental damage occasioned by operations of these oil companies, which tend to exacerbate security challenges in oil-producing communities. Amnesty International reports of (2005) indicates that, though oil pollutions and spillages are enormous in Nigeria, these incidents have remained controversial because oil companies are reluctant to accept responsibilities and the attendant financial compensation. Some of the oil companies, particularly the Shell Producing Development Company (SPDC) and Exxon Mobil (Nig.) Unlimited, have repeatedly denied responsibility for most oil spills, claiming that these were due to sabotage and pipeline vandalism by indigenous hoodlums and oil bunkers. The host oil communities, who bear the brunt of these recurring spills and their consequences on their lands and aquatic livelihoods, argue for redress and financial compensation, pointing to industrial spills, drilling blow-outs, and protracted legal battles meant to delay or deny payment of financial compensation to these unfortunate oil communities in several of such spills.

Karl (1991), agrees that accountability is the acknowledgement and assumption of responsibility for actions, decisions, and policies, including administration, and implementation, the obligation to report, explain and be answerable for resulting consequences. Accountability in the Nigerian oil industry is lacking. Lack of transparency in oil operations and sales in

the Nigerian oil industry paints dark images in the minds of an average Nigerian citizen. This is why Pezerworski (1988) states that the cardinal points of true democracy are the ability to institutionalize the principles of transparency and accountability on leaders, whereby citizens hold them accountable for their actions in the public domain through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives. Apart from the government, the oil corporations are also not accountable to their host oil communities due to tacit government protection and connivance of corrupt government officials.

2.3. Theoretical framework: Human Security

The concept of human security had become dominant since the mid-1990s. But despite this seemingly positive outlook, the concept like others in the social sciences remains contested and is often described as ambiguous because of its wide coverage and analytical relevance (Fukuda-Parr & Messineo, 2012). The concept of human security is a comprehensive one that goes beyond the confines of state-centered security and its primary or unitary focus on the state actor and the use of force for territorial rather than individual gain (Fukuda-Parr & Messineo, 2012). The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution 66/290 defines it as “an approach to assist member states in identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood, and dignity of their people” (<https://www.un.org/humansecurity/what-is-human-security/>). UNGA goes further to describe it as “people-centered, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented responses that strengthen the protection and empowerment of all people”. In 1995, one of the early proponents of the concept of human security, Mahbub ul-Haq wrote:

The world is entering a new era in which the very concept of security will change and change dramatically. Security will be interpreted as security of people not just territory, security of individuals not just nations. Security through development, not through arms. Security of all the people everywhere – in their homes, in their jobs, in their streets, in their communities, in their environment. (cited in Fukuda-Parr & Messineo, 2012, p. 21)

As a framework of analysis, therefore, human security which is people-centered, dynamic, comprehensive, context-specific, multi-medium prevention, and solution-oriented will be useful in understanding, contextualizing, preventing, or solving insecurity issues in Akwa Ibom State. Human security will give us the leverage to look beyond the application of force or the use of might in addressing security concerns in Akwa Ibom State. It also allows us to approach insecurity as development or sustainable development challenge that can be addressed via a good governance perspective that admits resource justice in resource-rich nations as an abiding criterion. Human security is broad enough to encompass state security, individual and group security, environmental security, physical security, and more (Fukuda-Parr & Messineo, 2012).

3. Methodology

This section is concerned with the logical procedure used in the process of conducting this research.

3.1. Research Design

The entire Akwa Ibom State constitutes the study population for this research. The state was first surveyed in a preliminary investigation to enable us to have a clearer view of the conflict issues in the state and to help us decide on the critical areas to focus on. It was also important to balance this against the need for representativeness. We had to ask and answer the question as to whether the areas selected represent the entire population of the state or are seen to represent the conflict or insecurity issues in the state adequately. Another critical issue is the historical antecedents and cultural affinity. It is important to note that all local government areas have cultural or historical roots and some kinds of cultural reference points that are important to the people and need to be respected. After careful consideration of these factors, it was discovered that the administrative/electoral arrangement for senatorial constituencies/districts presents a credible statewide sampling frame that encompasses all local governments of the state, and also fairly represents the ethnic leanings and the conflict issues revealed from our preliminary investigation. On the strength of that, one LGA was purposively selected to represent the historical and cultural center while two more were

randomly selected from the LGAs in each senatorial district to create the necessary balance and to have a fair chance of equal selection of all LGAs in the state. The result is represented below as follows:

A. Uyo Senatorial District

1. Itu Local Government Area
2. Nsit Ubium LGA
3. Uyo LGA

B. Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District

1. Etim Ekpo LGA
2. Ukanafun LGA
3. Ini LGA

C. Eket Senatorial District

1. Eastern Obolo LGA
2. Eket LGA
3. Oron LGA

The key informants who were interviewed across the state were chosen in two stages. The first selection was targeted at traditional leaders as custodians of the culture of the people, and the reference point for local leadership. Hence, the paramount rulers of all nine LGAs were selected and most of them were interviewed except where they were unavailable.

The paramount rulers are the highest-ranking traditional leaders in each local government area. In council, they superintend over clan heads, village heads, and family heads in that order. Others were selected based on their relevance or position which was adjudged as endowing them with special, detailed, or expert knowledge of the issues being studied. Care was taken to increase sample reliability by including the following groups; men, women, politicians, youths, activists, journalists, opinion-makers, shadow actors, and so on. Care was also taken to have key informants from a diverse range of ‘constituencies’ to effectively represent the diversity of the population.

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected from a combination of secondary sources (including books, journals, newspapers and magazines, and government or special publications), and primary sources from Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). Three focus group discussions

were conducted in each senatorial district. All focus groups had between four and seven persons in attendance to allow for meaningful deliberations. The target groups included youth groups, cultural groups, and assembly of leaders, elders, or opinion makers. Necessary efforts were made to ensure that women are represented.

Data collected has been analyzed carefully and triangulated (Mckinzie, Powell & Usher, 1997), but sufficient weight was given to primary data. This is to enable the people that are impacted directly by the various conflict issues and who have the advantage of experience to have more input in this search for sustainable solutions. It also has the advantage of yielding novel results, especially with regards to crisis tipping points and solutions that may not conform to standard or recycled narratives on conflicts and insecurity in the South-South or the Niger Delta generally.

3.3 Issues of Insecurity in Akwa Ibom State

3.3.1 Sea Piracy

Akwa Ibom is a coastal State. It also has significant inland waterways. Inland waterways are used for the transportation of goods and services to and from Akwa Ibom State. However, the coastal areas have become home to pirates who intermittently operate and cause havoc to different groups of people who navigate the maritime zones. Sea pirate activities are pronounced in Akwa Ibom State. In Itu Local Government Area, His Royal Majesty Edidem (Dr.) Edet Akpan-Inyang, the Paramount Ruler of Itu, asserts that the operation of sea pirates occurs very frequently. According to him: “the sea pirates operate almost every market day (Tuesdays and Thursdays weekly). They disrupt and cart away traders’ goods. They killed one woman who was returning from the women’s guild meeting at Mbak” (KII/Male/Paramount Ruler/Itu). The pirates operate at will and cause terror along the waterways of the community.

In Eastern Obolo Local Government Area, the pirates attack mostly the fishermen, seize their engines and dislodge their fishes from their boats. According to Mr. Festus J. Adasi, a youth activist in Emeroke community: “there are supposed to be gunboats set-up by the government which ought to monitor these boys in the river, but there are none. Last week, they collected eight (8) engines from fishermen and dumped the fishermen at the sea there” (FGD/Male/Youth

Activist/Itu). There are similar situations in Mbo, Oron, Udung Uko, and Urue-Offong/Oruko Local Government Area where, in August 2019, residents in the fishing communities staged a protest over the incessant attacks and killings of fishermen and boat owners on waterways by sea pirates (Umo, 2019). Criminal activities by pirates in Mbo LGA led to the kidnapping of five ExxonMobil employees by unidentified gunmen in 2013. This resulted to a gun battle between the navy and the pirates, causing the death of six pirates and heightening the bad security situation. In September 2019, piracy attacks accounted for the deaths of two naval officers. Narrating this ordeal, the clan head of Idua, His Royal Highness Etinyin Edet Nyong Ekeng states thus:

This problem of insecurity in our waterways has cost us so many lives, even the fishermen boats and engines are seized by the pirates. A week ago, a boat was seized and everything in the boat was carted away. We have made reports to the government agencies at various times. The sea pirates even attacked the state marine office and looted everything there, killing two security operatives, yet the government has not done anything. (KII/Male/Clan Head/Idua)

The activities of these pirates affect the economic fortunes of the residents of the fishing communities and also impact the economy of the state and the nation at large. Essien & Al note that “the frequent attacks on the fishing activities led to the reduction of the number of fishing trawlers from 205 to 150, That poses a significant challenge and enormous cost on the local fishing economies.” (2015).

Also, incidents of piracy and incessant harassment of fishermen and others engaging in economic activities, orchestrated in the Nigerian waterways are recorded in Ibeno, Ikot Abasi, Okobo, and Uruan, leading to the soaring cost of fish and seafood. An account of sea piracy in Ibeno relates that in November 2019:

The dare-devil pirates attacked fishermen in Ibeno, stealing over 40 boat engines in 2018. In some instances, the pirates demanded a ransom of N150,000 to N200,000 to recover each engine stolen from the fishermen, who are afraid their source of livelihood is under threat. For instance, fishermen in Okoroitak, a mangrove swamp in Ibeno lost 20 boat engines ranging from 15 horsepower, 25 horsepower to 40 horsepower worth about N550,000 and more between November and

December 2018. Apart from extorting money and stealing boat engines from them, the pirates are said to maim their victims in the course of their activities, mostly at night or early in the morning. (Pioneer Team, 2019).

Similarly, in Uruan L.G.A the indigenes express deep sadness and agony over incessant attacks by sea pirates who wreak havoc on them and their goods at different sea routes during their seaborne trade. Mr. Kokoette Ukpe, an Uruan fisherman whom we spoke with in Uyo speaks of his experience:

I've been into fishery for 20 years now. The business is good because I have built my house, I've purchased a car and an engine for my ship but on a sad note, our most challenging problem here are sea pirates and they rob us of our ship engines, fishes, money and other products we ship in from different locations. When they rob us of our engines, we get stranded and most of us would have no other choice than stay in the sea for two to three days until help finally comes our way. Just last Monday (4th May 2020), a fisherman who returned with his fishes was robbed and the whole fishes were emptied. These are fishes worth over N80, 000." (KII/Male/Fisherman/Uyo).

Comfort Enewara also alleges that in Okobo L.G.A, the havoc by the ocean raiders is due to the negligence of the government of the day on issues bordering on their welfare. According to her:

These thieves have made lives unbearable especially those who go to the sea to fish or cross borders to buy fishes in places such as Oron and Cameroun. These armed robbers extort money and kill people. I can't forget 2017 in a hurry; women were robbed of their goods and money and this made some of us detest going to fish or cross borders in purchase of them. We are trying our best but the government is not trying for us here. We voted this government en-masse but we in the village have been forgotten. I have seen and heard the governor visiting other markets but this has never been the case here, not even our local government chairman or any other person closer to government, she cried out (FGD/Female/Youth /Oron)

The major actors of sea piracy in the shores of the various local government areas in Akwa Ibom State are usually armed groups from neighboring states who are aided by informants within the local

communities of Akwa Ibom State, who benefit from the proceeds of these pirate activities. For example, in Itu L.G.A, the Paramount Ruler asserts that most of the pirates speak dialects traced to neighboring villages in Cross River State. In the case of Oron, HRH Edet Nyong Ekeng categorically states that “these militants come all the way from Bayelsa and I know that some indigenes here are equally involved in carrying out this injustice” (KII/Male/Paramount Ruler/Oron). This further demonstrates the link between the activities of sea pirates in Akwa Ibom State to similar activities of maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea. This is also the viewpoint of the Chatham House March 2013 report which asserts that “maritime security is a regional rather than a purely Nigerian issue as pirates cross international boundaries and attack foreign ships, and as many are located in different countries” (3).

Apart from the fishing business, shipping and other legal activities are affected by the wave of attacks unleashed by the hoodlums whenever they strike in the maritime environment. Seafarers and fishermen sailing between Akwa Ibom waterways and Cameroun, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome, and Principe sometimes complain of being attacked by pirates and other criminals, who ambush their victims in the high seas and impound their goods, fish, fishing equipment, including speedboats and engines, leaving them stranded on the high sea, or collect huge ransoms for the release of the confiscated items.

3.3.2 Cultism

Cultism in Akwa Ibom has no doubt taken a novel trend as it has become a rampant phenomenon in the streets of the state. The Divisional Police Officer in Itu, CSP Joseph Udouiroh posits that “cultism is a big challenge here in Akwa Ibom State. Generally, there is a nexus between cultism and other crimes in the State” (KII/Male/Divisional Police Officer/Itu). There have been series of cult activities and restiveness by youths across the state to the extent of affecting much younger youths (often adjudged to be children aged from 9 to 19) in secondary and primary schools. Obong Awan (Mrs) Grace Ekong, a former Chairperson of the State Universal Basic Education Program (SUBEP), relates that “cultism has crept into every fabric of the society (secondary schools, and offices)” (KII/Female/PANDEF/Itu). She further explains that “as chair of the SUBEP, I received complaints

of situations where classes in different primary schools in the state were used at odd hours for cult activities” (idem). This shows the urgency related to the issue of cultism in the state. The Akwa Ibom State Command of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) further validates that cultism has penetrated every fiber of the society, including the nursery and primary schools in Akwa Ibom. In a press release, the Akwa Ibom State Command of the NPF asserts that:

Following the recent proscription of cultism and other violent behavior under the Cultism and other Violent Behaviour (Prohibition) Order, 2020 by the State Government, the command reassures members of the public that the fight against cultism and other violent crimes will be intensified against members and sponsors of the following cults, groups, and societies existing within and outside tertiary institutions, secondary and primary schools... (Akwa Ibom State Police Press Release, 17th March 2020).

In February 2020, Njoku Chidi and Ogonna Dickson of the Vikings Confraternity were apprehended. In the press release, the NPF in Akwa Ibom stated thus:

Relying on intelligence on 18/2/2020 at about 11 am, operatives of the command raided a black spot suspected to be the rendezvous of notorious cultists along the Udo Udoma traffic light, Off Oron Road, Uyo and arrested one Ogonna Dickson ‘m’ and Njoku Chidi ‘m’, both of Ebonyi State, but residing at Ibiaku Ishiet village in Uruan L. G. Area. During interrogation, suspects confessed to being members of Vikings Confraternity. (Akwa Ibom State Police Press Release, 12th March 2020)

All nine (9) local governments we visited had cultism as a top vector of insecurity. Among the LGAs in Akwa Ibom, Oron reportedly has a relatively high concentration of cult groups and cultist activities. This is due to unemployment, lack of infrastructural amenities, and absence of federal and state presence (this is discussed extensively in 4.1.4 below). Concurrently, in March 2020, the AKSG signed an Executive Order, prohibiting the recognition and operations of 65 cult groups and other secret societies in the state. According to the governor:

Any cult, society, or group by whatsoever name whose activities are found to be consistent with the activities of a cult shall be considered and treated as such under this Order. Defaulters shall be prosecuted in accordance with the Cultism, Offensive Weapons and Violent Behavior (Prohibition) Law 2004, or any other enabling law in that regard. (Akpan U, 2020).

However, upon this proscription, activities linked to cult groups remain persistent in the state. According to Mr. Godwin Otu, a community leader at Iwukem, Etim Ekpo L.G.A: “cultism is still persistent here in Iwukem even after the proscription by the AKSG. The boys are sponsored by top politicians so they don’t care, they feel they are above the law” (FGD/Male/Community Leader/Etim Ekpo). This situation equates to what transpires in Ukanafun L.G.A where cultists terrify the villagers with guns and other light weapons they got from politicians during elections. This is happening despite the measures taken by the government to tackle insecurity in the area through an amnesty programme where these cultists surrendered their arms to the AKSG. Paradoxically, they never surrendered arms but rather “brought out hunters’ guns and gave to the AKSG,” according to Chief Nelson John Udomah (KII/Male/Village Head/Ukanafun).

Identified cult groups by the NPF Akwa Ibom Command comprise of the following: Vikings, Black Axe, KKK, Buccaneers, Mafias, Luttos (Junior Black Axe), Debam, Dewell, Ice Landers, Red Skins, Pirates, Amoc, Akwa Marines, Utoto Groups (419), the Luttox, Red Skin, St. Stephens, Dewell, Sept. 11 Group, Secret Sons of Satan, King Cobra, Junior Vikings (J.V), Bats, Predators, Black Ladies, Black Cross, Scavengers, Skylolo, Sons of Night, Blood Brotherhood, Junior Buccaneers, White Angels, Musket, Daughters of Queen Amina, Lion, Leo Lion, Neo Black Movement of Africa, Temple of Eden, Daughters of Jezebel, Amazon, Black Brazier, Barracudas, Black Beret, The Dragon, Red Devil, Blood Suckers, Scorpion, Black Eye, Aiye, Son of Night, White Angels, Yellow Ribbon, Python, Black Sword, Supreme Dred Lock, Black Heart, Black Dagger, White Brothers, High Mafia, Supreme Red Skin, Italian Mafia, Separate Brother Confraternity and Clansmen (Akwa Ibom State Police Press Release, 17th March 2020).

Apart from Ini LGA, where the paramount ruler underlined that the “Buccaneers” predominantly cause havoc in the different communities in

the LGA, no other LGA visited indexed a particular cult group. Every other local governments visited asserted that no cult group had strongholds in their community and that they experienced violence and restiveness from different groups appearing in different and varying attires, such that it is almost impossible to tell which groups operated at a given time. For us, this is the reason for the incessant cult clashes noticed in Akwa Ibom. The entire communities in the local government areas have become a battlespace where these cult groups metamorphose into smaller factions, engage in cult clash, restiveness, and all forms of violence in the bid to display superiority.

3.3.3 Communal and Inter-State Land Disputes

A trend of violent communal conflicts spreading through Akwa Ibom State in recent years has intensified in the past months, leaving hundreds of people dead and thousands displaced. Land disputes is one of the main causes of communal conflict in Akwa Ibom State (Akpaeti, 2005). A release from the Department of State Service (DSS) cited by the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR, 2002) notes that since the creation of Akwa Ibom State from Cross River State in 1987, several bloody communal clashes have occurred. For instance, Oku Iboku and Ikot Offiong, Mbiakong and Ifianyong Usuk in 2003, Ngwa and Ikot Umo Essien in 1996 to 1997, Ikporom communal conflicts in Ini Local Government Area and Edem Aban in Abia State. These conflicts have impacted negatively on the land and other environmental resources, thereby reducing the livelihood and development potential of the natural resource base of the people.

On May 21, 2019, 10 people (including fishermen) were reportedly killed with several others declared missing in a renewed violence between Oku-Iboku community in Itu Local Government Area (LGA) of Akwa Ibom State and Ikot-Offiong community in Odukpani LGA of Cross River State (WANEP, 2019). Suspected gunmen from Ikot Offiong community were alleged to have carried out the armed attack on Ikot Adakpan fishing community in Itu LGA. Preliminary investigations have revealed that the gunmen stormed the waterways in speedboats shooting and killing victims who are indigenes of Oku Iboku on a fishing expedition in the disputed area. Consequent upon the renewed hostilities, operatives of the Nigerian Army assigned to the Calabar-Itu Bridge bordering both states halted an attempted reprisal attack on the people of

all in the boundary areas. The delineation of boundaries by the National Boundary Commission has further generated disputes and heightened tension between border communities, claiming historical rights to some fishing communities on the boundaries of the Calabar-Itu River which links both states. The conflict has overtime impacted negatively on environmental resources, thereby affecting the livelihood and development potential of the natural resources in the communities (Emah, 2015).

In Ini LGA, conflict situations are the result of compulsory struggles in their respective day-to-day activities at all social levels aimed at satisfying primordial and universal needs. These needs include security, identity, recognition, and development. They strive increasingly to gain control of their environment to ensure the satisfaction of these needs. Communal conflicts in the study area involve violent struggles among groups typically organized along ethnic, religious, and cultural lines. The issues at stake in such conflicts are not typically cultural but may involve struggles over economic, political, and land/boundary disputes. Aside from the loss of lives and property and the displacement of people usually associated with communal conflicts, its impact on environmental resources cannot be overemphasized. This is the case in Nkari, a clan situated in Ini Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State with ten villages, where three brothers were killed by gunmen in March 2013, after a clash over the construction of a dam in their village (Ikuruekong & Al, 2012). Since 2014, communal violence between the Nkari people in Akwa Ibom and the Arochwuku people in Avia, in Abia State, has resulted in the displacement of people and an unknown number of fatalities as related by Chief Effiong Toliquo, a village head in Nkari (FGD/Male/Village Head/Nkari).

Also, Ibeno LGA, home to one of the largest fishing settlements on the Nigerian coast, has been reportedly exposed to oil spills. Fishing communities have protested on the environmental pollution caused by oil exploration in the area. Apart from oil spills causing environmental degradation, there are reported cases of communal violent clashes with Eket LGA. Several people were reportedly killed, including an elderly villager in October 2012 and the local PDP chairperson in May 2013. In April 2013, a violent land dispute between the Ibeno community and neighboring Eket LGA led to the deaths of five people and the destruction of dozens of homes, displacing several families (The Fund for Peace, 2014). The stigma from this crisis remains between both

neighbors, and according to Hon. Peter Ulaeto, an Ibeno politician, “the Eket and Ibeno crisis has affected the psyche of the people in both local governments. For instance, it is very difficult to convince an Eket man to sleep in Ibeno. No matter how close an Ibeno man is to an Eket person, there’s still that suspicion, including me an Ibeno man” (FGD/Male/Politician/Eket).

3.3.3.1 Case study: the nkari dam project

A special case that has exacerbated the security situation in Nkari (situated in Ini Local Government Area) is the Nkari Dam project. Until the inception of the Nkari Dam project, the community’s primary occupation was farming, which they depended on for livelihood and survival. In the course of this research, when we visited the community, we noticed that the only paved road from the headquarters to the community was tarred halfway and abandoned. A large part of the one hour forty-five minutes journey from the headquarters was made on uneven, waterlogged, and rough earth road. When we got to the meeting venue, what was supposed to be an FGD of some selected leaders and women representatives had attracted the entire community (this shows how desperate they have become to attract social amenities and basic infrastructure for their survival). To commence the FGD, it took some time to address and organize the crowd and separate our target group from the crowd which remained till the end as spectators. They nodded and applauded their leaders’ comments and sometimes felt the need to emphasize some salient points by shouting across the hall in the primary school where we met. After what was generally a peaceful meeting, as we left the hall, there was some commotion from the spectator angle and some youths followed us out. The youths were asking repeatedly, “What did they bring?” It was a picture of poverty, frustration, and burgeoning aggression.

Barrister Bassey Ekpo explained that the Nkari Dam project was inherited from the Cross River State Government (under the supervision of the Nigerian Basin Authority) and has remained a drain of public funds as the crisis-ridden project was passed from one government to the other and from one contractor to another. This project has moved from being a beacon of hope for the Nkari people to a symbol of frustration and crisis. Since the inception of the project, the community

has not been compensated for their land and no form of impact assessment has been made on this multi-billion Naira project. The Nkari people have continued to call for compensation, completion of the dam project, and payment of royalties over land. As a farming community, they are angry that after several years of taking over their farmland, the project has brought them nothing but pains, tears, deaths, and destruction (KII/Male/Community Activist/Nkari).

According to Barrister Bassey Ekpo (Idem), the conflicts and disagreement over the project were reported to the Senate and the House of Representatives Committee on Water Resources and the minister in charge during the President Goodluck Jonathan administration; the contract was revoked because of its many lapses and zero corporate social responsibility. However, it was under Hydro Works, under the directorship of Engr. Castel, that more than 60% of the contract was done. It was subsequently re-awarded to A.G Visions Nigeria Ltd, a local contractor, working in partnership with a Lebanese businessman. It was at this point that one Bassey Inuaeyen, a local contractor, made a false claim on the ownership of the land bordering the dam. He claimed ownership of over 80% of the land while the rest belongs to three villages (his village included). Based on this claim, NGN50, 000,000.00 was paid to him on behalf of the community and he absconded with the bulk of the money after giving stipends to the three villages while abandoning the other seven villages. This led to conflicts and massive destruction of three out of seven villages.

The local and state governments' attempts to end the crisis have yielded no fruit. During Governor Godswill Akpabio's tenure, the contractor handling the project took the divide and rule strategy to a strange new level. The company lured activists and youth leaders, eight of them, who were fighting for community compensation, recognition, and CSR projects out for a meeting where they were killed (three of those killed are the three brothers mentioned above). This led to the renewal of unrest in the community as tensions rose to new heights. To date, the community is deeply divided between those who support Bassey Inuaeyen and the displaced and dispossessed majority. There is also no survey stating exactly the number of acres of land for the project; the consequence is that the community continues to lose its vast land area to the project. A commission of enquiry was set up to look into the crisis and the death of the youths but to date neither the commission's report nor the government's white paper on the crisis has been made

public. The community continues to grope in abandonment and live in fear as attempts are made to silence the truth.

What is happening in the dam project shows a conspiracy between local interests, local political lackeys, and powers at the state level and beyond. They are beneficiaries of an atmosphere of “gangsterism surrounding the Niger Delta”. For him, there is complete leadership failure in the Niger Delta. He insists that

the Niger Delta needs to understand the political genesis of Nigeria and act within it. There is no (leadership) front. It is very atomistic and it is not ideological, it has nothing altruistic, it is mercantilist and not directed to achieve growth or development but for temporary leaders to achieve the benefits while it lasts (KII/Male/Community Activist/Nkari).

3.3.4 Protests and Restiveness: The Oro Youths Protest

Organized under the aegis of the Oro Youth Congress (made up of youths drawn from the five council areas of Mbo, Okobo, Udung Uko, Urue Offong-Oruko, and Oron), a peaceful youth protest was held on the 24th of February 2020 against the non-inclusion of its five local government areas as oil-producing/ host communities. According to some patriotic Oronians, the protest was the sincerest agitation from Oro youths in the history of the Oro nation. Before the protest, the youths rejected all forms of negotiation/enticement and even staged a walk-out on representatives of Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited.

The protesters, who were dressed in black, also displayed many placards, including “Is oil thicker than blood?” “Oro youths say no to continued marginalization,” “Akwa Ibom Government is a threat to peace.” In a seven-point communiqué, the Convener of the protest, under the auspices of Oro Youth Congress, Lovestic Eyo, urged the federal and state governments and the oil companies to implement the resolutions by the National Assembly and the National Executive Council immediately (Atainyang, 2020). In our interaction with Mr. Francis Otioro, head of mobilization, the group alleged that the state government had over the years disregarded the “tripod arrangement as proposed by our forefathers during the creation of the state which has

led to the absolute marginalization and neglect of Oro people for obvious and unknown reasons” (FGD/Male/34/Youth Leader/Itu).

Hon Okpoyo Etifit, a political activist maintains that the general grievances of the Oro nation are due to continuous and renewed marginalization of the five local governments in the Oro nation by both the federal and state government. According to him,

Oro nation is embedded in oil. Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) began a CSP survey in 1954 and discovered over 500 oil wells: there are 125 in Urue-Offong/Oruko, Oron has 86, Okobo has about 90 and Mbo has about 66. It is Oro that makes Akwa Ibom the number one oil-producing state in Nigeria. Sadly, in Oro, there is nothing to show for this; poor infrastructure, and lack of electricity, government presence, hospitals, etc. that has become a great source of insecurity. (KII/Male/Political Activist/Oron).

This sense of exploitation and injustice, occasioned by what some commentators have described as an ‘internal colonialism’ arrangement (Offiong & Okonmah, 2010), is aggravated since decisions to centralize oil resources were taken and imposed by federal military regimes (and their elected successors) representing dominant social forces. The centralist nation-building project of the military in post-civil war Nigeria, bankrolled by petro-dollars, manifested as a virtual transfer of oil wealth from Oro to other regions of the country.

The very process of national development has paradoxically contributed to the Oro nation's underdevelopment as the region, which generates oil that fuels development, but has continued to lack basic amenities and infrastructure. This point is one of the focal issues of the Oro Bill of Rights of 1999 which reads thus:

That although the Oro nation has played host to oil exploration and exploitation activities which started with Shell in 1958 with capped wells dotted across the Oro landscape, with nothing to show for it... Despite the presence of Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited, rigs within Oro territorial waters and in "disputed" waters, the Oro nation has been denied its rights, following the abrogation of the offshore - onshore dichotomy as a price for Oro local government areas belonging to the core catchment areas of Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited have continued to fall on deaf ears. Of specific note is that even paltry compensations for the January 1998 oil spill have not been

paid to most communities and individuals in the Oro speaking local government areas. (Paragraph 6 & 7).

3.3.5 Armed Violence and Drug Abuse

The alcohol-drug abuse-violence nexus presents itself in several different facets: alcohol and other drugs of abuse may act on brain mechanisms that cause a high-risk individual to engage in aggressive and violent behavior. Individuals with costly heroin or cocaine habits may commit violent crimes to secure the resources for further drug purchases. Narcotic drug dealers, but not alcohol vendors, violently practice their trade. Alcohol, narcotics, hallucinogens, and psychomotor stimulants differ substantially from each other and in the way that they are related to different kinds of violent and aggressive behavior. In a study carried out in February 2015 by E. Isreal and E. Nyoho, and tagged “Illicit Drug Use and Emotional Behaviour of Senior Secondary Students in Public Schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria;” it is established that “school riots, violence, immorality, irrational act and other forms of unwholesome behavioural tendencies among school children are linked to the abuse of illicit drug use” (54). In this paper, we shall treat the issues of drug abuse and armed Violence as a common theme and present the problem of child trafficking independently.

In Akwa Ibom, the various manifestations of armed violence are kidnapping, rape, robbery, quasi-militancy. Particularly in Uyo, the capital city, the list of kidnapped persons continues to increase. Kidnap for ransom is a significantly under-reported crime. It is important to note that most of these armed crimes, especially kidnappings, navigate and operate across borders. In one of the instances, the NPF reports that:

...on 11/2/2020 at about 2000hrs that one Ekpono-Abasi G. Eduok ‘F, aged 20yrs, a student of University of Uyo (UNIUYO) was given a lift along Aka Road, by unknown men who later diverted her to a bush and demanded fifty thousand naira (N50, 000) ransom before she will regain her freedom, a combined team of Anti-Kidnapping Squad and Eleme Area Command patrol team traced the victim to a bush in Port-Harcourt on 12/2/2020 at about 1130hrs, and combed the isolated bush near GVC bus stop in Eleme where the victim was rescued unharmed. Suspects on noticing Police presence abandoned the victim and

escaped to a nearby forest. The victim has since been reunited with her parents.” (Akwa Ibom State Police Press Release, 12th March 2020).

Most kidnappings involve criminal motives rather than political intentions. There are no recent cases of kidnappers making political demands. Therefore, mediating between kidnappers and the families of victims has developed into an independent business. Mediators charge a transaction fee and allegedly have taken, in some cases, the largest share of the ransom payment by greatly exaggerating kidnappers’ demands. The business of mediation is booming as the number of kidnappings increases and victims’ families and associates continue to remain reluctant in involving the police. More so, there have been a series of raids by the NPF on drug joints in the state.

In February 2020 Operatives of the Anti-Narcotic Section of the NPF raided an illegal drug joint at No. 4 Ekpenyong Close, Off Idoro Road, Uyo where one Christiana Udoudo Akpan ‘f’ of No.4 Ekpenyong close, Uyo and Johnson Ettudo Brownson ‘m’ of Atai Obio Offot, Uyo were arrested. Exhibits recovered are, three (3) 50kg sack bags containing dried weeds suspected to be Indian hemp, a bag of seeds suspected to be Indian hemp, a green PMF beret, PMF uniform, one Police baton, one dagger, one sword, two machetes. (Police Press Release, 12th March 2020).

There is a high rate of the use and abuse of psychoactive substances by youths in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State; this accounts partially for the high incidence of school dropouts and other nefarious activities. The presence of alcohol, Indian hemp, cocaine, and heroin are noted in schools in Uyo and Eket (Abasiubong & Al, 2008). In a study carried out on 10,520 senior secondary school students from 13 public secondary schools in Uyo metropolis, Isreal E. and Nyoho E. (2015) “revealed that illicit drug use has a serious influence on the emotional behaviour of senior secondary students in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.” (52). The results revealed that there is a significant influence of illicit drug use on school violence in secondary schools. In other words, students are prone to various degrees of violence in schools because of the influence of drugs.

In February 2020, Government Technical College in Ewet, a secondary school in the Uyo metropolis was shut down over a cult war that resulted in critical injuries to a Divisional Police Officer in one of the divisions in Uyo. Many teachers and students were also injured. The

Commissioner for Education, Prof. Nse Essien Uyo announced the indefinite closure of the school, citing the unruly behaviour of the students who destroyed school properties and caused injuries to police officers, including a DPO who went to quell the riot and staff of the college. He further explained that:

As I speak, the DPO is in a critical condition in the hospital as a result of injuries sustained in an effort to quell the students' unrest. A member of staff of the college is under surgical operation on his left eye, while another one has also been seriously injured. Several other members of staff and the general public have also sustained varying degrees of injuries. And several windscreens of vehicles have also been smashed as a result of the street fighting which has almost become a trademark of the college. As a responsible government, we cannot sit down, fold our hands and watch, how our schools which are supposed to be citadels of learning is being turned into a den of hooligans. (Effiong J. 2020)

Delinquent acts and lack of achievement of life purposes are some of the hazards associated with substance use and criminal behaviour such as stealing, rape, armed robbery, and murder in Akwa Ibom, which are due to the influence of substance use. The majority of students in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom were below 20 years of age, with a mean age of 16 and 17 years (Abasiubong & Al, 2008). This further corroborates our findings of cultism in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

3.3.6 Child trafficking

According to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2000), child trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of children for exploitation. In Akwa Ibom State, child trafficking has become rampant and most cases are apprehended at the borders linking Akwa Ibom to her neighbor states. There are a series of organized child trafficking syndicates in Akwa Ibom who indulge in child theft and prostitution. Those trafficked are recruited from rural, and to a less extent urban, areas in Akwa Ibom: women and girls for domestic servitude and sex trafficking, and boys for forced labor in street vending, domestic service, mining, stone quarries, and agriculture.

In a research at the University of Nigeria, the majority (82.9 %) of the victims of Traffic in Persons (TIPs) in Akwa Ibom State were females, while the remaining 17.1 % of them were males. The majority (72.2%) of the victims of TIPs were aged 11-20 years. Others were aged 21-30 years (13.9%), 1-10 years (12.2%). And those aged 31-40 years were 1.5 per cent, while those aged 41 years and above were 0.2 per cent. Table 1 further showed that the majority (80.4%) of the victims of TIPs had secondary school education. Others had primary school education (16.6%), OND (0.7%) and NCE (0.5%). Those with no formal education were 1.5 per cent, while 3 per cent of the victims of TIPs did not specify their level of educational attainment. The majority (73.7 %) of the victims of TIPs were found in rural areas, while 26.3 per cent of them were found in urban areas. (Okoro, 2013).

In the Anambra State Police Command Diary of February 2020, there is a report of a rescued ten-year-old girl child suspected to have been stolen from Akwa Ibom state: “On the 21/2/2020, a girl child of about 10 years old reasonably suspected to have been stolen from Akwa Ibom State since 2018 and sold to a couple in Anambra State at the rate of eight hundred thousand naira (N800,000.00) was rescued by Police detectives attached to 33 division, Onitsha following intelligence report” (Anambra State Police Press Release, February 2020).

In May 2020, a medical doctor, a lab scientist, and fifteen other people were uncovered by the Akwa Ibom State Police Command for child trafficking where a five-month-old baby and a four-year-old child were recovered. The suspects were arrested in Itu LGA, Akwa Ibom State, and Calabar, Cross River State

...following a tip-off that one Grace Asuquo Davis ‘F’, the mother of a 5-month-old baby conspired with her sister, one Abigail Asuquo Davis, and sold the said child at the cost of two hundred and fifty thousand naira (N250, 000.00) to one Dr. Victor Onongha. The transaction was perfected through two human trafficking agents, one Clement Edem ‘m’ and Ekaette Okon Akpan ‘F’. The said doctor was arrested and he confessed to the offence, and led the Police to the arrest of one Hope Jonah ‘F’, a lab scientist working at General Hospital, Calabar who bought the child from him. On further interrogation, Hope Jonah ‘F’ confessed to the offence and also led the Police to the Nigerian Army Barracks, Ebrutu, Calabar where one Mrs. Patience Livingstone was arrested and the baby was recovered. Patience Livingstone on her part admitted that her husband Livingstone Orji bought the child at the cost

of six hundred and sixty thousand naira (N660, 000.00) from the lab scientist, Hope Jonah Offor. (Akwa Ibom State Police Press Release, 11th May 2020).

3.4 Conflict Actors and Responses/Interventions

3.4.2 Conflict Actors

Given the nature of the conflicts in the state, the actors are typically community warriors or militias and several development associations in the state. The security agents are also part of the actors and in some cases, they have been alleged to have taken sides in the conflicts with some conflicting parties. Governments at the first and second tiers have also been indirectly involved in some of the conflicts especially when security agents such as the police and soldiers are drawn in. The executive and the legislature are also actors in some conflicts. The major actors of cultism are the youths who converge under socio-political groupings. As declared by the Divisional Police Officer of ITU, “youths are the common actors, however, they are not the only individuals involved in this. In the case of cultism, the young ones are attracted by the big-wigs” (KII/Male/Divisional Police Officer/Itu).

More so, most of these youths are indigenous returnees who have been engaging in cult activities in the big cities neighboring Akwa Ibom State. This group of returnees having been rendered jobless due to bans on motorbikes and other related informal economic activities, come back en-masse to their respective communities in Akwa Ibom. Hence rendered jobless, they resort to criminal activities and cause unrest in their different communities. Specifically, in Ikot Inung, Etim Ekpo L.G.A, Mr. Christopher Ntawara, a community leader, narrates that:

Since 2017, there has been an influx of indigenous migrants from Rivers State who come back to their homes as a result of the ban on motor-bikes to supplant cult groups like Debam, Icelanders, etc. They are more than 300 who have been kidnapping, bullying, and raping people, this has made the villagers to be displaced. (FGD/Male/Etim Ekpo).

In most of the communal crises in the state, the narratives embody deep-seated desire for the affirmation of rights which many parties feel are

trampled upon. For instance, most of the protracted and violent clashes in Akwa Ibom involve local communities of the state with neighboring communities from other states, and in many of these cases, the communities in Akwa Ibom have gone up in arms using local militias based on the conviction that they are pursuing the cause of the community. This has been the prevailing situation in Ikot Offiong, Itu LGA. Therefore, their interests as parties in conflict might include recognition, demand for economic rights, and preference for freedom to choose where they want to belong, as in the case of the Oku-Iboku community in Itu Local Government Area.

3.4.3 Government, Civil and Community Responses/Interventions

Interventions by the state and federal government, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), CBOs have been coming but their impacts on the landscape of conflict and insecurity leave so much to be desired in terms of impacts garnered during the fieldwork. Many of the communities want the government and multinational corporations to show more presence, firmness, and fairness in handling the matter which points to the fact that achieving sustainable peace in Akwa Ibom transcends the presence of military men. The state government seems to have a grasp of the inter-relatedness between poverty, bad governance, and criminality, and how the intersection has been fueling grievances, protests, and banditry in oil-producing communities and conflicts in the state. This has informed the amnesty initiative which many respondents condemn as meant to satisfy certain narrow interests in the state. Some described it as “playing the politics of peace” instead of using it to promote the culture of peace.

The traditional and religious leaders and other stakeholders in the state have been suing for peace and some of them have been victims of the conflict, while some have been misunderstood. Nevertheless, they have sustained their roles in advocating for peace and tolerance by all parties concerned. Nigeria, as a developing country facing diverse challenges, is calling on all stakeholders to contribute towards the achievement of peace.

3.5 Causes of Insecurity in Akwa Ibom State

There has been an increasing rate of criminality and insecurity in Akwa Ibom State since 2007. This can be attributable to several factors including the marginalization of the peoples of the Niger Delta, environmental degradation, bad governance, and inconsistent policy framework, and the divide and rule policy of the oil companies.

3.5.2 Marginalization and Abject Poverty

Some communities in Akwa Ibom have remained grossly socio-economically underdeveloped and pauperized amidst the immense oil wealth owing to systematic disequilibrium in the production exchange relationship between these communities, the transnational oil companies, and the people. Enormous money had been derived from oil exports, but the area has been subjected to severe land degradation, socio-economic disorganization, increasing poverty, misery, and bloody violence. (Pegg, 1999). A typical example of such communities is the Oron nation where there is a total absence of government presence both at the state and federal levels. Marginalization breeds poverty and has led the people to revolt, protest, and indulge in criminal activities in the quest for survival.

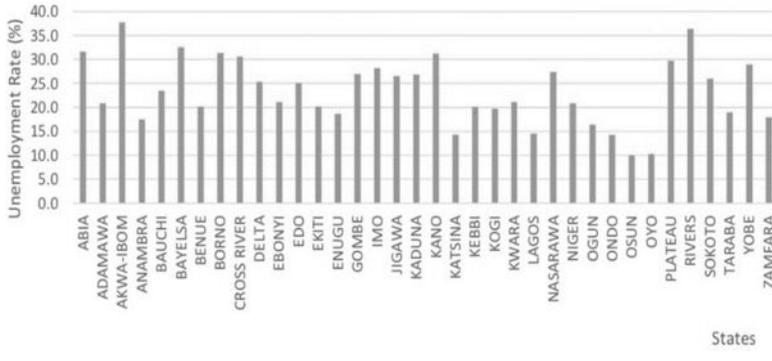
3.5.3 Massive Unemployment

Unemployment is also a root cause that cuts across the entire nine local governments we covered in our fieldwork. The issue of unemployment is a major vector, which is why youths engage overwhelmingly in criminality in Akwa Ibom State. According to a report of the National Bureau of Statistics published in 2019, Akwa Ibom recorded the highest unemployment rate of 37.7 per cent in the third quarter of 2018 (Figure 2).

The National Bureau of Statistics noted that: “in Q3, 2018, the calculated unemployment rate for Akwa Ibom state was 37.7% (37.91% in Q3 2017), the highest unemployment rate in the zone, while the underemployment rate was 20.1%, this represents a 0.20 percentage decrease in the unemployment rate and 1.33 percentage increase in

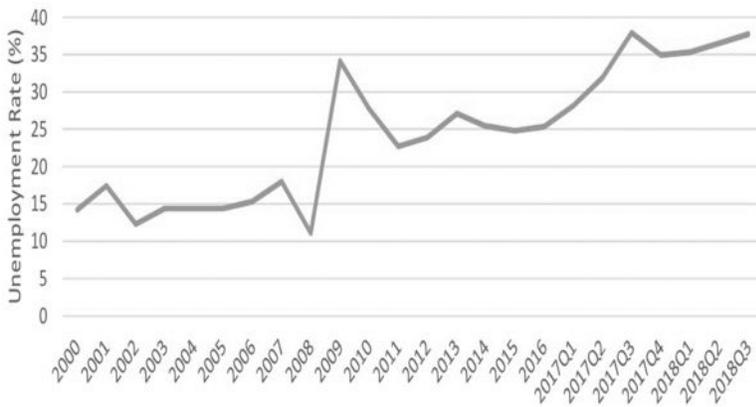
underemployment rate over the corresponding period of the previous year” (NBS Report, 2019).

Figure 2: Unemployment by States in third quarter of 2018



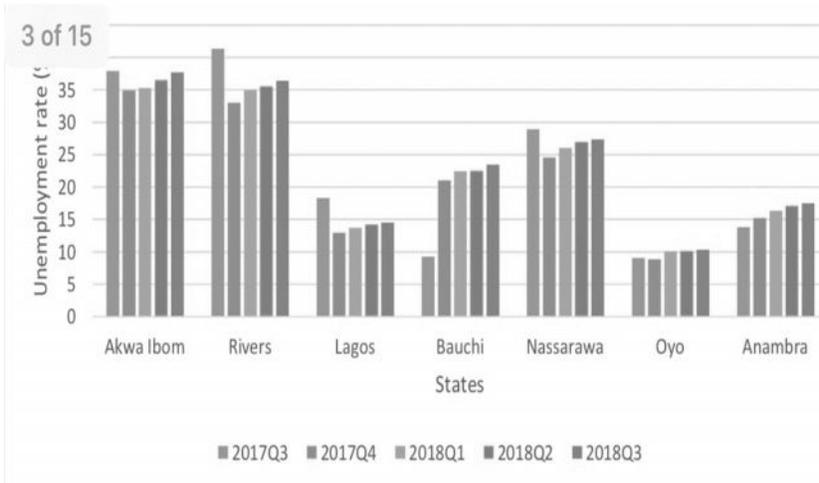
Source: (Effiong, 2019)

Figure 3: Trend of Unemployment in Akwa Ibom State



Source: (Effiong, 2019)

Figure 4: Unemployment by Selected States from 2017Q3 – 2018Q4



Source: (Effiong, 2019)

3.5.4 Lack of Transparent Engagement between the Oil Companies and Host Communities: Corporate Social Responsibility and Corruption

Over the years, the oil-producing companies operating in the Niger Delta have adopted a divide and rule method in which they identify for compensation, people in the host communities they believe can influence the indigenes to ensure that they have a peaceful environment to operate in, at a minimal cost. A minute part of the money that should have been spent on corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the development of the host communities is paid to such individuals and groups. As such, in some communities, traditional rulers and local community leaders have become corrupt as recipients of various contract awards and cash payments to the detriment of the communities they represent. (Kimiebi, 2010).

Where there has been a crisis of leadership in the host communities, the oil-producing companies have tended to support whichever faction they believe had the capability of disrupting its operations “as opposed to groups or factions of properly constituted and traditionally legitimate” (Ikelegbe, 2006). The realization by the youths that violent protests and

disruptive actions elicited immediate actions and payments by the oil companies led to the emergence of several youth groups or militias. These youth groups became more daring in their tactics; and from minor threats of disruption of activities, emerged full-blown militancy activities. This calls for more and novel ways of interrogating the questions of belonging, securing, governing, and managing access to natural resources towards having a more textured understanding of the ramifications, trends, and patterns of the conflict between the oil-producing communities and TNCs as the main source of conflict and insecurity in the state.

4 Conclusion, Findings, and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusion

The issues of insecurity in Akwa Ibom State are multiple, ranging between violent and peaceful protests, sea piracy, cultism, land, and communal disputes, disputes over royalties accrued from mineral deposits/ oil, armed violence such as kidnapping; tussle over the headship of oil and gas peace committee set by communities , environmental disputes over ownership of oil well, projects location/site, among others. The extent of inhumanity, sophisticated weapons, and conflation of interests in the conflict combine to make it a very complex one. This calls for a specific analysis of the trends, patterns, and actors at the micro and macro contexts. As a state with large deposits of crude oil, condensate, and gas, which make it an economic hub of the country, the conflict has dire implications for the economy and security which underscores the need for a broad-based multi-dimensional approach in responding to it. A major consequence of this is the availability of a mass pool of youths who can be easily and spontaneously mobilized for acts inimical to public peace and safety. The massive unemployment situation of these youths further places them in a situation of precarity and proneness to violence either armed or unarmed.

4.2 Findings

There is a serious case of political and infrastructural marginalization of the oil producing communities in Akwa Ibom. If emphasis has been laid in this study on the situation of the Oro nation (Mbo, Urue-

Offong/Oruko, Udung Uko, Okobo, and Oron L.G.As), the same situation is valid for Eastern-Obolo and in some measures Ibeno and Eket L.G.As. There is presently a high scale warning sign of violence and insecurity in the Oro nation if the problem of political and infrastructural marginalization is not addressed as soon as possible.

- The increasing dimensions of insecurity in the state are traced to a lack of collaboration between the traditional rulers, the state government, and the security agencies in Akwa Ibom State. All the paramount rulers, clan heads, and village heads in our field research areas decried the absence of partnership between them and the various security stakeholders in Akwa Ibom State.
- The implementation, aims, and objectives of the State Amnesty Program of October 2018 ought to be fundamentally reviewed. The beneficiaries of the amnesty never relinquished all arms in their possession and having been released to their communities, have become serious threats to the peace and security of the communities in Ukanafun, Etim Ekpo, and Obot Akara L.G.As.
- There is a high rate of indulgence in sea piracy, cultism, armed violence, trafficking of persons amongst the youths in Akwa Ibom State, due to unemployment. As noted by the National Bureau of Statistics, the state of unemployment and underemployment in Akwa Ibom is alarming. This is a major reason for the increase of insecurity in the state.

4.3 Recommendations

- The Federal Government should set up a panel for the implementation of the agreement as contained in the 16-Point Agenda of 2016 in the Oron nation. Oron nation as a matter of urgency should be duly recognized as an oil-producing zone in the country. The Maritime University in Oron should be revamped into a full fledged tertiary institution to accommodate a federal presence. The East-West Road should be completed to connect brothers and sisters within the Oron Nation.

- The question of political and infrastructural marginalization of the Oron nation vis-à-vis the state government should be carefully examined and corrected. The state government should implement the tripod agreement in respect to the alternating political leadership, which was agreed upon by the founding fathers of the democratic era which consists of splitting powers between the three ethnic groups (Ibibio, Annang, and Oron) in the political disposition of the state. The state government should locate at least a campus of one of its tertiary institutions in Oron nation. The White Paper on the communal clash between Eyo-Abasi and Idua communities should be released to ensure peace and stability in those communities.
- The state government and security agencies should dialogue with, and consult, on a continuous and inclusive basis, with all stakeholders at all levels of society on the ways through which the complex conflicts of the Niger Delta can be constructively resolved in a nonviolent manner. Part of the process should involve the empowerment of the traditional leaders, the building of trust, and the adoption of an integrated approach of engagement with militants to reach a sustainable agreement on cessation of violence and kidnappings.
- Oil companies should review their corporate social responsibility programmes along the lines of encouraging integrated and sustainable local/community development initiatives, demonstrating respect for host communities' rights, and terminating approaches that fuel intra and inter-community violence.
- Skill acquisition centers should be built or the existing centers should be revived in each of the senatorial districts for the training and enhancement of skilled workers in the bid to bend the current curve of unemployment in the state.
- There should be increased dialogue and synergy between the State Government, Security Agencies and Traditional Rulers on issues of insecurity in Akwa Ibom State. To this end structures that empower and hold the Traditional Rulers accountable for conflict management and peace in their communities should be established.

- An expert group should be empaneled to revisit its structure, strategy and mandate of the State Amnesty programme. A proper programme of disarmament and de-radicalization should be implemented for the repentant militants, with efforts to stem further proliferation of militants and cults.
- The Akwa Ibom State Government should urgently look into the problem of Women, children and people living with disabilities (PLWD) that are significantly affected by violence and forced prostitution and sundry exploitation in the State.
- There is an urgent need for a new culture of respect for and obedience to the law needs to be instituted to counter a culture of lawlessness and impunity. To this end, credible and positive examples of rule of law need to be set by the State Government and its agencies followed by dedicated enforcement of existing laws. For example, known cultists should henceforth not be appointed into positions of authority by the State Government.
- The State Government should create a Ministry for Peace Building and Conflict Management. This Ministry should work with Traditional Rulers, local institutions, including the Local Governments to monitor and address conflict issues before they escalate. This ministry will also serve the purpose of strategic communication and help restore trust between the government and the people if its leadership is appointed from the Civil society and Non-Governmental Organizations sector as it will involve both state and non-state actors in the promotion of security in the state.
- There is dire need to create the Oil Mineral Areas Development Commission in Akwa Ibom State. This will help reduce tension and restore the infrastructure deficit in the oil producing communities of the State. the commission should also oversee corporate social responsibility (CSR) concerns between oil producing or host communities and oil multinational companies.

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CHAPTER TWO

Insecurity in Bayelsa State: The Issues, Actors and Solutions

Jackson T.C.B Jack and Coronation Edward Tokpo

Executive Summary

Nigeria's South-South geo-political zone is the country's oil belt. The Niger Delta has been enmeshed in a paradox. There is massive unemployment, extreme poverty, deprivation, backwardness, poor infrastructure, environmental degradation, and general underdevelopment, despite the huge oil and gas resources generated from its environment over the last 63 years. Consequently, the region has been a hotbed of unrest with the attendant adverse effects on the socio-economic and political stability of the region.

The Niger Delta region has experienced different forms of armed conflicts and violence. Contests over state politics, inter and intra – communal disputes, the battle for supremacy by various cult gangs, sea piracy, armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom, and electoral violence have led to violence that undermines peace and security in the area. The peak of the conflict was characterised by confrontations between federal troops and armed militants who fought at least on the face value for increased oil revenues to sub-national states in the Niger Delta region. With the 2009 declaration of amnesty by the federal government and ceasefire by the militants, peace returned to the region until 2016 when there was a relapse to violent conflicts. Militant groups, principally the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), targeted oil infrastructure in the region bringing oil production from over two million barrels to about 1.6 million barrels per day.

Part of the negotiations between the Nigerian government and stakeholders in the Niger Delta was facilitated by a group of civil society actors who, with funding from the European Union, organized a **Niger Delta Dialogue (NDD)**, which brought together fifty key leaders from across the region to dialogue with government officials. At that meeting,

it was agreed that it is necessary to have continuous dialogue on various issues of the Niger Delta region to study issues in-depth and to use these insights to influence legislation and policy actions. Pursuant to its objectives, Academic Associate Peaceworks (AA Peaceworks), Conveners of the Niger Delta Dialogue, recruited experts to conduct an analysis of insecurity in the six South-South states of (Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers) to research and interrogate the current and emerging insecurity dynamics in the region.

The research was organized by the Niger Delta Dialogue (NDD) and funded by the European Union (EU) to explore current and emerging contexts and dynamics of insecurity and conflicts in Bayelsa State, especially in the post amnesty era, identify the key actors in the state, explore the interactions between actors and context and provide policy guidance in addressing the issues of insecurity in the state.

This report is a product of the original primary data collected in 2020 which was complemented by data from existing empirical and theoretical literature. Eleven (11) focus group discussions (FGDs) and thirty (30) key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with various stakeholders and actors. It highlights containment and mitigation measures to the insecurity issues in the state, such as cultism, sea piracy, kidnapping for ransom, electoral violence, oil theft, illegal and artisanal oil refining, drug abuse, attacks on security outposts and checkpoints, communal disputes, boundary disputes, and rape. Recommendations are made, amongst others, for the government to change the faulty reward system that favours conflict actors to rewarding and engaging with peaceful, law-abiding and hardworking youths, for Civil society organizations to train communities and youths on early warning systems, and the international community to provide technical support and platforms for the application of technology in fighting insecurity and drug abuse in Bayelsa State.

1. Introduction

Bayelsa State, due to its huge contributions to the nation's oil and gas economy, is of strategic importance to the Nigerian state. Despite being prided as the state where oil was first struck in commercial quantities in Nigeria, Bayelsa state, much like the rest of the Delta, typifies backwardness, extreme poverty, deprivation, unemployment, poor infrastructure, and despair. This situation has been described as the Niger

Delta question (UNDP, 2006 p.9), the Niger Delta dilemma or the paradox of lack amid plenty. The situation in Bayelsa State and the Niger Delta generally was aptly captured by Ibaba, (2008) who described it thus:

Oil has meant for the indigenes of the Niger Delta, wrenching poverty...Peoples Rights have come under severe assault by the ecologically unfriendly practices of oil Transnational Corporations (TNCs). Also, state laws and policies as they relate to petroleum resources, expropriate the indigenous peoples of the Niger Delta of their 'right' to their natural resources... (Ibaba, 2008/2 p. 3).

Over the last two decades, the region has been a hotbed of unrest, insecurity, and conflicts that have negatively affected the State, with the attendant adverse effects on the socio-economic and political stability of the region. In 2009, amnesty was granted to armed agitators by President Umaru Musa Yar'adua in a bid to end hostilities in the region. This led to the subsequent declaration of ceasefire by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and other militant groups in the region. The proclamation of amnesty and the subsequent declaration of ceasefire improved the security situation as it pertains to oil industry infrastructure. However, the issues of insecurity and conflict as it affects the broader society were left unaddressed. Instead, such issues were transformed into a complex network of violence that continues to undermine the peace and security of ordinary people in communities and cities across the Niger Delta.

Bayelsa State is a typical case of the precarious security situation in today's Niger Delta. This precarious security situation is an outcome of the economic and environmental insecurity induced armed militancy that characterized Bayelsa State and the Niger Delta region. Armed militancy did not occur in isolation from other forms of violence and conflicts in the region (Ebiede, 2017). Rather, it fed into or has contributed to other forms of violence, insecurity, and crimes such as inter or intra-communal conflicts, inter-ethnic conflicts, electoral violence, oil theft and illegal refining, sea piracy, armed robbery, cultism, and drug trafficking (Ebiede, 2017). In most cases, the different types of violence and conflict in Bayelsa State share common actors.

While the current insecurity situation in the state cannot be divorced or dissociated from the larger issues of environmental injustice,

environmental pollution which has denied people their traditional means of livelihoods, and issues of general neglect and poor resource governance, the focus of this research, however, is on post amnesty insecurity dynamics in the state. Given the above, prevailing analysis and narratives of various conflict situations so far have shown that contestations for power or contestations over land, poor governance, corruption, and unemployment are catalysts or complex drivers of conflicts and insecurity in the Niger Delta (Ebiede 2017). Yet, there is still a shortage of knowledge concerning the forms in which insecurity manifests, and the existing complex webs of interactions between the actors, drivers, and the context. This study, hence, seeks to address these gaps by seeking to provide insight into the dynamics of insecurity in Bayelsa State.

The report is structured into eight sections with the first section providing an introduction and background to the study, the second section builds the context to insecurity in Bayelsa State and review of related literature. While section three focuses on the theoretical framework adopted in the study, section four presents the research methods, section five beams the searchlight on data presentation and analysis, and section six looks at the summary of the research findings. Lastly, section seven focuses on the conclusions while section eight tables some policy recommendations and solutions to the insecurity issues identified by the study.

Objectives of the Study

The study was set to achieve the following objectives:

1. Explore the current context and dynamics of security in Bayelsa State
2. Identify key actors in the insecurity landscape in Bayelsa State
3. Explore the interactions between actors and context
4. Provide policy guidance in addressing the issues of insecurity in Bayelsa State

Key Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do security dynamics manifest in cities and communities in Bayelsa State?
2. What types of actors are prevalent in the security landscape in Bayelsa State?
3. What is the nature of the interactions between actors and the security context in Bayelsa State?
4. What policy guidance best addresses drivers of conflicts, insecurity, and violence in Bayelsa State?

2. The Context

2.1 The Political Context

Bayelsa State was created in 1996 by the late Head of State, Gen. Sani Abacha. It has eight local government areas namely; Brass, Ekeremor, Kolokuma/Opokuma, Nembe, Ogbia, Sagbama, Southern Ijaw, and Yenagoa local government; 24 state constituencies, 105 electoral wards or registration areas, five federal constituencies, and three Senatorial Districts. The political landscape in the state has been dominated by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) which has been producing the governors, deputy governors, and local government chairmen and councilors in the state since 1999. The PDP has also been producing at least 80-85% of members elected into the State House of Assembly, and the National Assembly, except for the 2019 National Assembly elections in which the party produced two out of the three Senate seats, and three out of the five seats allotted to the state in the House of Representatives. The All Progressives Congress (APC) has been in strong competition with the PDP since 2015, winning the governorship election in the state on the ballot in 2019 but was disqualified by the Supreme Court in 2020 based on discrepancies in the names of the deputy gubernatorial candidate. The politics of the state has largely been characterized by violence in some local government areas, notably Nembe, Southern Ijaw, and Brass. The state has also produced the president of the country and several key positions at the national level.

2.2 Geography

Bayelsa State is geographically located within latitude 4.664030, and the longitude is 6.036987. The GPS coordinates of 4° 39' 50.5080" N and 6° 2'13.1532" E.(<https://www.latlong.net/place/bayelsa-nigeria-10527.html>). It shares common boundaries with Delta State on the north; Rivers State in the east; and the Atlantic Ocean on the west and south. The brackish water swamp forests, freshwater swamp forests, and the Ripmian forests characterize the vegetation of the state. The mangrove forests of Bayelsa State occupy the brackish and marine river systems of St. Nicholas, Brass, Sangana, Fish Town, Pennington, Ramos, Forcados, and Santa Barbara rivers (Okali, 1979 p. 4). The land area of Bayelsa State describes the geometric shape of a triangle with its apex in the area north-east of the bifurcation of the River Niger into the Forcados and the Nun River systems in Sagbama Local Government Area (Oyegun, cited in Alagoa, 1999 p.31).

The north- western limit of the state is at the estuary of the Ramos River, a distributary of the Forcados River, while the south-eastern margin of the state is at the mouth of the Santa Barbara River in the environ of Kula. This whole delimitation covers nearly 12, 000 Km², with over 185 km of coastline which describes the arc of the Niger Delta (Alagoa, 1999).

The weather condition in the state is brought about by the moist tropical maritime air mass and the dry dust-laden tropical continental air mass. The former is prevalent during the rainy season and blows from the Atlantic, while the latter originates from the high-pressure belt of the Sahara Desert and blows over the state in the dry season (Alagoa, 1999 p.46). Further inland with a rise in the level of the land, there are extensive freshwater swamps, characterized by trees such as raffia palm, oil palm, wild mango (Ogbonor), etc. Citing Nyanayo, Alagoa, (1999) noted; “characteristic of the vegetation of Bayelsa State are tree species such as African Breadfruit, Iroko, Silk Cotton, Mahogany, Abura, etc, and serves as home to the African Grey Parrot and the clawless other” (Alagoa, 1999 p. 46).

2.3 The Socio-Cultural Context

Bayelsa State has a vibrant socio-cultural life that is derived from its shared customs and traditions. This is mostly portrayed in the rites of

passage and ceremonies such as marriages, burials, traditional wrestling games, festivals, dance, arts, etc. There are three language groups in the state, namely: Nembe - Akaha comprising the dialects of Nembe and Akassa. The Izon language comprising 19 dialects namely Bomo, Tarakiri, Oporomo, Olodiama, Bassan, Apoi, Ogboin, Epketiama, Gbarain, Kolokuma, Iduwini, and the Inland Izon, comprising Biseni, Okordia, and Oruma. There is also the Edoid group spoken by six communities in Sagbama, the Epie Atissa, and Zarama. Finally, there is the central Delta group spoken by the Ogbias (Alagoa, 1999).

Languages of Bayelsa State listed by LGA:

LGA	Language (s)
Brass	Abureni; Southeast Ijo; Ogbia; Kugbo
Ekeremor	Izon
Kolokuma/Opokuma	Izon
Nembe	Abureni; Southeast Ijo
Ogbia	Abureni; Southeast Ijo; Odual; Ogbia; Oruma
Sagbama	Biseni; Isoko; Izon; Ogbah; Okodia; Urhobo
Southern Ijaw	Southeast Ijo; Izon
Yenagoa	Engenni; Epie; Izon; Ekpeye

Source: Nigeria. Ethnologue.

The above classifications notwithstanding, some communities in Sagbama Local Government Area share a common linguistic and cultural affinity with the Urhobo and Isoko people of Delta State. Some Isoko and Urhobo communities are located adjacent or opposite Ijaw communities of area. It is pertinent to note that in Sagbama constituency 3, communities such as Aboitor, Osekweneke, Osifo, Obokirigbene all speak Isoko language, while in constituency 1, Anibeze and Ofoni are Urhobo communities in Sagabama LGA of Bayelsa State. Ofoni community which is the community of the present Deputy Governor of Bayelsa State, Lawrence Ewhrudjakpo is in the Tarakiri clan of Sagabama LGA but dominated by the Urhobos, and they predominantly speak the Urhobo language.

Also, the emergence of significant numbers of non-indigenes in various communities such as Yenagoa, Amassoma, Olugbobiri, Nembe –

Bassambiri and Ogbolomabiri, Otuan, and Kaiama with their peculiar socio-cultural activities, combined with the mixture of various language and tribal groups have altered the appellation of Bayelsa State as a homogenous Ijaw State. Bayelsa State can, therefore, best be described as a multi-cultural society.

2.4 The Economic Context

The local economy of Bayelsa State is mainly in subsistence agricultural production and petty trading. The majority of the population, mostly based in rural areas, are farmers. Mixed cropping and sole cropping are the predominant farming systems, and crops like cassava, different species of yam, cocoyam, sugarcane, potato, groundnut, vegetables; okra, pepper, pumpkin, and garden egg, etc. are produced for subsistence and in some cases in commercial quantities. Palm oil and fibre production, fish farming, small scale livestock farming, palm wine tapping, lumbering, and canoe-carving are common occupations.

According to Alagoa, (1999), over 30 percent of the population is engaged in fishing for subsistence. The many lakes, ponds, and swamps serve the people in this regard. In terms of trade, a small proportion of the population engages in and it covers mostly trade in agricultural products (Alagoa, 1999). The people are blessed with agricultural and mineral resources. Agriculture is largely at the subsistence level, with few farmers farming at commercial levels.

However, the state also has huge crude oil and gas resources, with exploration activities operated by multinationals such as Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), the Nigeria Agip Oil Company (NAOC), Chevron Nigeria Ltd. Aiteo, Connoil, First E&P, etc. The state government depends heavily on funds from oil revenues. Due to its status as an oil-producing area, Bayelsa State benefits from a 13% share of proceeds derived from oil exploitation in the area, giving it an income edge over most other states in the federation. Other sources of revenue in the state include statutory allocations, excess crude windfalls, and ecological funds. Despite the great resource potentials, internally generated revenue (IGR) has been the least viable in the state resource base. In 2007, internally generated revenue accounted for only 1% of the state's revenue (Budget analysis brief Bayelsa state , 2009). In 2008 it was 7.5% and projected to be 12% in 2009 (Budget analysis brief Bayelsa state , 2009). This indicates that the state depends largely on transfers

from the federation account. In 2019, Bayelsa State received #140,129,363,936.74 billion naira as revenue from the Federation Accounts Allocation Committee (FAAC), while IGR stood at #16,342,762,531.98 in the same period. More so, unemployment in the state stood at 32.6 per cent, while underemployment stood at 17.2 per cent in the 3rd quarter out of the total labour force of 1,362,014 in quarter 3 of 2018 (NBS, 2018).

2.5 Demographics

According to official figures from the 2006 National Population Commission (NPC) Census, Bayelsa State had a population of 1,704, 515 people and projected a population of 2,278,000 by 2016, and fertility rate stands at 4.8% in 2016/17 (NPC, 2006). The gender configuration of the population in 2006 was: males 874,083, females 830,432 (NPC, 2006).

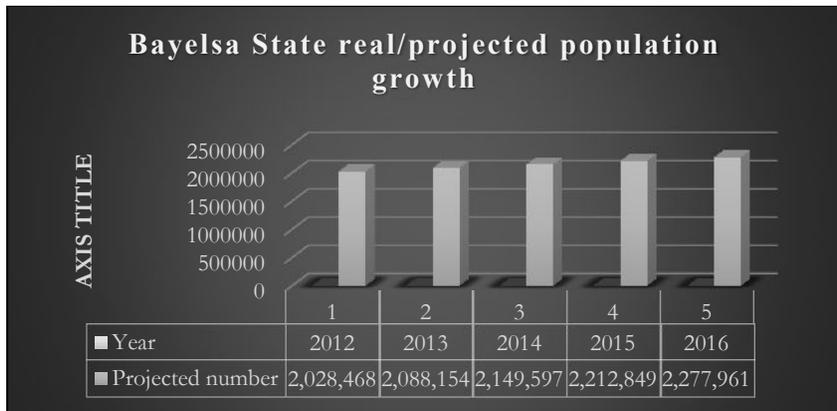


Figure 1: Bayelsa State population projections 2012-2016

Source: Compiled by Authors based on NPC Figures

Figure 1: Bayelsa State population projections 2012-2016

Source: Compiled by Authors based on NPC Figures

i. The Place of Youth

Youth in Bayelsa State play active roles in the community, in social groups, and politics, but less so in the formal economy of the state. Local and state-level politics is powered by youths who constitute a decisive

majority in the state. There are however limited opportunities for social transition and transformation to the ruling class which is dominated by older men above 50 years. At local government and to a lesser degree, at the state level, youths occupy elective and appointive positions but are usually in the minority in the State Executive Council. From figure 2 below, it can be deduced that more than 80% of the population are young people between the ages of 0-39, about 14% falls within the middle age category at 40-59 years, and only 5% are old people above 60 years. Also, available data reveal that youths in Bayelsa State have an 88.8% literacy rate, while middle-aged and older adults have a literacy rate of 77% (NBS Annual Statistical Bulletin, 2018).

The umbrella youth group in the state is the Ijaw Youths Council (IYC). The IYC and student organizations such as the National Union of Bayelsa State Students (NUBSS), the National Union of Izon-Ibe Students (NUIS), and various local government-specific student associations and socio-cultural groups serve as channels or platforms for youth participation in politics and cultural affairs.

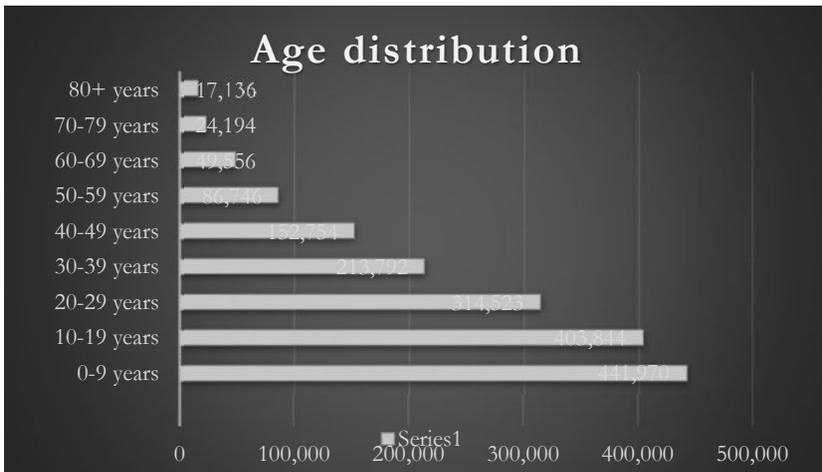


Figure 2: Age Distribution of Bayelsa Population
Source: Compiled by Authors based on NPC Figures

Beyond these organizations, there are several youth groups at community or clan levels. Unlike other ethnic groups, the Ijaw culture does not have specific rites of passage or initiation into adulthood except circumcision. Female circumcision has now been phased out following decades of advocacy and state legislation that made it illegal.

ii. Women and Gender Issues

Women in Bayelsa State occupy prominent positions in the social and family circles. There are no known cultural impediments to women's social growth. Women are free to attain education to any level, participate in family and village meetings, and are appointed chiefs in some communities. The appointment of women chiefs is common practice in the Ijaw, Epie-Atissa speaking enclaves of Bayelsa State, but not in the Nembe and Ogbia areas. Women are breadwinners in many families. Families with female breadwinners are more common in rural areas where women engage in farming and fishing as a means of livelihood. Women form and run social organizations, local cooperative or thrift societies, and save money for the upkeep of their children. The predominant socio-cultural practices in Bayelsa provide for the right of women to inherit property from their father's estate. In cases where she is married to a man from a different community than hers, women have the right to claim membership of both communities. For example, women can contest elections to represent their community of origin or the community of their husbands. Men do not enjoy such privileges as they can only contest from one side, not both. Though women are expected to submit to male authority, they are regarded as the conscience of the Ijaw society.

iii. Human Development

The 2009 "Poverty Baseline Survey" in Bayelsa state, embarked upon by the Micro-finance Administration and Credit organization indicates that poverty is pervasive despite the massive petro-dollars that have accrued to the state since 1996. The poverty headcount in the state in 2019 stood at 32.6% compared to the national headcount of 40.09% (NBS, 2019 pp. 13-22).

The unemployment rate currently stands at 22.61% of the population. The state civil service is the major employer of labour, and the majority of those engaged in the services of the state are in the junior cadre which places them in the low-income category. The majority of the self-employed people are low-income earners as over 60 percent of them earn less than ₦30,000 (thirty thousand naira) or \$85 monthly based on the 2020 dollar – naira exchange rates. Over 80% of the self-

employed, fund their businesses with personal savings, thus, low-income limits investments as the propensity to save is low (Bayelsa State Poverty Baseline Survey Report, 2009).

The literacy level in Bayelsa State is above 80%; this is significantly high when compared to other states in the country (Bayelsa State Poverty Baseline Survey Report, 2009). Some of the tertiary institutions in the state are the Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island; Federal University, Otuoke; the University of Africa, Toru-Orua; Federal Polytechnic, Ekowe; University of Health; the Bayelsa State College of Education; Bayelsa State College of Arts and Science; The College of Medicine, Otuogidi; the state institute of Tourism, etc. There are primary and secondary schools in all major communities and some satellite communities in the state. These institutions contribute largely to the training of young people and have presented lots of underprivileged families the opportunity to train their children.

Healthcare is in deplorable condition in the state, especially in rural communities. The frequency and intensity of common sicknesses are ranked as follows - malaria, typhoid fever, headaches, measles, cholera, dysentery, stroke, rheumatism, etc. (Bayelsa State Poverty Baseline Survey Report, 2009). Several factors influence the poor health condition in the state. They include an inadequate number of healthcare centres and hospitals, inadequate medical personnel, unavailability of drugs and medical equipment; and lack of funds to access medical services. The absence of health facilities also explains the large number and patronage of traditional birth attendants (Bayelsa State Poverty Baseline Survey Report, 2009). Also, a lack of vision by successive administrations can be responsible for the poor healthcare situation.

The majority of the rural dwellers live in single houses. These buildings are mainly made of mud, thatches, and iron sheets thereby endangering life. Households are congested and lack basic amenities such as potable drinking water, electricity, and toilets. The main source of water is the rivers, creeks, and lakes which also serve as dumping grounds for domestic and human waste. This may explain the prevalence of typhoid fever, cholera, and other water-borne diseases. The situation in urban areas such as Yenagoa, the state capital, is no better as housing remains one of the major difficulties experienced by low-income residents.

2.4 Insecurity in Bayelsa State – Trends and Dynamics

Insecurity and violence have become part of every day realities across different towns and villages in Bayelsa State. The state has also experienced conflict transformation over the years. This section reviews the extant literature on the dynamics, dimensions, and emerging issues of insecurity and conflicts in Bayelsa State.

Bayelsa State is characterized by various insecurity issues, ranging from militancy, cultism, sea robbery, kidnapping, oil theft, and artisanal refining, inter and intra-communal conflicts, electoral violence, rape, land and boundary disputes.

One of the most common insecurity issues in Bayelsa State is cultism and cult-related violence. Scholarship on cultism and cult-related violence that is specific to Bayelsa State is scanty. In Nigeria, cultism started as confraternities formed in the 1950s in the University of Ibadan which later spilled over to other university campuses. The Pyrates Confraternity (National Association of Sea Dogs) was formed to, amongst others, give members networking opportunities (Asuni, 2009, p. 8). According to Rotimi, (2005), cited in Azibasuum, Igomu, and Uqwoke, (2018), the Pyrates Confraternity aimed at producing future Nigerian leaders who would be very proud of their African heritage. It also wanted to revive the age of chivalry as it boasted of the cleanest, the brightest, and the most politically conscious among the students. Other aims and objectives of the confraternity were: (i) to fight non-violently but intellectually and effectively, against the imposition of foreign conventions, to revive the age of chivalry, (ii) to find a lasting solution to the problems of tribalism and elitism. Professor Wole Soyinka was the first democratically elected “captain” of the society with the name, Captain Blood (Epkenyong, 2010 p. 123)

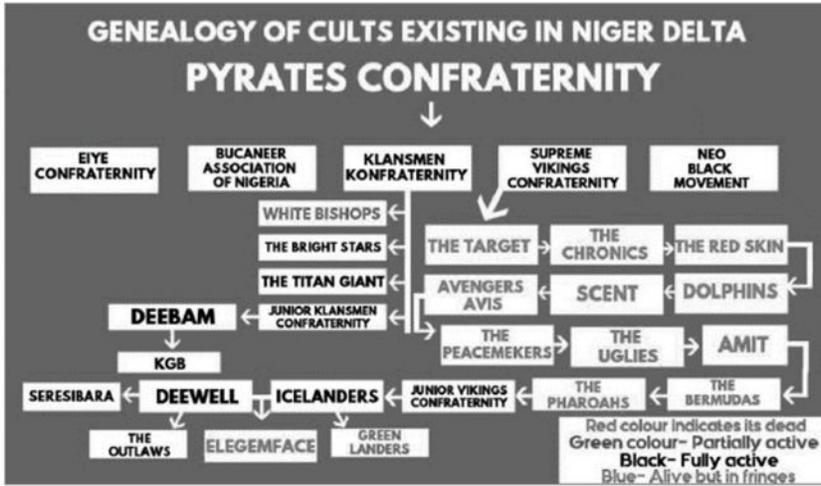


Figure 3: Genealogy of Cult Gangs in the Niger Delta

Various confraternities emerged and spread to university campuses in the 1970s and 80s. The rivalry between and among these confraternities later spilled to the streets where street cults such as the Deywell, Icelandos, now called Icelanders or Germans and now Greenlanders, Deybam, Bobos, and so on were established as street arms of campus confraternities (see figure 3). Cults are rigidly hierarchical. All cults have secret initiation ceremonies, which include oath-taking, beatings, to killing (Osaghae, Ikelegbe, Olarinmoye, & Okhomina, 2008 p. 36). Some are pro-state or pro-government; some are anti-state, while others have no clear political objectives.

The formation of cult groups in Bayelsa State followed the formation and spread of cult groups in Rivers State. The cult groups in Bayelsa State, therefore, emerged from the cult groups in Rivers State. Even though cult groups in Bayelsa State came in from Rivers State, they have since transformed and taken new dimensions and structures in Bayelsa State, and this is further explained in the empirical findings of this study. Cultism remains the most pervasive throughout the state.

Another nagging insecurity issue that has so far defied solutions in the state is sea piracy. Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea has become a major security challenge, with a significant number of pirates originating from Nigeria (Onouha 2010; Essien and Adongai 2015). The increasing menace of piracy and armed robbery on the country's territorial waters, particularly in Bayelsa waterways, is detrimental to the local economy of

the country and the state (Essien & Adongoi, 2015 p. 215). According to Essien and Adongoi (2015), Nigeria loses about \$26.3 billion annually to sea piracy and sea robbery. In their study, Adongoi, Otodo, and Azibasuum (2019) found that sea robbery or sea piracy is prevalent in the rivers and creeks connecting Ogbia and Nembe local government areas and along the River Nun and other rivers and creeks in Southern Ijaw local government areas of Bayelsa State. They described the acts of sea piracy to include the carting away of goods belonging to traders, kidnap of victims, and carting away of outboard engine boats. They noted that sea pirates operate with double 200HP or 250HP (Horse Powered) fast running outboard engine boats, and they use informants to give them information before they set out for operations. The use of 200HP speed boats for sea piracy and kidnapping informed government policy action in 2017 targeting 200HP fast running boats, banning them from commercial ferry operations in the creeks. However, the outcry from boat operators and the Maritime Workers Union in Bayelsa State, stating that the ban on 200HP commercial boats would only make them more vulnerable to sea pirate attacks because the pirates do not obey government laws, caused the state government to relax the ban.

Closely following sea piracy or robbery is kidnapping and ransom taking. Kidnap/ransom is one of the criminal legacies of armed militancy in the Niger Delta (Okoli & Agada, 2014 p. 139). During the period of armed militancy, expatriates working for international oil companies (IOCs) were the main targets. Funds derived from kidnapping were used to procure arms, and ammunition, and sustain the lifestyle of militant leaders and their followers. However, it should be noted that kidnapping was not for economic purposes alone during the armed struggle. It was also used to achieve political ends. For instance, Asuni (2009, p. 20) noted that “while militants like Farah and Boyloaf kidnapped purely for money, Western MEND used hostage-taking, at least in part, to maintain pressure on President Obasanjo to release Asari Dokubo and Chief DSP Alamieyeseigha.”

Following the enactment and implementation of the Presidential Amnesty Programme in 2009, Bayelsa State has witnessed a different dimension of kidnapping for ransom. This new dimension has made everyone, especially those from rich families, their potential targets. During militancy, kidnapping, and hostage-taking mainly targeted oil company workers, majorly white expatriates. Post amnesty kidnapping

targets both whites, and blacks and not necessarily oil company workers. Kidnappers now target close family members of politicians, top businessmen and women, the clergy, and traditional rulers. Several prominent persons have died in the hands of kidnappers, others a paid ransom to regain their freedom.

While kidnapping civilians for monetary purposes holds sway in Bayelsa State, another insecurity issue that is prevalent in the state in recent years is armed attacks on police and military outposts and checkpoints. Though these attacks are more common in the hinterlands, there have also been attacks in the Yenagoa metropolis, sometimes as reprisals in retaliation for military or police brutality, or to collect firearms from them. According to Eziukwu (2015), an attack by sea pirates on a Joint Task Force base in Nembe on July 31, 2015, left four military personnel and a policeman dead along the waterways in Nembe community. Similarly, Akasike and Utebor, (2016) reported that on Tuesday, May 11, 2016, three soldiers attached to the Military Joint Task Force in the Niger Delta, (Operation Pulo Shield) were attacked and killed by suspected militants at Foropa in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. They noted that the gunmen, who operated in a speedboat, overran a military outpost at Foropa and shot three soldiers dead.

Again, in what appears to be a resumption of violent activities in the Niger Delta following the emergence of the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), militants attacked and killed four soldiers and a civilian in the Ekeremor waterways in Bayelsa State on Monday, 28 August 2017. Most recently, Abisoye, (2020) reporting for Sahara Reporters, also noted that some armed militants laid ambush on the soldiers along the waterways of Letugbene in Ekeremor local government area of Bayelsa State. The soldiers and their civilian boat driver were killed during the attack. The military carried out reprisal attacks on the community and burnt down houses and other properties belonging to the people of the community. Similarly, on Sunday, February 16, 2020, Nigerian troops were again ambushed by unknown gunmen, and four soldiers were killed “while carrying out their routine duty within its area of responsibility”. This prompted the Commander, Operation Delta Safe along with the Commander, 16 Brigade and Commander, Sector 2 of the Nigerian Army in Bayelsa state to pay a visit to Letugene, Beneside, Ogbotobo, and Tunu. Bilabiri community also came under military raids in

retaliation for the killing of military personnel along the creeks of Ekeremor local government area (Osahon, 2020).

The Police have also been targeted in various attacks. According to Utebor (2017), some gunmen attacked a police checkpoint in Kolo town, Ogbia Local Government Area, killing a sergeant and stealing arms and ammunition on May 4, 2017. Gunmen also attacked a police checkpoint in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, injuring a Sergeant and snatching two AK47 rifles ahead of the rescheduled 2019 general elections (The Nation Newspaper, 2019). On March 16, 2019, two policemen were killed by gunmen who attacked Udem Hotel along Alamiyeseigha Road, Opolo, Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. Osahon (2019) reported that the gunmen shot sporadically at the two policemen on guard at the hotel, leading to the death of one of the officers, and carted away their rifles. In another incident at Amarata, a suburb of Yenagoa, armed robbers also stormed a popular supermarket around 7 pm on the same day and killed the policemen on guard (Osahon, 2019).

Another dimension of insecurity in Bayelsa State is electoral and election violence which has characterized every election cycle. Election periods have become periods of apprehension, tension, and overt violence (Yoroms, 2019 p. 40). Specifically, the electoral politics and contestation for power in Bayelsa State have been characterized by violence and destruction or the hijacking of voting materials by thugs and few instances of arson. According to the KIMPACT Development Initiative (2019, p. 6), the types of electoral violence ranges from inter-cult gang clashes, disruption of campaigns, killings, arson, inter-party clashes before, during, and after elections. Ex – militants also play vital roles in promoting violence. They are often used by politicians to cause violence and rig elections for their preferred candidate (s).

The Partnership Initiative in the Niger Delta (PIND) reported that the 2011 and 2015 elections in Bayelsa State were largely characterized by political tensions and violence (PIND, 2018). They noted that cult groups were actively involved as entrepreneurs of violence during the 2011 and 2015 federal and gubernatorial elections. While their connection to political parties could not be explicitly established, clashes between rival cult groups and gangs in supremacy battles underscore the character of these sinister groups in fueling violence and undermining stability by utilizing networks and group affiliations during elections.

Drawing from the foregoing, while the existing literature reviewed so far has highlighted the existing trends of insecurity in Bayelsa State, these studies were time-bound and limited to the periods when they were carried out. This, therefore, informs the need to provide new evidence on the current state of insecurity in Bayelsa, as the issues, actors, and drivers of insecurity have changed over the years. This report, hence, is an effort to document the current trends, contexts, and dynamics in the insecurity landscape of Bayelsa State to highlight the common trends across various local government areas and identify context-specific ones.

3. Theoretical Framework – Human Security Approach

Ever since the connection between peace, security, and human development became glaring to scholars, world governments, and international non-governmental organizations, the concept of security has been constructed and reconstructed to take a more human face. This paradigm shift saw the concept of security move from the traditional state-centered, militaristic notion of national or territorial security to a people-centered and individual-oriented approach to human security. The human security approach introduced in the 1994 global Human Development Report (HDR) broadened the scope of security beyond the narrow definitions of territorial protection of nation-states from external aggression to encompass widespread and cross-cutting challenges to survival, livelihoods, and dignity of people across the world. This new perspective to security that hinged on the human rights approach broadens the concept of security to incorporate issues such as the ‘freedom from want’, ‘freedom from fear’, and ‘freedom to live in dignity’. Central to the human security approach, hence, is the idea that people have ‘the right to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair... with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential (United Nations, 2012).

The concept of human security as developed and defined by the United Nations Development Programme (1994) refers to safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease, and repression and protection from sudden and harmful disruptions in the patterns of daily life - whether in homes, in jobs or communities. Similarly, the Commission on Human Security (CHS, 2003) asserts that human security in its broadest sense embraces far more than the absence of violent conflict. It encompasses human rights, good governance, access to education and

health care, and ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfill his or her potential. The human security paradigm is hence anchored on the principles of people-centeredness and multi-sectoral understanding and analysis of insecurities. I because of these principles that the UNDP in its 1994 Human Development Report (HDR) also identified seven dimensions of human security to include the totality of economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security. The human security approach underscores the interconnectedness of threats and responses to threats by recognizing that all threats are interlinked. For example, violent conflicts may lead to deprivation and poverty which in turn may trigger resource depletion, infectious diseases, and education deficits.



Figure 4: Human Security Approach

Source: United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2010)

Drawing from the foregoing, the human security approach is adopted as the theoretical and analytical framework for this study. The choice of this approach is because it provides the analytical perspectives and tools for a people-centered, comprehensive, and context-specific analysis of all dimensions of security.

4. Research Methodology

This section discusses the methods and procedures guiding the conduct of the research and techniques adopted for data collection and analysis.

4.1 Research Design

The study was anchored on a participatory qualitative research design. It involved a process of exploring, and providing an understanding of the issues and dynamics of insecurity in the research area from the lived experiences of the research subjects.

4.2 Sampling Techniques

The sampling technique utilized in the study involved a combination of cluster and purposive sampling techniques. The cluster sampling technique was adopted with data collection and analysis conducted according to the three existing senatorial districts which are: Bayelsa West District comprising of Ekeremor and Sagbama local government areas; Bayelsa Central District made up of Yenagoa, Southern Ijaw and Kolokuma-Opokuma local government areas; and Bayelsa East District which has Ogbia, Nembe, and Brass local government areas. Furthermore, at the local government area level, a preliminary conflict/insecurity mapping was conducted to identify conflict/insecurity hotspots. Communities were purposively selected for this study based on the initial mapping of insecurity in the local government areas. Based on the foregoing, participants in the study were purposively sampled from the following communities: Obotogbo, Azagbene, Ekeremor, Letugbene, Peretorugbene, Sagbama, Toru-Orua, Imiringi, Kolo, Iduma, Elebele, Ogbia, Emeyal, Okpoama, Akassa, Diema, Ewoama, Bassambiri, Ogbolomabiri, Atohosa, Ekpetiama, Onopa, Yenakah, Azikoro, Kiama, Odi, Ikebiri 1, Igbomotoru, Amassoma, Ondewari, Ayama-Ijaw, and Olugobiri.

4.3 Data Sources

The study relied on both secondary and primary sources of data. For secondary sources, an extensive literature review and consultation with publications in academic journals was conducted. Other non-academic

publications such as periodicals, newspapers, and official records from security agencies were also used. Primary data involved intensive fieldwork in the year 2020. The data collection exercise was conducted across the eight local government areas of Bayelsa State and the three senatorial districts of the state. The qualitative data collection approach was utilized to solicit information from respondents across the selected communities in the local government areas where the study was conducted. The methods and process of the data collection exercise are described below.

4.4 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

Open-ended questions were used to collect qualitative data from Key Informants. These KIIs were recorded using a tape recorder. This approach provided the researchers with the opportunity to explore an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of the respondents in their various communities and how the phenomenon under study has impacted their lives and that of their community. Key informants were selected to participate in the study based on a series of pre-identified qualifications such as knowledge of the subject matter, residency in communities, positions occupied in communities, and so on. Given this, 30 key informant interviews were conducted with participants from various sections of social, political, economic, and religious strata in the communities. These include community paramount rulers, community development committee (CDC) members, youth leaders, women leaders, politicians, security agencies, civil society actors, and conflict actors such as cultists, ex-militants, and so on.

4.5 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

The focus group discussion (FGDs) technique was deployed to complement the KIIs. FGDs were made up of 4-7 persons. Overall, participants of FGD groups were drawn from different demographics in the society. However, in situations where it was difficult to have men and women participate in the same FGD, separate FGDs were conducted for women to discuss insecurity as it affects women in the communities. A total of 11 FGDs were conducted. Two FGDs each in Ekeremor, Southern Ijaw, and Nembe local government areas. One FGD each

was conducted in Sagbama Local Government Area, Ogbia Local Government Area, Brass Local Government Area, Yenagoa Local Government Area, and Kolokuma-Opokuma Local Government Area.

4.6 Data Analysis Technique

The data generated from the KIIs and FGDs were transcribed, thematically coded, and analysed using the thematic analysis technique. This involved the identification and development of conceptual categories. This process bestows empirical considerations for assembling interrelated concepts and provides a framework for describing, classifying, and connecting emerging concepts, themes, and categories (Gorra, 2007). Hence, the research analysis involved the thematic categorization of drivers of insecurity, actors, and impacts across the three senatorial districts in Bayelsa State. Besides, case study analysis was conducted to present and buttress specific conflict/insecurity issues that appear significant in understanding the problem the research was set out to examine.

5. Data Presentation and Analysis

In this section, we analyse the data collected during fieldwork. The analysis was conducted according to the peculiarities of the specific contexts across the three senatorial districts of Bayelsa State. The analysis provided a snapshot of the insecurity/conflict dynamics by establishing the context and identifying the specific insecurity issues, drivers, actors, and impacts across the state.

5.1 Bayelsa West Senatorial District

Bayelsa West senatorial district is composed of Ekeremor and Sagbama local government areas and the analysis of the insecurity trend and dynamics is conducted according to the local government summaries below:

5.1 Ekeremor Local Government Area

Ekeremor Local Government Area which borders Delta State has a coastline of approximately 60km on the Bight of Bonny. It has an area of 1,810 km² and a population of 270,257 according to the 2006 census figure. With Ekeremor community as its headquarters, the largely riverine nature of the local government has continued to shape and reshape the nature and dynamics of insecurity which are discussed here.

i. Militancy

Militancy happens to be the most pressing security challenge in Ekeremor Local Government Area. Its proximity to Delta State and the Atlantic Ocean made it a hotspot of criminal violence during the militancy era of the Niger Delta. Findings from the study showed that most of the so-called repentant militants who are under the Presidential Amnesty Programme and some fairly new actors are currently engaged in militancy activities in the area. The study revealed an increasing spate of militant insurgency in Ekeremor within the last three years with oceanic communities along the 'Dodo River' and 'Aghoro River' such as Letugbene, Azagbene, Bilabiri, Egbemanagalabiri, and Aghoro as hotspots of the ongoing militancy. The Obiokpo creek which links Azagbene community to Ezetu outlets in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area has increasingly become a hotspot for militant attacks.

Further investigation into the patterns and trends of the manifestation of militancy in the area revealed the following predominant activities:

Box 1: Dimensions of Militancy in Ekeremor Local Government Area

- i. Sea Piracy and Sea Robbery.
- ii. Attacks on military formations, houseboats, and service boats.
- iii. Killing of military personnel and mop up of arms and ammunition from dead soldiers.
- iv. Attacks on oil infrastructure, pipeline vandalism especially the Tunu flow-station base.
- v. Kidnapping of oil expatriate workers and military personnel.
- vi. Attacks and robbery of market cargo boats and passenger boats.
- vii. Rape of market women on the sea.
- viii. Inter-gang killings over contestation of supremacy and control over territorial waterways.

The activities of these armed militant groups have continued to be on the increase despite the ongoing Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) of the federal government and increasing militarization of the area. It was revealed from the study that Ekeremor Local Government Area has disproportionately been impacted by the new wave of militancy in the state. There is an unusual proliferation of militant camps in the creeks of Ekeremor. Most respondents in the local government classified militancy as the most pervasive manifestation of insecurity that poses severe threats to the lives and livelihoods of the Ekeremor people.

Describing the spate of militancy in the local government, the Area Commander of the Ekeremor Area Command of the Nigerian Police asserted thus:

We have experienced an increase in militancy activities in Ekeremor LGA, especially sea piracy, kidnapping is predominant specifically in Southern Ekeremor, near the coastal line of the Atlantic Ocean. The militants have their camps in the thick tropical forests and they come out to the open river to attack passenger boats, cargo boats and even kidnap oil company expatriate workers (KII/Male/Police Officer/Area Commander Ekeremor).

The information provided by the Police Area Commander for Ekeremor is corroborated by another respondent who is an agent of a government security unit. According to the latter, the difficult riverine terrain and the expert knowledge of the rivers and creeks by the militants makes it

advantageous for local criminal groups to operate in the area. He argued as follows:

You see, securing the waterways is extremely difficult, there are places that our gunboats cannot navigate, some places speed boats can't get there and these are the places where these boys have their camps, in the swamps. These guys would be in the mangrove since you are not seeing them and they are so sophisticated that if you are coming with your speed boat they can be in that forests or swamp listening to the sound of the boat. They can tell you if that boat is carrying 25 horsepower or whatever. So, from afar they can tell you that this is a gunboat approaching or they can tell you that it can be a passenger boat. That is how sophisticated they have been in their criminality. If the navy is approaching, they would just know that the navy is approaching. So, before you reach there they have gone because they know the area more than you. They know where to go, you don't know where to go. (KII/Male/State Security Agent/Ekeremor).

The criminal activities of militants in Ekeremor, according to the Police Area Commander and the State Security Agent, extends beyond the Ekeremor waterways to parts of Southern Ijaw local government, Brass local government, parts of Delta State, and deep into the Atlantic Ocean on international waterways like the Bakassi peninsula where Cameroonian soldiers have been reportedly killed by militants from Ekeremor. Multiple incidences of militant attacks have been recorded between 2019 to early parts of 2020 along the Ekeremor waterways. On March 22, 2020, militants attacked the Atala oil field at Azagbene community. Houseboats at the flow station were burnt down and few soldiers were declared missing. Before this incident, on March 16, 2020, a transport speedboat heading from Ogbobagbene to Aghoro was attacked and passengers on board were robbed and kidnapped. Similarly, on February 1, 2020, an attack was launched where oil company staff heading to the Tunu flow station were kidnapped along the Egbemaangalabiri waterways. On January 3rd, 2020 three expatriates working for Styling Global Dredging Company were equally kidnapped, resulting in the killing of four naval officers along the Bilabiri-Agge waterway. On November 9, 2019, four soldiers escorting food stuff to Tunu Flow Station were killed and the militants went away with all food items and arms belonging to the soldiers. The dire security situation is

further demonstrated by the kidnapping of the DPO of Ekeremor Divisional Police Headquarter on December 6, 2019, along the Egbemangalabiri waterway.

Contrary to the notion that the oil industry is no longer the target of militants following the implementation of the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP), respondents in the Ekeremor area revealed that there has been an increase in the militant attacks targeting oil facilities, soldiers, oil company-owned food and material supply boats in the area. While describing the activities of militants in the area, participants in the study who have been victims of sea robbery and piracy attacks shared their experiences thus:

Several times they have robbed our community people who are coming from market in Warri. In fact, they raped four of our community women on one of those occasions. Our lives are not safe along this our Ekeremor waterways, we are living in hell in the hands of our brothers and sons. (FGD/Male Group/Ogbotobo Community).

While militancy, sea piracy, and sabotage is on the rise in remote areas of Ekeremor, illegal bunkering, crude oil theft, and illegitimate artisanal refining is at its lowest ebb. Respondents report that ex-militants who were awarded oil pipeline surveillance contracts currently provide protection for pipelines, and in collaboration with the military, have destroyed artisanal refining camps in the area. Respondents report that the successes recorded with the halting of oil bunkering and artisanal refining have put male youths who were previously depended on these as a means of livelihood in a more precarious economic situation. This has led some of them to resort to sea piracy and sea robbery as a means of livelihood. According to some respondents, there is a link between the halting of artisanal refining and the rise of sea piracy and sea robbery in the area. A militant youth interviewed for this study, speaking in “pidgin” English, explained it thus:

...when we are cooking this crude, we were enjoying, we were making our money, and we were peaceful. Since JTF said we should not do that job, they have burnt all our things so we don't have any choice, which is why we came back to river. Na una bring us back to this business, this business wey we don say bye bye before. So as una say we no go chop, so we sef go dey the river (KII/Male/Militant Actor/Azagbene Community/31 Years).

Although militant criminality is the overarching manifestation of insecurity in the area, there are complex and interlinked drivers of criminality that exist in the LGA. There is a pervasive sense of entitlement among young people engaged in criminality, especially former militants. However, significant unemployment and poverty also make youths vulnerable to recruitment into criminal groups. In addition, political patronage of violent actors by state actors and an overwhelming glorification and deification of ex-militant agitators in the area reinforces a culture of violence in communities. While poverty and unemployment remain fundamental to the rising insecurity in the area, the current socio-cultural and political realities in the state have created an economy of violence where conflict actors in form of militant leaders capture benefits from state resources in form of awarded surveillance contracts or direct political appointments. The faulty reward system of compensating violent actors and militant leaders through the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP), surveillance contracts, or patrol contracts has reinforced the circle of violence and militancy in the area as new entrants, following the footsteps of their predecessors, seek opportunities to amass wealth, political power and an enviable status in society. Respondents noted that unlike the pre-amnesty militancy era when young people were motivated by struggle for resource control and self-determination, the new wave of militant attacks on oil companies and the military are a means through which actors seek recognition and possible settlements through surveillance and patrol contracts. This situation has in turn resulted in the fierce rivalry between ex-militant leaders and active militants over territorial rights to operate on the river or to handle surveillance contracts in the area. The culture and economy of violence is also further sustained by the widely held value system where ex-militant leaders like Tompolo and John Togo for instance are eulogized and deified as heroes of the Ijaw nation especially by popular Ijaw musicians. This, therefore, makes militant leaders some sort of cultural icons who serve as a source of inspiration for would-be and current militant actors.

Key Actors

Militant actors in Ekeremor had close ties with erstwhile militant agitators in Delta State such as General Government ‘Tompolo’

Ekpemupolo and Late General John Togo. The analysis of actors reveals that most militant actors are young men between the ages of 17 to 35. It is not clear if these actors are linked or connected with the mainstream cult groups operating across Bayelsa State. Unlike the cult groups that are structurally organized with membership base spanning across communities and even states, the militant groups have no clear organizational structure beyond their leader. Yet militant groups happen to be more deadly, powerful and have stronger financial resources and arms than the cult groups. They are most times referred to as the 'River-Men'.

ii. Military Raids/Invasion on Communities

Related to the activities of militants in the area is the issue of recurrent raids/invasion of communities along the River Dodo by men of the Nigerian military. These military raids/invasions are often carried out as reprisals to militant attacks on soldiers and key oil infrastructure in the area. Respondents noted that the Nigerian military raid communities along the waterways whenever militants attack in that area. Participants in this study reported that the military engage in indiscriminate destruction of houses, sporadic shootings, mass arrests, and extra-judicial killing during these reprisal attacks. This situation has led many community residents to flee their communities thereby constituting an increasing trend in the number of internally displaced persons in places such as Azagbene, Letugbene, and Bilabiri. Respondents noted that military raids have become a recurring event in the area. On the 25th of March, 2020, soldiers invaded Ezetu community in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area, killing two, following the burning of a military houseboat in Azagbene community. On February 16, 2020, men of the Nigerian army raided/invaded Letugbene community following the killing of four soldiers and a civilian captain on board a tugboat towing a barge carrying two cranes to Shell location in Tunu. Similarly, on January 17, 2020, men of the Nigerian army invaded Bilabiri community following the killing of four naval officers and the abduction of two foreigners at Agge waterway. The raid led to the burning of houses and displacement of community residents. On July, 23, 2019, troops of the 16 Brigade of the Nigerian army invaded Azagbene community following the killing of two soldiers guarding a crude oil facility in the area.

Describing the cause and impact of reprisal attacks on communities, one respondent explained thus:

The basic challenge we have is that some of our boys carry arms to do militancy. Sometime last year, I think it was on the 23rd of July 2019, something happened. The so-called boys that carry arms, they went to a well head close to my community, in the process two soldiers were killed. So, with the report from the army, they found out that it is somebody from Azagbene that did that, so that led to the invasion of the community by the soldiers. And when they invaded the community, houses, properties and so many things belonging to community members were burnt down (KII/M/Azagbene Community/55Years).

Security operatives deny wrongdoing . The military claim that those were not invasions but raid operations following intelligence reports. They alleged the militants live within the communities and the leadership of these communities abhor criminals in their domain. They alleged suspected collusion and criminal conspiracy of some community leaders in the activities of the criminals hence the arrest of the King of Bilabiri community, when the military raided the community. However, there is no credible evidence to suggest that there is any community support for militant and criminal groups in the area. Instead, communities such as Azagbene have exiled militant members. This shows that the claims of intelligence reports linking communities to militancy are unfounded. From the foregoing, it can be said that military activities in the area pose a threat to the security and human rights of non-militant members of communities.

iii. Intra-Communal Crises

Intra-communal crises are a major source of insecurity in Ekeremor Local Government Area and Bayelsa State at large. Most of the communities facing such crises are oil -bearing communities and the study found out that crises usually arise from leadership succession across the varying community governance structures. Competing interests amongst groups to control monies accruing the community from oil companies operating within these communities is responsible for leadership succession crisis. Two case studies were examined below:

Case Study 1: Peretorugbene Community Election Crises of 2019

Peretorugbene is an Ijaw community in Ekeremor Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. The governance structure of the community is composed of the traditional institution made up of the paramount ruler and his council of chiefs, the community development committee (CDC), the youth executive, and women executive. The constitution of Peretorugbene community stipulates a two years tenure for the CDC executives. In November 2019, a month to the expiration of the tenure of one Mr. Feboke Perezide's as the CDC chairman, an electoral body was constituted by the Welfare Board of the community to conduct a new election. The Welfare Board is a group of elders and prominent sons of Peretorugbene community who are saddled with the responsibility to coordinate the development of the community and to be the forum to manage issues that are beyond the CDC chairman and the paramount ruler of the community. To an extent, the Welfare Board can be considered a Board of Trustees or Governing Board of the community. Some of the prominent members of the Welfare Board include Dr. Peters Singabele, Chairman Bayelsa State Civil Service Commission; Mr. Otiki Gbodo, Community Liaison Officer to SPDC, Peretorugbene Community; Mr. Zinc-ware Aguwana Solo alias Chemical Ali, a business mogul and a licensed oil bunker; Mr. Ebipremene Feboke, Chairman Oporomor Cluster Development Board; Pattern Geoffrey, retired permanent secretary, Bayelsa State Civil Service; Hon. Jonah Gede, a politician.

How Elections are conducted

The community is structured according to the three historical quarters (egedes) which include Tamo Egede, Oturu Egede, and Bolou Egede. The CDC chairmanship position is rotated among the three quarters and it was the turn of Tamo Egede to present candidates for the 2019 CDC elections for the post of the chairman while other quarters were assigned the post of vice-chairman and the other offices in the community. The key candidates who amongst others contested for the election in the chairmanship category include:

1. Gbeke-yei Gbodo
2. Boboye Afingi

The Dynamics and the Issues

Dr. Peter Singabele was given the mandate to conduct the election as the chairman of the electoral body. On the said date of the election, the election was disrupted by angry supporters of the candidates. It was alleged that the electoral body was divided amongst themselves as members of the electoral body have shown support for their preferred candidates thereby discrediting the process. This led to an outbreak of violence resulting in some persons sustaining several degrees of injuries. Another date was chosen for the conduct of the election, and this time, Mr. Zinc-ware Aguwanana was made the electoral body chairman because it was alleged that the former electoral body chairman Dr. Peter Singabele and the rest of the members in the body were biased. The new chairman of the body could not conduct the chairmanship election as the process was marred by electoral violence for the second time. Yet again, the electoral body was accused of supporting candidates thereby stoking a crisis. The security agents sent in from Yenagoa by the then governor of Bayelsa State, Henry Seriake Dickson, to man the election could not stop the outbreak of violence. The chairmanship election was therefore postponed indefinitely while the election of the vice-chairman and other executives was successfully conducted on the first day which produced one Mr. Dirifa Orume as the vice-chairman.

Since the chairmanship election could not hold after two attempts, the Welfare Board and the community elders unanimously agreed that the vice chairman-elect should be made to act as the chairman of the community pending when a new date would be fixed for the chairmanship election. Coincidentally, the vice-chairman elect, Mr. Dirifa Orume's father is the acting paramount ruler of the community. His father was made the acting ruler of the community following the death of the former paramount ruler. Mr. Dirifa Orume was acting as the CDC chairman until the supporters of the other chairmanship candidates accused him of running a non-inclusive government. He was accused of fraudulently diverting monies accruing to the community from SPDC at the Beniseide flow station which is jointly owned by Ojobo community in Delta State and Peretorugbene community in Bayelsa State.

Following these allegations, Mr. Dirifa was pressurized by his accusers to vacate the office of the chairman, and the Welfare Board - which is the constitutionally empowered body to drop an acting

chairman - suspended him for two weeks after investigating the allegations leveled against him. It was alleged the acting chairman abused his position to pursue personal gains as he was accused of revealing secrets of past leaders of the community to certain persons. These leaders hence ganged up and set him up by inciting the supporters of the chairmanship candidates against him. After his suspension, Mr. Dirifa took refuge in the nearby Ojobo community in Delta State, when things were no longer cozy for him at home.

Two weeks into the suspension of the acting chairman without being recalled, his supporters allegedly came to Peretorugbene community one fateful night and captured Mr. Boboye Afingi, who was a chairmanship candidate, and two of his supporters. Mr. Boboye and his supporters were moved to Ojobo community in Delta State. The people of Ojobo community on know this, swung into action, rescued the captured Boboye Afingi and his two supporters, and sent them back to Peretorugbene community. On arriving Peretorugbene community, Mr. Boboye Afingi informed his supporters that those that captured them planned to kill them if not for the swift intervention of the Ojobo community. Upon hearing this, the supporters of Mr. Boboye Afingi grew angry and started destroying the properties of the suspended acting chairman and his supporters and that of members of the Welfare Board, arguing that they were part of the people stoking the crisis in the community. Several buildings were destroyed, as 23 block buildings, 2 one-story buildings and 1 two-story buildings were axed and burnt down.

Following the massive destructions, the supporters of Mr. Boboye Afingi announced him as the substantive chairman, asking everybody in the community to recognize him as such. Some opposed this new arrangement and the community became highly tensed. This led to another round of violent crisis as warring groups engaged in a series of fights resulting in several people sustaining severe injuries from machete cuts and bottles. The Welfare Board intervened but was unable to resolve the issue as the community became heated up and weapons were already being imported in preparation for the war to come. The state government tried to resolve the matter by inviting the parties to the state house in Yenagoa to resolve the issue, all efforts, however, proved abortive and the crises lingered. Those that were stoking the crisis were the 'godfathers' big names in the Welfare Board. Each member fully backed a candidate with the anticipation of getting SPDC and GMoU contracts if the candidate of their choice is elected.

General Tompolo's Intervention – Transition from Conflict Actor to Peace Actor

While the narratives so far have shown that most ex-militant leaders have utilized violence and militancy to climb the apex of the socio-economic and political ladder of society while reinforcing violence, some ex-militant leaders have on the contrary proven to be relevant actors in the de-escalation of violence and promotion of peacebuilding in the area. The highly revered High Chief Government Ekpemupolo alias Tompolo is one of such relevant actors in Ekeremor Local Government Area. Although Tompolo hails from the Gbaramatu Kingdom of Delta State, he wields so much power and influence in communities across Ekeremor Local Government Area who idolize him as an Ijaw war hero.

With the escalation of the crises and the inability of the Bayelsa State government to broker peace, High Chief Government Ekpemupolo having learnt of the crisis at the community intervened and summoned all parties, especially the candidates, to meet with him at Oporoza in Delta State to discuss how the matter would be resolved. It was later gathered that Mr. Bobye Afingi had affiliations with Tompolo when he was an agitator. The candidates were asked to come with some of their supporters to meet with Tompolo. Everyone took his turn to register his position, interest, and needs and a common ground was sought. The candidates were asked for the way forward and it appears going back to conduct another election might trigger another round of violence. Tompolo hence pleaded with the rest of the candidates to step down for Mr. Boboye Afingi and Tompolo volunteered to refund all the expenses incurred by the candidates and rebuild all houses destroyed during the crises. The other candidates after consulting with their supporters, accepted Tompolo's panacea, and oaths of reconciliation were sworn amongst them to seal the peace. Tompolo warned all parties that the outcome of the meeting is binding on all and whoever tries to stir up any crises after the reconciliation would be sanctioned by him. The Welfare Board accepted the decision of the candidates and appreciated the role Tompolo played in resolving the crises. Mr. Boboye Afingi was sworn in on the 7th of December 2019 as the substantive CDC chairman of Peretorugbene community and peace has returned to the community.

iv. Cult Wars

Cultism and cult-related violence was identified as a major threat to security and peace in Ekeremor town, headquarters of Ekeremor Local Government Area. The major cult groups in Ekeremor are the Icelanders, Greenlanders, and Bobos. The Bobos, however, do not have a well-defined hierarchical structure like the Icelanders or Greenlanders.

The cult groups are usually engaged in thuggery, armed robbery, rape, and violence. Inter-gang rivalry exists between these gangs and these usually lead to violence. Violent confrontations between cult groups often take place in public ceremonies such as birthday parties and burials. Amongst the drivers, access to political figures appears to be the most potent factor responsible for the proliferation of cult groups in Ekeremor. The study found that cult groups play key roles as thugs, bodyguards, and perpetrators of violence during electioneering periods. The cult groups have close ties with local and state-level politicians; these politicians act as patrons to the groups, providing them finances and arms. This in turn reinforces the rivalry between the existing cult groups as each group struggles for the supremacy race to receive patronage from the politicians. The study found that some senior cult members have gained access to the political space in the local government and the state.

Ekeremor – Bomadi Link

Another trend to the cultism issue is the Delta State connection, as it was revealed from the study that most key cult actors have affiliation with their Delta State counterparts across the Bomadi creek. The study revealed that due to the proximity between Delta State and Ekeremor, most Ekeremor communities inter-marry with their Delta counterparts, hence making constant movements across both states inevitable. This dynamic has ensured easy movement of cult gang members from Delta to Ekeremor and vice-versa thereby creating a scenario of inter-state violent criminal networks and drug networks. The study found that most of the hard drugs that drive insecurity in Ekeremor are sourced and trafficked from Delta communities such as Ughelli. Given the above, the activities of cult gangs have continued to pose serious security threats for the people; most Ekeremor residents live in perpetual fear as their livelihoods are seriously impacted.

5.2 Sagbama Local Government Area

Sagbama Local Government Area with its headquarters in Sagbama town has an area of 946 km² and a population of 187,146, according to the 2006 census. Sagbama is among the local government areas in Bayelsa where most communities are accessible by road. Data collected during fieldwork in the local government area reveal issues of insecurity that are thematically discussed below:

i. Cultism

Cultism and cult-related violence is the major source of insecurity in Sagbama Local Government Area. Activities of kidnapping and militancy are almost non-existent in the area, owing to the landlocked nature of the local government, unlike its riverine counterparts. The street wing of the Vikings confraternity happens to be the most powerful gang in the area. Other gangs in the area are the Greenlanders, Icelanders, and Bobos. The participants in the focus group discussion in Sagbama town adduced that the proliferation of criminal cult activities in the area is a result of political actors who use the cultists for political gains during elections while serving as patrons to these gangs. Political actors serving as patrons always solicit and ensure the freedom of these violent cult gangs whenever they are apprehended by law enforcement agencies, such as the police. The focus group discussants argued thus:

One of the conflicts we have here in Sagbama is political conflicts which are strongly connected with cult violence. If you look at these cult groups, they are strengthened by people and these people are the politicians. That is what is giving them wings; so if these politicians can change, that's the only way we can get rid of cult members. Because if you see some cases that have happened in this community, some of them when they get arrested, it is still the politicians they will call and then the DPO or whoever will discharge them and they are not sanctioned. (FGD/Sagbama Community).

This gesture by political actors empowers these cultists to freely carry out their activities in the communities. And their criminal activities have affected the social and economic life of the community negatively. People no longer have peaceful nightlife outdoors due to fear of being

attacked while the continuous looting of shops has significantly resulted in moving out of business persons and their businesses in the community. In their testimonies, a clergyman and elder statesman who were part of the focus group discussion session noted some personal attacks. The elder noted that his home was attacked and he was robbed of all his cash at the time and the C clergyman said that church properties were being stolen and threats made to some of his colleagues and members. This has resulted in some members not attending some of the church activities. He also noted that clergymen are scared of speaking against the activities of the cultists for fear of being attacked. They all maintained that the community has no effective mechanism to curb the activities of the cultists.

ii. Inter - Communal Environmental Resource Conflict

A prominent issue that featured in Sagbama Local Government Area is inter-communal conflicts over environmental resources. While most inter-communal conflicts in the state are over ownership of land or location of oil facilities, the dynamics in Sagbama differ partly because of the low oil and gas presence in the local government. A key inter-communal conflict that is worthy of note from the study is the ongoing conflict over the ownership of a fish pond between Ofofi community in Sagbama local government and Nanagbene community in Ekeremor local government. This dispute has negatively impacted the livelihoods of the Ofofi people who claim they are the rightful owners of the fish pond while they alleged the Nanagbene people are the invaders. Describing the ongoing conflict, the participants of the focus group discussion in Ofofi posited thus:

This problem with Nanagbene community always comes up during the dry season. It is about a fish pond that belongs to this community, but the Nanagbene people claim it is theirs. Their boys always go to bail the pond; when our youths went there to bail the pond, they met those other people which resulted in a fight, and most of our boys were wounded. And it happened again the second time and we were not weak hence, fought back. We they later settled the issue yet some persons from the other community are still saying they are the owners of the pond (FGD/Youth/Ofofi Community).

While this dispute has not yet generated a full-blown crisis between both communities, there is a likelihood that if not properly handled, the

crises may escalate thereby constituting a greater security risk for the state since both communities are located in two separate local government areas.

iii. Ethnic Minority Marginalization

Another dimension of insecurity the study found in Bayelsa State is the issue of marginalization of ethnic minority groups by the larger Ijaw ethnic group in the state. This issue is most evident amongst the Ofoni people in Sagbama. The Ofoni people are the only Urhobo speaking group in Bayelsa State. The study participants claimed they have faced discrimination and marginalization by the Ijaw who refer to them as “Biokeme” and have denied them equal rights and opportunities to access political office, employment and development. This marginalization according to the Ofoni people has constituted a subtle form of insecurity for them, as their rights to human dignity and equal opportunities are impacted upon. They decried that while some Ijaws see them as non-Bayelsans, they have, however, recently had a sense of belonging in the state with the rise of their son, Senator Lawrence Oborawhariwwo to the office of the deputy governor of Bayelsa State.

5.2 Bayelsa Central Senatorial District

Bayelsa Central senatorial district is composed of Southern Ijaw, Yenagoa, and Kolokuma/Opokuma local government areas. The senatorial district is the largest in size and population and hosts the state capital in Yenagoa, Yenagoa local government.

a. Southern Ijaw Local Government Area

Southern Ijaw Local Government Area with headquarters in Oporoma occupies a key place in Bayelsa State. It is the largest with an area of 2,682 km² and second highest in population with a total of 319,413 persons as of the 2006 census. Southern Ijaw communities are mostly coastal and the insecurity dynamics in the area are discussed as follows:

i. Sea piracy and robbery

Southern Ijaw Local Government Area holds the unenviable record as the hub of militancy in Bayelsa State during the period of the post-Boro armed agitation in the 2000s, which began in small measures sometime after the 1999 general elections. The area is a flashpoint for sea piracy and sea robbery. According to respondents, sea robbery and piracy have posed serious challenges to the wellbeing and safety of travelers along the creeks of the local government area. The pirates target mostly passenger speed boats, wooden market ferry boats and dispose them of their engines, cash, and sometimes food and other valuable items. Sea pirates in the key flashpoint areas around the Kolouama, Azuzuama, Lobia, Ukubie, Foropa, Ikeni and Ezetu, target seagoing vessels such as fishing trawlers and other vessels to steal their foreign currencies and fishes. Sea robbers also operate around the Igbomotoru axis which links Igbomotoru community in Southern Ijaw LGA to Sangana, Akassa, and other communities in Brass LGA. It was also discovered that sea robbers from Southern Ijaw Local Government Area also go to Ekeremor LGA to rob and return to their camps located in the mangrove forests. It was also revealed that sea pirates from the local government navigate the Gulf of Guinea maritime domain to carry out attacks in Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea's territories and return to base.

In 2017, then- governor, Seriake Dickson appointed ex-militant leader, Africanus Ukparasia as Chairman of the Bayelsa State Waterways Security Task Force to combat sea piracy and other crimes in the waterways. Respondents in Ikebiri 1 community stated that the task force blocked the Ikebiri creek for about two years and denied the sea pirates passage to operate (KII/Male/Community member/Ikebiri 1 Community/44 Years). The taskforce suffered poor funding and eventually stopped operations, giving rise to sea pirates' attacks and kidnapping of prominent people from Yenagoa, Kolokuma/Opokuma, and Sagbama local government areas, passing through the Ikebiri creek to their camps scattered around the mangrove swamps around Azuzuama, Ukubie, Lobia, etc. The respondents were unanimous that a checkpoint at the Ikebiri creek is needed to stem sea pirate attacks and kidnappings in the state.

Our study also revealed that current and ex-militants, many of whom are beneficiaries of the Presidential Amnesty Programme are involved in sea piracy and kidnapping in the area. They sustain their operations with

monies from their attacks and ransom payments. It was further revealed that drugs such as cocaine, tramadol, codeine, and cannabis (Indian hemp) play crucial roles as complex drivers to condition the minds of the criminals to carry out their acts. While it was revealed that carting away engines boats, goods, and other valuables, are common with every sea pirate attack, rape and killings are rare. The operations of the sea pirates distort the local economy, increase unemployment, poverty, and crime rates.

ii. Kidnapping

Like sea piracy, kidnapping is common in the Azuzuama, Lobia, Ukubie, Gbaraun, Foropa, Ikebiri 1 & II axis of Southern Ijaw Local Government Area. Militancy was firmly rooted in this area as more than 60% of the entire militant camps in Bayelsa State were located in the area. As earlier noted, this research revealed that for kidnap victims that have been released after ransom payment, freed by security agents, or died in captivity in the state, over 65% have been traced to locations in this area. Arms proliferation, the complex environment owing to the plethora of crisscrossing rivers, creeks, and the lengthy mangrove swamps, make it difficult for security agents to police the area. The study also revealed that the same actors or same camps involved in kidnapping also engage in sea piracy and robbery. Kidnapping and sea piracy, therefore, have the same set of actors who work with their cronies.

iii. Cultism and cult-related violence

Southern Ijaw Local Government Area is also characterized by cult violence. Cultism has penetrated many strata of the Local Government Area including primary schools, secondary schools, and tertiary institutions in the LGA. It was discovered that even children as young as eight years and above are also involved in cultism. Cultism has assumed the dimension of a status symbol among several youths in the local government area, most of whom are uninformed, uneducated, and unexposed. Respondents stated that the 'cult boys' indulge in drug and substance abuse, theft, rape, assault, and sometimes murder. The study revealed that cultism in the local government area is driven by political patronage, drugs, poor parenting, loss of social values, break-down of the

family, poor education, unemployment, and limited opportunities for social mobility. Some of the actors are politicians, youths, students, and primary school pupils. Cultism is the single most pervasive crime that cuts across almost all communities in Southern Ijaw LGA. Loss of lives, injuries, destruction of properties, economic losses, etc. are common impacts to the people of the area. Some of the hotspots are: Amassoma, Ekowe, Otuan, Oporoma, Angiama, Anyama Ijaw, Koluama I and II, Ogboinbiri, Foropa, Ukubie, Azuzuama, Lobia, Gbaraun, etc.

In Amassoma community, host to the Bayelsa State-owned Niger Delta University, there is both university campus cult groups such as Vikings and Black Axe confraternity and street cults such as Icelanders, Greenlanders amongst others. As early as 2005, there was a clash between the Greenlanders and Icelanders, leading to some deaths and injuries. Cult groups in the villages are cells of their parent groups in the city. They take instructions from their leaders in Yenagoa, but often go out of their way to take unilateral actions.

iv. Electoral violence

Electoral violence occurs in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area in every election cycle. During every election season, civil society organizations and election monitors have always mapped the local government area as a hotspot for political violence. Such issues as killings, isolated cases of arson, destruction of properties, destruction of election materials, and disruption of campaigns amongst others related to attacks by thugs are common sights. The 2003 governorship election between late Chief DSP Alamieyeseigha of the PDP and Prof. Millionaire Abowei of then APP, led to the killing of several persons at the local government headquarters, Oporoma. The 2011 general elections, 2012 gubernatorial elections, and 2016 general elections also witnessed varying degrees of electoral violence including the open display of firearms, massive shootings, and hijack of electoral materials were witnessed. Election observers and staff of the Independent National Electoral Commission dread going for election duties in Southern Ijaw LGA.

b. Yenagoa Local Government Area

Yenagoa LGA is the host local government of the state capital with a total area of 706 km² and a population of 352,285, according to the 2006

population census. Yenagoa is mostly constituted by the Ijaw and Epie-Atissa people. The insecurity issues in Yenagoa include the following:

i. Cultism and cult-related violence

Inter-cult clashes are the commonest cause of insecurity and violence in the Yenagoa metropolis. Respondents revealed that various cult gangs engage each other in battles for supremacy and reprisals. Cult groups maintain command and control structures and each is identified with territories they predominate. According to respondents, various communities within the metropolis and environs maintain cult cells which known members of rival cult groups usually avoid. Cultism is the most prevalent insecurity issue in the local government area as every community from Ogbogoro community up to Igbogene, a boundary town with Rivers State can be identified with the predominance of one cult gang or the other. It was discovered that the primary motivating factor for cultists is drug and substance abuse and political patronage and support by politicians who maintain ties with the cultists to use them during elections. It was also revealed that cultists are emboldened by their connections to powerful politicians who ensure they get away with every act of violence they perpetrate. Respondents revealed that if cultists are arrested by law enforcement agents, they would be freed almost immediately due to the influence of top politicians. In all interviews, it featured as the most prominent insecurity issue, but more so in Yenagoa LGA. The state capital is characterized by inter-cult rivalries, clashes, and killings (KII/Male/Former CSO/Onopa Community/35 Years).

The cult members are susceptible to and available for recruitment into other forms of violence: theft, armed robbery, oil theft, illegal oil bunkering, political thuggery, communal violence, etc. St. Peters, Obele, Ovom, Onopa, Gwegwe street, Amarata, Ogbogoro, Kpansia, Opolo, Okutukutu, Ede-Epie, etc. are hotspots for cult gangs. These gangs are semi-structured organized crime groups with no clear – cut objectives. The deadliest and most violent cult gangs operating in Yenagoa Local Government Area are as follows:

The Supreme Greenland Confraternity: The Supreme Greenland Confraternity commonly known as Greenlanders is currently one of the most powerful cult gangs in Yenagoa. It was discovered that in terms of

numerical strength, it outnumbers other cult gangs and also have wider spreads throughout the state. It is known for initiating and recruiting very young people. A key informant revealed that children as young as eight years and above are being initiated into the confraternity. The Greenland confraternity has its strongholds at Edepie, Arietaline Street, Harbour road, St. Peters, Gwegwe, and other communities.

Icelanders Confraternity: This group is believed to be the second-largest organized cult gang in the local government area and the state. Their spiritual and operational headquarters is believed to be in Rivers State. Some prominent politicians also belong to this cult gang and provide funding to run their clandestine and criminal activities. The Icelanders strongholds are in Amarata, Ovom, Akenfa, and other communities.

The Deebam confraternity: Also known as Bobos, the Deebam confraternity has a widespread in Yenagoa. A respondent revealed that the Bobos is one of the fastest-growing cult gangs in Yenagoa, and only second to the Greenlanders in initiating children in primary and secondary schools and the streets. From our interviews, this group was identified with ruthlessness as members strive to climb to the top of the hierarchy by carrying out some of the most brutal and deadly attacks on rival cult gang members or innocent people. Drug running, theft, snatching of mobile phones, stealing of jewelries, and other valuables are some of the criminal activities they carry out. Women, petty traders, and shop owners are their major victims. It was revealed that they use locally made pistols (Akwa made), knives, and axes to rub their victims and kill if they meet resistance. Their major means of mobility for their operations is tricycles, popularly called “Keke”. Their strongholds are in Gbaratoru, Igbogene, Agudama, Swali, and other communities.

The Vikings Confraternity: The Vikings confraternity was originally a university campus cult group, but now also have street-based splinter groups such as the Greenlanders confraternity. Vikings is largely an elitist confraternity with several high-profile politicians in the state being members. It is more organized compared to the other confraternities identified above. Vikings confraternity is not as violent and deadly as the other cult gangs in Bayelsa State. It was discovered that this group initiates and recruit majorly mature people. It was also revealed that

social mobility occurs as people grow and move from the Greenland confraternity to join the Vikings.

Structure of Cult Groups and Mode of Operations

Like many other organizations, cult gangs are structurally hierarchical. Though not formally but semi-structured, the cult groups in the state usually have an arrowhead who is called the Point 1 or Captain of the Ship. The Point 1 is usually the most senior ranking and active member of the group and emerges by ascension, appointment, or mutiny. If it is by ascension, when the leader at the time gives way, the next in command takes over. In some confraternities, an Advisory Council appoints a successor to succeed the group's leader whose time has elapsed or he becomes an "Ex". A violent takeover of leadership often happens in street cult groups, sometimes leading to splinter groups and fractionalization.

Various cult groups have their state leadership, local government leadership, clan leadership, and community leadership. Sometimes, these structures are fluid, and can hardly be differentiated as different cells operate without recourse to their superior's directives. Their operations are usually against rival cult groups attacking their opponents with automatic rifles such as AK 47, FM rifles, locally made pistols (Awka made), axes, machetes, daggers, and other dangerous weapons. They raid their opponents' strongholds, kill or injure them. The attacking team members are also killed or injured some times during such operations.

Cult clashes have impacted the communities and the people in many ways including loss of lives, destruction of properties, and disruption of social life, social disconnect, injuries, and economic losses.

ii. Kidnapping for ransom

The economy of kidnapping is not widespread in Yenagoa Local Government Area even though isolated cases are reported. The origin and roots of many kidnap incidences in the local government have been traced to Southern Ijaw local government. Many kidnap victims who were released or freed after payment of ransom have confirmed this while reliving their experiences. It was discovered that there is an external dimension to kidnappings in Yenagoa and environs. Kidnappers from

neighbouring states such as Rivers and Delta have formed alliances with their counterparts in Bayelsa State, and kidnap their victims to demand a ransom. Respondents observed that the low incidence of kidnapping in the Yenagoa metropolis is attributable to the presence of security agencies. While no death has been recorded in recent times from kidnapping in the local government area, it has impacted negatively on families of victims, loss of huge sums of money, and bodily injuries; it has created fear and a general sense of insecurity amongst people living in the area. The complex drivers of kidnapping are the use of hard drugs and narcotics, the availability and proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs), unemployment, etc. Ransom payments from victims' families serve their financial needs. It was discovered that kidnappers usually lodge in hotels in Yenagoa, Warri, and Port Harcourt to enjoy their illicit money and plan further operations. Kidnapping has put a dent on business investments in the state, further exacerbating unemployment and poverty in the state, the same reasons the kidnappers adduce for their indulgence.

iii. Land disputes

Yenagoa local government, especially the Yenagoa metropolis is a land-based area. As the state capital, land is an essential asset. The people and communities operate a family-based land ownership system. There are also community-owned lands that require community approval to dispense. Land related disputes are common sights, but only a few cases result in violence. Respondents revealed that in April 2020, a land-related dispute between Agudama-Epie and Akenfa community led to the loss of three lives. Such land-related killings have been recorded almost on annual basis. The most prevalent form of land-related conflict arises from sales of the same portion of land to different persons, either by the same person or family or by another. Some individuals and families have sold the same portion of land to three or more persons, resulting in conflict and, in rare cases, violence. Landowners either sell or lease land to individuals and business organizations, and use the rents to train their children, marry wives, pay bills, and sometimes organize lavish burial ceremonies. General insecurity issues in Yenagoa LGA, especially in the Yenagoa metropolis have affected businesses and livelihoods, therefore negatively impacting the development of the state.

iv. Jungle Justice and Lynching

A new dimension of insecurity across Bayelsa State especially in the Yenagoa metropolis is the rising trend of jungle justice and lynching of suspected perpetrators of crimes such as armed robbery. In recent times, several mob actions have been recorded in Yenagoa. For instance, on December 1, 2019, three suspected armed robbers were accosted with guns around Arizona Filling Station in Yenizue-Egene, Yenagoa. The suspected robbers attempted to rob retail shops in the area when a resident raised an alarm, prompting other residents and passers-by to respond. Two of the suspected robbers were caught, while one was mobbed to death. Similarly, on December 2nd, 2019, it was reported that three students of the Bayelsa State College of Health Technology (BYCOTECH) Otuogidi, Ogbia Local Government Area were kidnapped at gunpoint. The students are in their Higher National Diploma (HND) program. On December 3, however, local vigilantes from Otuogidi and Ogbia Town rescued the victims from a nearby forest and two of the kidnappers were arrested and lynched. In a separate event, a young man was reportedly caught and beaten to death for robbery and another escaped at Opolo, Yenagoa during the morning hours of Thursday May 28, 2020. The two suspects reportedly stole a laptop and other items and were chased by a mob before one was caught. Before the arrival of the police, the suspect was already beaten to death.

The rise in mob action and lynching in the state is largely becoming a source of insecurity and the study gathered that feelings of lack of trust and failure of police to arrest or prosecute criminals was the major reasons behind rising cases of lynching and mob actions in the state.

c. Kolokuma/Opokuma Local Government Area

Kolokuma/Opokuma is the smallest local government area in size and population. It has an area of 361 km² and a population of 77,292 in the 2006 census. Kolokuma/Opokuma Local Government Area has its headquarters in Kaiama. It was discovered during this research that Kolokuma/Opokuma holds the enviable record of the most peaceful local government area in Bayelsa State. However, there exist pockets of insecurity issues which are discussed below.

i. Cultism and cult-related violence

Like other local government areas, cultism is inherent in Kolokuma/Opkuma LGA, especially in Kaiama, Sabageria, and Egbedi communities. Pockets of cult activities are also found in Odi and other communities. Cultism involving young people is the only widespread insecurity issues in the area and is quite pervasive to the extent that it involves pupils in primary and secondary schools. In Kaiama, most respondents claim that cultism is the main insecurity issue affecting the town, and politicians were implicated for the prevalence and sustenance of cult activities in the area.

A respondent explained the problem of cultism in Kaiama thus:

The boys practicing this act of cultism here, are being backed up by politicians, so to gain popularity, they invite the boys and push them to the war front against their opponent; if they go for an operation and come back, they will be paid by the politicians and they share it among themselves. So, it has become a full-time business (KII/Male/Chief/Kaiama Community/63 Years).

The primary motivator for youths to belong to cult groups in the area is political patronage and influence in communities. Unemployment and drug abuse are also implicated as common drivers of cultism. Respondents revealed that the vigilante group, working in consonance with the community leadership has been doing a great job of containing the activities of cultists. Their effectiveness in confronting cultism and other vices can be compared to none. They gather intelligence for the police to make arrests and perform other policing duties. The vigilante operates in conjunction with the Action Group, a youth body also working with the community leadership to maintain peace in Kaiama. They also work in cooperation with vigilantes of neighbouring communities in the LGA by sharing intelligence and doing combined arrests of suspects whom they handover to the police. Cultists apprehended are publicly flogged and disgraced according to the laws of the community. The prominent cult groups in the area are the Vikings, Greenlanders, and Icelanders, mainly populated by youths from the communities but with ties to their parent cells in the city. Drug and substance abuse are common among the youths and serves as a key

driver of cultism in the area. Inter-cult clashes are usually heightened during cultural festivals and big burial ceremonies.

ii. Kidnapping

Incidences of kidnapping in Kolokuma/Opokuma LGA are rare. Some kidnap incidences in the area have been found to originate from Southern Ijaw LGA where the kidnappers operate through the river links to the LGA, kidnap their victims and zoom back to their locations in the creeks, mostly taking the Ikebiri creek route to avoid the military gunboats in the Nigeria Agip Oil Company operated oil flow station at Ogboinbiri and the gunboats working for Dalon Security at Olugbobiri community. Being a largely land-based LGA, the issue of kidnapping is minimal and happens only occasionally.

iii. Electoral violence

Electoral crisis which is common in other local government areas is very rare in Kolokuma/Opokuma Local Government Area. From the 2007, 2011, 2015, to the 2019 general elections, no deaths have been reported in the area even though disagreement happens among party supporters. The possible reason attributed to this is the level of development in the area. Most of the communities in the local government are connected by road. The, high level of education, and understanding among the people in this area are largely responsible for the peace in Kolokuma/Opokuma LGA.

iv. Herdsmen Encroachment of Farmlands

Another uncommon insecurity issue in the area is herdsmen encroachment on farmlands belonging to the indigenes. Herdsmen have encroached on farmlands a couple of times in the last two years, but have not resulted in clashes. In one instance, the vigilante group at Kaiama intervened by approaching the herders who disclosed to them that the cattle belong to a senior military officer from northern Nigeria but based in Port Harcourt. The vigilante chairman called the army officer in Port Harcourt to explain why his herders should leave the community for peace to reign. The army officer instructed his herders to leave and a

possible crisis was averted. It is for these reasons Kolokuma/Opokuma is regarded as the most peaceful local government area in Bayelsa State.

5.3 Bayelsa East Senatorial District

Bayelsa East Senatorial District is made up of Nembe, Brass, and Ogbia local government areas. It is pertinent to note that the three local government areas making up the senatorial district are largely riverine. Brass local government, for example, is completely cut off from the rest of the state as no community is linked to either Nembe or Yenagoa, the state capital by road. Brass is the only local government area in the state that has no community linked to the capital by road. Therefore, the insecurity that characterizes mostly riverine local government areas is visible in the area.

a. Brass Local Government Area

Brass is a riverine local government area with a coastline of approximately 90km on the Bight of Bonny. With its headquarters in Twon-Brass, the LGA covers an area of 1,404 km² and a population of 185,049 at the count of the 2006 population census. The only means of transportation to Brass is through water using outboard fibre speed boats and locally made wooden boats. It is host to the Nigerian Agip Oil company's crude oil terminal, and, therefore, have lots of economic activities in the area, including Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa/Fulani traders selling various items such as food items, electronics, clothing, groceries, sachet water supply; commercial fishing by trawlers and local fishermen and women, timber works, bread bakery business, etc. According to Austin Abaye, an indigene of the local government area, the Nembe Waterside in Port Harcourt and Swali Market Waterside are the destinations of the cache of fish from the area. Brass and Nembe have close traditional ties, and both speak similar dialects, distinct from the overall Ijaw language. Brass was originally part of Nembe until the creation of a separate local government area. The insecurity issues and its peculiar dynamics as they have manifested in Brass are analyzed below.

i. Sea piracy

Sea piracy is the most prevalent insecurity issue in Brass Local Government Area. Sea pirate attacks are more frequent in the Brass – Nembe creeks and the Brass -Yenagoa routes in the LGA. Livelihoods are affected gravely as travels to and from Brass LGA have become dangerously precarious. Respondents revealed that economic activities; fishing, trade, and ferrying of goods through outboard speed boats and local boats have often come under attacks and robbed. For example, they revealed that suspected pirates attacked a passenger boat along the Nembe-Brass waterway in Bayelsa State on Thursday, September 31, 2017, making it the second sea robbery incident on the waterway that week. Witnesses saw gunmen trailing a passenger boat and began firing their weapons sporadically before hijacking the boat. The boat driver and his crewmen were later dropped off in the creeks as the pirates took the boat to an unknown destination (Sahara Reporters, 2017). On Saturday, March 9, 2019, armed pirates reportedly attacked an offshore supply vessel (OSV) roughly 55km (34 mi) off Brass (Bayelsa state), killing one Nigerian Navy guard tasked with escorting the vessel. The pirates reportedly approached the OSV in speed boats armed with machine guns and kidnapped five crewmembers. The navy guard was reportedly killed in an exchange of gunfire during the attack (GardaWorld, 2019).

A respondent stated that security forces are trying their best to curtail sea robbery attacks but the issue is yet to abate. The local boats navigating to Twon Brass, Okpoama, and other communities are usually attacked, with some people kidnapped and on rare occasions, women are raped. People are now trading with fear. It was not until surveillance contracts were given to certain contractors who started engaging the boys to police the oil facilities that the level of piracy reduced. A key informant recounted the brutality of the sea robbers thus:

...I remember, there was a time when these boys caught a fisherman and his wife, demanded fish from them. They told them they had no fish and they pointed a gun at them, asked them to throw their baby into the river. They complied and when the baby got drowned, they told them, “You have fish now, take it home”. Even 9.9 horsepower engines, engines that have no value, they steal it. It was that bad until they started getting these surveillance contracts. There is considerable peace in the area now. But these activities had severe effects on

economic activities. People were afraid to even go fishing or even to pick isam (periwinkles). They didn't dare it. I'm telling you, don't dare it. (FGD Respondent/Male/Nembe LGA/38 yrs).

The issue is even more compounded as the creeks remain the only means of transportation to and from the LGA. Arms proliferation, unemployment, drug abuse, etc. were implicated for the scourge of sea piracy in the area. Some participants of the focus group discussion in Brass stated thus:

Most of the security agencies are not covering our riverine areas. If it is the navy that is in charge of the waterways, let them patrol so that they can get these boys apprehended, because it is by the grace of God that we get to Brass and Akassa. (FGD/Community Leaders/Brass).

ii. Cultism and cult-related violence

Brass Local Government Area, especially in Twon Brass, Odioma, Okpoama, and Biyama are reckoned as hotspots of cultism and cult rivalries. Cult groups such as the Vikings confraternity, Greenlanders and Icelanders, etc. found their way to the Brass area through city dwellers in Port Harcourt, Yenagoa, and university undergraduates who established their local cells in Twon Brass. Their activities have led to the loss of lives, destruction of properties, caused bodily injuries, disrupted economic activities, and caused social dislocations among the people and communities. They are funded largely by political elites who use them as thugs during elections to cause mayhem. Cultism in Brass has penetrated not just the political space but the traditional leaderships as key political figures have been linked to cult groups. Describing this anomaly, a respondent during the FGD session stated thus:

This cult issue is a precarious situation as you will even find cultists in the traditional leadership. They are the people in control. Maybe a chief council would like to put some of their boys at the helm of affairs of the youth executive; even in the women organizations, you will find them there. So, it is a virus that has eaten deep into the fabric of our society. I remember one incident, I will not mention the person's name, he was a chief, he was intoxicated so he forgot himself and started shouting "Aroo mate and people were surprised (FGD/Community Leaders/Brass).

Cult gangs such as Vikings and Greenlanders chants ‘Aroo Mate’ as slang to boost each others’ morale while on operations.

iii. Kidnapping for ransom

Brass Local Government Area provides a safe space for criminal groups engaged in kidnapping for ransom. The area’s topography with crisscrossing creeks, rivers, mangrove swamps, and access to the Atlantic Ocean makes the economy of kidnapping a veritable and brisk venture. Though not as pervasive as in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area, Brass local Government could be described as the local government area in Bayelsa State with the second highest incidences of kidnapping. Militants and ex-militants and cult gangs are involved in kidnapping for ransom. Kidnappers from Southern Ijaw LGA also operate in the area. Kidnapping in the Brass area as in other LGAs comes with its attendant negative impacts such as loss of lives.

iv. Electoral violence

Electoral violence, although occurring mostly during election seasons, is one of the main drivers of insecurity in Brass Local Government Area. Electoral violence is rife as politicians and oil company contractors work to outplay each other to reap the spoils of the conflict situations they create. Hijack of electoral materials, incidences of sporadic shootings during elections, and occasional killings characterize the electoral politics in the area. The actors are politicians and their support structures, including cultists, ex-militants and active militants, and community leadership structures. The Vikings confraternity and Greenlanders are loyal to the APC leaders, while Icelanders confraternity is usually identified with the PDP. However, some individual members and splinter groups deviate from such support structures to support candidates of the opposing party. Twon Brass, Akassa, Odioma, Okpoama, etc. were found to be hotspots for electoral violence. This can be situated within the context of the complex mix of local politics, oil and gas politics, and partisan politics in the area. It was, however, observed that the oil surveillance contracts given to the people from the area have engaged a good proportion of the youth; hence, crime rates and violence have dropped remarkably.

b. Nembe Local Government Area

Nembe is an ancient traditional kingdom, with headquarters in the town of Nembe. Nembe Local Government Area occupies a total area of 760km² and a population of 130,931 in the 2006 census. Historically, Nembe is known for fighting wars. This informs the constitution of Chieftaincy Houses into War Canoe Houses. The area is prone to violence ranging from political violence, community leadership crises to oil economy-related violence. Some of the insecurity issues are as discussed hereunder:

i. Electoral violence

The current context of insecurity and conflicts in Nembe Local Government Area are rooted in partisan and local politics. It was discovered that old crises and grievances also play a role in the violence that currently characterizes political contestations in Nembe. Respondents explained that the old wounds from the Isongufuro and Esenasawo crises that bedeviled the Nembe area in the early 90s have survived to date. They stated that aside from the Isongufuro and Esenasawo crisis, several other chieftaincy or inter and intra-communal disputes remain in the minds of the people. The respondents were unanimous that some persons activate such underlying issues during electioneering periods and cause violence. They blamed the Nembe political crises on un-forgiveness, vendetta, winner takes all syndrome, and lack of regard for human life. One respondent stated thus:

It is because of unforgiveness that from time to time, for no reason, crises just occur. That is why some people take other people's problems. People inherit the problems of their parents and relatives and use conflicts as an opportunity to payback. That is why some people will just decide to join APC today so they can chase PDP out and do to someone what has been done to them previously. There is also the winner takes it all mentality (FGD/Male/Youths/Nembe-Bassambiri Community).

There is a complex blend of oil politics, partisan politics, and local community politics in Nembe local government . This point came out strongly in the discussions. Whoever controls the oil politics in the area

at any point controls the local community politics and partisan politics. A respondent stated as follows:

Anyone that gained power was able to control every other thing...they were able to influence who became the king, who became the chief's council chairman... and they monopolize everything including negotiations with oil companies (KII/M/Youth Leader/Bassambiri/38 Years).

In the 2019 gubernatorial elections in Bayelsa State, scores of people were shot and killed in Nembe Ogbolomabiri during the PDP campaigns. For a long time, Nembe – Bassambiri, and Nembe - Ogbolomabiri were working at cross purposes until the last gubernatorial elections where both communities worked together for the APC even though political interests within the PDP in the state joined in the alliance between the two communities, but were over-powered and chased out. Those who control the oil economy incidentally dictate the tune for partisan politics in the area. An attempt by the PDP members to campaign in Nembe as part of the electoral process led to the loss of some lives during the 2019 elections. The political elites, their support structures, local community structures, youths, and women are implicated as actors. Loss of lives, bodily injuries, destruction of properties, internal displacement, economic losses, and lack of social trust and cohesion are common impacts of such crisis in the Nembe Local Government Area. Another notable impact of political violence in the area is internal displacement. Hundreds of people, mainly from the less powerful group at the time are internally displaced, sometimes for years.

ii. Cultism and cult-related violence

Cult activities are prevalent in Nembe Local Government Area, and enjoy the moral and financial support of politicians and oil businessmen mainly to intimidate challengers or would-be challengers in the contestation for oil rents and political control of partisan and local community politics. It was discovered that many youths, belonging to various cult groups such as Vikings confraternity, Iceland confraternity, and Greenland confraternity are paid monthly stipends either as oil

surveillance workers or sit at home payments. Community leadership structures from chiefs to CDCs, youth executives, women, and Action Group members also receive some form of monthly payments.

Unemployment, drug/substance abuse, the quest to control the oil rents, and community leadership are complex drivers of insecurity and conflict in the area. Cult clashes have led to the loss of lives, caused injuries to rival cult members and innocent citizens, destruction of properties, and disruption of economic and social events. Nembe – Bassambiriand and Nembe – Ogbolomabiri are hotspots of cultism.

iii. Sea robbery and Kidnapping

The Nembe Local Government Area is also susceptible to sea robber's attacks and kidnapping. Sea piracy and kidnapping have largely reduced due to the completion of the Yenagoa – Ogbia – Nembe road project, constructed by the SPDC and the Niger Delta Development Commission, and the activities of oil surveillance contractors whose security operatives and youths are patrolling the creeks to secure oil facilities in the area. This supports the thesis and link between the development of infrastructure to peace and security. Many youths, who were hitherto involved in sea robbery and kidnapping, have also been engaged by the surveillance contractors to secure the oil and gas facilities in their domains. This explains the reduction in kidnapping and sea piracy in the area. According to a respondent, "at a point, traders were even afraid of going to certain daily markets. It was not until surveillance contracts were given to certain contractors and these contractors started using the boys for these contracts". The level of piracy reduced because of these contracts. Respondents stated that in the past, sea pirates have attacked military gunboats in Nembe and carted away their arms and ammunition. Civilians have also lost their lives to sea pirate attacks. Economic activities, especially in the riverine communities, have been impacted negatively due to sea pirate attacks. Respondents observed that there could be a relapse to full-scale insecurity in the area if the surveillance contracts are taken from the indigenous contractors and given to the Navy as suggested by the state deputy governor in March 2020.

c. Ogbia Local Government Area

Ogbia Local Government Area has its headquarters in Ogbia town. It covers a total area of 1,698 km² and a population of 179,926, according to the 2006 census figure. The area takes pride in hosting Oloibiri, the community where oil was first struck in Nigeria in 1956. The insecurity dynamics as they currently manifest in Ogbia LGA are discussed within the following thematic considerations:

i. Cultism

Cultism and cult-related violence is on top of the list of insecurity challenges in Ogbia Local Government Area. There is hardly any Ogbia community that has not been affected by the menace of cultism and its associated vices. While describing the pervasiveness of cultism in Ogbia, the participants of the youth focus group discussion lament thus:

In every 10 Ogbia boys you see today, eight are cult members and drug addicts. It has led to an increase in the rate of gang activities in virtually all Ogbia communities as it has suddenly become a fad to be a cultist (FGD/Youth Leaders/Ogbia).

Respondents revealed that the most prominent cult gangs in Ogbia include the Greenlanders, Icelanders, Deybam, and Vikings. While each of the gangs has a varying degree of influence and power, the Greenlanders appear to be more powerful as they are most connected with and affiliated with key politicians in the local government. The Greenlanders are most connected to the seat of power in the area as some of the leaders of the confraternity are currently political officeholders. This notwithstanding, each of the gangs has its sphere of influence across the territorial landscape of Ogbia. It was revealed that while Kolo community happens to be the headquarters and sphere of influence of the Deebam, Imiringi community is the headquarters for the Greenlanders. In other communities like Emeyal 1, Emeyal 2, Otuoke, Elebele, Otuasega, and Oruma, the two major gangs co-exist alongside the Icelanders and Vikings. Findings from the study showed that cult clashes occur more in these communities where gangs co-exist due to

the battle for supremacy and territorial control, unlike in Kolo for example which experiences fewer cult wars since it's solely a Deybam stronghold. The activities of cult gangs in Ogbia have constituted a serious insecurity challenge for the area as cult gangs are known to perpetrate heinous crimes such as armed robbery, political violence, rape, and even kidnapping. Otuoke community being the host of the federal university in the state is largely impacted by cult clashes owing to the rising number of campus-based cult gangs and associated cult clashes in the area. This has further compounded the cult issue in Ogbia LGA as campus-based cult gangs have largely contributed to insecurity in the area.

In some cases, inter cult war has also metamorphosed into inter-communal crises. The recent cult clashes that happened between the Greenlanders and Deybam almost led to an inter-communal crisis between neighboring Otuasega and Oruma communities. The crises started when, in the early part of January 2020, Deybam gang members from Otuasega community and Greenlanders from Oruma clashed over a supremacy battle which led to the destruction of community-owned properties. It was gathered that a community-owned guesthouse was destroyed in Otuasega community by the gang members from Oruma community, thereby infuriating the youths of Otuasega who saw the attack as an affront on their community. The incident raised serious tension between both communities as they lived in fear of reprisals and mutual suspicion. It took the intervention of the leaders from both communities to put the situation under control after a series of peace meetings.

The study also revealed that aside from running criminal gangs in the communities, most cult gangs have strong ties with the political class and they are key stakeholders in the political recruitment process in the local government.

ii. Kidnapping for ransom

Ogbia has become an epicenter of kidnapping in Bayelsa State. Incidences of kidnapping have increased tremendously in the area. Kidnapping was reported to be more prone in the Oloibiri axis, Ogbia town, and the Abureni clan due to the riverine nature of these areas. Armed men have invaded the houses of people and whisked them away several times in Ogbia. It was also on record that on December 24,

2019, the residence of former president Dr. Goodluck Jonathan was attacked by armed bandits in the early hours, and a soldier was killed during the assault. The people of Ogbia have continued to live in fear as incidences of kidnaping are reported regularly. A respondent in the study while sharing his experience reported thus:

...my father's house was attacked in 2017 in Oloibiri, my village when 22 armed men entered the village with two speed boats. Thirteen of them came with assault rifles, that is AK 47s, the rest were with Oka (locally made guns) and pump actions. They came in, broke down our house, they tried breaking the doors but it was bulletproof. So, they ended up breaking the walls to pull down the door. They said he was a former ambassador that he came back from Italy with money and put it in a container; that the container is filled with dollars. They broke the container only to bring out the furniture we bought for our grandmother's burial. Somebody died on the spot, two people were hospitalized, and one had a problem with his spinal cord. I was calling 16 brigades, calling the security agencies, for three hours but there was no response (KII/M/Opinion Leader/Oloibiri Community/38 Years).

iii. Drugs

The use and abuse of hard drugs have been a major driver of conflicts and insecurity in Ogbia Local Government Area. The use of drugs especially cannabis, tramadol, codeine, and even cocaine amongst the Ogbia youth is alarming. Drugs act as a key driver to the violence that is associated with cultism, armed robbery, kidnaping, and other forms of criminality bedeviling Ogbia. The study revealed that Imiringi community is the hub of drug trafficking in Ogbia Local Government Area. Drugs get to Ogbia through Imiringi. This is partly because Imiringi is the hub of the oil and gas industry in the local government. Hence, it has a viable economy to sustain such illicit trade. The proliferation of illicit drugs in Ogbia Local Government Area has negatively impacted the area as it has increased criminality and produced unproductive youths that easily become tools for unscrupulous politicians.

iv. Illegal Bunkering and Artisanal Refining

Ogbia Local Government Area is increasingly becoming the hub for illegal bunkering and artisanal refining in Bayelsa state following the clampdown of these activities in Southern Ijaw, Brass, and Ekeremor by surveillance contractors and the Nigerian Army. Illegal bunkering and artisanal refining are mostly domiciled along the Kolo creek axis of Ogbia especially in Ebelebiri community. Although most of the respondents perceive illegal bunkering to be more of a livelihood activity than a criminal venture, it contributes to insecurity in the area. Firstly, artisanal refining comes with a severe environmental cost that results in the pollution of the Kolo creek which negatively impacts food security and the livelihoods of communities along the creek. Secondly, the presence of artisanal refining camps in Ogbia has led to the increasing militarization of the area as cult gangs, the police, military, and community vigilantes all compete to capture economic benefits at various stages of the production and distribution value chain.

On the other hand, the study also revealed that the illegal bunkering and artisanal refining flourish in the area because the communities perceive it to be a livelihood activity which has provided jobs for the youths and it is rather reducing the level of insecurity in the area. Respondents in the youths focus group discussion (FGD) alluded to this when they argued thus:

If you take a case study of the illegal bunkering activities that are happening in Kolo creek, you know that most times when you look at our creek, the creeks have been polluted and it affects even the farms along the creek. But we allow them to do these activities because whenever these activities are ongoing, the level of theft and criminality is minimized; but once the government intervenes and stops the business, it ignites the crime rate to increase. If you take a view of what is happening when these bunkering activities are ongoing and when it is not ongoing, you now know that unemployment and hunger are the root cause of all these things (FGD/Youth Leaders/Ogbia).

This trend is similar to our earlier submission in Ekeremor Local Government Area, where it was reported that the clampdown and stoppage of illegal bunkering and artisanal refining in the area has increased the incidences of sea piracy. This tends to prove that massive unemployment and underdevelopment remain a key driver of insecurity

in the area. This notwithstanding, the study also identified poor community response due to the absence of substantive community leadership in most Ogbia communities as a key inhibitor of the community's ability to curb the menace of insecurity. This tends to show that the traditional institution has been weakened in Ogbia both by internal political/leadership tussles and the constant disempowerment and de-relevance of the traditional institution by the state government. Speaking on behalf of the traditional institution, one of the kings interviewed had this to say:

...We are not kings o in a sense that those cultists and militants are closer to the governor than yourself who is the king. Ordinarily, the governor will come and say, look as kings, you are in charge of your various domains. Ensure that there is peace and security... It is difficult because these are all deceits, and we as kings we do not bear arms. But the governor has army, police, guarding him. Where ever he is going, he is guarded, even if he wants to travel. There are things you will do and your life will be in danger. And so you have to be careful, and that is why kings are handicapped in their domains because of the way the government is being run, and with all the ways of the various cult groups that don't listen to their parents, that don't listen to their uncles, but only listens to their cult masters, do you understand? So, in a situation like this, it is the government itself that can do away with this insecurity challenges. In as much as the government has a hand in it, sorry, you are wasting your time (KII/M/King/Ogbia LGA).

The above submission reflects the weak capacity of the traditional institutions in the state to curb the diverse forms of insecurity communities across the state are challenged with.

5.4 Analysis of the Interactions between Actors and Context

This section of the research report presents and establishes the interactions between actors and the insecurity context in the state. The analysis of these interactions is discussed within the foregoing thematic considerations:

i. Relevant factors that contribute to insecurity in the state

The insecurity landscape of Bayelsa State is populated by a group of conflict merchants including politicians, ex-militants, oil bunkers, cult gangs, businessmen, youths, sea pirates, kidnappers, and armed robbers, etc. In responding to a question on who the actors are, a key informant stated:

Drug dealers are actors... then oil bunkers and illegal refiners of crude oil...sometimes community leadership are also actors because if a community does not permit for people to do illegal refining of crude oil in their forest, they cannot have access...and the community leaders get settlements from the oil bunkers and refiners (KII/Male/Opinion Leader/Igbomotoru/45 years).

Also, respondents in the Kaiama focus group stated that cult boys are the actors involved in insecurity in Kaiama community and Kolokuma/Opokuma local government area. Kaiama is a community along the East-West Road, a community that connects to Delta and Rivers State. Cult gangs in the area are populated by community youths who either reside in the community or the cities, but flock to the community, mostly during festivals and big burial ceremonies to cause mayhem. Also, herdsmen have on a few occasions intruded into farms belonging to the natives and destroyed their crops. The vigilante groups in Kaiama have averted crisis relating to herders' invasion of farmlands in the area.

It was important to interrogate and understand the motivation of these actors involved in insecurity and how they sustain their operations. Key informants and actors interviewed stated that lots of those involved in sea piracy and kidnapping are beneficiaries of the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) whose mostly stipends payments of #65,000 (sixty-five thousand naira) is sometimes delayed for months, and they need to feed with their families. So, they engage in sea piracy or kidnapping to survive. Some blamed the way the programme was structured where beneficiaries would acquire skills, go through training programmes home and abroad and return with no jobs as a reason for the failure of the PAP and, therefore, the inherent insecurity. Idleness and joblessness were also implicated for their return to the creeks. The monthly stipends to militants also serve as motivating factors to peaceful youths to also

engage in crime and criminality to be recognized.

A respondent captured this view thus:

...the guns these ex-militants are carrying, others can also carry it but some are being paid amnesty. Those who are not included are also agitating. Those who are not included go to the river so they will be noticed and also get considered (FGD/Male/Youth/Nembe-Ogbolomabiri Community/38 years).”

The amnesty programme is, therefore, fueling more insecurity in the state as erstwhile non-violent actors would want to take to violence to also benefit from monies and contracts being thrown at conflict actors. This economy of violence therefore fuels, sustain, and reinforces the ongoing insecurity in the state.

The poor justice system in the country also impacts the security environment in the state. Conflict actors are emboldened because the criminal justice system has made it difficult for perpetrators of crime to get commensurate punishment for crimes committed. Even where arrests are made, the looseness of the system gets them freedom, sometimes by just a call from high profile politicians or businessmen.

ii. Stakeholders that contribute to resolving insecurity in the state

Insecurity and conflict resolution are major concerns of state and non-state actors. Institutions, groups, and individuals play vital roles in resolving insecurity issues when they arise. These include but are not limited to government institutions, traditional authorities and charismatic leaders, non-governmental organizations, some respected clergymen, and cultural organizations. For example, following Chief Obasanjo’s establishment of the Niger Delta Peace and Conflict Resolution Committee sometime in 2006, the Bayelsa State Government established the Bayelsa State Peace, and Conflict Resolution Committee which played vital roles in getting the militants out of the creeks before the Presidential Amnesty Programme in 2009. Former governor, Timipre Sylva was using a pacific approach by paying millions of naira monthly to the militants who were scattered along the creeks of Bayelsa State as a way of engagement to forestall a breakdown of law and order. The

former agitators including Ebikabowei Victor Ben (Boyloaf), Africanus Ukparasia (Gen. Africa), Paul Eris (Gen. Ogunboss), Joshua Maciver (Izon Tukpa), Selky Kiley (Gen. Young Shall Grow), etc. were allegedly paid between #10 million naira to #30 million naira monthly through the Bayelsa State Peace and Conflict Resolution Committee chaired then by Chief James Jephthah (Octopus). Through these payments, the state government secured their loyalty, so it was not difficult for the militants to be persuaded to come out of the creeks following the proclamation of amnesty by President Yar'Adua. Furthermore, some of the key ex-agitators like Government Ekpemupulo (Tompolo) have in recent years played instrumental roles in conflict resolution especially in the Ekeremor axis of Bayelsa state.

There are traditional rulers and some charismatic community leaders who arbitrate between parties in conflict or disputes and resolve them. For example, until his death in January 2020, His Royal Highness, Edward Tokpo (JP), the late Amananowei of Otuan who ruled Otuan community for 54 years - from 1965 – 2020 - regularly settled such disputes. The same can be said of every community or clan traditional leader. They use customary laws and norms and wisdom to settle issues that would otherwise cause insecurity or conflict in their domains. More so, the Pan Niger Delta Forum (PANDEF) made up of key elders, statesmen, and leaders across the Niger Delta region has over the last few years contributed immensely to conflict de-escalation and peacebuilding. The PANDEF was instrumental to the current ceasefire and normalcy enjoyed in the region after the Niger Delta Avengers resumed hostilities. Civil society organizations such as AA Peaceworks, conveners of the Niger Delta Dialogue (NDD), Partnership Initiative in the Niger Delta (PIND), Stakeholders Democracy Network (SDN), the Bayelsa State Non-Governmental Organizations Forum (BANGOF), etc. have been involved in one way or the other in promoting peace and averting crisis in Bayelsa State and the Niger Delta region.

The Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) has been the dominant Ijaw youth group. While at different times members of the IYC have been instigators or perpetrators of violence and insecurity, the group has played significant roles in resolving insecurity and conflict issues. The recent invasion of Letugbene and Azagbene communities in Ekeremor Local Government Area by the military in a reprisal attack was resolved following the intervention of the group.

- iii. Leaders (traditional, political, community, social, and economic leaders) that influence the outcome of political processes and insecurity in the state

The political process in Bayelsa State is largely directed by the state governor at the time. Other political leaders, elected or appointed or none governing elites usually fall in line with the governor's wishes. In recent years, opposition to the ruling party has been increasing. Aside from the sitting governor, former President Goodluck Jonathan; Former Governor Chief Timipre Sylva, Former Governor Henry Seriake Dickson; Former Ag. Managing Director of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Chief Ndutimi Alaibe; Heineken Lokpobiri, among others are key influencers of the political process in the state. However, all elective positions in the state are largely determined by the incumbent governor. The governor is known to provide funding, usually state funds to facilitate the election of his preferred candidates.

Politics in Bayelsa state is usually characterized by violence arising due largely to the disposition of the actors who have more often than not demonstrated a '*win at all cost*' mentality. Disenfranchisement, deprivation, and alienation of interested aspirants by godfathers are commonplace. For example, in the 2019 local government elections in the state, the PDP, on the directive of Governor Henry Dickson produced only one nomination form for each councillorship position across the 105 wards and one each for chairmanship positions in the eight LGAs. Also, all 24 candidates for the House of Assembly, five House of Representative seats, and three Senate seats were solely nominated and produced by Governor Henry Seriake Dickson. Again, he solely handpicked the flagbearer of the PDP, Sen. Douye Diri, and supported him with state funds and state power to win the primary election. Chief Timi Alaibe and few other aspirants refused to bow to the governor's dictates and went ahead to contest the primaries but lost. These are the kind of actions that precipitate violence and insecurity in the state.

A respondent stated the following:

I believe that it is the politicians that are encouraging insecurity. Because if you are in power, you use these boys, don't expect that when

the next person comes, they will not do the same thing. And if you feed them now, keep feeding them, keep feeding them, and as you keep feeding them, they are under your beck and call...if you say that, government is not doing well or that government is doing substandard jobs, somebody would say "why is this person saying that government is doing a substandard job?" The governor can use some of these boys to hunt you. We know these things. People are afraid; they cannot speak up again because the government is using these boys to cause insecurity. Look my brother, the government is the highest killer, record me... You just see people dying you don't know who came to kill them. Sometimes we know who killed them but we cannot go and arrest them. And we have government and police cannot arrest them (KII/Female/Former Assembly Member/Bayelsa State/57 Years).

A respondent from Nembe also stated:

The actors, for now, are PDP and APC. They are partisan actors. Politicians are the actors. Cultists are also actors and, in some cases, militants ...it is the politicians that sponsor these conflicts. Every conflict you see is sponsored by politicians. Politicians are the shadow parties. You won't see them at the scene of the crimes but it is their foot soldiers, the cultists that you would see at the scene of the conflicts. (KII/Male/Youth Executive/Nembe Ogbolomabiri Community/42 Years).

The only exception to the win all situation was in 2007 when then-President Olusegun Obasanjo directly intervened to prevail on the then Acting Managing Director of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Chief Ndotimi Alaibe to step down for then Acting Governor Goodluck Jonathan in the gubernatorial primary election for the ticket of the PDP. Chief Alaibe stepped down for Goodluck Jonathan and was consequently rewarded with the privilege, as directed by Obasanjo, to nominate 10 out of the 24 House of Assembly members, two out of the five House of Representative members, and one out of the three senatorial candidates. This was before Goodluck Jonathan was nominated as running mate to late President Umaru Musa Yar'adu. There was no violence because of the settlement.

iv. Power dynamics and relationships between actors, their frame of action, capabilities, and resources

Political power is essentially the most prized asset in Bayelsa State. The power dynamics have revolved around a few political heavyweights supported by ex-militants and cult gangs. The politicians, especially the governors, are the patrons, while youths, mainly ex-militants and cult gangs are clients to these political leaders. The political landscape in the state has been dominated by gladiators such as former President Goodluck Jonathan who was the deputy governor to late Chief DSP Alamiyeseigha, the first executive governor of Bayelsa State from 1999-2005. Goodluck Jonathan later rose to be the acting governor of the state after the incarceration of Chief Alamiyeseigha. He also later became Nigeria's vice president under President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, and finally emerged as the president of Nigeria from 2010 - 2015 after the death of Yar 'Adua. Chief Timipre Sylva who is the Minister of State, Petroleum Resources is also the leader of the APC in Bayelsa State. He was governor of the state from 2007-2012 but was denied a second term ticket by then President Goodluck Jonathan after the duo fell apart. Another gladiator is former Governor Henry Seriake Dickson who is the only governor of the state to have ruled two complete terms of four years each. He was the commissioner for justice when Goodluck Jonathan was the governor of the state from 2005-2007. He was also elected into the House of Representatives in 2007 till 2012 when he was elected as the governor. Chief Ndutimi Alaibe, though has not held any elective position, has been a political gladiator since he contested the gubernatorial primaries of the PDP with late Alamiyeseigha in 2003. He was first appointed as the Executive Director, Finance and Administration, NDDC, but was later elevated by Chief Olusegun Obasanjo to be the acting managing director of the commission. He was also appointed Coordinator of the Presidential Amnesty Programme and Special Adviser to President Yar'Adua on Niger Delta Matters. Politics in the state among these gladiators have been the winner takes all, thereby leading to a violent struggle for power among the gladiators. Former President Jonathan has, however, been known for his peaceful conduct. He said in his 2011 presidential election campaigns that his ambition is not worth the blood of any Nigerian. He also made the famous call to his successor, President Muhammadu Buhari to

congratulate him even before the final results were announced.

Violent groups and individuals exchange support for political patronage in the form of monthly payments, contracts, quick-win jobs, government appointments, and protection. Ex-militant leaders and cult members have been appointed into office as local government chairmen and the Bayelsa Vigilante and Bayelsa Volunteers security outfits, while others have been rewarded with party tickets and funded by the state government into the State House of Assembly. This corroborates the views of a former Speaker of the Bayelsa State House of Assembly who stated:

For cultism, I don't want to cast aspersions on previous administrations, but specifically from 2009 to 2011, we had our government paying different cult groups salary in the state (KII/Male/Former Speaker BSHA/47 Years).

These actors possess enormous resources capable of influencing the outcomes of elections in the state. When in office, they use state resources to fund political activities for members of their party whom they handpicked to contest various elective positions.

- v. Types of action by actors that impact the situation directly, and their motivations for these type of actions (financial, personal, political, ethnic interests, etc.)

The imposition of candidates, sometimes unqualified candidates, the application of state resources and state power, and the patronage of violent groups by politicians have the most profound and direct impact on the polity and the security landscape of the state. These have had far-reaching social, economic, and political impacts on the state. These actions are motivated by financial (as in making financial gains), political (as in being in control of the levers of power and therefore have considerable share of the resources of the state), and ethnic interest (as in protecting the political interest of a group to have some advantages such as citing of projects, execution of contracts and a good share of appointments to one's ethnic enclave). At other levels, such actions are motivated for personal reasons such as to maintain one's relevance, power, and influence in the system.

5.5 Analysis of Impacts of insecurity and conflicts in Bayelsa State

Insecurity and conflicts leave trails and relics of social, economic, political, and psychological impacts. The natural balance is usually distorted and new forms of dynamics emerge when insecurity and conflicts occur. The study revealed that the interplay of the diverse manifestations and issues of insecurity in Bayelsa State have collectively constituted a human security challenge for the people of the state. These issues have negatively impacted the three core fundamental components of human security which are the freedom from want, the freedom from fear, and the freedom from indignity. The manifestations of these impacts are discussed below within the following thematic considerations:

i. Social Impacts

The first casualty of insecurity and conflict is the society itself. Insecurity affects the social fabric of society, breeds disunity and social distrust among members of a community, and sometimes results in a social breakdown. The 2019 electoral crisis in Nembe, for example, distorted academic activities and caused internal displacement to indigenes of the community. The Peremabiri crisis also resulted in internal displacement and the recent military invasion of Azagbene, Bilabiri, and Letugbene communities in Ekeremor Local Government Area. Till now, many families cannot return to their communities to settle or even attend family programmes such as burials and marriages. School sports activities, burials, cultural festivals, and marriage ceremonies have been disrupted by cultists on several occasions. From the Amassoma Fishing and Feasting Festival to the Odi Ogori Ba Oge, the Kaiama Festival, beach parties, etc, these events have suffered such disruptions over the years. Many no longer have passion for such programmes, due to the incessant violent disruptions. In the Ijaw tradition, burial ceremonies were hitherto done in the night till the day of interment. There is a cultural shift in most parts of Ijawland, where such ceremonies are now conducted during the day.

Insecurity disrupts and dislocates family ties and communal life. It breeds hunger, grooms people to hate perceived or real enemies who may have perpetrated some hurtful crimes to family members during

insecurity and conflict. Overall, the incentivization of conflict and insecurity by rewarding conflict actors with political appointments and contracts has continued to reinforce violence, thereby creating a culture of violence in the state.

ii. Economic impacts

The economy represents the backbone of society. Insecurity and conflict are the most potent adversaries to the economic wellbeing of the citizens. There are huge economic impacts of insecurity and conflicts in Bayelsa State. During the fieldwork, it was revealed that cult activities, armed robbery, sea piracy, and kidnapping which are prevalent in the state have largely contributed to the economic hardship and hunger. Some businesses such as the entertainment industry thrive at night, but insecurity has disrupted night businesses. Shop owners close before nightfall in many parts of the state to avoid robbers or cultists' raid on their shops. Point of Sales (POS) operators, even banks, filling stations, grocery shops, have often been attacked by robbers and cultists. Commercial activities in rural communities are the most affected as sea robbers have made many routes impassible. Marketmen and women, local and speed boat operators in the maritime sector, and travelers have been victims of sea pirate attacks. Some have lost their lives in the process while some women have been raped.

These activities have made many who hitherto had their businesses in the state to relocate to more peaceful states. It has prevented new investments that could have provided jobs for the teeming youths and equally denied the state much needed internally generated revenues (IGR). Unemployment, poverty, hunger, and underdevelopment in the state are the direct manifestations of insecurity and conflicts.

iii. Political impacts

Politics is the most available means for politicians to build their economic bases. The state lacks industries and factories. Politics is, therefore, seen as the most viable industry. Therefore, contestation for political power in Bayelsa State has become a violent struggle for state power, and could best be described, according to Claude Ake in the context of "Warlike Democracy". The contest for state power is 'zero-sum' as winners win all, and losers lose all. This precarious situation has

generated dynamics that have kept the state in concentric circles of backwardness, poverty, and squalor. The violent nature of politics produces 'leaders' who are accountable only to their godfathers, ex-militant leaders, and cultists who shot the way for them to attain power. Sense of responsibility, accountability, probity, and sense of duty have therefore taken flight. The logical outcome is the rise of profligate leaders and many who could barely express themselves, getting elected into positions of authority. This situation produces what HRM King Bubraye Dakolo called the emergence of "Unscrupulous Elite". He stated that Nigeria is heading to the rocks if men of goodwill do not take over the reins of power. He posited thus:

...if the scrupulous elite do not take over the reins of power from the unscrupulous elite, if the unscrupulous elite do not surrender power to those who can govern, the likelihood is that Nigeria is going to collapse into pieces because we are right now at the precipice (KII/Male/HRM King of Ekpetiama Clan/Ekpetiama Community/58 Years).

While politics ought to be an avenue to serve the public, it has become a means for the private control of the state and this is achieved through violence. Politicians often promote drug abuse, arms proliferation, and violence of many kinds. The institutions of state have been hijacked by politicians by their undue interference using political power and public resources to protect conflict actors.

Psychological impacts

Given that the social, economic, and political impacts of insecurity and conflict generally affect the psychology and the general psyche of the people, and socialize them into a rogue/violent culture, the psychological impacts of war could last generations. Many youths in Bayelsa State have been socialized into a culture of cultism, drug abuse, militancy, and other criminal and violent behaviours. This is due to the practice, over time by politicians and government, to reward cultists, militants, drug addicts, and badly-behaved youths with appointments, contracts, monthly payments, and protection. Respondents argued that youths are lured by the seeming achievements of conflict actors and aim to be like them.

The DPO, Azikoro Division stated thus:

...so, what the youths see now, they see those militants, those thugs you know riding big cars, building big houses, and rather than utilizing a more respectable way of achieving success in life, they will then tend to follow them. So, if I want to say, I will say, I will put government firstly responsible, then the leaders of this groups; like I have said earlier on, that cultism now in more especially in the Niger Delta region, is the mother of all crimes (KII/Male/DPO, Azikoro Division/Azikoro Community/50 Years).

Youths in the state are socialized into cultism and other crimes with the hope that they would be feared and compensated by the authorities. This psychological impact has bred cultists, illegal oil bunkerers, drug peddlers, militants, sea pirates, and kidnappers in the state at primary, secondary schools, and university levels, including out of school children and youths.

6. Summary of Research Findings

The study examined the insecurity issues, trends, contexts, and dynamics in Bayelsa State. It provides a critical analysis of the prevalent insecurity context that shapes and drives insecurity in all its ramifications and exploring the diverse types of insecurity issues, key actors relevant to insecurity challenges, key drivers of insecurity, and possible mitigating institutions and strategies.

Based on the qualitative research design within the praxis of the human security approach, the study showed a prevalent pattern of interwoven and inter-connected insecurity issues that are mutually-reinforcing. These issues are largely manifested in the form of violent conflicts and youth-based restiveness such as militancy, sea piracy, kidnapping, oil bunkering/artisanal refining, attacks on military personnel, military invasion of communities, armed robbery, cultism, drug trafficking, inter-communal environmental resource conflicts and intra-communal leadership and resource management crises. The mapping of the insecurity landscape in Bayelsa State showed that while cultism and cult-related violence featured as a state-wide insecurity issue, militancy, sea piracy, attacks on critical oil infrastructure and attacks on military formations and the associated military invasion of communities are predominant in Ekeremor Local Government Area.

More so, while activities of sea piracy and armed robbery have reduced tremendously in Nembe Local Government Area due to the completion of the Ogbia-Nembe road and the engagement of the youths by surveillance contractors to secure oil facilities in the area, these activities are on the rise along the waterways of Brass and Southern Ijaw local government areas. Also, while Yenagoa and Ogbia Local Government Areas are most notorious for cult-related violence and kidnapping, Southern Ijaw, Ekeremor, and Nembe local governments were reported to be hotspots for political violence, militancy, sea robbery, cultism, and kidnapping. Furthermore, while the activities of illegal bunkering and artisanal refining have drastically reduced in previous hotspots like Southern Ijaw, Ekeremor, and Brass local government areas due to the jobs done by the indigenous pipeline surveillance contractors, this illicit business is thriving in the Kolo Creek area of Ogbia Local Government Area which has now become the new hotspot for illegal bunkering and artisanal refining. Despite the precarious state of insecurity in the state, Sagbama and Kolokuma/Opokuma local government areas are the least impacted by these insecurity issues.

The analysis of the key drivers of insecurity in the state revealed multifarious factors ranging from social conditions such as the breakdown of value systems, faulty reward system, heroizing of violent actors, irresponsible parenting, the prevalence of drug use and abuse amongst youths, to economic conditions such as unemployment, poverty, get rich syndrome and widespread underdevelopment in the state; political conditions such as failure of governance both at the community, local, state and federal levels and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs). Conversely, the existing insecurity situation predisposes the already weak structural conditions to further strains as it poses negative impacts to the social, economic, political, and psychological well-being of the society thereby creating the necessary conditions to further exacerbate the insecurity in the state.

Several types of actors influence the security landscape and outcomes in Bayelsa State. While some actors are actively involved in violent conflicts such as young men and women clustered as youth groups, cult gangs, militants and ex-militants, other actors like politicians, community leaders, international oil companies (IOCs), and so on are shadow actors who create the environment for conflict to thrive and also provide funding and arms for the actors. This tends to establish the linkages and

connections between the various dimensions of insecurity to be mutually reinforcing since, for instance, while the cult gangs are responsible for political violence, armed robbery, and kidnapping or oil bunkering; politicians, community leaders, etc. provide arms and finances to sustain such activities. Politicians are known to procure arms and recruit cult groups and other powerful armed groups to intimidate opponents and rig elections. Cultists and militants are also deployed during election campaigns and rallies. It was also found that often, the politicians are not able to meet the needs of the “boys” when they win and assume office as they become increasingly inaccessible. The boys hence resort to using the illegal firearms to perpetrate crimes to survive.

Further, the international oil companies (IOCs) are also key actors especially with regards to inter, and intra communal conflicts in oil host communities. The IOCs were reported to stoke crises within and between communities by a means of divide and rule through which communities are shortchanged. The IOCs also patronize conflict actors using contract awards for security, surveillance, and patrols, thereby providing incentives for more conflict actors to emerge.

The foregoing notwithstanding, the study identified some key actors that can be instrumental in mitigating and resolving insecurity and conflict issues. These include conventional authorities such as the government, security agencies, traditional rulers, clergymen, civil society organizations, and respected ex-militant leaders like Government Ekpemupolo (Tompolo) and government committees. For example, ex-militant leaders, Africanus Ukparasia and Abraham Pius helped to limit the activities of sea pirates and kidnapers in the waterways of Southern Ijaw and Ekeremor local government areas when they were appointed as Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Bayelsa State Waterways Security Task Force by former Governor Henry Dickson.

7. Conclusion

Insecurity and conflict in Bayelsa State in the post amnesty era leaves much to be desired. While the insecurity issues that characterized the pre-amnesty period such as pipeline vandalism, and clashes between militants and soldiers attached to oil companies to protect oil facilities are not common now, kidnapping and sea piracy emerged as some of the unenviable legacies of the armed struggle. Armed militancy and the largesse for ex-militants have also exacerbated insecurity in some ways.

Given the foregoing, the study, therefore, concludes that while all the aforementioned structural conditions are the primary drivers of insecurity in the state, insecurity is reinforced by the emergence of a culture of violence which is largely fed and sustained by the creation of a violent economy where actors such as cultists and militant leaders become conflict entrepreneurs or militia capitalists who capture benefits from the insecurity situation they created. The act of awarding surveillance and patrol contracts to militants and cultists or pacifying them with political appointments and elective positions and rewarding them with chieftaincy titles in their communities is therefore incentivizing the culture of violence which is already being passed down to the younger generations. This situation is perpetuating a vicious circle of unending violence in Bayelsa State.

8. Policy Recommendations

The study has shown that the issues of insecurity in Bayelsa State are multi-dimensional and multifarious, yet they are intertwined and interconnected. Tackling insecurity in Bayelsa State would, therefore, require a well-coordinated multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral approach. This approach must be comprehensive enough to integrate all relevant state, non-state, and community-based actors and be specific enough to address the context-specific issues as they manifest in various parts of the state. In achieving this, the prevention-oriented strategy which emphasizes a combination of both the top-bottom ‘protection’ approach and the bottom-top ‘empowerment’ approach is highly recommended.

Based on the foregoing, the following recommendations are put forward to the various stakeholders:

8.1 The Government

- The state government should work with the State House of Assembly to review the laws against cultism, sea piracy, and kidnapping to reflect current global and local realities; such laws should be enforced to the letter. We recommend the reduction of the death penalty to a jail term of 20 years with hard labour, so that the governors would find no difficulty in implementing the laws.

- The state and local government councils should work to consciously reverse the reward system where criminals are empowered with appointments, protection, monthly payments, and contracts, to rewarding hardworking, law-abiding, and peaceful youths. This is the most critical and sustainable long-term solution to insecurity.
- We recommend the application of crime surveillance systems and digital tracking technologies, such as the installation of surveillance cameras, and the use of drones with High Definition camera and video surveillance systems and sensors in the crimes hotspots. This should be backed by standby security teams stationed around the hotspots, especially patrols along the waterways, to mitigate attacks not only on oil infrastructure but on civilian populations.
- The federal and state governments should collaboratively create jobs and employment opportunities for the teeming unemployed youths especially with the gradual phasing-out of illegal bunkering and artisanal refining in the state. This can be done by providing opportunities for alternative livelihoods such as rapid infrastructural development in communities and access to skills acquisition, and financial capital for business start-ups.
- The study revealed that peaceful youths were often neglected in government programmes, thereby increasing the propensity of other youths to indulge in crime, drug abuse, and violence. It is, therefore, recommended that programmes and policies should be specifically designed to benefit the peaceful and law-abiding youths to motivate other youths to toe the path of peace.
- The government should, as a matter of urgency, empower the traditional institutions to have some executive powers rather than being mere ceremonial figures with no powers or resources to adequately secure and protect their domains.

8.2 The Communities

- Communities should develop rural security networks such as vigilante groups such as the Kaiama community model or community policing agencies that would act as information gathering and information sharing networks with key security agencies such as the police, military, and the State Security Service. The recent inauguration of the State Community Policing Advisory Committee and Community Policing Committee by the Bayelsa State governor should be harnessed by both communities and the police to strengthen collaborative community policing in the state.
- Communities should also strengthen their resolve to fight crime and criminality by adopting localized solutions such as sanctions, fines, banishments, or even the use of traditional practices such as oath-taking and invoking traditional gods.
- Communities should ensure that the right values are socialized to the young ones. Responsible parenting should be emphasized, the religious institutions and schools should inculcate values of peace and responsible living to the children and youths.
- Communities should desist from rewarding known conflict actors such as cultists and militants with chieftaincy titles and positions of nobility. This practice of idolizing and heroizing violent actors has largely incentivized and recycled violence in the communities.

8.3 International Oil Companies (IOCs)

- International oil companies should avoid community development efforts that are short term and driven by the ideology of securing Freedom to Operate (F^TO) from host communities and focus on long term or sustainable interventions that genuinely reduce insecurity in their areas of operation. IOCs can do this by collaborating with the local and state governments to entrench a robust framework for sustainable human and infrastructural development in their host communities.

- Liable as key conflict actors in the state, IOCs should desist from stoking communal crises through the divide and rule tactics. Rather, they should be a source of social capital for communities to bridge the underdevelopment deficits faced by host communities.

8.4 Civil Society Organisations

- Civil society organisations like the Niger Delta Dialogue should collaborate with the local governments and communities to build local capacity on conflict tracking, early warning systems, conflict resolution, and peace-building.
- Promote awareness creation and sensitization of communities and actors on the need for conflict de-escalation, and peacebuilding in local communities.

8.5 International Organizations

- International organizations such as the European Union (EU) should use their platforms to facilitate dialogue between state actors and civil society in a bid to address insecurity in the State.
- The European Union and other international partners should fund the development and implementation of specific intervention programmes that seek to eliminate the drivers of insecurity in the State.
- International partners should also provide technical support to the state and local governments in fighting drug abuse and arms proliferation by targeting mainly the points of production.

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Appendices

Table 1: Insecurity Trends in Bayelsa West Senatorial District

Date	Incidence	Description	Location	L. G. A
MAY 8, 2020	Kidnapping	Mr. Napoleon Alale (80 years old), father to the Sagbama LGA chairman, Embeleakpo Alale was kidnapped at Agbere town by unknown gunmen who left with their victim on a boat through the river nun.	Agbere Town	Sagbama
April 3, 2020	Gun battle	The notorious militant leader and sea robber, John Charles was killed by men of the Operation Delta Safe of the Nigerian military while three of his men escaped with gunshot wounds.	Ekeremor Creeks	Ekeremor
March 22, 2020	Criminal attack	Suspected militants attacked the Atala Oil field	Azagbene	Ekeremor
March 20, 2020	Criminal attack	Suspected militants attacked three passport 19 speedboats moving from Warri to Atala oil field at Azagbene.	Azagbene	Ekeremor
March 16, 2020	Armed robbery	Sea robbers attacked a transport speedboat from Aghoro		Ekeremor

		Community en-route to Ogbobagbene community.		
February 28, 2020	Cult violence	The Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) central zone's National Convention was marred by violence resulting in the stabbing and death of one Mr Timi Ebiasuode also known as "Baba God".	Sagbama Town	Sagbama
February 16, 2020	Military Invasion	The Nigerian military invaded Bilabiri community destroying 4 houses and 2 suspected pirate camps.	Letugbene	Ekeremor
February 15, 2020	Sea Piracy	Suspected militants attacked a tugboat towing a barge carrying two cranes to Shell location at Tunu. Four soldiers were killed and a civilian captain.	Letugbene waterways	Ekeremor
February 1, 2020	Kidnapping	Suspected militants kidnapped a speedboat with the driver of the boat and a girl with Company food supply.	Egbemor Angalabiri	Ekeremor
January 17, 2020	Military Invasion	The Nigerian military invaded Bilabiri community	Bilabiri	Ekeremor

		destroying properties worth millions of naira including residential buildings.		
January 3, 2020	Kidnapping	Four (4) Naval Officers were killed and three expatriates working for a dredging company kidnaped by suspected sea pirates.	Bilabiri/Agge	Ekeremor
December 6, 2019	Kidnapping	The Ekeremor D.P.O was kidnapped by unknown gunmen. Immediately other troops rescued him and the kidnapers were all killed.	Ekeremor Town	Ekeremor
November 13, 2019	Sea piracy	Ex-militant by the name Ebigini was on a patrol at night along the waterways, accosted by some armed robbers.	Bilabiri	Ekeremor
November 8, 2019	Criminal attack	Four soldiers were killed.		Ekeremor
November 1, 2019	Explosion	A bunkering oven exploded and four persons burnt to death.	Ayama	Ekeremor
October 10, 2019	Kidnapping	Mrs. Beauty Ogere Siasia, the mother of former Super Eagles coach Mr. Samson Siasia, has regained her	Odoni	Sagbama

		freedom from the hands of kidnappers.		
October 8, 2019	Cult violence	Youths armed with machetes attacked one man leaving the victim with serious injuries.	Sagbama Town	Sagbama
September 8, 2019	Bunkering	Bunkering activities were reported along the trans-ramous pipeline between Ogbotobo and Aghoro communities.	Ogbotobo	Ekeremor
July 23, 2019	Military Invasion	Men of the Nigerian army invaded Azagbene community, destroying houses and properties.	Azagbene	Ekeremor
July 21, 2019	Criminal attack	Some criminals went to a military checkpoint and killed three soldiers, collected their raffles then ran away.	Azagbene	Ekeremor
June 5, 2019	Bunkering	Bunkering activities were discovered by the pipeline surveillance at the Community.	Ogbotobo	Ekeremor
July 5, 2019	Armed robbery	Armed robbers were seen going towards the sea with a 200-horsepower engine boat at river Ramos. Along the way, military men overwhelmed	Agge	Ekeremor

		them in a gun battle.		
May 19, 2019	Armed robbery	Armed robbers attacked passenger's speedboat along the Yenagoa-Forupagha route.	Forupagha	Southern Ijaw
May 1, 2019	Kidnapping	Five expatriates were kidnapped by suspected militants along the Trans-ramous pipeline.	Ogbotobo	Ekeremor
May 12, 2019	Armed robbery	Armed robbers attacked Market local boat at Ekeni Community river.	Ekeni	Southern Ijaw
June 1, 2019	Armed robbery	A local transport boat along Furopagha-Yenagoa route was robbed.	Furopagha	Southern Ijaw
March 15, 2019	Armed robbery	Unknowing gunmen attacked speedboats and tugboats between Furopagha and Ajuja-ama.	Furopagha/Ajuja-ama	Southern Ijaw
February 14, 2019	Armed robbery	Armed robbers attacked a speedboat with passengers going to Warri fortunately, a military gunboat engaged the robbers in a gun battle and killed one of them while the rest escaped.	Ogbotobo/Letugbene	Southern Ijaw

Source: Compiled by authors

Table 2: Insecurity Trends in Bayelsa Central Senatorial District

Date	Incidence	Description	Location	L. G. A.
July 9, 2020	Lynching	An 83 years old woman popularly called Taku was lynched to death by a mob at Ikebiri 1 community, for suspected practice of witchcraft and diabolically killing a teenager	Ikebiri 1	Southern Ijaw
JUNE 6, 2020	Armed Robbery and Lynching	Four suspected armed robbers apprehended and killed by an angry mob after a failed attempt of robbing a home on Bakery road, Azikoro	Azikoro	Yenagoa
May 28, 2020	Armed Robbery and Lynching	Two suspects apprehended and one beaten to death over attempted robbery of laptops	Opolo, Yenagoa	Yenagoa
MAY 13, 2020	Armed Robbery and Lynching	A young man was beaten to death by an angry mob along Azikoro Road, Old Assembly Quarters following an unsuccessful Point of Sale robbery attempt.	Old Assembly Quarters	Yenagoa
MAY 2, 2020	Criminal hideout invasion	The Nigerian Military in a raid operation launched an attack on three houses suspected to be owned by some militants and criminals	Foropa	Southern Ijaw

		in Foropa community.		
April 18, 2020	Land dispute/cult violence	One person was reportedly shot dead and two others reportedly survived with gunshot wounds.	Agudama-Epie	Yenagoa
April 12, 2020	Cult violence	Two persons were killed believed to be clashes by rival cult.	Azikoro community	Yenagoa
April 12, 2020	Gun battle	The Nigerian military killed the entire kidnap gang led by kidnap kingpin nicknamed Egbunu.	Southern Ijaw Creeks	Southern Ijaw
April 12, 2020	Cult violence	One person killed at Ogboloama, another shot at Agbia, and another shot severally at Okolobiri.	Gbarain Clan	Yenagoa
April 6, 2020	Cult violence	Three persons shot dead and one injured.	Gbarain-toru	Yenagoa
April 5, 2020	Robbery	Two robbers were caught by vigilantes	Etegwé	Yenagoa
March 28, 2020	Kidnap rescue	The mother of the Chairman of Yenagoa, Mrs Beauty Nimizuoa, rescued by the Operation Puff Adder Unit of the Nigerian Police.	Ezetu community	Southern Ijaw
March 25, 2020	Criminal hideout invasion	Two persons were reported to have been killed by the Nigerian Army.	Ezetu community	Southern Ijaw
March 24, 2020	Robbery	A young man who claimed to be a student of the Niger Delta University caught while attempting to snatch a cell phone.	Opolo	Yenagoa

March 20, 2020	Cult initiation	Four suspected cultists were arrested by the Nigeria police.	Okutukutu	Yenagoa
March 17, 2020	Cult violence	Two suspected cultists killed at Kpansia-Biogbolo school	Kpansia	Yenagoa
March 16, 2020	Cult violence	One reported killed resulting from rival cult war.	Kpansia	Yenagoa
March 15, 2020	Robbery	A young man was attacked and his phone and other valuables taken.	Tombia Roundabout	Yenagoa
March 15, 2020	Criminal hideout invasion	The Nigerian Police invaded and dislodged some suspected kidnapers and associated criminals.	Biseni Clan	Yenagoa
March 13, 2020	Militancy	Militants attacked a tugboat with a dresser coming from Port-Harcourt to Warri and killed three Mopols.	Ogboinbiri community	Southern Ijaw
March 10, 2020	Criminality	A serving police officer attached with the Bayelsa State Police Command was reportedly stabbed by suspected Fulani herdsman.	Azikoro Road, Ekeki	Yenagoa
March 5, 2020	Kidnapping	The mother of Hon. Uroupaye Nimizuoa, the Chairman of Yenagoa was kidnapped.	Agudama-Ekpetiama	Yenagoa
March 5, 2020	Militancy	Some group of Militants kidnapped the captain and the workers of the tugboat quickly bailed themselves with the sum of three hundred	Ezetu community	Southern Ijaw

		thousand naira (300,000) cash.		
March 1, 2020	Armed robbery	Armed robbers attacked a transport speedboat from Warri.	Ezetu community	Southern Ijaw
February 25, 2020	Robbery	A robbery reported around Dim-Ross junction.	Biogbolo	Yenagoa
February 24, 2020	Cult violence	Two suspected cultists attacked another cultist in his residence,	Okolobiri	Yenagoa
February 14, 2020	Cult violence	A suspected cultist was killed by the Nigerian police.	Swali	Yenagoa
January 26, 2020	Robbery	A suspected armed robber apprehended	Agudama-Epie	Yenagoa
January 23, 2020	Armed robbery and Lynching	Two suspected armed robbers robbing a point of sale agent were apprehended and lynched.	Biogbolo	Yenagoa
January 15, 2020	Cult violence	Two suspected cultists were arrested by the Nigerian Army.	Obunagha community	Yenagoa
January 10, 2020	Cult violence	Four suspected cultists were apprehended by indigenes and residents.	Okutukutu	Yenagoa
January 8, 2020	Cult violence	During late hours various cult groups were parading in the open.	Kaiama	Kolokuma-Opokuma
January 6, 2020	kidnapping	Six years old son of the current Bayelsa State Commissioner for Water Resources have been rescued and the kidnap suspects	Opolo	Yenagoa

		arrested.		
January 6, 2020	Unlawful use of firearm	A serving Police Mobile Force (PMF) Unit shot and killed a bus driver and one of his passengers.	Ekeki	Yenagoa
December 29, 2019	Armed robbery	A motorcyclist was seriously injured with machetes and his motorcycle taken by unknown thugs.	Amassoma	Southern Ijaw
December 23, 2019	Kidnapping	A six years old boy was kidnapped by unknown gunmen.	Opolo	Yenagoa
December 8, 2019	Armed robbery	A popular restaurant, Crunches Eatery at the Center of Yenagoa was robbed.	Kpansia	Yenagoa
December 5, 2019	Armed robbery and Lynching	A suspected armed robber was apprehended and mobbed.	Swali	Yenagoa
December 2, 2019	Robbery	Four suspected thieves with expertise in pocket picking and cell phone snatching were arrested.	Tombia Roundabout	Yenagoa
December 1, 2019	Armed robbery and Lynching	Three suspected armed robbers were accosted with guns around Arizona Filling Station and one was mobbed to death.	Yenizue-Egene	Yenagoa
November 24, 2019	Cult violence	A cultist allegedly hacked his mother to death.	Agbura	Yenagoa
November 12, 2019	Political violence	There was a clash of APC and PDP supporters.	Igbogene	Yenagoa
October	Cult	A young man was	Opokuma	Kolokuma-

27, 2019	violence	killed and properties destroyed.		Opokuma
October 22, 2019	Cult violence	A young man was attacked with machetes.	Okolobiri	Yenagoa
October 17, 2019	Political violence	Serving S. A.attacked by supporters of the main opposition party (APC).	Opolo	Yenagoa
October 15, 2019	Cult violence	A young man was seen lying unconsciously with machete and gun wounds.	Ovom	Yenagoa
October 10, 2019	Criminal arrest	Two ‘notorious’ kidnappers in the state.	Yenagoa	Yenagoa
October 3, 2019	Kidnapping	An 84 years old monarch, Mr. Doodei Week kidnapped and One Hundred and Fifty million naira demanded for his release.	Ayam-Ijaw community	Southern Ijaw
September 30, 2019	Political violence	Sporadic gunshots, when armed thugs forced their way into the House and went away with the mace.	State House of Assembly Complex,	Yenagoa
September 5, 2019	Pipeline vandalism	Operatives of Darlon Security and Guards Limited, shot and killed six youths.	Korokorosei	Southern Ijaw

Source: Compiled by authors

Table 3: Insecurity Trends in Bayelsa East Senatorial District

Date	Incidence	Description	Location	L. G. A
MAY 12, 2020	Cult Violence	Cult violence reported in community	Twon-Brass	Brass
April 12, 2020	Cult violence	One person killed believed to be clashes by rival cult gangs in the area.	Otuokpoti	Ogbia
April 7, 2020	Kidnapping	Two incidences of kidnapping were reported.	Ogbia Town	Ogbia
February 5, 2020	Kidnapping	The staffs including a foreigner of an engineering company contracted for the installation of street solar lamps along Oloibiri and Amakalaka communities escaped a kidnap attempt by unknown gunmen.	Oloibiri and Amakalaka	Ogbia
February 12, 2020	Kidnapping	A kidnap was reported by an unknown gunmen.	Amakalaka	Ogbia
January 29, 2020	Kidnapping	The operatives of Operation Puff Ader of the Nigerian Police, Bayelsa State Command intercepted a kidnap operation in process.	Imiringi	Ogbia
January 3, 2020	Cult violence	Also in the late hours of, a guest house was attacked by some suspected cultists.	Oruma	Ogbia
December 24, 2019.	Criminal attack	The residence of former president Dr. Goodluck Jonathan was attacked by armed bandits in the early hours.	Otuoke	Ogbia
December 9, 2019	Cult violence	The Federal University Otuoke, expelled Twenty Nine (29) students on Monday for Cultism and Examination Malpractice.	Otuoke	Ogbia
December 2, 2019	Kidnapping and Lynching	Three students of the Bayelsa State College of Health Technology (BYCOTECH) were kidnapped at gunpoint. Two	Otuogidi	Ogbia

		of the kidnappers were apprehended and lynched by a local vigilante.		
November 13, 2019	Criminality	Two policemen were reported to have been killed by two unidentified gunmen.	Otuogidi	Ogbia
November 13, 2019,	Political Violence	Five persons lost their lives including a driver of Radio Bayelsa OB Van, Mr. Simeon Onu during an attack on the PDP campaign rally.	Nembe	Nembe
24th October, 2019	Political Violence	There was an attack on some persons in Nembe Hospital Waterside.	Nembe	Nembe

Source: Compiled by authors

Table 4: Insecurity Landscape Mapping in Bayelsa State

LGAs	Insecurity Issues	Actors	Drivers	Funding Sources	Hotspots	Impacts	Mitigating Institutions
BAYELSA CENTRAL SENATORIAL DISTRICT							
Southern Ijaw	Sea piracy	Militants Ex-militants Cultists Youths	Unemployment Drug Abuse Arms proliferation	Sales of stolen engines, money taken from fishing trawlers, ransom	Azuzuama, Lobia, Ukubie, Foropa Ekeni, Gbaraun Ikebiri, Koluama I & II axis	Loss of lives, economic losses, rape, loss of social trust & cohesion	Military Bayelsa State Waterways Security Task Force
	Kidnapping	Youths Cultists	Unemployment Illegal Drugs Arms proliferation	Ransom Oil bunkering	Azuzuama Lobia Ukubie Ekeni Gbaraun Ikebiri Koluama I & II axis	Loss of lives, economic losses, lack of social trust & cohesion	Police DSS Military
	Cultism	Youths Politicians Businessmen	Politicians Unemployment Drug abuse	Politicians Drug deals Dues/levies & charges Oil bunkering, Returns	Amassoma Otuan Oporoma Angiama Ekowe Peremabiri Koluama etc.	Loss of lives, economic losses, injuries, fear, insecurity etc.	Police DSS CSOs
	Electoral-violence	Politicians Militants Youths Cultists Security agents INEC Godfathers	Unemployment Poverty Drugs Illiteracy Environment Corruption	Govt. & agencies of govt. Politicians Contractors Godfathers Parties Etc.	Oporoma Peremabiri Anyama Koluama I & II Ogboinbiri Amassoma etc.	Loss of lives, injuries, destruction of properties, poor leadership, Underdevelopment	Courts CSOs Traditional institutions Security agencies
	Boundary disputes	Communities Families	=	=	Igbomotoru	=	Traditional bodies
Yenagoa	Cultism	Cultists Politicians Businessmen	Unemployment Politicians Drug abuse Money Firearms	Politicians Drug deals Dues/levies & charges Oil bunkering, Returns	Down Yenagoa, Obele, Gwegwe Street, Amarata, Ogbogoro, Kpansian, Opolo, Okutukutu, Ede Epie etc.	Loss of lives, economic losses, injuries, insecurity, fear etc.	Police DSS CSOs Bayelsa Volunteers Bayelsa Vigilante Etc.
	Land disputes	Communities Chiefs Families Individuals	=	=	Epie/Atissa	Loss of lives, Economic losses, injuries, loss of social cohesion etc.	Police Govt. institutions Traditional authorities
	Electoral violence	Politicians militants Youths Cultists Security agents	Unemployment Poverty Drugs Illiteracy Environment Corruption	Govt. & agencies of govt. Politicians Contractors Godfathers	Opolo, Ovom, Down Yenagoa, Amarata, Biseni Zarama etc.	Loss of lives, destruction of properties, injuries etc.	Courts Police DSS Traditional institutions etc.

		INEC godfathers		Parties Etc.			
	Kidnapping	Youths Cultists	Unemployment Illegal Drugs Firearms Poverty	Ransom & Oil bunkering	Yenagoa metropolis and environs	Loss of lives, economic losses etc.	DSS Police
	Attacks on military & Police personnel	Militants Cultists Youths Armed robbers	Drug abuse Unemployment Illiteracy Poverty	=	Opolo, Amarat, etc.	=	=
	Theft	Militants Cultists Youths Robbers	Unemployment Poverty Drug abuse	=	Yenagoa metropolis and environs	Loss of lives Economic losses, insecurity	Police, DSS, traditional institutions (vigilantes)
Kolokuma / Opokuma	Cultism	Politicians Youths Students	Unemployment Politicians Drug abuse Money Firearms	Politicians Drug deals Dues/levies & charges Oil bunkering, Returns	Kaiama, Sabageria, Odi, Egbedi, Opokuma etc.	Loss of lives Economic losses Injuries Destruction of properties Loss of values	Police, DSS, Traditional institutions (vigilantes) etc.
	Kidnapping	Militants Youths	Unemployment Illegal Drugs Arms proliferation	Ransom & Oil bunkering	=	Economic losses, fear, insecurity	Police, DSS
	Herdsmen Encroachment	Herders	=	=	=	Fear	=
	Theft	Youths Cultists Robbers	Unemployment Poverty Drug abuse	=	Kaiama, Egbedi, Odi, Sabageria,	Injuries, economic losses, fear etc.	Police, DSS, Traditional institutions (vigilantes) etc.
BAYELSA EAST SENATORIAL DISTRICT							
Nembe	Electoral- violence	Politicians Militants Youths Cultists Security agents INEC godfathers	Unemployment Poverty Drugs Illiteracy Environment Corruption	Govt. & agencies of govt. Politicians Contractors Godfathers Parties Etc.	Bassambiri Ogbolomabiri	Loss of lives, injuries, destruction of properties, poor leadership, Underdevelopme nt	Courts CSOs Traditional institutions Security agencies
	Cultism	Youths Politicians Businessmen	Politicians Unemployment Drug abuse	Politicians Drug deals Dues/levies & charges Oil bunkering, Returns	Bassambiri Ogbolomabiri Okoroma axis, Ologoma	Loss of lives, economic losses, injuries, fear, insecurity etc.	Police DSS CSOs

	Sea piracy	Militants Ex-militants Cultists youths	Unemployment Drug Abuse Arms proliferation	Sales of stolen engines, money taken from fishing trawlers, ransom	Nembe – Brass axis Okoroma – Brass axis	Loss of lives, economic loses, rape, loss of social trust & cohesion	Military DSS Police
	Kidnapping	Youths Cultists	Unemployment Illegal Drugs Arms proliferation	Ransom Oil bunkering	Nembe – Brass axis Okoroma – Brass axis	Loss of lives, economic losses, lack of social trust & cohesion	Police DSS Military
Brass	Electoral-violence	Politicians Militants Youths Cultists Security agents INEC godfathers	Unemployment Poverty Drugs Illiteracy Environment Corruption	Govt. & agencies of govt. Politicians Contractors Godfathers Parties Etc.	Twon Brass Odioma Okpoama Llama Akassa	Loss of lives, injuries, destruction of properties, poor leadership, Underdevelopme nt	The Courts CSOs Traditional institutions Security agencies
	Cultism	Youths Politicians Businessmen	Politicians Unemployment Drug abuse	Politicians Drug deals Dues/levies & charges Oil bunkering, Returns	Twon Brass Okpoama	Loss of lives, economic losses, injuries, fear, insecurity etc.	Police DSS CSOs
	Sea piracy	Militants Ex-militants Cultists youths	Unemployment Drug Abuse Arms proliferation	Sales of stolen engines, money taken from fishing trawlers, ransom	Brass – Nembe axis Twon – Odioma axis Twon - Akassa	Loss of lives, economic loses, rape, loss of social trust & cohesion	Military DSS
	Kidnapping	Youths Cultists	Unemployment Illegal Drugs Arms proliferation	Ransom Oil bunkering	Brass – Nembe axis Twon – Odioma axis Twon - Akassa	Loss of lives, economic losses, lack of social trust & cohesion	Police DSS Military
Ogba	Cultism	Youths Politicians Businessmen	Politicians Unemployment Drug abuse	Politicians Drug deals Dues/levies & charges Oil bunkering Armed Robbery	Emeyal 1, Emeyal 2, Otuoke, Elebele, Otuosege, Oruma, Imiringi, Ogba	Loss of lives, economic losses, injuries, fear, insecurity etc.	Police DSS CSOs
	Kidnapping	Youths Cultists Criminal Syndicates	Unemployment Illegal Drugs Arms proliferation	Ransom Oil bunkering	Oloibiri, Ogba, Abureni Clan, Otuogidi, Amakalalal	Loss of lives, economic losses, lack of social trust & cohesion	Police DSS Military
	Illegal Bunkering/ Artisanal Refining	Youths Cultists Ex-Militants	Unemployment Community Support Arms proliferation Military Collusion	Politicians Businessmen	Kolo Creek Ebelebiri	Environmental degradation, livelihood and food insecurity, militarization of the area.	Police DSS Military Civil Defense Corps Petroleum Task Force

BAYELSA WEST SENATORIAL DISTRICT							
Ekeremor	Militancy	Militants Ex-Militants	Quick Money Unemployment Arms proliferation Struggle for Surveillance and patrol contracts	Ransom from Kidnapping Sea Robbery	Azagbene Letugbene Bilabiri Egbemangal abiri Aghoro	Loss of lives, injuries, destruction of properties, economic and social impacts	DSS Military Marine Police Navy Surveillance Contractors
	Attacks on military & Police personnel	Militants	Need for arms Recognition for security contracts	Ransom from Kidnapping Sea Robbery	Azagbene Letugbene Bilabiri Egbemangal abiri	Loss of lives, increased tension in communities	Military Navy
	Military Invasion	Nigerian Army	Reprisals for deaths of soldiers during militant attacks. Perceived community collusion	=	Azagbene Letugbene Bilabiri Ezetu	Loss of lives, injuries, destruction of properties, internally displacement of persons, economic and social impacts	Nigerian Army
	Cultism	Youths Politicians	Politicians Unemployment Drug abuse	Politicians Drug deals Dues/levies & charges Armed Robbery	Ekeremor Town	Loss of lives, economic losses, injuries, fear, insecurity etc.	Police DSS CSOs
Sagbama	Cultism	Youths Politicians	Politicians Unemployment Drug abuse	Politicians Drug deals Dues/levies & charges Armed Robbery	Sagbama Town Toru— Orua	Loss of lives, economic losses, injuries, fear, insecurity etc.	Police DSS CSOs

Source: Compiled by authors

CHAPTER THREE

Insecurity in Cross River State: Issues, Actors and Solutions

Ndifon Neji Obi and Ken Henshaw

Executive Summary

This chapter investigates and analyses insecurity in Cross River State. The findings show that Cross River State has a history of insecurity ranging from communal conflicts, cultism, political violence, kidnapping, and armed robbery, transitioning of street children to criminality, militancy and piracy, internal displacement, neglect, and statelessness (especially in the Bakassi area). There is also an emerging host communities – refugees and farmer-herder conflicts. The research also identified a growing influx of unidentified and undocumented young men migrating in large groups from northern Nigeria and the widespread availability and use of narcotics as indicators of insecurity. To a large extent, the issue of the movement of unidentified and undocumented young men is a problem of perception. This perception by indigenes of Cross River is fuelled by the increasing insecurity associated with itinerant herdsmen across Nigeria. Although this is perception, its growing traction in the minds of the people creates an environment of insecurity for both the local people and the migrant group in the state. The traction of this perception fuels tension that sometimes escalates into violence at the local level. The actors involved in insecurity in Cross Rivers, as identified in the study, include cultists, politicians, kidnappers, traditional rulers, pirates, militants, skolombo, and lacacera youths. Specifically, young people associated with the skolombo and lacacera groups are involved in the perpetuation of street crimes in metropolitan areas such as Calabar. The study concludes with some key recommendations that will help the government and other relevant stakeholders address the problem of insecurity in Cross River State.

1. Cross River State in Context

Cross River State, previously called South Eastern State, was created on the 27th of May 1967 by the military government of General Yakubu Gowon. When the military government of General Murtala Mohammed created seven additional states in 1976, the state was renamed Cross River, deriving its name from the river 'Cross', which traverses much of the state. In September 1987, the government of military president, General Ibrahim Babangida created Akwa Ibom out of the southwestern part of Cross River state.

Cross River State is bordered by Benue State on its northern tip, Ebonyi and Abia states on the west, Akwa Ibom State on the southwest, and the Cameroon Republic on the south. Administratively, the state comprises 18 local government areas, with Calabar Municipality in the south as capital. For administrative purposes, the local government areas are grouped into three senatorial districts: south, central, and north. The 2006 national population and housing census put the Cross River State population at 2,888,966 with the youths making up a greater percentage - 55% between the ages of 10 – 39¹. According to projections of the National Bureau of Statistics, Cross River State population was 3,866,269 as of 2016. It is calculated that if the rate of population growth between 2006-2011, which was +2.94%/ year, remained constant, the population of Cross River state in 2020 would be 4,341, 772.² The state has a total landmass of 20,156 km², with the population density varying considerably across the local government areas. In Bakassi for instance, the population density is 9 persons per square metre, while in Calabar Municipality, it is 1,237 per square metre. The population spread tends to be denser in the cities, especially around the capital Calabar.

Cross River State is located within the tropical rain forest belt of Nigeria. The lengthy extension of the state from the tip of the Atlantic Ocean in the south up to Nigeria's north-central region opens the state to at least five distinct ecological zones extending from mangrove and

¹ Percentage calculated based on available data from National Population Commission (web), National Bureau of Statistics (web) accessed at <https://www.citypopulation.de/php/nigeria-admin.php?adminid=N-GA009>

² Population.City (2015) Cross River Population. Retrieved from <http://population.city/nigeria/adm/cross-river/>

swamp forests around the southern coastal areas of the state, tropical rain forests further inland around the central parts of the state, and savannah woodlands in the northern parts. The Obudu highlands, which sit at an altitude of 1,595.79 metres above sea level, provide a distinct temperate climate remarkably divergent from the more commonly occurring dry and wet periods in the rest of the state.

Cross River State consists of a vast and rich diversity of ethnic nationalities including Efiks, Bekwara, Bette, Boki, and Ejagham. The agricultural sector engages up to 70% of the population. The primary occupation of the people of Cross River State is farming, comprising mainly of subsistence crop farming, fishing, and animal rearing. The state also houses large plantations growing cocoa, rice, cassava, oil palm, rubber, banana, and pineapple. Residents of Cross River State also generate significant income through subsistence trading.

Cross River State has an appreciable array of natural resources including limestone, clay, salt, tin, granite, basalt, quartzite, kaolin, sand, and feldspar. The state is also believed to have large deposits of other natural resources including lead, zinc ore, manganese, gold, uranium, titan, mica, and gypsum, which remain largely unexplored. Despite the natural resource endowment of the state, only the exploitation of limestone has reached commercial levels.

Cross Rivers State has the largest of the remaining 10 percent rainforest cover in Nigeria, with conserved pristine forests running through most of the state. In 1991, the total forest cover of Cross River State was 7,920 Km², representing 34.3 percent of the state's land area. By 2008, the forest cover dropped on account of illegal logging to about 6,102 Km² and occupying 28.68% of the state's land.³ Despite the declining forest cover, Cross River State forest has been identified by climate experts and the United Nations as a potential destination for climate change mitigation investment.

Despite its resource potentials, Cross River State fares averagely on many key development indicators. For instance, A Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index calculation for Cross River State contained in UNDP's National Human Development Report for 2018 indicates that it has a

³ Oyebo, M. et al (2010). A Preliminary Assessment of the Context for REDD in Nigeria. Retrieved from http://www.unredd.net/index.php?option=com_docman%26task%3Ddoc_download%26gid%3D4129%26Itemid%3D53

41.4 incidence of poverty rate. Compared to other Nigerian states and the national average which is 53.7, this score is relatively low. Similarly, Cross River's score in the National Human Development Index places it among the best performing states with a rank of 7th.⁴

The statistics for unemployment and underemployment in Cross River State are equally disturbing. Data released by the National Bureau of Statistics for the third quarter of 2018 show that the state had the fourth-highest unemployment rate in the South-South zone. The state recorded an unemployment rate of 30.6%, while the underemployment rate stood at 19.9% in the same period. The state's 2018 underemployment ratio represents a 9.9% increase compared to the same period in the previous year. This indicates a growing unemployment problem in the state with its attendant implications for human security. In the same period, the net total of employed persons decreased by 88,719 persons, indicating an emerging unemployment crisis.⁵

The youths in Cross River constitute more than 50% of the population of the state. However, there is no defined policy on youths and the role of youth groups in the political landscape of the state. The closest is the youth development master plan,⁶ the brainchild of the state Ministry of Youth and Sports Development. Despite, the obvious gap in deliberately implementing a policy that spells out the place of youths in the governance structure of the state, the current government is adjudged the most youth-friendly in the state with the allocation of more than 35%⁷ appointive positions to people under the age of 45. While this may be considered a commendable feat, there is no plan/policy in place to ensure its sustainability.

There is also the absence of clearly defined youth groups in the state except for the National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN), which has its state and local government structures in place. Other youth groups can

⁴National Human Development Report 2018 Achieving Human Development in North East Nigeria. (2020)
Retrieved from http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr_2018_nigeria_finalfinalx3.pdf

⁵<https://www.proshareng.com/news/Nigeria-Economy/Akwa-Ibom-State-Reports-Highest-Unemployment-Rate-of-37.7Percent-in-Q3-2018---NBS/45062>

⁶ The master plan was facilitated by the state ministry of Youth and Sports development around 2017 and supported by development partners like the UNFPA but the plan has hardly been implemented.

⁷ Declaration made by Comrade Ndiyo Ndiyo the state Chairman of the National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN). "Youth Council demands 55 per cent appointments from Cross River Gov. Ayade" Accessed at <https://punchng.com/youth-council-demands-55-per-cent-appointments- from-cross-river-gov-ayade/>

at best be considered as ‘exclusive groups’ like the various student associations, mostly found in institutions of higher learning that are often mobilized during elections. Other groups can be termed ‘circumstantial and seasonal’; consisting of those raised for the sole purposes of electioneering campaigns and often fizzle out thereafter. Within this context, youth transition takes place through various ad hoc and un-systematized processes of youth engagements in some legitimate spheres of public life. However, a notable process of youth transition in Cross River State happens within the political space through growing in the political ranks and getting appointed into public office. Debatably, this is at present the most popular and preferred structure of youth transitioning in the state. Overall, there is evident neglect of structured investment in youth development and transitioning opportunities in the state.

The same is largely true for gender recognition and sensitivity. Supported by development partners including the Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND), UNFPA, FHI360, LOPIN3, and the World Health Organization (WHO), Cross River state generated a gender policy that was launched in 2018. Further supported by development partners, gender desk officers were appointed across Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) of government including local governments. Training were also organized to bring these public officials up to speed with global best practices. The primary objective of the policy was to ensure the mainstreaming and sustained visibility of gender opportunities in the state. The indicators for measuring the performance of the gender policy are, however, not well defined and thus , it is difficult to determine the percentage implementation of the gender policy in the state.

2. Methodology

Data for the study was generated through a process of triangulation, with the data generated via multiple sources. In addition to desk review of the relevant literature, Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted. A total of 41 KIIs (Appendix 1) and 12 FGDs (Appendix 2) were conducted with respondents and participants across the three senatorial districts of the state. The

interviewees were purposively selected as key informants who are observant and reflective members of the community of interest with demonstrated knowledge about the phenomenon of insecurity in the state and were both able and willing to share their knowledge.

The numbers of KIIs and FGDs were unevenly distributed across the senatorial districts based on availability and time. The respondents and participants were drawn from women, chiefs, opinion leaders, state security advisers, security agents, former militants, youths, refugees, civil society activists, politicians, humanitarian workers, development consultants, and academics. An average of 50 minutes was used in conducting the KIIs and 90 minutes for the FGDs. The FGD sessions had an average of five participants. Ethical issues were observed before and during the process of the KII and FGDs. Documentation was done with the help of a research assistant. Secondary data was mainly generated through sources such as academic publications, published reports, journal articles, newspaper publications, and verifiable online materials. Before the fieldwork, preliminary contacts were made with the key informants and focal persons for the FGDs. The essence of data triangulation was to identify recurrent security issues to strengthen the credibility and validity of research findings. The primary significance of triangulation is that one can be more confident about a result if different methods lead to the same result. If only one method is used, results may be accepted without question; if two methods are used, the results may clash; by using three methods one increases the possibility that consistent and verifiable results may be obtained.

3. Human security and the myth of state-centered security

There is a growing tendency to limit the concept of security to the protection of lives and property of citizenry as often canvassed by the government. The concept of human security deviates from this limited conception of security to represent a potpourri of seven distinct but interrelated elements which are identified to include economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, political, and spiritual⁸

⁸ The notion of spiritual security has been canvassed by Prof. OBC Nwolise who argues that spirituality is important in the life of an individual; hence spiritual security is central to maintaining equilibrium in the security architecture of any nation. He makes a case for the integration of Strategic Spiritual Intelligence (SPI) into the security frameworks of nations. His philosophy is anchored on the notion that the use of

security. This presupposes that any approach to addressing the issues of security must accommodate and address these specific elements that make the concept of human security encompassing. Human security is, therefore, an emerging paradigm for understanding global vulnerabilities different from the traditional notion of state-centered security. While state-centric security focuses on heavy investments in military preparedness and response, dimensions of human security are people-centered, focusing on essentials for sustainable national, regional, and global development and stability⁹.

The UNDP¹⁰ Human Development Report, 1994, presents the concept of human security as anchored on the evidence that “freedom from want” and “freedom from fear” for all persons is the best path to tackle the problem of (global) insecurity. This implies that a security response strategy should be such that addresses freedom from ‘want’ and ‘fear’. Evidence, however, indicates that the Cross River State Government’s response to security issues is ‘state-centered’ rather than ‘people-centered’. A people-centered security strategy should, therefore, address the economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political needs of its citizens and create conditions conducive to spiritual security. Within this context, poverty, for example, is conceptualized as a human security threat, not because it can induce violence that threatens the stability of the state, but because it is a threat to the dignity of the human person. The spread of diseases, environmental destruction, and a lack of access to clean drinking water, poor maternal health, and unemployment all constitute threats to human security.

The myth of state-centric security has seen the state unable to appropriately address conflict causalities. Conditions that give rise to violence challenge economic and productive activities. Communal crises, for instance, have fundamentally, threatened food production leading to diminished economic power by households. Also, such crises often lead

‘black power’ to protect or harm can serve as a critical resource in redesigning security frameworks. This means, studying and harnessing the strength in African spiritual ‘science’.

⁹ United Nations Development Programme (2015). National Human Development Report: Human Security and Human Development in Nigeria. Retrieved from http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2016_national_human_development_report_for_nigeria.pdf

¹⁰ United Nations Development Programme(1994). Human Development Report. Retrieved from http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/255/hdr_1994_en_complete_nostats.pdf

to the destruction of education and health facilities, including the violation of the environment, general ecosystem and undermine personal means of livelihood. The state has failed on all seven fronts of the human security indicators. This linkage demonstrates how the state-centric approach to security weakens human security and, therefore, makes a case for the design and implementation of a robust human security framework in the state.

4. Security, peacebuilding and Alternative Dispute Resolution

Security threats in the state are characterized into three broad categories; communal, political, and socio-economic. The fluidity and the domino effect of these threats have reinforced the need for an integrated approach to addressing insecurity in the state.

Realism, liberalism, and constructivism are the three main security theories that have traditionally underpinned security practices and are adapted to explain conflict and insecurity and establish a link between security, peacebuilding, and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) at the sub-national level. Though, deployed as a guiding principle of global security, realists generally argue that power is the basic currency in ensuring security and stability. In the context of this study, this presupposes that the ability of the state to ensure security is determined by its capacity to deploy hard power by militarizing and securitizing the environment. This is because of the realist view that the prime source of insecurity is human nature, which is viewed as inherently violent and aggressive¹¹. It is, however, now clear that in spite of government's efforts in deploying armed security agents to conflict flashpoints in the state, it has in most instances, only exacerbated conflict situations.

Unlike realism, liberalism suggests that additional parties, such as non-governmental organizations are central to facilitating the processes of peace. In our context, this implies that community-based organizations (CBOs), NGOs, and the general civil society spectrum are important partners for peace that should be integrated into the state peacebuilding framework. On the flip side, the constructivists believe that conflict erupts primarily from a clash of identities, ideas, cultures, norms, and belief systems¹². In practice, however, constructivist theory

¹¹ Glaser, C. (2010). *Contemporary security studies*. New York: Oxford University Press

¹² Agius, C. (2010). *Contemporary security studies*. New York: Oxford University Press.

calls for a wide range of soft-power tools such as trust-building, development, democratization, education, and dialogue to help defuse the diverse and dynamic sources of conflict. The constructivists' perspective, therefore, creates conditions necessary for peacebuilding which is construed to mean 'action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace to avoid a relapse into conflict'¹³. In addition to strengthening structures that undermine insecurity, is Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) encompasses a whole range of processes including, mediation, negotiation, and conciliation. Capacity building of critical actors at the community and state levels is vital to ensuring the proactive management of conflict disorders in the state.

An integrated approach to managing insecurity in the state would, therefore, facilitate a hard-soft power continuum to frame the linkages of security, peacebuilding, and ADR. This is because hard power approaches as often deployed by the government largely focus on addressing surface-level threats, while habitually ignoring and possibly aggravating the root causes of insecurity. On the other hand, soft power influences and conditions actors to act peacefully. Sources of soft power include education, empowerment, and economic development. Soft power approaches can, therefore, reduce threats by increasing jobs, education, gender equality, and overall quality of life. Many practitioners consider soft power a more effective long-term strategy in dealing with potential security challenges, given the focus on deep-rooted sources and motivations for conflicts, such as identity, religion, empowerment, and perceptions¹⁴. It is, therefore, essential to integrate hard and soft power to deflect surface-level threats and defuse the deep-rooted sources of conflict and insecurity in the state.

5. The Rising Portfolio of Insecurity in Cross River State

The phenomenon of insecurity has gained prominence in national discourse particularly, since the return to democratic rule in 1999. This

¹³ Boutros-Ghali, B. 1992, 31 January. An agenda for peace: Preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping, United Nations Secretary-General's Report A/47/277-S/24111. New York: United Nations. Accessed at, www.un.org/Docs/SG/agpeace.html.

¹⁴ Moghaddam, F. M. (2010). *The new global insecurity*. Westport, CT: Praeger Security International.

is predominantly because Nigeria's return to democracy was greeted with fanfare and high expectations, which unfortunately have not been achieved. Citizens have become increasingly frustrated with the system because of unmet expectations. The result of this apparent disappointment is the tension that has forced some groups to go underground beyond the radar of normalcy and civil society. The activities of these groups have challenged the capacity of the state (national and sub-national) to effectively govern the political space. The gap created by the government's inability to provide effective peace governance has further deepened the problem of managing insecurity. Being part of Nigeria's South-South, Cross River is implicated among states with the problem of insecurity in the region.

From May 2011 to April 2020, the state is said to have recorded 591 deaths related to political violence¹⁵. This is excluding deaths emanating from communal conflicts, cult/gang wars, kidnappings, domestic violence, and general criminality. Generally, the context of Cross River State exemplifies a theatre of a cocktail of conflict issues. The severity and gravity of each conflict in terms of damage and the overall impact is, however, dependent on the prevailing contexts, the actors, and the available conflict management mechanisms. Overall, the insecurity experienced in the state is associated with the dynamics and threats posed by communal clashes, cultism, criminality and political violence, militancy/piracy, domestic violence, kidnappings, chieftaincy tussles, herders-farmers conflicts, and recently, refugees' influx.

In June 2019, Governor Ben Ayade announced that Cross River was the safest state in Nigeria with a crime prevalence rate of just 1.1% of total crime in Nigeria¹⁶. While the governor was significantly off target in the state's crime figures in comparison to other states in the country, he was quoting Crime Statistics released by the National Bureau of Statistics for 2017. Here referencing the report¹⁷, "Cross River State is reported to have 2,163 reported cases of different categories of crime in the year". This figure is relatively low when compared to that for other South-South states like Delta with 7,150 or nearby Abia State with 12,408 cases. However, the data which informs the NBS reports is only as true

¹⁵ Nigeria Security Tracker (2020). Map: Deaths by States. Accessed at <https://www.cfr.org/nigeria/nigeria-security-tracker/p29483>. Nigeria Security Tracker maps political violence based on weekly survey of Nigerian and international press.

¹⁶<http://crossriverwatch.com/2019/06/cross-river-has-one-percent-crime-rate-ayade/>

¹⁷<https://drive.google.com/file/d/15jBiCvTZnzldOHhajzSupjrYybcap8Yp/view>

as the number of cases reported to the different police stations and further escalated upwards for documentation and action. It is widely believed that the crime rate in states and nationwide is much higher than the official report indicates.

In Cross River State, for instance, there has been an alarming rise in cases of crime and general insecurity often resulting in fatalities (chart 1 below), which the NBS report does not capture. The state governor agrees with this increase after reporting that Cross River has the lowest crime rate in the country. According to him, there has been an increase in the activity of miscreants, community clashes as well as intra and interstate crises.¹⁸ This is a rare show of openness, especially for a state where the government has traditionally downplayed the occurrences of insecurity. Data on crime and violence are often manipulated to promote 'peace tourism', a situation where the state government and the media deliberately tone down incidents of violence and conflict to maintain the peaceful image of the state. To achieve this, it is believed that the government has ensured an underreporting of activities of gangs and criminal groups.¹⁹ Figures 1 and 2 below indicate that Cross River State and some of its local government areas were one of the worst affected by conflict fatalities in the Niger Delta region. Between January and December 2017, Cross River State had the highest number of conflict fatalities in the entire Niger Delta region²⁰. In the same report by PIND, it is stated that four local government areas in Cross River State made it to the list of the top eleven local government areas in the Niger Delta where conflict fatalities occurred in 2017.

¹⁸<https://dailypost.ng/2019/06/03/cross-river-bedevelled-miscreants-communal-clashes-gov-ayade-cries/>

¹⁹<http://new.cleen.org/Election%20Security%20Brief%20005.%20Cross%20River.pdf>

²⁰ Partnership Initiative for the Niger Delta (2018). Niger Delta Annual Conflict Report- January to December 2017 Retrieved from <https://pindfoundation.org/niger-delta-annual-conflict-report-jan-dec-2017/>

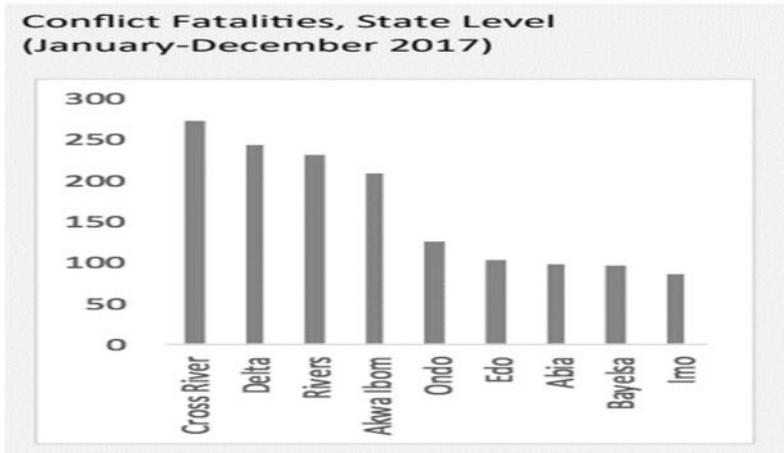


Figure 1: Conflict fatalities, state-level: Jan.-Dec. 2017

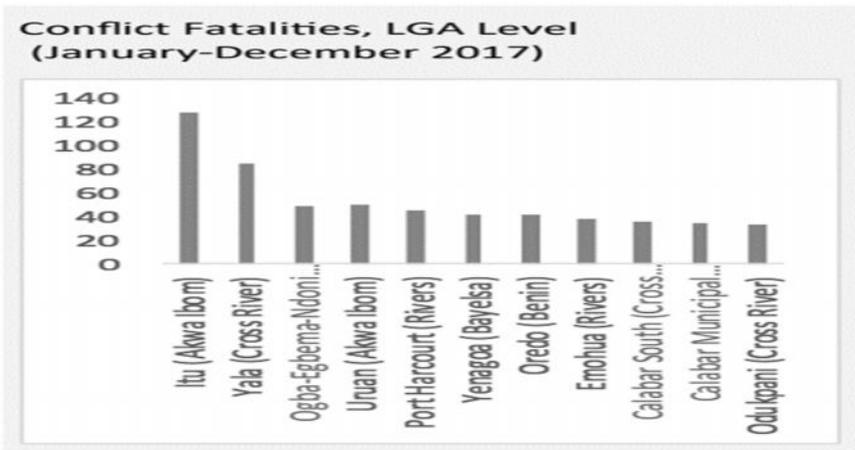


Figure 2: Conflict fatalities, Local Government Level.

Without a doubt, the level of insecurity in Cross River State has increased tremendously in the last decade. For a majority of people, this has reached alarming dimensions and requires significant action to stem the tide. For instance, the Cross River State House of Assembly in July 2019 under a Matter of Urgent Public Interest passed a resolution

decrying the rising spate of kidnapping, cultism, and other forms of criminality in the state. The Assembly stated further that the rising insecurity was adversely affecting the plans of the state towards industrialization²¹. The legislators asked the governor to take immediate actions including appointing security advisers from the three senatorial districts of the state and implement the anti-kidnapping law of Cross River State.

In March 2020, members of the Cross River branch of the Nigeria Medical Association (NMA) embarked on an indefinite strike demanding the release of an Assistant Director at the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital who was kidnapped²² for a ransom of N30 million. In a correspondence announcing the indefinite strike, the association said medical practitioners were being targeted in the rising insecurity in the state. It said that since 2017, at least 15 medical doctors and their dependents had been kidnapped for ransom in Cross River State. The association further asked the governor as the chief security officer of the state to take proactive measures and ensure the security of lives and properties. It also called on the Inspector-General of Police and the President to immediately declare a state of emergency over the rising insecurity in Cross River State.

Insecurity is impacting negatively on the business climate of the state. According to an investigative report conducted by a national newspaper, private businesses were folding up and leaving Calabar, the state capital, in favor of neighboring states on account of what it described as *'the unbearable rate of killings, kidnapping and cultist activities'*²³.

The report further informs that many investors and traders, especially from Nigeria's South-Eastern extraction have been relocating their businesses and families to Uyo in Akwa Ibom State. It declared that in the last six months, up to 20 persons were kidnapped in the Calabar metropolis with huge sums of money paid out as ransom to kidnappers, and several deaths recorded. Armed gangs were said to routinely invade

²¹ Edem, E. (2019, July 26). Cross River Assembly decries insecurity in State, tells Gov. Ayade what to do. *Daily Post*. Retrieved from <https://dailypost.ng/2019/07/26/cross-river-assembly-decries-insecurity-state-tells-gov-ayade/>

²² Ada, A. (2020, March 13). Cross River NMA begins strike over kidnap of member's wife. *Punch Newspaper*. Retrieved from <https://punchng.com/criver-nma-begins-strike-over-kidnap-of-members-wife/>

²³ Insecurity rocks Calabar as Igbo businessmen flee for safety to Akwa Ibom. *Legit*. Retrieved from <https://www.legit.ng/1178394-insecurity-rocks-calabar-igbo-businessmen-flee-safety-akwa-ibom.html>

warehouses, shops, and private residences in the state capital. The report also indicated that notable companies, including the Nigeria Bottling Company, Nigeria Breweries, and Coca-Cola have closed down their depot offices in Calabar and moved over to Uyo due to rising insecurity. The trend was said to be the same for contractors and private investors in the hospitality industry who were also relocating in droves to neighboring cities.

In response to the security challenges in the state, the Cross River State House of Assembly in 2016 passed a bill establishing the Cross River State Homeland Safety and Security Agency as a homegrown measure to check the rising cases of criminality in the state. The state governor describes the security framework as a departure from the traditional perception of security. According to him, the issues the outfit will address will include profiling of visitors coming in and out, providing intelligence services, doing neighborhood checks, and neighbourhood watches²⁴. Previously, in 2015, the state government had established a security unit called Operation Skolombo, comprising armed personnel from the Nigeria Army, Navy, Airforce, Police, and Civil Defense Corps. Operation Skolombo was set up to stem the wave of insecurity and crime in the state. In 2017, the operational headquarters of the unit was relocated to Calabar South which the government reckoned had become a key location of criminals and criminality in the state. Unfortunately, all efforts by the state government have not sufficed to improve the security situation in the state. After initial successes, the security situation in the state seems to always return to very poor levels. Sadly, it seems that with every overt security initiative, the problem of insecurity is reinforced in the state. In the 10 years, between 2009, and 2019, over 200 reported violent incidents caused an estimated 752 fatalities in the state generally²⁵.

More recently, the government of Cross River State and other states in the South-South region in a meeting with the Inspector-General of Police proposed community policing as a model for remedying the persisting insecurity in the region. According to them, security threats, especially kidnapping, armed robbery, cultism, arms proliferation, child

²⁴ Admin (2017, August 29) Calabar Residents Laud Ayade For Roll Out Of Homeland Security Outfit. *CrossRiverWatch*. Retrieved from <http://crossriverwatch.com/2017/08/calabar-residents-laud-ayade-for-roll-out-of-homeland-security-outfit/>

²⁵ Conflict Briefing (2017). Rise in Communal Conflict and Gang Violence in Cross River State. Niger Delta Partnership Initiative

theft, attacks by herdsmen, and sea piracy could be checked if a system of community policing that benefits from a well-designed training pattern for vigilantes and neighbourhood watchers is implemented to bridge the personnel gap in the Police Force. While the full implementation of this strategy is pending, some observers believe the security challenges in the region have deeper political economy drivers which cannot be addressed merely through expanding the security architecture to include community vigilantes.

The tense security situation in the state is further challenged as opposition politicians and civil society activists level virile accusations against the government, alleging serial abuse of protocols informed by a deliberate desire to misappropriate public funds for personal gains. The superhighway project, the Bakassi Deep Seaport, the proposed Obudu Cargo Airport, the CaliAir, the Calasvagas new city, the spaghetti flyover, the garment factory, the 23 megawatt power plant and many others are some of the projects respondents²⁶ qualify as phantom projects deliberately designed to embezzle public funds. Further, the recent government directive to withdraw 250 million naira from each of the 18 local government council accounts amounting to 4.5 billion naira as an equity investment in CaliAir has strengthened and sustained negative energies in the polity. Suspicions have, therefore, left the political space vulnerable to acrimonies and further threats of insecurity.

The sum of data gleaned from various sources establishes the existence of four prominent institutions/actors identified to include state institutions, traditional institutions, civil society organizations (CSOs), and religious organizations. These institutions occupy various roles within the security landscape of the state. The state authority saddled with the responsibility of ensuring law and order and creating an enabling environment for livelihoods is traditionally represented in the legislature, executive (police and auxiliary security agents), and the judiciary. Within the security landscape, the state maintains an asymmetrical power relationship with other actors because the state through relevant organs can make laws that can strengthen or undermine the optimal functionality of other actors. Laws to regulate activities of

²⁶ There was unanimity of opinion amongst discussants on the threats caused by the government's white elephant projects. During focus group discussion in Ogoja in April 2020, discussants particularly inform that the approach is to create subheads for the misappropriation of public funds.

people, including conflict resources, are made by the state through the legislature; the implementation and maintenance of law and order is done by relevant security agencies; while adjudication and seeking of redress when rights are trampled upon is done by the judiciary through the courts, including Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms.

Traditional institutions have representation in all the communities in the state, so they represent the first structure in conflict flashpoints. Though they exist in communities, they draw their powers from the state albeit, in real terms, they have limited capacity to mediate conflict situations. The institution that enjoys a greater sphere of influence is civil society organizations (CSOs). The capacity of CSOs spans several areas including, their network, and technical aptitude in the area of capacity building, report generation, mobilization and advocacy, health interventions, education, peacebuilding and building capacities for self-reliance. Organizations like the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Family Health International (FHI360), LOPIN3, CUSO International, United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF, Doctors without Borders) and several others like religious organizations exist and are performing different but interrelated roles in the state.

Beyond these more formal organizations, other less formal frameworks exert influence in the political landscape. In the Southern Senatorial District, the Ekpe institution enjoys a high level of authority and influence. This influence extends beyond the cultural and stretches to the economic and political. Similarly, socio-cultural organizations in Cross River State are created in a manner that ensures they represent ethnic identities across local government areas. The Atam People's Congress for instance is a socio-political group in the state comprising members of the northern, central, and parts of the southern senatorial districts. The congress, though mostly elitist, enjoys some degree of community-based political influence across the state, enough to impact peace and security.

6. Cross River and Patterns of Insecurity

Cross River State manifests a varying spread of insecurity drivers. In some instances, the occurrences tend to adapt to the peculiarities of the different local government areas and senatorial districts, while others are

more widespread, defining the generic security landscape of the entire state. The prevailing forms of insecurity in Cross River State are located within the broad forms of inter and intra communal conflicts, cultism and gang violence, criminality, including kidnappings and armed robberies, political violence, violence posed by street children, an incursion of violent attacks from the Ambazonian crisis in the Republic of Cameroun, militancy, and piracy, the escalating refugee situation in the state; and the threat posed by hordes of men arriving the state from northern Nigeria despite the ban on interstate travel due to the Coronavirus pandemic. While some of these drivers of insecurity are more manifest and intense than others, they all contribute significantly to highlighting Cross River State in terms of vulnerability to violent conflict and insecurity.

6.1. Kidnapping and Armed Robberies

One of the most potent threats to security in the region is violent criminality ranging from armed robbery to kidnapping. This level of criminality has increased tremendously in the state and now constitutes a major security concern for the population. This type of criminality occurs all over the state with the capital city of Calabar recording far more cases of armed robbery and kidnappings than any other part of the state. While security operatives regularly parade suspects of these crimes in the state and routinely provide updates on criminals arrested or killed, and criminal gangs it has encountered, the number of robberies and kidnappings seem to continuously increase, apparently overwhelming the security response outfits in the state. Focus groups' participants rank kidnapping and armed robberies as the most evident and disturbing driver of insecurity in the southern senatorial district. The Special Adviser to the state governor responsible for security in the Southern Senatorial District ranks kidnapping as the most common form of criminality occurring in the state²⁷.

²⁷ Interview with Mr. Ani Esin, Special Adviser to the Governor on security Matters in the Southern Senatorial District.

The botched kidnap of a six-year-old and a cripple in Obudu²⁸ and similar incidents in Ikom, Boki, and Bekwarra, the kidnap of a former governorship aspirant of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Cross River State, Princess Filia Henshaw, and five others in Calabar²⁹, the kidnap of the Cross River State chairman of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Mr. Ben Ukpepi, in Akpabuyo Local Government Area³⁰, are just a few recent instances of kidnapping for ransom. In three cases, a Bekwarra community relations officer, farmers, supermarket owner were all abducted for ransom³¹. The armed robbery³² case of 28th March 2020 that resulted in the death of a teenage girl, Favour Kalu in Bekpam layout, Obudu is another example in this regard. Similar violence and loss of lives are recorded in places including Ogoja and Yakurr. Reports of armed robberies which have caused the loss of lives have also been recorded in locations across all senatorial districts, with the recent case culminating in the death of four robbers at the hands of the police. Cases of cult-related gun violence in Okundi and Oku in Boki LGA have also been identified, including the burning of about 12 persons in Oku village on May 19, 2020, by some youths on allegations of witchcraft³³. Oku is home of a self-acclaimed repentant militant leader turned peace ambassador, Thomas Obi Tawo (popularly known as ‘General Iron’), who is Special Adviser on Forest Security to Governor Ben Ayade.

On October 22, 2019, in Okundi community, Boki Local Government Area, four young men were killed in a clash between cultists in the community. There is an episodic but recurring crisis related

²⁸Affe, M. (2017). Kidnappers abduct cripple in Obudu, demand N5m ransom. Retrieved from punchng.com/kidnappers-abduct-cripple-obudu-demand-n5m-ransom, Ugani, E. (2018). Obudu massacre: KJ Agba mourns police officer, civilians killed by daredevil robbers. Retrieved from crossriverwatch.com/2018/09/obudu-massacre-kj-agba-mourns-police-officer-civilians-killed-by-daredevil-robbers

²⁹ Wodu, A. (2020, April 28). Cross River: Gunmen kidnap ex-PDP gov aspirant, others. *Punch*. Retrieved from <https://punchng.com/cross-river-gunmen-kidnap-ex-pdp-gov-aspirant-others/>

³⁰ NAN. (2019, December 18). NLC chairman in Cross River kidnapped. *Premium Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/368702-nlc-chairman-in-cross-river-kidnapped.html>

³¹Wodu, A. (2019). Three abducted in Boki cocoa farm in C’River. Retrieved from <https://punchng.com/three-abducted-in-boki-farm-in-cr-iver>, Jeremiah, A. (2018). Breaking news: Bekwarra community relations officer kidnapped, Police unaware (updated). Retrieved from crossriverwatch.com/2018/12/breaking-news-bekwarra-community-relations-officer-kidnapped-police-unaware

³² HRH Patrick Ishoja informs that cases of criminality are common in Obudu.

³³Mob sets alleged witches ablaze in Cross River State after orders from Governor Ayade’s Adviser. Accessed at <http://saharareporters.com/2020/05/28/mob-sets-alleged-witches-ablaze-cross-river-state-after-orders-governor-ayades-adviser>

to the struggle for control of revenue from the Boki oil palm estates. This is in addition to the kidnapping of three non-indigenes who reside in Boje community, Boki Local Government Area, on November 23, 2019. This act triggered suspicion between Boje community and two neighbouring towns, Nsadop and Isobendeghe eventually leading to full-blown inter-community war and the resultant loss of lives and wanton destruction of properties³⁴. The insecurity in Boki Local Government Area is largely sustained by the government's tacit endorsement of cultism and the rabid and unprecedented politicization of access, control, and management of the oil palm estates. As long as the government treats the Boki oil palm estates as political booty for its loyalists, the desperate struggle to access the revenues from the produce by all who feel entitled would pitch groups against each other, and fuel criminality and political violence in Boki Local Government Area.

PIND's Niger Delta Weekly Conflict Update for April 26 - May 2, 2020 places kidnapping for ransom as the most prevailing human security threat in Cross River State, saying that the occurrence of this variety of criminality has increased in frequency in recent times especially in the state capital. The regularity and concentration of kidnapping for ransom in the state has spiked since January 2020. The report says that in February 2020, there were over six incidents of kidnapping for ransom. On April 26, 2020, six residents of the state were kidnapped at different locations in the space of a single day³⁵.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) participants in Calabar reckon that the regularity of incidents of kidnapping and armed robberies in the state are grossly under-documented and reported. This is because the majority of people who become victims of kidnapping prefer to work with trusted friends and relatives to deliver the ransom than involving the police. . The same rule applies to armed robberies. A significant number of victims prefer to bear their losses to armed robberies than report to the police whom they believe are incapable of investigating the incident and arresting the perpetrators.

³⁴ Boki crises: Sen. Sandy Onor condemns killings, calls for establishment of police barracks in Boje. Accessed at <https://www.sunnewsonline.com/boki-crises-sen-sandy-onor-condemn-killings-calls-for-establishment-of-police-barracks-in-boje/>

³⁵ Partnership Initiative for the Niger Delta (2020, May 2) Niger Delta Weekly Conflict Update for April 26 – May 2, 2020. Retrieved from <https://pindfoundation.org/niger-delta-weekly-conflict-update-april-26-may-2-2020/>

A more disturbing twist was revealed in a key informant interview with Mr. Jonathan Ugbai, a journalist with Cross RiverWatch, a Cross River dedicated online news portal. According to him, victims of criminality feel a sense of lethargy reporting to the police mainly because they believe the police are sometimes complicit in criminalities including armed robberies and kidnappings. In February 2020, a member of the state's special security squad, Operation Skolombo, raided and arrested members of a notorious gang comprising a serving policeman and five others who specialize in kidnapping for ransom in Calabar³⁶. Previously, the state governor had insinuated in this regard when he complained about situations where people who have been arrested over crimes like armed robbery or kidnapping find a way out of police custody and back to the streets without prosecution.³⁷

The state initiatives to check the spate of kidnappings and armed robbery have been mostly futile. For instance, in 2017, the state governor introduced an executive order titled 'Hafiz Law' which proposes a reward of N1 million for anyone that provides information that leads to the arrest of kidnappers and armed robbers in the state. The executive order on whistleblowing extends to information that relates to illegal possession of firearms, harboring of kidnappers or kidnap victims, etc. From the increasing cases of armed robbery and kidnapping in the state, it is evident that this and other initiatives did not make much impact.

³⁶Wodu, A. (2020, February 24) Policeman leading kidnap gang arrested in Calabar. *Punch*. Retrieved from <https://punchng.com/policeman-leading-kidnap-gang-arrested-in-calabar/>

³⁷ Okogba, E. (2017, February 28). *Vanguard*. Kidnapping, armed robbery: Ayade announces N1m for whistleblowers. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/02/kidnapping-armed-robbery-ayade-announces-n1m-whistleblowers/>

Table 1: Drivers of Insecurity by Local Government Areas

Local Government Area	Key Conflict Drivers
Abi	<p>Communal crises between Usumutong and Ediba Ebom and Usumutong Ebom and Ebijakara Afafanyi and Usumotong Ikwo local government in Ebonyi State and Abi in Cross River State</p> <p>Others Cross border attacks, cultism, drug abuse</p>
Akamkpa	<p>Cultism, kidnapping, Ambazonia rebel fighters settling in the town, drug abuse.</p>
Akpabuyo	<p>Cultism, kidnapping, murders, armed robbery, street children menace, drug abuse, militancy, piracy, internal displacement, undocumented refugees, the influx of migrants from Ambazonia conflict, harassment from Cameroon gendarmes.</p>
Bekwarra	<p>Communal crises between Ijibor (Bekwarra) vs Ishibori (Ogoja) Ijibor (Bekwarra) Vs Emajie (Yala) Imaya (Bekwarra) Vs Abuagbor Fulani community</p> <p>Others Criminality, drug abuse, and political violence</p>
Bakassi	<p>Cultism, kidnapping, murders, armed robbery, street children menace, drug abuse, militancy, piracy, internal displacement, undocumented refugees, influx of migrants from Ambazonia conflict, harassment from Cameroon gendarmes.</p>
Biase	<p>Route for kidnapers, cultism, drug abuse, armed robbery, communal conflict between Orugbam and Ebonyi state.</p>
Boki	<p>Communal crises between Okwabang and Beebo communities both in Boki, Danare 1 and Bashua communities both in Boki Boje and Iso-Bendeghe communities both in Boki Boje and Nsadop communities in Boki Irruan in Boki and Mbube in Ogoja LGA Abonorok Vs Abi (Etung LGA)</p> <p>Others Cultism/gang wars, drug abuse, refugee influx from Ambazonia conflict, political violence, conflict over control of Oil Palm Estates, and general criminality</p>
Calabar Municipal	<p>Cultism, kidnapping, murders, armed robbery, street children</p>

	menace, drug abuse, low Ekpe superiority contestation.
Calabar South	Cultism, kidnapping, murders, armed robbery, street children menace, drug abuse, low Ekpe superiority contestation, militancy.
Etung	Communal crises between Bendeghe-Ekiem and Akparabong in Ikom Ajassor Vs Effraya communities both in Etung Abi Vs Abonorok (Boki LGA) Others Cultism/gang wars, refugee influx, drug abuse, political violence and general criminality
Ikom	Communal crises between Nde Vs Akparabong communities both in Ikom Ofutop Vs Ochon (Obubra LGA) Ekukunela Vs Isabang (Obubra LGA) Akparabong Vs Bendeghe-Ekiem (Etung LGA) Others Cultism/gang wars, drug abuse, refugee influx, kidnapping for ransom, and political violence.
Obanliku	Communal crises between Bebi Vs Tivs (Benue State) Godilogo Vs Tivs (Benue State) Utuhu Vs Udigie (Obudu LGA) Others Host communities refugee crises, drug abuse, cultism, and political violence
Obubra	Communal crises between Inyima and Onyadama communities both in Obubra Ochon and Ofutop (Ikom LGA) Oderegha Vs Inyima (Yakurr LGA) Osokpong 11 Vs Ikwo (Ebonyi State) Onyadama (Obubra) Vs Nko (Yakurr) Others Cultism, drug abuse, and political violence
Obudu	Communal crises between Ukwortung VS Igwo communities both in Obudu Kutia and Ukwurutung communities both in Obudu Okordem Vs Ukwutia communities both in Obudu Abonkib and Igwo Villages Vs Tsar community in Vandikya LGA (Benue State) Others Cultism/gang wars, drug abuse, political violence, farmers-herders conflicts, and general criminality
Odukpani	Communal crises between Ikot Offiong and Oku Iboku

	<p>Idim Ndum Atan</p> <p>Others kidnapping, cultism chiefly in Ekurikang, drug abuse, hostage keeping in Creek Town, Okoyong, Eniong.</p>
Ogoja	<p>Communal crises between Adagom Vs Njua communities both in Ogoja Adagom Vs Afrike communities both in Ogoja Adagom Vs Ndok communities both in Ogoja Ntara Vs Yahe (Yala) Odajie Mbube Vs Njua-Bano (Boki LGA) Idum/Mbube Vs Kachuan Irruan (Boki LGA) Nwang/Ekajuk Vs Kakwagom/Osokom (Boki LGA)</p> <p>Others Host communities-refugee crises, kidnappings, cultism, drug abuse, and political violence, and farmers-herders conflicts</p>
Yakuur	<p>Communal crises between Nko Vs Mkpani communities both in Yakurr Ekori Vs Mkpani communities both in Yakurr Nko Vs Inyima & Assiga communities both in Yakurr Nko Vs Adun (Obubra LGA) Nko Vs Onyadama (Obubra LGA) Inyima Vs Oderegha (Obubra LGA)</p> <p>Others Cultism/gang wars, kidnappings, drug abuse, political violence, and general criminality</p>
Yala	<p>Communal crises Olachor Vs Igebkurekor communities both in Yala Yahe Vs Ntara (Ogoja LGA) Ijibolo Vs Achalan (Ebonyi LGA) Ujama (Ukelle) Vs Izzi community (Ebonyi State)</p> <p>Others Farmers-herders conflicts, drug abuse, political violence</p>

Source: Generated by the researchers

6.2. Cultism and Gang Violence

In addition to the criminality of armed robbery and kidnapping, another predisposing factor, dominating the discourse on security in Cross River State is cultism or gang-related violence. Originating in Nigeria's higher institutions in the 1970s the phenomenon of cultism has transcended tertiary institutions into streets, neighborhoods, and even rural communities. By definition, cults are gangs of mostly armed young men who share the same membership identity and act in competition or opposition to perceived rival gangs. The membership of cults was previously restricted to undergraduates of tertiary institutions. However, with the proliferation of cult groups and increasing violent battles for supremacy and territoriality, the need arose to rapidly expand membership and grow affiliations and networks. This thinking gave rise to the multiplicity of cloned groups outside the campuses, who only subscribe to the violent *modus operandi* of the original groups. Mr. Ani Esin, Special Adviser to the governor of Cross River State on Security in the Southern Senatorial District says the largest campus gangs are the Vikings, the Ku Klux Klan (Klans), and the Neo Black Movement of Africa aka Black Axe (NBM).

The stiff rivalry between these foremost groups gave rise to rapid expansion and spread. The 'off-campus' equivalent of these groups who are active on the streets, communities, and neighborhoods include Skylo, Maf, Scorpions, Wounded Lions, Who Send You? etc. While they maintain some collaborative relationships with the main groups on campuses, they operate with relative independence, recruiting their members, establishing branches, and carrying out acts of aggression against other gangs and the public. Key informants including security experts, politicians, and journalists insist that one of the main sustaining factors for cultism is the allure created by the membership of politicians. Former senator, Ewa Henshaw, for instance, insists that many highly placed people in the state are also cultists³⁸. Mr. Ani puts the percentage of politicians who are members of violent cults at about 50%.³⁹ He goes further to posit that cultists are also highly complicit in organized kidnappings and armed robberies in the state. For them, engagement in

³⁸ Interview with Bassey Ewa Henshaw, former Senator and leader of PANDEF in Cross River State

³⁹ Interview with Mr. Ani Esin, Special Adviser to the Governor on security Matters in the Southern Senatorial District.

these acts of criminality constitutes additional revenue mobilization sources.

Cultism is one of the most widespread drivers of insecurity in Cross River State. According to journalists in the state, there has been no month in the last 5 years that cult-related killings have not occurred in a part of Cross River State. To address the problem of cultism in the state,

“Cultism has become a top killer factor in the state, even more deadly than some diseases. The killing of young Cross Riverians on campuses is alarming and we must take steps to address it.

“This bill seeks to outline stiffer punishment for any individual who is arrested for involvement in cultism to set as a deterrent to others,”

Mr Joseph Basse, Deputy Speaker Cross River State House of Assembly.

the Cross River State House of Assembly in 2019 began legislative deliberations aimed at amending the 2002 Cross River State Public Order and Prohibition of Secret Cult and Offensive Weapons Law. The 2002 law stipulated a penalty of two years imprisonment without an option of a fine for those who are convicted of cultism⁴⁰. In the law, owners of buildings where cultists reside are regarded as accessories to their crime and are to

be prosecuted along with their cultist-tenants. The law also stipulates a punishment of dismissal for heads of schools where cultism is prevalent. The new proposal by the Cross River legislators seeks to more deliberately describe acts that qualify as cultism and what constitutes membership. The new bill seeks to significantly increase the punishment for cultism from a short term of imprisonment to a sentence of death on conviction. The lawmakers believe that only such a stiff penalty will serve as a deterrent to would-be cultists.⁴¹

Incidents of cult-related violence are rife in Cross River State. On April 21, 2020, ten suspected cultists were allegedly killed in Ugep, Yakurr during a cult clash⁴². In Okundi community of Boki local

⁴⁰ Onah, G. (2002, August 14) Duke Signs Anti-Secret Cult Bill to Law. *Vanguard* Retrieved from <https://www.religionnewsblog.com/384/duke-signs-anti-secret-cult-bill-to-law>

⁴¹ (2019, October 24) Cross River Assembly seeks death penalty for cultism. *Pulse*. Retrieved from <https://www.pulse.ng/news/local/cross-river-assembly-seeks-death-penalty-for-cultism/ejxxe29>

⁴²Edem, E. (2020). Ten suspected cultists allegedly killed in renewed cult clash in Cross River. Accessed at <https://dailypost.ng/2020/04/21/ten-suspected-cultists-allegedly-killed-in-renewed-cult-clash-in-cross-river>, see also Shobiye, H. (2020). Two suspected cultists killed by rival group, mob in Cross River. Accessed at <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/04/two-suspected-cultists-killed-by-rival-group-mob-in-cross-river>

government, lives have been lost and properties destroyed by the activities of cult groups. The epicenter of cult-related activities in the Central Senatorial District is Etung and Boki LGAs. In both LGAs, cult violence has assumed a scary dimension where shooting, killing, and maiming of persons are commonplace. Bendeghe-Ekiem, Etomi, and Agbokim are some of the communities where cult war is prevalent in Etung LGA. This scenario played out prominently on the 16th of February 2019 during the postponed Presidential and National Assembly elections, where two rival cult groups supporting two different political parties engaged in a brawl that led to the death of 6 persons in Bendeghe Ekiem. Orimekpang, Okundi, Oku, Osokom, Boje, Iso-Bendeghe, and Nsadop are communities in Boki where cult violence has been recurrent. The latest episode of violence occurred in Okundi on 21-22 October 2019 between a cult group and members of the community, leading to the death of 7 persons⁴³. In the Northern Senatorial District, Ogoja and Obudu are renowned for cult activities.

A resident of the city of Calabar describes the current cult war as ‘Temple Run’, named after a virtual game, where a player maneuvers obstacles while running to survive. In Calabar, this captures the periodic escalation of cult-induced violence that compels a significant number of people in the state to flee their residences for safety. Respondents say ‘Temple Run’ occurs as regularly as twice a month and sometimes lasts for up to 2 months leaving a daily trail of brutal deaths. Recent escalations of cult violence in Calabar include the murder of at least 4 persons on the 2nd and 3rd of May, 2020 in a clash between rival cult groups⁴⁴, the shooting to death of a former local chapter chairman of Peoples Democratic Party, and aide to the state governor on the 16th of May 2020⁴⁵, the stabbing to death of an academic doctor working with the University of Calabar, on the 17th of May 2020⁴⁶, and the hacking to death of two men on the 15th of May 2020 at Iboku Street by Ikom

⁴³ This was gathered from interactions with Sunday Akam, an indigene if Okunndi and Enyong Ikpi, the Departmental Security Officer for Boki during separate interviews in April 2020. Both interviewees narrated that the cult war in Okundi has been recurrent with attendant economic losses and distortion of livelihoods.

⁴⁴ Wodu, A. (2020, May 5). Four killed in fresh Cross River cult clashes. *Punch*. Retrieved from <https://punchng.com/four-killed-in-fresh-cross-river-cult-clashes/>

⁴⁵ Uchechikwu, I. (2020, May 17). Cult war: Gunmen kill Ayade’s aide in Calabar. *Vanguard*. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/05/cult-war-gunmen-kill-ayades-aide-in-calabar/>

⁴⁶ Edem, E. (2020, May 18). Cross River cult clash claims University don, one other. *Daily Post*. Retrieved from <https://dailypost.ng/2020/05/18/cross-river-cult-clash-claims-university-don-one-other/>

Street, Mbukpa and Bassey Street, Off Ekpo Abasi respectively⁴⁷. Guardian Newspaper reports that no less than 20 persons have been killed in the last three weeks on account of different cult clashes, heightening the insecurity in the state⁴⁸.

Cultism has generally been sustained in the state largely because of political patronage. The relationship that exists between youths, cultism, and political leadership is, therefore, one that is mutually reinforcing, such that youths serve as the raw materials for cultism, and leadership on the flip side, creates and sustains an environment that makes cultism attractive.⁴⁹

6.3. Communal Conflicts

Communal conflicts have accounted for one of the major and longest lasting sources⁵⁰ of insecurity in Cross River State. Episodes of these violent interactions have not been unconnected to a wider national trend⁵¹ which has seen communal conflict becoming a rampant existential phenomenon in Nigeria. There is a growing consensus⁵² that communal conflict has been experienced in all local governments that make up the state. The only difference is its frequency of occurrence and gradation. Since the return to democracy in 1999, a lot of communities have been affected by outbreaks of communal violence with varying

⁴⁷ Asuquo, B. (2020, May 17). Cult clash claims 2 young lives in Calabar. *Paradise News*. <https://paradiseneews.ng/51004/cult-clash-claims-2-young-lives-in-calabar>

⁴⁸ Todo, A. (2020, May 18). Ayade's aide, two others killed in Calabar's cult war. *Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://guardian.ng/news/ayades-aide-two-others-killed-in-calabars-cult-war/>

⁴⁹ Obi, Ndifon Neji (2017). "Youth involvement in cultism and its implication for leadership in Cross River Central Senatorial District". *Guest lecture delivered on the occasion of the Cross River State Peace and Security Summit, Ikom*

⁵⁰ This much is contained in the 2016 Strategic Conflict Assessment of Nigeria (SCA): Consolidated and Zonal Reports by the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR), Abuja, Nigeria. Published in 2017

⁵¹ The 2016 SCA report provides evidence that suggest the pervasiveness of communal conflicts in our national political space.

⁵² This much is established when consideration is given to the evidence made available in such publications like: Conflict Incident Monthly Tracker (2018). Cross River State, February – March; Monthly Conflict Tracker (2016). Cross River State – April/May; Nigeria Conflict Bulletin (2015). Cross River State: Patterns and Trends, January 2012-June 2015. The Fund for Peace; Conflict Bulletin (2014). Cross River State. Fund for Peace; Una, E. (2019). Early morning communal conflict claims many lives in Cross River. Accessed at www.vanguardngr.com/2019/12/early-morning-communal-conflict-claims-many-lives-in-cross-river/; Okoi, I. & Tabi, F. (2018). Communal Boundary Conflicts in Nigeria: An Assessment of the 2006 Ebom - Ebijakara Boundary Conflict in Cross River State. *NDUÑQDE: Calabar Journal of the Humanities*, 13 (1), 300-308.

degrees of casualties. There are different categories of communal conflicts/clashes that have permeated Cross River State. Firstly, there are interstate communal conflicts that occur between communities in Cross River State and towns in neighboring states like Ebonyi, Akwa Ibom, and Benue. Typical of this type of conflict are the clashes resulting from the suspected incursion into land as witnessed between the Tsar community in Vandikya LGA of Benue State and Abonkib and Igwo Villages in Obudu⁵³LGA of Cross River State. This conflict which has been episodic over the years, escalated in 2019, resulting in the death of five persons. The persistent ancestral/aboriginal identity conflict between Izzi community in Ebonyi State and Ujama in Ukelle, Yala LGA of Cross River State is also another example of interstate conflict. This is a seasonal crisis that usually leads to the loss of lives and destruction of property.

One of the most notable and long-lasting interstate communal conflicts is the land dispute between Mbiabong Ikot-Offiong in Odukpani, Local Government Area in Cross River State, and Oku-Iboku in Itu Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. According to the Paramount Ruler of Ikot Offiong, this dispute has existed since 1913. The root of the conflict is the determination of the boundary between both communities. While the Ikot Offiong and Cross River people hold that the boundary is as naturally demarcated by the River Cross (placing Ikot Offiong immediately after the Calabar-Itu bridge), the Oku Iboku and Akwa Ibom people believe that Ikot Offiong territory lies further inland (a few kilometres after the Calabar-Itu Bridge). In 2000, an armed conflict between the two communities resulted in the death of at least 1000 persons⁵⁴. Since then, the two communities suffer periodic bursts of violent conflict, often claiming lives at each instance. The situation has also created a recurring problem of internal displacement which is one of the oldest in Cross River State. In 2016, the Ikot Offiong community suffered an attack that witnessed the destruction of every house in the Cross River part of the community, and the displacement of hundreds of people. Many residents of Ikot

⁵³ The Obudu Vs Tiv communal conflicts over disputed land boundary which stretches from the Borderline of Abonkib to Igwo villages of Obudu, and Tsar village have historically been virulently contested. This communal war has cause a lot of damage to both communities, resulting to several deaths and destruction of property as well as implosion of humanitarian crisis like Internal Displaced Persons (IDPs), distortion of economic activities and restriction of movement of people, goods and services.

⁵⁴Interview with the Paramount Ruler of Ikot Offiong, in Odukpani Local Government Area

Offiong have remained internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Okruikang community in Odukpani Local Government Area, and at make-shift accommodations in Calabar for decades.

There are also intrastate communal conflicts arising from boundary disputes between different communities within Cross River State. These include the recurrent dispute between Danare 1 and Bashua communities, and between Boje and Iso-Bendeghe in Boki LGA; the crises between Adagom and Njua, Adagom and Afrike and Adagom and Ndok. Among these are intrastate conflicts between different communities in the same LGA and/or different LGAs in Cross River State. The intra communal conflicts notably between Kutia village and Ukwurutung village⁵⁵ over a disputed land boundary in Obudu LGA, the inter-family land feud between same family members over land ownership in Adagom in Ogoja LGA, and the boundary dispute between Bendeghe-Ekiem and Akparabong communities are other categories of communal conflict recorded in the state. The relationship between the different causal factors of insecurity in the state requires a more methodical, context, and actors' analysis. This catalogue is by no means exhaustive as communities such as Inyima and Onyadama in Obubra, Okwabang, and Beebo communities in Boki, Nko, and Mkpani in Yakurr, Ochon in Obubra and Ofutop in Ikom, Ikwo local government in Ebonyi State and Abi in Cross River State have experienced episodic but recurring violent clashes.

The communal conflict between Usumutong and Ediba, Ebom and Usumutong, and Ebom and Ebijakara people in Abi Local Government Area is perhaps the most complex in Cross River State. The conflict which has claimed hundreds of lives and engendered widespread insecurity in the Cross River Central senatorial district involves communities from the same Bahomono nation. While the Usumutong people are engaged in a two-decade old strife with the neighboring Ediba people over the ownership of a parcel of farmland, they are caught up in the web of another armed crisis involving the Ebijakara people and Ebom community who are in conflict over farmland and settlement rights. The conflict between the two communities have seen the sacking

⁵⁵ Kutia and Ukwurutung Villages are located along the Obudu Ogoja High Way and have frequently, even at the time of this research engaged in violent armed conflict and most times blocked the federal highway leading to Ogoja and Obudu.

of the Ebijakara people from their ancestral land. Consequently, they have been IDPs in Usumutong community for decades.⁵⁶ The fact that the displaced Ebijakara people have been offered refuge by the Usumutong community constitutes a trigger of a new phase of belligerence between Usumutong and Ebom communities. More recently, another neighboring community, Afafanyi is said to have joined the coalition of Ebom and Ediba antipathy towards Usumutong. Dispute over land ownership is the root cause of all these conflicts. At different times, judicial decisions have been made by the courts, and various government agencies have intervened and made pronouncements on these cases to no avail. Unfortunately, the interventions have been unable to cause the peaceful resolution of these communal conflicts in the state.

These communal clashes feature the use of heavy and sophisticated weapons and have often resulted in deaths, destruction of property, displacements, and dislocation of livelihoods. Whenever these clashes occur, insecurity is heightened, farming is threatened, a decline in agricultural produce is experienced, and per capita, household income equally declines, with the multiplier effect of impacting the capacity of farmers in the conflict region to effectively meet sundry financial demands. A major predisposing factor of communal crises is the quest for land for agricultural purposes. Communal conflicts are, therefore, common⁵⁷ during farming seasons, which stretches between January and May⁵⁸. Specific reviews of some of these conflicts indicate that they are rooted in historical contexts⁵⁹ that predate the post-colonial Nigerian state. There is evidence that fatalities due to communal violence spiked sharply in July of 2017.⁶⁰ The dynamic nature of communal conflict has further reinforced gang violence, cultism, drug abuse, and criminality in the state.

⁵⁶ Interview with Elder Francis Eremi, Clan Head of Ebijakara, Abi Local Government Area

⁵⁷ Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (2017). 2016 Strategic Conflict Assessment of Nigeria. Abuja: Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution.

⁵⁸ 2016 SCA, Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR), Abuja

⁵⁹ Okoi, I. & Tabi, F. (2018). Communal Boundary Conflicts in Nigeria: An Assessment of the 2006 Ebom - Ebijakara Boundary Conflict in Cross River State. *NDU²QDE: Calabar Journal of the Humanities*, 13 (1), 300-308.

⁶⁰ Conflict Briefing (2017). Rise in Communal Conflict and Gang Violence in Cross River State. Niger Delta Partnership Initiative

6.4. The Threat of Street Kids

There is an alarming number of children who live on the streets in Calabar and fend for themselves without any adult support or guidance. This phenomenon which began in the early 2000s has escalated to unsettling proportions, with the number of children seeming to increase daily despite all efforts to curb the problem. Many of these kids fled their homes in Cross River State and other neighboring states after being branded witches and wizards by their families. Other kids arrive in Calabar as a means of escaping abandonment and poverty and abusive homes. In more recent times, the city has been plagued with a unique brand of insecurity perpetrated by these street children. Given the absence of a formal support system, these children depend on the goodwill of members of the public to survive or on whatever they can steal or scavenge from dumpsites.

The city of Calabar has been confronted with intensifying insecurity attributed to the violence and criminality perpetrated by these street children. The boys are condescendingly referred to as ‘Skolombo’, a loose term depicting a state of psychopathy conditioned by narcotics, lack of care, or reasoning. The girls are called ‘Lacasera Girls’, comparing the ease with which they are sexually exploited to the cheap carbonated drink, Lacasera. In creating their support system to survive on the harsh uncaring streets of Calabar, these children band together, scavenging or begging for their sustenance. Gradually, some of these groups morphed into criminal gangs, sometimes linked with larger and more lethal gangs of adults that rob, rape, kidnap, and use and trade in drugs, perpetrate political violence and prostitution. It was partly in response to the threat of insecurity posed by street children, that the state government created the special security team called Operation Skolombo. A victim of robbery perpetrated by street children describes how a group of no less than 12 boys, between nine and 15 years old, attacked her close to the Calabar Botanical Garden. While she could overpower one or two of them, the sheer number of the kids hitting and pulling her immediately caused her to succumb, as they took all valuables from her including shoes, and left her badly injured.

Respondents report that in the 2015 and 2019 elections in Cross River State, these street children were recruited by politicians to act as a

violent support base, intimidating and attacking opponents. There are unconfirmed reports that ahead of the 2019 elections, many of these under-aged kids registered and procured voters cards that allowed them to vote for the highest bidders. The presence of a mass of young people exposed to hardship and beyond the control of any positive adult influence exacerbates an already serious problem of insecurity. They present ready recruits for more sinister criminal gangs including cult groups. The expansion of cults to streets and neighborhoods in Calabar saw the enlistment of several street children, many of whom have grown into daredevil kidnapers, armed robbers, and murderers.

6.5. Militancy and Piracy

Another key source of insecurity in Cross River State is the phenomenon of militancy and piracy. The origins of this phenomenon

are traced to the ceding of the Bakassi Peninsula to the Republic of Cameroon and the displacement of the people of Cross River State whose home it was. According to the leader of the Bakassi Strike Force, the armed militant group which emerged immediately after the ceding, the decision to arm themselves and wage a sustained struggle was borne out of the need to protect the people of Bakassi from attacks by Cameroonian gendarmes who made it a habit to attack and extort Nigerian nationals that remained in the Peninsula. According to him, carrying arms was also informed by the failure of past Nigerian governments and the international community to ‘demonstrate the minimum level of responsibility and other obligations spelt out in the

It is unacceptable, for whatever reason and under any circumstance, for a citizen to bear arms. It is unacceptable for any citizen of Nigeria to bear arms. In that respect we want to thank specifically President Muhammadu Buhari, the Chief of Army Staff, the Commander of Operation Delta Safe, who have worked to bring this day to bear...the Bakassi Strike Force was not originally designed as a criminal team. It was a pressure group and Benjamin Ene is known to us. He is an indigene of Cross River State. He is from Bakassi, where the deep seaport is located. This is the philosophy that informed the decision to grant them amnesty. They took up arms when they saw their ancestral homes ceded to Cameroon; saw the loss of oil wells and the attendant pains. The conflict arising from all these degenerated to armed rebellion,

- Governor Ben Ayade

governments and the international community to ‘demonstrate the minimum level of responsibility and other obligations spelt out in the

Greentree Agreement',⁶¹ forcing them to initiate a struggle for self-determination and liberation of the people of Bakassi.

While the founding principles of the Bakassi Strike Force may have been noble and informed by the rather debilitating situation in which the people of Bakassi found themselves after the ceding of the Peninsula, there is no doubt that the later actions of the group became less honorable and bordered on outright criminality. In a focus group discussion in Bakassi Local Government Area, residents recounted experiences with militants that extorted from community people and travelers on the sea. At the height of the insecurity, militants took over the affairs of the communities, replaced the traditional institutions, and presided over court sessions on every matter which involved community members.

By 2016, the militants had overrun and taken over Bakassi and Akpabuyo local government areas, effectively replacing the elected officials of the councils. The elected chairmen, councilors, and staff of the two local councils abandoned their duty posts for months, relocating to Calabar. Militants have been accused of involvement in criminalities including kidnapping and armed robberies, and forcing residents, traders and travelers to pay 'protection money'⁶².

In December 2018, an amnesty was granted to the Bakassi Strike Force in return for the combatants to submit their arms and embrace a peace process. The formal event saw the handover of several sophisticated firearms and a pledge by the militants to embrace peace, while the government works towards rehabilitating and reintegrating them into civil society⁶³.

However, recent occurrences indicate that the process following the formal hand over of weapons was not followed through by the state government. In December 2019, former militants from Bakassi Local Government Area arrived Calabar in droves, heading to the office of the state governor. The militants were protesting abandonment by the

⁶¹ NAN. (2018, December 17). Over 1,000 militants surrender in Cross River. *Premium Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/south-south-regional/301591-over-1000-militants-surrender-in-cross-river.html>

⁶² Bassey, I. (2016, July 10). Militants Take Over Two LGAs in Cross River. *Thisday*. Retrieved from <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2016/07/10/militants-take-over-two-lgas-in-cross-river/>

⁶³ Offiong, E. (2018, December 18). Cross River grants amnesty to militant group. *VoiceofNigeria*. Retrieved from <https://www.von.gov.ng/cross-river-grants-amnesty-to-militant-group/>

government, and failure to keep to the promise of reintegration and support which had informed their embrace of the amnesty programme. According to the militants⁶⁴, the government promised to provide them with regular stipends and skills training, adding, however, that both promises have not been kept. They vowed to return to the creeks and arms if the conditions for the cessation of hostilities were not met.

6.6. Fallouts of Bakassi Ceding

The Bakassi Peninsula lies on the Gulf of Guinea close to the Cross River estuary. In terms of geography, the Bakassi Peninsula lies between latitudes 4°25' and 5°10'N and longitudes 8°20' and 9°08'E, consisting of marshy mangrove islands covering an approximate area of 665 km². Traditionally, Bakassi was administered as part of the larger Efik kingdom, and the Peninsula consisted largely of Efik-speaking fisher folks who called the place home as did their ancestors. Before the ceding of the territory to Cameroon, the area was administered by Nigeria as a distinct local government area and captured in the constitution. However, trouble between Nigeria and Cameroon over the ownership of the Peninsula intensified with the discovery of considerable reserves of crude oil in the area, and the interest of several oil exploration companies in the place. After initial military and a diplomatic face-off between Nigeria and Cameroon, which saw the two countries threatening to go to war in 1981, and the breakout of armed military skirmishes in the 1990s, Cameroon referred the dispute to the International Court of Justice on 29 March 1994. On the 10th of October 2002, judgement on the ownership of the Peninsula was delivered in favour of Cameroon. While the judgement required that Nigeria hands over ownership of the territory to Cameroon, the large Nigerian population on the Peninsula was not required to change their identity or nationality or even move away from the place.

⁶⁴ Todo, A. (2019, December 19). Ex-militants storm Calabar, vow to return to creeks. The Guardian. Retrieved from <https://guardian.ng/news/nigeria/ex-militants-storm-calabar-vow-to-return-to-creeks/>

Citing the fact that the handover of the disputed Peninsula did not enjoy the ratification of the Nigerian legislative arm, and violated sections of the Nigerian constitution, the National Assembly on the 22 November 2007 passed a resolution declaring that Nigeria's withdrawal from the Bakassi Peninsula and handing same to Cameroon, was illegal. However, on the 14th of August 2008, the Nigerian government finally handed over the entire Peninsula to Cameroon.

Even though there was no requirement in the Greentree Agreement for Nigerians in the Bakassi Peninsula to relocate, the regular abuses meted to them by Cameroon security operatives forced a migration of thousands of Nigerians to Cross River State. In July 2017 for instance, the Nigerian Foreign Affairs Ministry summoned the Ambassador of Cameroon to Nigeria over the killing of no less than 97 Nigerians resident in Bakassi by Cameroon Gendarmes over their failure to pay a N100,000 discriminatory boat levy imposed by Cameroon. This incident and many similar cases of abuse led to another wave of refugees into Cross River State. Interviews with internally displaced persons in Bakassi and Akpabuyo local government areas indicate that abuses by Cameroon authorities against Nigerians in Bakassi are routine and regular and that more and more Nigerians are fleeing insecurity in Cameroon into Cross River State. The displaced people now live in camps and other makeshift accommodations including school buildings and farm settlements. The crisis over the Bakassi Peninsula has caused an unprecedented nationality and identity

Greentree Agreement: Article 3

Cameroon, after the transfer of authority to it by Nigeria, guarantees to Nigerian nationals living in the Bakassi Peninsula the exercise of the fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in International Right Law of the people and in other relevant provisions of international law.

In particular, Cameroon shall not force Nigerian nationals living in the Bakassi Peninsula to leave the zone or to change their nationality. Respect their culture, language and beliefs. Respect their right to continue their agricultural and fishing activities. Protect their property and their customary land rights. Not levy in any discriminatory manner any taxes and other dues on Nigerian nationals living in the zone; and take every necessary measure to protect Nigerian nationals living in the zone from any harassment or harm.

predicament for the indigenous people. For instance, in 2012 during the governorship election in Cross River State, Bakassi ‘returnees’ in the state could not exercise their franchise because they were no longer on the voters register and their indigenous communities no longer existed in Nigeria. Nigerians in Bakassi suffered a similar fate in Cameroon’s presidential elections. The majority were not found eligible for issuance of identity papers that would allow them to vote. This crisis of nationality and identity has been described by scholars as a classic case of ‘statelessness’.

The identity and welfare challenges of internally displaced persons from Bakassi has been exacerbated by the fact that 14 years since the Greentree Agreement was reached, Nigeria is yet to ratify it⁶⁵, creating bottlenecks and weaknesses to any serious policy initiative to address the plight of the people. According to the victims, the government has failed to provide the relief that was promised. While 3,820 families are displaced, the government has only provided 240 housing units⁶⁶.

Aside from creating an unusual fiscal and humanitarian burden on the governments of Cross River State, the Bakassi displacement is also contributing to the threat of insecurity in the state. The camp constructed by the government for the residence of displaced people has already become a den of criminality as the place has been taken over by armed criminal elements. Reacting to the insecurity created by the situation, the traditional ruler of the area says his people regret allowing the government to construct the camp since it has now become a source of woes. “We regret allowing the government to build that estate; we regret every inch of that decision. I wish, we could rescind that decision or turn back the hands of time.”⁶⁷ There is growing discontent between the ‘returnees’ and residents of Bakassi and Akpabuyo local government areas.

⁶⁵<https://guardian.ng/news/ceding-of-bakassi-13-years-on-greentree-agreement-unratified-unimplemented/>

⁶⁶ Sunday, E. (2029, October 20). Ceding of Bakassi: 13 years on, Greentree agreement unratified, unimplemented. *Punch*. Retrieved from <https://punchng.com/bakassi-idps-protest-against-neglect/>

⁶⁷ Edem, E. (2017, October 13). Hoodlums take over IDPs camp in Cross River, rob displaced persons. *Daily Post*. Retrieved from <https://dailypost.ng/2017/10/13/hoodlums-take-idps-camp-cross-river-rob-displaced-persons/>

7. Emerging Threats of Insecurity

An emerging and potent threat to security in Cross River State is the sudden influx of men, mostly between the ages of 19 and 27 from northern Nigeria, possibly including Nigeriens and Chadians. In Calabar, these young men band together in small communities around dumpsites, markets, and other makeshift spaces. The fact that they have no traceable accommodation or any form of personal identification is a major source of security threat. Residents of Calabar report that in some cases, under the guise of rendering menial services to homes including disposing refuse and mending shoes, they steal valuables. When this happens, there is no way of tracing them.

More recently, the government of some states in southern Nigeria raised an alarm over the increasing number of these men arriving in their states. Despite the nationwide lockdown necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant number of states discovered large numbers of these men hiding in trucks conveying food materials and livestock.

In May 2020, with the Cross River State boundaries closed to external travels, a state boundary patrol team, comprising Peace Corp members, civilian vigilantes, and COVID-19 taskforce stopped five trucks at Bekwara local government, ostensibly conveying food items from the northern parts of the country. The trucks were found to contain large numbers of young men⁶⁸ heading for Calabar. Witnesses report that majority of them spoke no word of English and could not identify themselves. While the state government immediately ordered the trucks back citing the COVID-19 lockdown protocols, it is widely believed that this level of migration has been taking place undetected for long while.

It is important to note that the Nigerian constitution allows citizens of the country to reside in any part of the country they choose to. The clandestine manner of the current wave of migration, coupled with the identity challenge of the migrants, raises key questions that border on

⁶⁸ Uchechukwu, I, (2020, May 7). COVID-19: Ayade orders five truckloads of almajiris back to destination. Vanguard. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/05/covid-19-ayade-orders-five-truckloads-of-almajiris-back-to-destination/>

security. There are also two varieties of emerging conflicts with their attendant arms build-up namely: host communities versus refugees/IDPs and farmers versus herders. Existing literature is yet to appropriately account for these strands of conflicts because these genres had been relatively alien to the security landscape of the state.

7.1. Ambazonia Conflict, Refugees and Arms Build-up in Cross River State

With the unrest occasioned by the demand for the creation of the Ambazonia Republic from the Republic of Cameroon, it is only natural that Cross River State, especially with its hosting of a long, contiguous and porous international border with Cameroon, becomes a destination of choice for refugees fleeing the violence in Cameroon. The governor of Cross River State notes that there are 27 illegal routes used by the Cameroonians to gain access into the state. He also states that as of September 2018, the state was home to over 4,000 Cameroonian refugees in about seven camps⁶⁹. With over 4,000 refugees in the state as of 2018, the figure rises to 35,965 in 2019 and 36,044 in January 2020 representing 69.5⁷⁰ per cent of the total number of Cameroonian refugees in Nigeria (with the national official number of refugees rising from 51,723 in December 2019 to 51,864 in 2020), there is an urgent need to dedicate attention to studying this emerging trend.

“It is so bad that the arm struggle has led to a situation where Cross River has become a recruitment ground for mercenary to prosecute the war in Cameroon”

(Governor Ben Ayade - 2018)

Another dimension of the associated refugees’ threat is the invasion of communities in Cross River State by Cameroonian gendarmes. About 80⁷¹ Cameroonian gendarmes were noted to have invaded Danare 1 and 2, in Boki Local Government Area, claiming that they were after Cameroon militants who took refuge in the community where over 5,000 unregistered Cameroonian refugees are hosted. In October 2017, two

⁶⁹ NAN. (2018, September 12). Cameroonian mercenaries recruiting from Cross River – Governor. *Premium Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/south-south-regional/283294-cameroonian-mercenaries-recruiting-from-cross-river-governor.html>

⁷⁰ Cross River hosts 36,000 Cameroonian refugees – SEMA DG (February, 2020). Retrieved from <https://guardian.ng/news/cross-river-hosts-36000-cameroonian-refugees-sema-dg/>

⁷¹ Cameroonian gendarmes invade Cross River Community (January, 2018). Retrieved from <https://punchng.com/cameroonian-gendarmes-invade-cross-river-community/>

farmers were killed and five persons abducted in December from Danare on the claims that they were mercenaries involved in the fight for the creation of Ambazonia Republic. The linkage here is such that people “smuggle in goods of different kinds, sell them and use the money to acquire arms, recruit young men and women in the state and use them as mercenaries to fight back home⁷²”.

Besides the 5000 refugees hosted in Danare 1 and 2, there are other registered and unregistered refugees hosted in different communities in the state. Biajua is said to be home to 890, Bashu 400, Bashua 350, and Abo Emeh 240, all in Boki Local Government Area. Up Ranch in Obanliku Local Government Area is said to host 450, 850 in Agbokim, 759 in Ajassor both in Etung Local Government Area and more than 2500 in Ikom Local Government Area⁷³. There are equally undocumented numbers of refugees in Amana, Besenge, Adandang, and Utanga in Obanliku local government area. In Adagom, the refugee camp settlement that was meant for 4000 persons currently hosts over 6000 refugees. In addition, the Okende camp settlement which was built for 2500 persons now hosts over 3500 refugees⁷⁴. In most cases, these numbers spill over into the host communities, thereby putting pressure on the limited resources in such communities, resulting in clashes and disharmony. Conflicts between refugees and host communities in Adagom 1 in Ogoja Local Government Area and Amana 1 in Obanliku LGA are instances of the emerging dynamics of the refugees-induced insecurity. Besides the humanitarian efforts in addressing issues of food security in the refugee camps, there is an obvious lack of a deliberate response strategy by the government in addressing associated issues of insecurity posed by refugees’ influx, particularly for refugees within host communities who have the liberty of moving in and out of Cameroon unchecked.

⁷²Ayade: Cameroon Smuggling Arms, Mercenaries to Nigeria (July 2018). Retrieved from <https://shipsandports.com.ng/ayade-cameroon-smuggling-arms-mercenaries-nigeria/>

⁷³ Information was provided by Kingsley Obase, former Project Coordinator Support with Medicines Sans Frontierers (MSF) during an interview in April 2020. He maintained that the numbers mentioned were statistics for 2019 but the numbers are subject to fluctuation because renewed hostility leads to influx of more refugees

⁷⁴ Kingsley Obase, during an interview in April 2020, mentioned that actual numbers of refugees hosted in the refugees’ camps in Ogoja are more than the capacity for which they were built. This is majorly due to the relocation of some refugees from Anyiake in Benue state to Ogoja in Cross River State.

Generally, in terms of documentation and tracking, there are 4 categories of refugees consisting of: those that are registered by the UNHCR and are accommodated at the different refugee camps; the second category are those registered by the UNHCR. They were either not accommodated at the camps or they refused to relocate to the camps. This category only goes to the camp at the end of every month to collect their monthly stipends. The other categories are those who refuse to register for reasons that the UNHCR was yet to provide for some of the registered refugees, so they do not see any rationale for registering. This category exists in communities and fend for themselves through legitimate and illegitimate means. Those who are not registered and are not steady at a particular location constitute the last category. They move from place to place and settle momentarily depending on their convenience. This trend demonstrates the difficulty and security risks associated with dealing with the refugee phenomenon in the state. The unregistered number of refugees in the state, pressure on existing health, social, educational, and economic services, and proliferation of small arms and light weapons are, therefore, some of the issues driving emerging insecurity in the state.

7.2. Farmers-Herders Conflicts

Farmers-herders strand of conflict is not common in the security landscape of the state so its emergence and recurrence constitute a potential threat to livelihoods. The invasion and sacking of over 300⁷⁵ residents of Mbiabong Ito community in Ito-South clan of Odukpani Local Government Area of the state by herdsmen in December 2017, the reported killing of about 10⁷⁶ people and the displacement of more than 3,500 people in Obio Usiere in Eniong Abatim, Odukpani Local Government Area of Cross River State by Fulani herdsmen in April 2017, the invasion of Ikaptang community⁷⁷ of Ishibori in Ogoja Local

⁷⁵Residents flee home as herdsmen invade Cross River community (December 2017). Retrieved from <https://punchng.com/residents-flee-home-as-herdsmen-invade-cross-river-community/>

⁷⁶Fulani Herdsmen kills 10, rapes many in Odukpani LGA of Cross River State (April 2017). Retrieved from <https://paradiseneews.ng/22361/fulani-herdsmen-kills-10-rapes-many>

⁷⁷Fulani herdsmen leave Cross River community 72 hours after quit notice (August 2017). Retrieved from <https://www.legit.ng/1121113-fulani-herdsmen-leave-cross-river-community-72-hours-quit-notice.html>

Government Area in August 2017 and other isolated incidences in Yala, Obudu and other parts of the state are indicative of an emerging ubiquitous threat of insecurity that must not be overlooked. Whenever herders' invasion occurs, inhabitants of these communities who are predominantly subsistence farmers stay away from their farms for fear of being raped or killed. In every such situation, the farmers' crops are at the risk of being destroyed by the herders' cattle with severe implications on livelihoods.

The primary driver sustaining this emerging security challenge is the government's apparent silence and inability to appropriately address this emerging source of insecurity. The response mechanism often deployed by the government is the militaristic approach of deployment of security agents to crises flashpoints. The pattern indicates that the invasion by herdsmen in southern Cross River State, particularly, Odukpani local government which has become a flashpoint is through Arochukwu, a town located at the southern end of Abia State while the contiguity of some local government areas in northern Cross River with Benue and Taraba states, where farmers-herders conflict is prevalent, has enhanced and sustained the vulnerability of LGAs sharing common borders at these volatile corridors.

8. Actors of conflicts, violence, and insecurity in Cross River State

Actors in the security landscape of the state are broadly categorized into 5 groups identified to include:

Table 2: Actors of conflicts, violence, and insecurity in Cross River State

The roles of these actors are captured in the analyses below.

Community Actors: Compromised traditional rulers, Deviant youth groups, Cultists , vigilante and community war criminals as well as compromised security agents.

Political Actors: Politicians, Compromised security agents, Cultists and political thugs.

Economic Actors: Traders association and National Union of Road Transport workers (NURTW).

Clandestine Actors: Cultists, Kidnappers, Militants and Pirates.

Others: Herdsmen, Refugees, Skolombo and Lacasera babes.

Source: Generated by the researchers

9. Findings and Analyses

9.1. Kidnapping and Armed Robberies

From interviews and other research findings, one of the major reasons kidnapping for ransom and armed robbery thrive in Cross River State is the weakness of law enforcement in the arrest and prosecution of offenders. This weakness can be traced to at least two factors. The first is the alleged complicity of some law enforcement officers in the occurrences of criminality in the state. As previously highlighted, in at least one instance, a police officer was arrested on the accusation of leading a kidnap for ransom gang that had wreaked havoc in the state. Similarly, Mr. Ani, who advises the state governor on security issues in the southern senatorial district, informs that security operatives are key actors in the insecurity in the state. According to him, some police officers hire out their firearms to criminal elements to use in operations.

Another key factor responsible for the increasing spate of insecurity associated with kidnapping and armed robbery in the state is the phenomenon of bail. At a focus group discussion in Calabar, participants insisted that the criminal justice system in Cross River State is so skewed that it is easy for any person accused of a crime to walk out of detention and any form of prosecution. According to them, the police have perfected a strange concept of 'bail' - where an amount of money is paid by offenders to the police to secure their immediate release without trial. The participants narrate instances where known criminals were arrested by the police only to be released back into the communities shortly afterward. It is for this reason that many crime impacted-communities in the state are resorting to self-help or jungle justice strategies to fight criminality. In August 2018, local vigilantes arrested and burnt three suspected armed robbers in Calabar South. The vigilantes claimed they had to organize themselves for that purpose since they could no longer rely on the police for security. On their decision to incinerate the suspect, they stated that whenever they arrested criminals and handed over to the police, they are routinely released on bail⁷⁸. There were also

⁷⁸Uchechukwu, I. (2018, August 23). 3 robbery suspects burnt to death in Calabar. Vanguard. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/08/3-robbery-suspects-burnt-to-death-in-calabar/>

issues of crime and vigilante justice recorded in Abi in 2015, Ogoja in 2013, and Obudu in 2018. Vigilante justice is a direct outcome of the failure of law enforcement at instilling law and order in communities.

Findings from the study show that the prevalence of kidnapping, armed robbery, and other related criminalities in Cross River State lies chiefly due to the laxity in the law implementation process to prosecute offenders. The criminal justice administration system simply lacks the willingness to prosecute offenders. The prevailing logic in the administration of criminal justice by the police is that when 'bail' is paid to the police, somehow that payment qualifies as penance for crimes committed. In reality, however, findings indicate that the police considers the money extorted from criminal as a kind of ransom to secure their release without consideration for the victims of crime.

The complex nexus of kidnapping, armed robbery, and other shades of criminality and cultism in Cross River State is one that is often overlooked by the authorities. Findings from the research indicate that these crimes are carried out by well-organized cult gangs. This relationship is explored further and deeper in the next sections on cultism and gang violence.

9.2. Cultism and Gang Violence

As previously documented, while the phenomenon of cultism originated in Nigerian tertiary institutions in the 1970s, its growth, and expansion in Cross River State has taken place mostly on the streets, neighbourhoods and even suburban communities.

One of the key findings in the research is that politics and politicians are the key drivers and sustenance mechanism for the growing gang-related insecurity in Cross River State. The interplay and mutual reinforcement of politics and cultism were well established in the course of the research. Specifically, the leader of PANDEF in Cross River State, Senator Bassey Ewa Henshaw stated in a key informant interview that politics and political contestation play a critical role in the development of insecurity in the state. Politicians deliberately arm and retain the services of people whom they can call on to attack, intimidate and subdue opponents. He says further that beyond this, politicians also provide support, protection, and sustenance for these 'private armies' when they get into power, insisting that many highly placed people in the

state belong to different cult gangs. Another former senator in the state, Mrs. Florence Ita Giwa shares this view. She avows strongly that politicians and the political class are behind cultism and the attendant insecurity in the state⁷⁹.

A key opposition grassroots politician in the state Mr. Effiong ‘Obama’ Ekarika supports this line of argument. According to him, insecurity is heightened when politicians enlist the support of armed

“Cultism is an issue of concern in the state and there is now a shared relationship between politics and cultism. Politicians hire cultists to cause mayhem... It’s so bad that even in simple civil issues; you still find cultism rearing its head”.

Governor Ben Ayade

cultists to support them in the usually violence-prone elections in the state. At the end of the electoral processes, the cult gangs become the standing army of the politician who has now become a political office holder. In exchange for their services in intimidating opponents, the politician offers the gang members high-level protection.

Mr. Ekarika argues that when gang members are arrested for different levels of criminality, their release is immediately secured by the political backers. He argues further that while different antagonistic gangs are operating in the state, their point of convergence in political contestation is usually in their support for candidates of the ruling party. However, he argues that with the emergence of the All Progressives Congress (APC) as a formidable political opposition in the state, this hegemony enjoyed by the ruling PDP in the ‘ownership’ of cult gangs could change. He noted that during the 2019 elections in the state, there were subtle attempts at balancing electoral terror, noting that if the trend is not checked, this could grow into manifest anarchy in future electoral contestations.

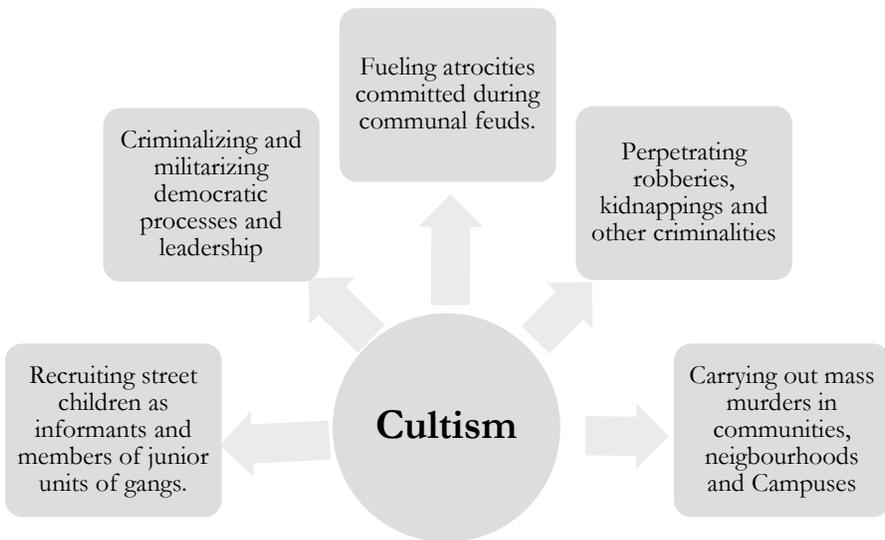
Cultism has generally been sustained in the state largely because of political patronage. The relationship that exists between the youth, cultism, and political leadership is, therefore, one that is mutually reinforcing, such that youths serve as the raw materials for cultism, while

⁷⁹(2018, April 4). Politicians behind cultism in Cross River – Ita Giwa. *BluePrint*. Retrieved from https://www.blueprint.ng/politicians-behind-cultism-cross-river-ita-giwa/?doing_wp_cron=1590163807.1445078849792480468750

the leadership incentivizes and sustains an environment that makes cultism attractive.

Respondents attribute the rising spread of kidnapping, armed robbery, and other criminal activities in the state to the commensurate rise and spread of cultism. Mr. Ani argues that criminality provides revenues that sustain cultists. His counterpart in the central senatorial district Mr. Ransom posits that cultism is a means of livelihood, like any other job. According to him, 90% of kidnapers and armed robbers double as cultists. Senator Henshaw provides a fuller context to the relationship between criminality and cultism. According to him, they simply realized that it was easier to perpetrate crimes in an organized cartel, and cult gangs provide the perfect framework to do that.

Chart 1: Cultism as a Major Enabler of insecurity in Cross River State



Source: Generated by the Researchers

The relationship between cult gangs and other forms of insecurity in Cross River State is such that cults are facilitators and enablers of these drivers of insecurity. This goes beyond participation in kidnapping and armed robbery. Take the relationship between cult gangs and street

children for instance; research findings reveal that cult gangs recruit street kids into junior units of their groups, thereby expediting the transformation of street children into full-blown criminals. In the same regard, cult gangs are responsible for the regular upheaval of atrocious killings in different parts of the state, and when 'wars' of rivalry break out between these groups, scores of murders are committed all over the state. In some cases, non-members of these groups suffer collateral damages. The full participation of cult gangs in the political processes of the state is one of the major reasons the process is characterized by violence. As stated previously, the capacity of cult gangs to unleash unmitigated violence against opponents, and force the will of their political patrons on the electorate, is a major consideration for appointing their members in government and retaining their services during future elections. This level of violence in the electoral process creates a standard of insecurity which goes beyond the immediate outcome of the election and extends to the character of political governance that emanates from the process.

Cult gangs also utilize their expertise in handling light weapons in the many communal crises in Cross river state, sometimes as mercenaries. It is important to note that in communities where there is intense inter or intra communal strife, there is always also an increased prevalence of cult gangs. In Ekruikiang in Odukpani Local Government Area, for instance, the inter-communal crisis between Oku Iboku in Akwa Ibom State and Ikot Offiong in Cross River State has led to the growth of cult groups in that town being the closest to the location of hostilities. When the communal violence escalates, gang members defend their communities in lead attacks against opponents. This is true in other parts of the state where communal crises are manifest.

It is also important to note that there are indications that some traditional rulers are complicit in cultism. At a 2019 workshop in Calabar, the Speaker of the Cross River State House of Assembly informed an audience of security experts and academics that some traditional rulers in the state are members of cult gangs⁸⁰. This view was affirmed by Mr. Ani Esin who also reported that membership of cult

⁸⁰ Edem, E. (2019, August 22). Some traditional rulers are cultists – Cross River Speaker alleges. *Daily Post*. Retrieved from <https://dailypost.ng/2019/08/22/traditional-rulers-cultists-cross-river-speaker-alleges/>

gangs includes serving traditional rulers and even religious leaders. He said the security realities of the state have tended to necessitate their membership as a self-protection mechanism.

In August 2018 while receiving the General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the 82 Division of the Nigerian Army, Major General Emmanuel Kabuk, Governor Ayade challenged security agencies to arrest and prosecute any person found, including members of his government, to be involved or known to be aiding and abetting cultism⁸¹. The impression this request creates is that the governor is unaware of cult leaders in the state. Research findings indicate that contrary to this view, the state government actually knows the leaders of the key cult gangs, and meets periodically with them to discuss peace and security in the state. According to the Special Adviser to the Governor on Security in the Cross River Central Senatorial District, Mr. Ransom Odey, there is a Cross River State Peace Council, a meeting framework where the heads of all the major cult gangs in the state send representatives to discuss peace in the state. This reality indicates a sense of understanding, accommodation, and tolerance of criminality, criminals, and gangs operating in the state.

⁸¹ Gill, N. (2018, August 28). Politics, Cultism Fueling Insecurity In Cross Rivers – Gov. Ayade. Independent. Retrieved from <https://www.independent.ng/politics-cultism-fueling-insecurity-in-cross-rivers-gov-ayade/>

CASE STUDY 1: Poverty and Unemployment as drivers of insecurity

Mr. Effiong Ekarika is a grassroots politician. He was a Councillor in Calabar South local government area on the platform of the ruling People's Democratic Party, PDP. Recently he decamped to the opposition All Progressives Congress where he contested unsuccessfully to enter the Cross River House of Assembly. On the streets of Calabar South and Calabar Municipality, Mr. Ekarika is fondly called Obama, a reference to his popularity and grassroots leadership.

For 9 years, beginning sometime in 2012, Mr. Effiong Ekarika controlled the bunkering business in Bakassi, Akpabuyo and Calabar South local government areas. Stolen crude oil processed by artisanal refineries in Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta states into petrol, diesel and kerosene are transported by huge dugout canoes called 'Cotonou Boats' through the connecting waters between the states to the creeks of southern Cross River State. Mr. Ekarika takes charge of the delivery with a long retinue of 'boys' who work for him and depend on the business for their source of livelihood. The business network of bunkering in Cross River State was a long one, requiring the participation and service of a significant number of people. From transporters to retailers to lifters who roll and lift drums of the product to their loading points. The value chain included drivers and owners of taxis, buses, motorcycles, tricycles and tankers. It also included food vendors who make profitable daily sales at the jetties, as well as retailers of an assortment of wares.

At the end of the week, Mr. Ekarika pays his workers. He spends an average of five million naira paying a long list of workers mostly from a pool of young men who reside in the communities. Mr. Ekarika says the number of people he paid salaries to from the business was in the thousands, and the payments were regular. He also ran a welfare scheme which allowed people from the community access to zero-interest credit facilities or grants to start businesses or respond to emergencies.

For the 9 years the business of reselling artisanal refined products lasted, Mr. Ekarika says the level of criminality and insecurity was negligible. The people who currently perpetrate criminalities were judiciously engaged and did not have the time or interest to become engaged in gangs or robberies. However, immediately the government of Senator Lijel Imoke put a stop to the 'business', Calabar South became a den of criminality. Mr. Ekarika says he knows several young men who previously worked for him full time, but are now gang leaders engaging in crime. He knows others who have been arrested or killed.

Mr. Ekarika buttresses the point that the key support system for insecurity caused by criminality is poverty and unemployment. The tendency for people to become engaged in criminal activities increases in proportion to their level of poverty and destitution.

Research findings also indicate that there is a more elaborate- and sinister relationship between politicians, government, and cult gangs in Cross River State that extends beyond a one-way flow of support. When cult gangs support politicians to get into power, they are rewarded with appointments and operational revenues. Previously, this reward system took the form of monetary handouts. Gradually, it evolved to the award of ‘revenue points’ to various gangs and gang leaders. These ‘revenue points’ are a major source of territorial conflicts between cult gangs. The stronger gangs control the more lucrative ‘revenue points’. Below is a breakdown of ‘revenue points’ and the major gangs controlling those points in Calabar South:

Table 3: Revenue Points controlled by cult groups

‘Revenue Point’	Cult Gang Control
Watt Market, Roundabout up to Edgerley, Mbukpa and Iman	- Black Axe
	- Scorpions
Watt Market Roundabout through Edibe Edibe to Ibesikpo	- Vikings
	- Skylo
Bedwell	- Ku Klux Klan
	- Mafians

Source: Generated by the researchers

This award of revenue collection rights to gangs creates an incentive for gang membership, while also driving the motivation to assume a leadership role and thereby having access to public revenues.

In Cross River State, the government is known to have rewarded perpetrators of violence and people with the capacity to mobilize and unleash violence, with political appointments. For instance, the leader of the militant groups, the Bakassi Strike Force was appointed into the state cabinet as the Special Adviser to the Governor on Maritime Security. Again, the oil palm estate that is at the roots of the conflicts and killings in Boki is said to be managed by an alleged cultist⁸² nicknamed ‘*General Iron*’.

⁸² This declaration was by Robert Bisong Agbor, former Youth Leader of Osokom-Okundi, Boki LGA during an interview in April 2020.

Cultism grows and thrives in Cross River State because the state government fails to criminalize it through the implementation of the existing anti-cultism law, and developing a more stringent one. The tolerance of the government for cultism expressed through the partnership between cult gangs and their members on the one hand, and politicians and government officials on the other hand, creates a dangerous synergy of creepy complicity. The existing reward system for gangs and gang members, including the emerging trend of gradual assimilation into official government positions, makes nonsense of any government effort to end the malaise of cultism in the state.

9.3. Communal Conflicts

Population increase, limited availability of land resource, poor land use practices and lack of properly demarcated land boundaries, the absence of community early warning and early response system, unemployment/poverty, weak traditional institutions and compromised security agencies are some of the factors⁸³ that create and sustain conditions that stoke communal conflicts. Generally, vast arrays of factors have been projected as explanations for the various outbreaks of violence which have plagued communities in Cross River State. In favoring a resource-based interpretation, some scholars⁸⁴ have connected the phenomenon of communal conflicts to the competition for land caused by overpopulation and limited availability of the same resource. This thesis has been advanced by the Niger Delta Partnership Initiative⁸⁵ and other scholars.

⁸³ There is a unanimity of opinion on the drivers of insecurity in the central and northern senatorial districts and indeed, the state in general. This much was established in interviews with HRH Patrick Ishoja; Barr. Lazarus Izabi-Undie; Hon Emmanuel Akwagiobe on April 30, 2020. These points were further restated by discussants during focus groups.

⁸⁴ Okoi, I. & Tabi, F. (2018). Communal Boundary Conflicts in Nigeria: An Assessment of the 2006 Ebom - Ebijakara Boundary Conflict in Cross River State. *NIDUNODE: Calabar Journal of the Humanities*, 13 (1), 300-308.

⁸⁵ Partnership Initiative for Development in the Niger Delta (2017), Enang, E. (2013). Population and communal land conflicts nexus in rural communities of Nigeria: The case of Obubra local government area of Cross River state, Nigeria. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(2), 587-592, Eremi, E. & Bisong, T (2018). Trends of ethnic conflict in Cross River state. *Scientific Research Journal (SCRJ)*, 6(11), 74-83.

In their interrogation of the conflict landscape of Central Cross River, scholars have also argued firmly in support of that proposition⁸⁶. While the availability of the land resource is limited, the study found that it is further compounded by a lack of properly delineated boundaries⁸⁷. Closely related to improper boundary delineation is the lack of a community early warning and early response system. Evidence has demonstrated that communal clashes do not just happen but are preceded by a cocktail of signals that could be easily identified and mitigated were there to be community early warning and early response systems. The lack of a community-owned and driven system that identifies conflict signals and activates response and mitigation measures becomes a potent driver that allows latent conflicts to manifest and escalate.

Many analysts have also fingered the politicization of the security apparatus as a primary driver of insecurity. Certain studies⁸⁸ have drawn linkages between traditional institutions and the prevalence of conflict. Findings of the research conducted by such scholars highlighted discontent among some traditional rulers as a vector for communal conflicts. Dereliction of duty on the part of traditional rulers is often seen as one of the causes of insecurity, a fact made obvious by the suspension of 10 traditional rulers of some communities in the central senatorial district by the Cross River State Government in 2013⁸⁹ on account of the outbreak of rounds of communal strife. Elsewhere, certain strands of opinion have also identified other drivers of insecurity such as long-standing animosity between communities, hunger, access to arms and ammunition, and personal grievances as well as socio-economic variables⁹⁰.

⁸⁶Agbor, U. & Eteng, F. (2018). Sustainable management of communal violent conflicts and peaceful co-existence in central Cross River state, Nigeria. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 5 (10), 331-345.

⁸⁷ The State Security Adviser (SSA) Central, Ransom Odey informs that most of the communal clashes experienced in the state (whether intra- state or inter-state) occur due to lack of proper boundary demarcation. He made the point that National Boundary Commission and the state boundary commission owe people the responsibility to ensure the proper delineation of inter-state and intra-state boundaries.

⁸⁸ Ovat, O. (2015). Obubra yesterday, today and tomorrow: An assessment of the economic development of a local government area in Cross River state, Nigeria. *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*, 6 (20).

⁸⁹Cross River Watch (2013). Communal conflicts: Imoke suspend 10 traditional rulers. Retrieved from crossriverwatch.com/2013/05/communal-conflicts-imoke-suspend-10-traditional-rulers

⁹⁰ Ovat, O. (2015). Obubra yesterday, today and tomorrow: An assessment of the economic development of a local government area in Cross River state, Nigeria. *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*, 6 (20).

CASE STUDY2: Government's inaction as driver of insecurity

While there is a well-constructed road that leads from the Ugep junction into Usulutong, the people of Usulutong dare not use that route. It goes through Ediba, a neighbouring community they have been engaged in a communal feud with over a piece of land for decades. The people affirm that travelling through Ediba community is dangerous for anyone from Usulutong; you could be attacked and killed. This has happened in the past. The alternative route to Usulutong is a dirt track through farmlands. The community has hired stern looking armed young men who man a makeshift checkpoint to vet entrants into the community.

The Ediba and Usulutong people belong to the same Babomono nation, sharing the same customs, language and freely inter marrying. However, trouble erupted over claims and counter claims by both communities over a modest piece of farmland. Both the Ediba and Usulutong people lay claim to the parcel of land as theirs. The first signs of contestation over the land emerged over 100 years ago in 1912. Again in 1919 and 1940, the issues erupted again. However, the contestation took a belligerent turn in the 2000s and became an armed conflict in 2013. The crisis has led to the destruction of several houses and the displacement of several families. Scores have been killed as a result of the communal conflict. Despite petitions to successive governments of Cross River State to intervene and resolve the matter, there has been no government backed action to resolve the crises. The warring communities have also taken their contest to court for amicable solution. Unfortunately, the rather slow court processes have eclipsed any chance for an amicable solution in the immediate future. The failure of relevant institutions to resolve the crisis between Usulutong and Ediba has created an opportunity for that crisis to feed into other crises in the 9 communities that make up the Babomono nation.

In January 2006, the Ebijakara and Ebom people who have historically shared a community, clashed violently. At least 300 persons were killed in 4 days of violence and murders. Since then, the Ebijakara people have been driven out of their ancestral homes. For 14 years, they have been forced to live as refugees in camps and makeshift spaces. While courts and investigation panels including those from the National Boundaries Commission have intervened in the matter, the failure has been the extent of the enforcement of the various rulings. The same applies to court rulings. In 2015, the state government set up a mediation committee to address the concerns of both feuding parties. The committee never produced a report.

Majority of the displaced Ebijakara people now live in Usulutong community, in houses donated to them. This act of charity has sparked another round of fighting, this time between Ebom and Usulutong. The Ebom people reckon that accommodating their opponents amounts to supporting them in the ongoing feud. In 2018, on account of this, Ebom community invaded Usulutong, torching several houses including that of the traditional ruler.

The web of conflict in the Babomono nation has continued to expand without any interventions from the government to address the source of the conflict. Recently, Afajanyi, another neighbouring community with roots in the Babomono nation declared war on Usulutong, seemingly for no discernible reason. In April 2020, Ebom community again attacked neighbouring Bazovere for reasons that are still unclear, further driving the area into insecurity.

Interestingly, the role of the Police in the various conflicts has been dismal. When clashes erupt, the Police stay away until it simmers, when all the damage is done. The failure of the police to intervene and enforce order has driven the belligerents to desperate measures, including an unprecedented arms build-up by all communities in the area. Also, the unwillingness of other government institutions to intervene in the conflict has ensured that the source of the contestation is not addressed, and that citizens continue to suffer negative consequences.

It is interesting to note that a significant number of the communal conflicts in Cross River State tend to erupt during the farming season, and recede thereafter, clearly demonstrating the assertion that these conflicts are mostly related to ownership of farmlands. The perennial and recurring character of these conflicts, however, demonstrates the weakness of the government in taking action to ensure their resolution. Such action will necessarily involve the proper and accurate delineation of the various boundaries in contestation. In several of these cases, the government fails to do so, thereby creating an atmosphere of uncertainty that allows conflicts to fester. In other cases, where through litigation processes, ownership of lands in contestation has been decided, or where government agencies like the Boundaries Commission made definitive pronouncements, enforcement becomes a problem. In the land dispute between the Ikot Offiong people of Odukpani Local Government Area of Cross River State and the Oku Iboku people of Akwa Ibom State, the failure of relevant federal government agencies to enforce the decisions of the courts and other adjudication processes has contributed to sustaining the conflict and exacerbating it.⁹¹

The same situation exists in the conflict between the Ebijakara and Ebom people of Abi Local Government Area. In this case, the courts have made detailed pronouncements on the ownership of the contested lands. Again, the conflict continues because of the failure of the government in enforcing the judgment of the court. In the case of Ebijakara and Ebom communities, this has lasted since 1964.⁹²

A key flaw in the ability of traditional institutions to manage communal conflicts is that those traditional stools have become highly politicized.⁹³ The process of appointing traditional rulers has become so politicized in some instances, to the extent that the occupants of political stools have no real powers beyond those flowing from the formal political institutions of the state. This limits the influence and legitimacy of those traditional leaders, and their ability to mediate conflicts and ensure their peaceful resolution.

According to Mr. Ransom Odey, the incessant communal conflicts in Cross River State have led to an arms race between warring

⁹¹ Interview with Ambassador Stephen Nya, Traditional Ruler of Ikot Offiong, Odukpani Local Government Area

⁹² Interview with Elder Francis Eremi, Clan Head of Ebijakara Clan, Abi Local Government Area.

⁹³ Interview with Jonathan Ugbai, Journalist with CrossRiverWatch, Calabar.

communities in the state who compete to secure the most sophisticated firearms in readiness for the escalation of violence⁹⁴. When there is relative peace in the community, these firearms become available for the perpetration of criminal activities.

9.4. The Threat of Street Kids

Research findings indicate that the fundamental reason for the perpetuation of the street child phenomenon in Cross River State is the inability of the state government to implement its Child Rights Law. In 2009, following the example of the federal government in passing the Child Rights Act, the Cross River State House of Assembly passed its version of the child protection framework called '*A Law to Protect the Rights of a Child and for Other Related Matters, 2009*', largely 'domesticating' the provisions of the Nigeria Child Rights Act.

The Cross River State Child Rights Law prioritizes the best interest of the child as the paramount consideration in all actions. More specifically, the law provides important protections for the child, especially within the context of the street child phenomenon in Cross River State. Part II Subsection 11 provides for the dignity of the person of the child. It expressly prohibits the subjection of the child to physical, mental, or emotional injury, abuse, neglect, or maltreatment, including sexual abuse, torture, inhuman or degrading treatment, or punishment. It goes further to charge the state, parents, guardians, institutions, services, agencies, organizations or bodies responsible for the care of a child to ensure adequate opportunities for the child to enjoy those rights⁹⁵.

Section 31 of the law prohibits the sale, hire, let, disposal of or obtaining or possession of a child. It goes further to state in detail that a child shall not be used in Cross River State to beg for alms, guiding beggars, prostitution, domestic or sexual labour. It further prohibits forced or compulsory labour of the child as well as serfdom and debt bondage. It also forbids the use of kids for hawking of goods or services on main city streets, brothels, or highways; and the procurement or offering of a child for prostitution or the production of pornography.

⁹⁴ Interview with Mr. Ransom Odey, Calabar

⁹⁵We the People. (2019) Paradise for Pedophiles: Atrocity of Street Children Prostitution in Calabar.

As lofty as these legal provisions are, their actual application in the protection of street children in Cross River State is a far cry. The institutional framework required to ensure compliance with the provisions of the law and the enforcement of established sanctions are at best weak or non-existent. The inaction of the government concerning the protection of children is chiefly responsible for the plight of children in the streets of Calabar and other parts of the state.

9.5. Militancy, Piracy and the Ceding of Bakassi

The concerns which provided reason (or excuse) for the formation of the Bakassi Strike Force as a militant group ostensibly for the protection and enforcement of the rights of the indigenous people of Bakassi are still present in the region. The incessant attacks and abuses which fisher folks and traders from Bakassi, as well as those still living on the island, suffer, are still ongoing. Similarly, the Nigerian government and the government of Cameroon have successively reneged on honouring and implementing the provisions of the Greentree Agreement, which spells the terms of the handover of the territory to Cameroon and the responsibility of all parties to the people of Bakassi. The internal displacement of the Bakassi people since the early 2000s makes it one of the oldest refugee crises in Nigeria. Unfortunately, the government has failed to ensure adequate resettlement and livelihood alternatives for them. To a large extent, the people of Bakassi continue to live as refugees in makeshift spaces including primary school classrooms and church halls, in their country. According to Senator Ewa Henshaw, some people who were children at the time of the ceding have become grown men and women without skills, home or livelihood.

Research findings show that the failure of the implementation of the terms of the Greentree Agreement and the neglect of the genuine appeal of the people of Bakassi for resettlement and rehabilitation are the key drivers of insecurity in the areas. Other sources of insecurity in the region include the continued and unchecked incursion of Cameroon gendarmes into Nigerian territorial spaces and the harassment of Nigerians carrying out legitimate business in those places.

It is also important to note that the promises made by the Cross River State Government when granting amnesty to members of the Bakassi Strike Force have not been kept. Field interviews indicate that

there is growing discontent among former combatants who believe that the state government has reneged on its promises to them. This is already creating additional tensions in the region. The fact that hundreds of armed militants could mobilize to Calabar in protest of their neglect indicates that they can still mobilize and organize; and that the amnesty programme may not have adequately mopped up firearms from the combatants. There is the real fear that the multi-layered deprivations and frustration which the people of the area experience could create the climate for a return to armed insurrections and further insecurity.

9.6. Ambazonia Conflict, Refugees and Arms Build-Up

Cross River communities have become the unofficial theatre of the fallouts of the Ambazonia conflict in the Republic of Cameroon. As stated previously, this conflict has led to the influx of refugees into several communities in the state, the invasion of Nigerian territories by Cameroon gendarmes under the guise of seeking Ambazonian militants, an arms buildup around the border communities with Cameroun and generally heightened the state of insecurity in the area. With the increase of an unregistered number of refugees spilling over from overcrowded camps into Cross River communities, tensions are rife and it becomes pertinent to consider and address the threat of conflict. Already, conflicts between refugees and host communities in Adagom 1 in Ogoja Local Government Area and Amana 1 in Obanliku Local Government Area demonstrate the trend and changing dynamics of the refugees-induced insecurity. Pressure on existing health, social, educational, and economic services and proliferation of small arms and light weapons are some of the issues driving insecurity in these areas. Equally driving community discontent in refuging-hosting communities is the competition for the few available job opportunities in those communities. It is widely believed that Cameroonian migrants are grabbing jobs that were previously held by locals. The migrants provide the same services for much less payment, thereby driving locals out of employment opportunities.

There are other emerging possibilities of insecurity which have not yet become full-blown, but already have all trappings of potential security breaches. Available evidence indicates that many Ambazonia militants

reside and plan attacks from Cross River State. Cross River borders are also utilized in the smuggling of firearms and other supplies in support of the conflict. The danger which this portends is that the state could become a centre for the sale and distribution of small arms which could have a devastating effect on the already bad security condition in the state. Similarly, the presence of Ambazonian militants in Cross River State could also result in increased incursion of Cameroon security forces violating Nigeria's territorial integrity. This has the potential of leading to a major international conflict between the two countries.

Also, given the poor youth employment statistics in Cross River State, there is a real threat that young people from the state could become a recruitment target for Ambazonia fighters to be used in fostering the conflict as mercenaries. In other places in Africa where this has happened, it has ended up exacerbating the security challenges of the area by sucking local community populations into a foreign conflict.

Unfortunately, Nigeria has not taken any action to address the escalating Ambazonian conflict and all the challenges emerging from it. Beyond working with the UNHCR to document the refugees and provide some humanitarian support, the federal and state governments have not paid any detailed or serious attention to the security and livelihood threats posed by the refugee situation and the climate of conflict.

9.7. Farmers-Herders Conflicts

This is an emerging threat that has mostly been overlooked, eclipsed by the much larger occurrences of this brand of insecurity in Nigeria's North Central geopolitical zone. However, the regularity of conflicts between Cross River farmers and nomadic herders from northern Nigeria, and the dire consequences it could engender, qualifies it as a key security risk factor. Whenever the herders invade their agricultural fields, inhabitants of communities who are predominantly subsistence farmers stay away from their farms for fear of being raped or killed. In addition to this obvious fear is the tendency of their crops to be destroyed by cattle with the attendant implications on their local economy, livelihoods, and food security.

The silence and seeming inability of the state government to appropriately deal with the conflict disorders remains the primary driver

sustaining insecurity in the state. The response mechanism often deployed by the government is the reactive, militaristic strategy of deployment of security agents to crisis flashpoints when damage would have been done. The pattern indicates that the invasion of herdsmen in southern Cross River State particularly, Odukpani local government, is recurring through Arochukwu, a town located at the southern end of Abia State. Also, the contiguity of some local government areas in northern Cross River with the North Central states of Benue and Taraba where farmers-herders conflict is prevalent has enhanced and sustained the vulnerability of local government areas sharing common borders and indeed, the state to this strand of disruptive conflict.

The fact that the government response capacity is limited to the reactive kinetic model of mobilizing the military indicates that few or no lessons have been learnt from other parts of the country where this variety of conflict is prevalent. As in the case of communal conflicts, poorly identified and demarcated farmlands, the absence of grazing routes, and the lack of early warning and response infrastructure account for the escalation of these conflicts. The failure of the government to initiate practical steps and processes aimed at addressing this challenge is driving communities to self-help, creating an atmosphere for the conflicts to become more widespread and lethal.

10. Cross-Cutting Enablers of Insecurity

Apart from the more specific types of insecurity drivers discussed above, some other cross-cutting conditions enable insecurity to fester in communities. These rather generic conditions include poverty, drug and substance abuse, availability, and access to small arms and light weapons (SALWs).

10.1. Poverty

Poverty has been identified as one of the most critical cross-cutting elements which influence and contribute to the criminalities that result in insecurity. It has been argued that it is the desperation which poverty and unemployment engender that eventually results in the susceptibility of

people to criminal enticement. With the unemployment rate at 30.6%⁹⁶, the state has an army of unemployed youths who are ready to make their services available to anyone who can pay for it. In this context, they become ready tools in the hands of *conflict entrepreneurs*⁹⁷. When the driver of unemployment interacts with poverty in a context that has little or no system of identifying and mitigating conflicts, episodic yet recurring crises become inevitable.

Various respondents trace the attraction for joining criminal gangs to the need to survive. Mr. Ransom Odey, for instance, posits that the allure of cultism is no longer in the nostalgic confraternity values that existed in the early years of campus confraternities but now driven by survival instincts. For him, cultism has become 'a means of livelihood'. It is, therefore, plausible to state that if the variable of poverty is removed from the social equation through the provision of gainful employment and skills development, the occurrence of cultism and gang related insecurity will decline significantly.

10.2. Narcotics

Respondents provided evidence of a close relationship between criminality and the use of narcotics. The village head of Amadung Ekeng Ewa Clan of Bakassi Local Government Area captures the worry over the use of narcotics. He said there is an unprecedented spread in the use of illicit substances, the commonest being marijuana. Other drugs being abused include cocaine, heroin, and other psychotropic substances including tramadol, codeine, etc. In his estimation, up to 80% of young people in the community routinely consume narcotics. Surprisingly, the use of narcotics has transcended the cultural inhibitions that placed a moral sanction on its use. There is now widespread acceptance of the practice, and it is done openly even to the knowledge (and sometimes complicity) of law enforcement operatives.

⁹⁶ The unemployment rate as at Q3 2018

⁹⁷ This is a concept widely used to describe persons who benefit from the business of stoking conflicts, simply referred to as 'spoilers'.

This research observed closely the abuse of drugs by street children. Narcotics routinely consumed by these kids include marijuana, tramadol, codeine, and glue which they frequently inhale. Further inquiries reveal that these drugs deaden their sense of tiredness and emotions and not only make them perform tasks meant for adults but give them the audacity to commit dastardly crimes.

The Cross River Command of the National Drugs Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in 2018 reported that it seized a total of 722.46699 kilogrammes of hard drugs from dealers in the state in 2017 alone. The seized narcotics included 711.9721 kilogrammes of cannabis, 395.9 grammes of cocaine, 122.6 grammes of heroin, and 10.051 kilogrammes of psychotropic substances.⁹⁸ In 2019, the same agency discovered and destroyed a 10 hectares cannabis farm in Odukpani, Cross River State⁹⁹, believed to have been thriving with the complicity of the community.

It is widely held that the use of narcotics and the abuse of other prescription drugs provide the psyching up and moral numbness which allows the commission of many atrocious crimes. It follows, therefore, that a reduction in the use of these substances could potentially result in a notable decrease in the occurrence of crime.

10.3. Proliferation of Small Arms

The ease of acquiring small arms and light weapons (SALW) is a cross-cutting issue that finds resonance in all the drivers of insecurity in Cross River State. Weapons used in the commission of crimes fall generally within three categories; 1. Domestic weapons including, knives, machetes, and axes, etc. This category of weapons is much easier to acquire with minimal suspicion. 2. Locally manufactured firearms including single and double barrel rifles and pistols, dane guns, and locally manufactured revolvers. This category of firearms is produced by local blacksmiths who craft the weapons using traditional methods of forging metal. These are less sophisticated but still retain the capacity to

⁹⁸ Jeremiah, U. (2018, January 29). NDLEA impounds 722.469kg of illicit drugs in Cross River. Vanguard. Retrieved from

www.vanguardngr.com/2018/01/ndlea-impounds-722-469kg-illicit-drugs-cross-river/

⁹⁹ Offiong, E. (2019, May 6). NDLEA razes 10 hectares of cannabis farm in Cross River. *Voice of Nigeria*. Retrieved from <https://www.von.gov.ng/ndlea-razes-10-hectares-of-cannabis-farm-in-cross-river/>

unleash weighty damage. 3. Imported firearms including submachine guns, automatic rifles, and pistols, surface-to-air rockets, dynamites, etc. These classes of weapons are mostly imported into the country through the porous borders. Due to their rather expensive costs, it is believed that these types of weapons are owned by crime cartels and militants. Some respondents also argue that politicians procure this category of weapons for their 'armies' during electoral contestations, and are hardly able to withdraw them at the end of the contests. It was also gathered from interviews that criminals sometimes hire these weapons from serving law enforcement officers. .

The profound abundance of illicit weapons in the hands of unauthorized non-state actors is a serious enabler of insecurity in Cross River State. Until weapons are deliberately mopped up from circulation and the sources of illicit arms and ammunitions are investigated and plugged, criminal elements in the society will retain the capacity to perpetrate criminality with maximum casualties.

11. Conclusion

This study examined the landscape of security in Cross River State with a particular focus on the context, actors, and the relationship between context and actors. As the study found out, the state has a history of conflict disorders ranging from communal conflicts, cultism, and political violence, kidnapping, and armed robbery, and the threat posed by the transitioning of street children to criminality, militancy and piracy, internal displacement, neglect, and statelessness, especially in Bakassi, emerging host communities-refugees and farmers-herders conflicts, and the threat posed by the influx of young men of suspicious identity migrating from northern Nigeria. The research also noted key cross-cutting issues in the conflict dynamics of the state including the proliferation of small arms and light arms, widespread availability and use of narcotics, and the rising incidence of poverty which is reinforced by the poor employment statistics of Cross River State. Some of the drivers of conflict and the attendant cross-cutting issues have become deeply integrated into the political leadership recruitment framework of the state with the attendant negative consequences for democratic governance. To say the least, it has emerged that politics is the superstructure upon which many of the conflict malfeasances in the state

draw motivation and mettle. It has also emerged that the system of youth transitioning economically and politically is tied to the already dented political system. In simple terms, youth transitioning is determined by how closely the youth work in servicing the existing political officeholders. Transitioning is structured as a political reward system rather than based on hard work and merit.

In all, the research indicates that the conflict typologies and insecurity in Cross River State escalate or deteriorate due to government inertia and apathy. While this is evident in issues like the government's inability or unwillingness to address the challenge of street children and its emerging potential as a potent source of insecurity, it is more directly glaring in the many instances of inter and intra communal conflicts in the state. It is the contention in this study that the government and its institutions are the most effective actors in addressing the insecurity in Cross River State. Every other actor in the landscape depends on the government to take the first step.

What explains the prevalence of conflict in the state is the evidence that the context contains conflict elements that facilitate and sustain the interaction of negative energies. When unemployment, poverty, and hunger interact with a context that is vulnerable to shocks and conflicts, insecurity becomes inevitable. The state has, therefore, been subjected to different shades of conflicts, and it is established that there is hardly a community in the state that has not experienced dysfunctional conflict. Conflict is always in its inorganic form except when acted upon by the human element. This presupposes that conflict without actors would naturally, remain inert. Several actors are playing different but complementary roles in the conflict and security landscape of the state. Some of these actors are identified to include government and its institutions, politicians, cult groups, community warriors, traditional leaders, youth and women groups, trade unions, and civil society organizations. Individually and collectively, these actors are responsible for conflict progression in the state. Until these actors can work together to address conflict causality and redirect conflict energies into peace resources, the security of the state would continuously be undermined.

12. Policy Recommendations

To address the insecurity in Cross River State, the research makes the following recommendations;

Communal conflicts

- The government working with relevant partners should ensure the creation of a peacebuilding commission, which will operate a Conflict Early Warning and Early Response (CEWER) and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) at all levels. The government can prioritize this and prune its present unwieldy political appointees that run into thousands.
- The state government in partnership with the National Boundary Commission (NBC) and relevant partners should ensure urgent and appropriate mapping and delineation of contested boundaries in the state. In the same regard, the state and federal governments should ensure the enforcement of court decisions on boundaries delineation.

Militancy and Piracy

- The state and federal governments should immediately revisit the Greentree Agreement and other commitments to the protection, resettlement, and rehabilitation of the people of Bakassi. This process should deliberately target the outcome of ending the statelessness of the people, supporting them to develop livelihoods, protecting them against aggression, and generally resettling and rehabilitating them.
- The Nigerian government should take action to bring international attention to the ongoing Ambazonia crisis in Cameroon and the security and social implications it is already having on Nigeria. This action should aim at protecting the territorial integrity of Nigeria, but also protecting Nigerians living in border communities from the negative impact of the crisis.

- A comprehensive program to mop up the illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) in circulation should be commissioned, including arms buy-back initiatives for holders and illegal manufacturers of arms.
- The state government should take urgent steps to purge itself and its institutions of the current practice of deliberate accommodation and patronage of cultists and gang leaders to convey a positive signal against incentivizing anti-social practices and criminality that stoke insecurity.

Drugs, Street Children, Cultism, Kidnaping, and general Criminality

- The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency should be strengthened and supported to enforce the ban on illegal drugs and narcotics. In the same regard, the agency and the social welfare ministry of the state government should be enabled to develop a programme of rehabilitating drug addicts.
- The Cross River State Ministry of Social Welfare should immediately commence a process of documenting street kids in the state and ensuring that they are returned to homes and fully rehabilitated.
- The state, federal and local governments should develop life enhancement schemes to build sustained means of livelihood for unemployed youths in the state. This should be in addition to scholarships and adult education programmes, accompanied by a robust plan for generating employment opportunities in the state.
- Traditional institutions should be repositioned and empowered by state legislation and appropriately incentivized to effectively provide leadership within their domains. Repositioning of traditional institutions should include capacity building on Alternative Dispute Resolution, ADR, and creating platforms for community voices.

- Activation of extant laws regulating criminality and sponsorship of violence, including a strengthened anti-cultism law.
- All stakeholders including the government of Cross River State must become engaged in the ongoing conversation on the reform of the police and policing in Nigeria. Well-researched policy recommendations leading to the improved performance of the police should be developed and campaigned for.

Farmers-Herders Conflict and Refugees influx/IDPs

- A study should be commissioned to examine the emerging dynamics of host communities-refugees/IDPs and farmers-herders conflicts in the state to proactively address them.
- A process should be developed for documenting and identifying migrants into Cross River State. This should be done in a manner that does not infringe on the right of Nigerians to move and reside in any part of the country they choose.

CHAPTER FOUR

Insecurity in Delta State: Issues, Actors and Solutions

Sam Ogege and Ebimboere Seiyefa

Executive Summary

In light of recent events and research in Delta State on insecurity, violence, and conflict, it appears increasingly important for stakeholders to attempt to understand the dynamics of insecurity, violence, and conflict in the state. The uncertainty which naturally accompanies insecurity has also dampened the enthusiasm of both local and international investors from partnering with the government to develop the state. Scholars and policymakers have been assessing and exploring policies to curb insecurity in the state. Such policies must consider the reasons behind insecurity, violence, and conflict in the state and the perpetrators of this phenomenon. The report reviewed several related works of literature and theoretical framework to clarify the relationship between the variables in the study. The study adopted the qualitative method using the purposive sampling technique to select the study areas, while focus group discussions and key informant interviews were used as qualitative instruments to collect data from the study participants. Data were analysed using thematic and content analyses. It was discovered that diverse forms of political violence, organised criminal activities, social and structural violence were the prevalent forms of insecurity and conflict in Delta State. Furthermore, key actors involved in the perpetration and sustenance of violence included political actors, restive youths, oil-producing companies, and security officials. The study established that these forms of insecurity, violence, and conflict have negatively affected the socio-economic and political life of the people. Recommendations and policy strategies were developed to help limit and counter insecurity, violence, and conflict and their effects in Delta State.

Introduction

Although issues of violence and hostilities have been recorded in Delta State in times past, their manner of occurrence and operation are such that the government at the local and state levels can curtail and handle them thereby reducing them to a level that is manageable by society. This is witnessed in the cases of militant hostilities - though may have been reduced by the introduction of the amnesty programme and inter and intra communal clashes between various ethnic groups within the state - that were in time past handled at the traditional level with the actors coming to a compromise via dialogue. Issues of cultism were kept at bay as their occurrence was recorded only within the walls of tertiary institutions and was managed by the school authorities. Acts of crime like armed robbery, kidnapping, and the likes were in existence though but were not widespread.

For quite some decades back, new dimensions of violence, conflict, and insecurity concerns in the state are recorded in the annual incursion of violent migrant Fulani herders in the state, the incessant clashes between rival cult groups - and criminal activities associated with it carried out in communities across the state - and the spate of kidnappings, rape and communal clashes over resources of economic importance associated with the discovery of oil, has recorded a lot of casualties in various degree- loss of human lives, destruction of property, farmland, and farm produce. This has created a volatile situation in the state, with fear gripping the locals about the activities of herders on the one hand and the criminal activities of armed robbery, cultism, kidnappings, and rituals orchestrated by youths on the other hand. These conditions have created a heightened insecurity situation which has made investment efforts to be thwarted as well as affecting the local economy of communities across the state.

1.1 Background to the Study

Delta State, located in the western end of Nigeria's South-South, is one of the major oil-producing states in the South-South region. The state was created out of the defunct Bendel State on 27 August 1991. Before its creation, the area that makes up present-day Delta State was part of the old Mid-Western region (1963 – 1976). The state was created on the

heels of agitations by the people of the old Delta Province for the creation of a new state known as Delta State. President Ibrahim Babangida acceded to the request of the people and created Delta State with Asaba as its capital. The name, Delta State was given to the state because of its location in the Delta region within the River Niger. The state has twenty-five local government areas spread fairly evenly across the three (South, Central, and North senatorial districts) (Ogege, 2015).

Delta State has an estimated population of about 5.681 million with Urhobo, Itsekiri, Ijaw, Isoko, and Anioma (Igbo) as the main ethnic groups. These groups share ancestral and traditional administrative systems, evident in their dressing, language, festivals, music, and folklore (Okoh 2016). The vast majority of the inhabitants are Christians, with a few of them practicing traditional and Islamic religions.

Since its creation in 1991, Delta State has had 10 Governors out of which four have been civilians elected by the people. From 1993 to 1999, Delta State, like other states in Nigeria, was ruled by military administrators. Military rule in Delta State was fraught with violent confrontations between the Nigerian government security forces and the people, specifically those from oil-producing communities. At the core of this confrontation was the issue of unfair allocation of resources, the government's inability to affirm land boundaries between warring ethnic groups in the state, amongst other outcomes of poor governance (Human Rights Report 1999). Correspondingly, the issue of ethnic politicisation was evident in the Warri Crisis that lasted for 7 years, where the Warri Southwest local government council headquarters was relocated from an Ijaw community to an Itsekiri community. It is pertinent to highlight the continued manipulation of ethnic ties by the political elite for personal interest in contemporary Delta State.

The end of military rule did not stop the aforementioned conflicts in Delta State; rather successive governors were faced with insecurity generally identified as militancy that became very prevalent during the administration of Governor Ibori. Liberation movements and environment protection groups proliferated the state, their mission ostensibly was economic emancipation of the people of Delta State and the South-South region. Despite these noble objectives, Omotola (2009) argues that the 'contest for the soul of oil and its revenue' is at the centre of violence in the state. This was reflected in violent and non-violent

protests, abduction of foreign oil workers, destruction of oil pipelines and installations, and destruction of lives. Eventually, an amnesty agreement in 2009 was reached and this led to the decline of militancy in the state. Despite the amnesty program, from the year 2015 to date, records existing and new dimensions of conflict, violence, and insecurity in the state. New militants' groups emerged such as the Niger Delta Avengers, urban crime-related violence such as cultism and armed robberies became prevalent, continued conflict between oil-producing communities and multinational oil companies (MNCs), farmers-herders clash, and political violence are all examples of contemporary forms of violence in the state. The issue of kidnapping which was part of the operation of the militants during the administration of Governor James Ibori became heightened during the administration of Governor Emmanuel Uduaghan, with its presence still felt in the present government. The issue of migrant Fulani herdsman incursion became rampant in the administration of Governor Ifeanyi Okowa in terms of its spread across the state and significantly the perception of Fulani and migrants of northern origin as security threats by the indigenes and residents of Delta State due to the violent activities of some Fulani herders.

Youths occupy a vital position in Delta State due to their population and as such when their resources are not harnessed and channelled in the right direction, they are like a ticking time bomb which when triggered will be fatal to the growth and development of the state. The transitional phase of youths in the state is filled with a vacuum which has resulted in frustration, depression, disorientation, and marginalization. Despite the enormous resources accruable to the state, a teeming population of her youths is unemployed and marginalized. The marginalization of youths and their lack of empowerment and involvement in issues of development as recorded in the dealings of government, oil corporations in collaboration with community leaders more often than not, sparked protests and the resort to militancy by youths.

Notwithstanding Governor Okowa administration's empowerment and skill acquisition programs, the issue of unemployment and limited youth participation in politics both at the local and state level have created a fragile situation in the transitional phase of youths across the state as they resort to devising alternative means of survival. These alternative means do not conform to the legitimate means to achieve the

goals of society as described by Ogege (2009). The weak or fragile transitional state of youths laden with expectations and demands from them by family and society accounts for all shades of insecurity that are criminal, such as an increase in armed robbery, high rate of cultism, involvement in internet fraud or scam tagged “yahoo ritualism” and the unleashing of terror on the society.

Against this background of insecurity, the study is designed specifically to:

- i. Examine the dynamics of insecurity, violence, and conflict in Delta State
- ii. Determine the types of actors prevalent in the security landscape of communities in Delta State
- iii. Evaluate how the prevailing forms of conflict, insecurity, and violence have impacted communities in Delta State
- iv. Highlight policy guidelines to address specific drivers of conflict, insecurity, and violence in Delta State.

1.2 Theorizing insecurity, violence and conflict in Delta State

The complexity and broad concepts of insecurity, violence, and conflict make it difficult to examine the occurrence of these phenomena within a single theory or framework. As such, an integrated approach of different theories covering the identified dimensions of conflict, violence, and insecurity in Delta State is adopted. This approach has been implemented successfully by scholars in the field of violence and conflict in Delta State such as Augustine Ikelegbe, Chukwu Ambrose, Cyril Obi, Sam Ogege, and Ebimboere Seiyefa to mention but a few. Ikelegbe applied the economy of war theory emphasising greed and grievance to explain the emergence and sustenance of militant activities in the state. Furthermore, Seiyefa applied a combination of network theory, rational choice theory, and elite political culture framework to explain the sustenance of an industry of political violence in the state. This is, specifically, the use of political thugs and alliances between interest groups and complicit politicians in perpetrating political violence. Ambrose applied frustration-greed-aggression theory to explain ethnic and organised violence in Delta State. Hence the application of different

theories to analyse the diverse aspect of conflict and violence in the state is applied in this report.

The rational choice theory examines how individuals make decisions, the motivation, and the variables involved. Hence individuals or groups will embark on an action after calculating the costs and rewards involved (Lindauer, 2012). As such, groups like the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) or cults will make informed decisions concerning choosing violence as a means to achieve stated goals. This proves that the decision to use violence indicates certainty of success. Conversely, the use of selective violent tactics by militants, cults, and restive youths in the state ensured that amnesty, in the case of the militants, and financial settlement in the case of oil-producing communities was given to them (Seiyefa 2020).

The application of network theory aids in the identification of network actors and the examination of relationship dynamics between actors concerning their operational activities. Perliger and Pedahzur (2010) maintain that the application of network analysis in studying violence and insecurity perpetrated by groups indicates alliances between actors and identifies the transition of non-violent movements to violent groups. This observation is supported by the links between actors identified in this report whose ties vary from ethnic, finance, mobilisation, military, and political. The application of this theory aids in the analysis and interdependence of actors and stakeholders in violence and insecurity in Delta State.

Ikelegbe (2010) emphasizes greed and grievance as a core motivating factor of communal and political conflict in the state. In support of this view, Collier and Hoeffler (2000) maintain that grievance is a convenient tool for political mobilisation to access and control resources. Conversely, the combination of grievance and greed argued by Seiyefa (2020), Godinho, and Hermanus (2018) underscores the implication of elite political culture and the government's attitude towards governance. It is pertinent to note that the outcome of the political elite form of governance – state capture does not serve as the cause for greed, however, the disparity between the rich and the poor necessitated by the absence of infrastructure makes the case for grievance or social injustice. The analysis in this research draws from some of the theoretical insights discussed in this section.

Structural strain theory was used by Ogege (2009) to explain deviance behaviour, be it non-criminal and criminal. It explains the structure of the society that operates with socially approved goals of success and socially approved means of hard work that individuals are expected to follow. This process mounts pressure on certain individuals that lack the means to achieve the goals culturally defined by society. This is due to the inequality and inadequacies that exist among members of the society that is created and reinforced by corruption and the capture of state resources and institutions for personal interest. Society puts undue pressure on individuals to achieve socially accepted goals though they lack the means to do so. This leads to strain which may make individuals devise alternative means not accepted by society, defined as anomie, to achieve the set goals recognized by society.

1.3 Methodology

The method adopted for the study is the qualitative method which made use of the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and the Key Informant Interview (KII) to collect data from the respondents. The justification for the choice of qualitative method was because the nature of the study requires in-depth knowledge and information about the phenomenon under investigation. The FGD was employed to collect data from community leaders and groups comprising men, women, and youths in different occupations and positions such as vigilante heads/members, farmers, traders, religious leaders, unemployed youths, civil servants - both retired and those in service - trade union members such as market women association, etc. Their views, opinions, and perceptions on issues of insecurity, violence, and conflict were sampled as it affects them in their different areas of operation/occupation in society. The focus group was comprised of about 4-7 people. Ten focus group discussions were conducted in the LGAs and communities selected across the three senatorial districts (see table 1.2). The key informant interview was used to provide additional information from key figures or personalities in Delta State that know the area of security and being conversant with the subject matter. This KII participants include security agencies, key members of the Pan Niger Delta Forum (PANDEF), traditional rulers, traditional council members, local government chairmen, politicians and

community heads such as men, women and youth leaders, executive members of Fulani Herders Association in Delta State and top government functionaries and the member of the House of Representative, who is Vice Chairman Committee on Niger Delta representing Warri Federal Constituency. The analytical tools used for the study were content, thematic and discourse analyses. The content analysis was used to classify the data using codes and based on their contents. Thematic analysis was used to identify, organise, and offer insight into patterns of meaning (themes) to make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences, while discourse analysis was used to analyse the structural and functional meaning of the data collected by situating the language in context. This is to offer a deeper insight into meanings attached to utterances than the study of language in isolated sentences.

Table 1.1 Sample specifications for focus group discussion

S/N	Senatorial Districts	Local Government Area	Communities	FGD Categories
1	Delta Central	Ughelli North	Uwheru	5 Men
		Uvwie	Effurun	5 Youths
		Ethiope East	Abraka	6 Women
2	Delta North	Ukwuani	Obiaruku	5 Men
		Ndokwa East	Okpai	5 Women
		Oshimili South	Asaba	5 Youths
3	Delta South	Isoko South	Enhwe	6 Youths
		Warri South West	Ogbe-Ijoh	3 Men and 1 Woman
		Warri South	Omadino and Ubeji	7 Women and 5 Men

2. Manifestation of Insecurity, Violence, and Conflict in Delta state

Decades of political violence, socio-economic activism (armed and non-violent resistance) amidst other factors have made Delta State vulnerable to diverse forms of insecurity and violent conflict activities hence, the sustained manifestation of incidences of violence in the state is intertwined with the social, economic, and political reality and history of

the state. Delta State has witnessed a shift from ethnic-based communal violence to issues of human insecurity such as cultism, farmers/herders' clashes, organised crime, extrajudicial killings, and abuse from security officials amongst others (see appendix I). This also indicates that there is an entrenched culture of violence that affects all levels of society. In the course of this research, diverse manifestations of violence, insecurity, and conflict in Delta State were discovered and grouped into five categories discussed below. Also, selected case studies are used to further analyse the dynamics of insecurity, violence, and conflict in the state.

2.1 Political Violence in Delta State

Political violence in Delta State is usually manifested in activities ranging from electoral violence, political assassinations, riots, and protests by non-state actors. In addition to the above-mentioned activities, empirical findings identified: leadership tussle at the local government level, communal clashes due to boundary disputes, location of oil companies' operations, the unconstitutional stay of tenure, and alliances between politicians/government officials and militia groups as contemporary and prevailing forms of political violence in the state.

Leadership Tussle

Leadership tussle expressed in violent political opposition and communal disputes are the main line of political violent activities in the state. Since the change to civilian rule in 1999, there has been an increased level of violence before, during, and after elections at the local government level, party primaries, senatorial elections, and gubernatorial elections. This occurrence is fuelled by the perception of political power as a means to pecuniary rewards and access to crude oil contracts or oil company operations location. Respondents from Omadino FGD maintain that;

We have power tussles between members of committees, some communities have two factions that hinder the development of our community [Omadino]; examples of these committees include Omadino

Trust Committee and Omadino Working Committee. (Reverend Matthew Temile, 2020).

Likewise, respondents identified kingship scuffle as another dimension of leadership tussle. They maintained that enthroned kings are deposed and banished unconstitutionally by a few powerful people. This has a way of undermining the peace of the affected communities, as the youth factions of the banished and new kings are intermittently engaged in gun battle. This is aptly presented by Professor Patrick Muoboghare.

There are cases of kingship tussle in Agbarho and Uzere that have provoked communal crises. The people present a king to the government to give the staff of office to and after a short time, turn around to dethrone and banish the king from the community. This is because the king upon being crowned, does not work in the expectation of some powerful people who expect him to be loyal to them as against his working independently. As I am speaking to you now, HRM Samson Oghughuwa, the Osuvie of Agbarho, and HRM Isaac Udogri, the Ovie of Uzere are both forcefully dethroned and banished... and they are replaced with HRM William Onokpite and HRM Henry Etwede respectively (Prof. Patrick Muoboghare KII, 2020).

These views shared are also reflected in Koko and Ugborodo communities where respondents stressed the prevalent manifestation of leadership tussles and communal disputes as spectres of insecurity in their communities.

...people who are expected to spend about 2-3 years in an executive position, after their tenure, they will want to remain...so there is always a conflict between the in-coming executives and the out-going executives which is manifested in conflicts sometimes violent (Chief Michael Odeli -Olorogun of Warri Kingdom, KII, 2020)

These observations are evident by The Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta Report (PIND) in 2017, recording the death of 80 people and destruction of properties due to leadership tussle and communal disputes in Warri South-West, Warri North, Udu, Ukwuani, Ughelli North, Aniocha South, Isoko South, and Ndokwa West LGAs.

Furthermore, a senior security officer in Delta State validates this assertion; he identifies intra-community crisis as a manifestation of insecurity, violence, and conflict in Delta State

...usually there are issues between leaders of the community for council, chairman or committee positions, in some of these cases arms are freely used (Senior Security Officer 1, KII, 2020)

This comment is supported by records of electoral violence in Delta State during the 2019 general elections. For instance, amongst other cases of electoral violence, two people were killed in Amukpe near Sapele on February 23rd, 2019. Furthermore, there were reports of electoral violence perpetrated by political thugs across the state including Asaba (Channels Television February 24th 2019). Besides, Delta State was identified as one of the top 10 states that recorded high levels of election-related violence in 2015 (Taft & Haken 2018).

Communal Conflict and Boundary Disputes

Communal conflict as a function of boundary dispute is prevalent in the state; respondents from the three senatorial districts stressed the frequency of this form of insecurity:

We have a dispute in Isoko South local government between Enhwe and Igbide communities over a piece of land containing oil that has sparked conflict between the two towns. This is also evident in Ukwuani Local Government Area between Amai and Umuebu. In this case, there is no crude or other mineral resources in the land in dispute. (Enhwe FGD, 2020).

The traditional rulers and president generals, because the traditional ruler has his council of chiefs. Some are loyal, some are not depending on what is on the ground. At the same time, the president-generals are also very greedy, they want to be involved in everything, in executing all the contracts; bringing their stooges to do their contracts for them and this does not go down well with the other members of the community (Hon. Prosper Irogbo, Fmr. Isoko South LGA Chairman Uzere, KII, 2020).

Originally in Omadino, land belongs to the community. They formed a land committee that is led by Chief Atiwa now late, he was the chairman then with Prof. Gabriel Umere. They gave land in the name of the community to some group of people, with that veto power that they have, some of them surveyed the land and gave it to their children and even the unborn ones. This has been a source of conflict, people now sell their allocated portion of community land. (Omadino FGD, 2020).

A variant of intracommunity violence that is related to politics was evident in Ewvreni community in Ughelli North Local Government Area. According to an interviewee:

There was a tussle over the faction of the community that produces the President General of the community. They attempted to undermine my authority and they planned to unleash terror on me. That is why for days now, we have not known peace in this community. (HRM, Kumane, the Ovie of Ewvreni Kingdom, KII, 2020)

In essence, boundary disputes while identified as a source of contention (armed and unarmed conflict) in the state is also largely attributed to the government's lack of foresight or deliberate inaction to officially identify boundaries across the communities. Respondents also stressed the absence of land allocation records by the local government officials as a source of inter-communal land dispute issues.

Alliances between Leaders and Interest Groups

There are cases of alliances between politicians, government officials, and violent groups for the express purpose of accessing state power reported by respondents.

Take, for instance, a current member House of Representatives, argued that as of today, in his community his boys are there. If there is an election tomorrow, either community or government election, he will gather his boys, likewise, the other group of people will do the same thing. (Omadino FGD, 2020)

Some of these politicians sponsor these cultists because they make use of them during elections, that is why crime is sustained (Mr. Tunde Akintola, Chairman of Vigilante Unit of Dore Street, KII, 2020)

At the community level, you see some chiefs and elders sponsoring violent actions... I do not want to mention names, but it is prevalent in Delta South. There are some organisations such as MEND, Niger Delta Avengers, although their activities are low now can be violent at the shortest notice and are getting involved in politics and activities across the regions. Like the recent elections allegedly, some members of the Niger Delta Avengers were involved in political thuggery services. (Senior Security Officer 1 KII, 2020).

These observations by respondents are evidenced by reported cases of electoral violence in the last 15 years in Delta State usually carried out by political thugs (Onimisi&Omolegbe 2019). Notably, there have been arrests and release of political thugs in Delta State after elections. There is a general perception that these political thugs are sponsored by complicit politicians (Adeosun, Ismail & Zengeni 2016). Despite these views, respondents were reluctant to identify the names of persons they knew or suspected of being complicit in electoral violence.

Unconstitutional Stay of Tenure

This report interprets unconstitutional stay of tenure as identified by respondents as the unwillingness of public officials either by appointment or election to step down after an agreed period of service/tenure. Unconstitutional stay of tenure was identified as another prevalent form of conflict and violence in Delta State. Respondents argued that;

...there are complaints that the person has been working for so amount of years. At the same time, some people will say let him stay there. It has been an issue and despite having a constitution, nobody abides by the constitution. It has been a source of internal crisis, supporters of both factions express their discontent or dissatisfaction in violence. Right now, the national youths of Omadino are still in court. One is from the palace angle and the other from the community angle. (Omadino FGD, 2020)

One major cause of political violence in Asaba is the greed of politicians who want to stay indefinitely in office; moving from one political position to another and they employ youths to carry out violence to achieve their aims. Also, political tussle causes conflict. This small position of youth president I occupy has attracted a lot of conflicts and there is struggle once the time to elect new executives is around the corner, the shooting of guns and the use of other weapons, even charms, to achieve their objectives. (Asaba FGD, 2020).

2.2 Ethnic and Interest Group Conflict in Delta State

The end of military rule in 1999 encouraged the formation of interest groups, whose goals in the case of Delta State were targeted at economic emancipation of the Niger Delta, resource control, federal appointments amongst other objectives. However, the emergence of these groups coupled with structural governance challenges within the social, political, and economic environment birthed the utilisation of violence by these groups.

Ethnic Clash

Except for the Ijaw-Itsekiri-Urhobo crisis that lasted for 7 years, the Ogbe-Ijoh (Ijaw) -Aladja (Urhobo) crisis has been prevalent for over 15 years and still on-going. Respondents maintained that the root of this crisis is not so much a case of tolerance but more aligned with land disputes. Both ethnic groups claim ownership of Okotonu (see further analysis in the case study). In this light, Huber (2013) identified unclear constitutional arrangements and problematic allocation of local government headquarters as triggers of ethnic conflict in the state. This was attested to by respondents who asserted:

There is another issue of Okerenkoko (Ijaw) and Okereigho (Itsekiri) where the maritime university is situated. If the issues between these communities are not properly handled, they may trigger something else. They have gone to the Supreme Court as a result of dissent on the name of the place, but a verdict has not been given. The verdict was given to Omadino but the Okerenkoko – the Ijaws, applied for an appeal and the struggle is still on. (Omadino FGD, 2020).

The envisaged one that might happen this year might be between the Ijaws and the Itsekiris. You know historically the Ijaws have raided Itsekiri communities before based on [perceived] political marginalisation...we have local government elections coming up this year, Itsekiri have six wards and the Ijaw have four wards...there are serious agitations by the Ijaws to produce the chairman by this year (Security Officer 2, 2020).

Multinational Oil Companies Vs Host Communities Clash

Another source of insecurity and violence in Delta state is conflict between host communities and oil-producing companies (OPCs). This issue has been prevalent since the exploration and production operations of crude oil. Respondents from host communities commenting on this phenomenon stated thus;

...Host community versus oil companies especially Shell and Chevron, there is always crisis between these groups because of employment, compensation, and oil spills. In the Burutu area where Shell operates, the youths are sometimes agitating for better conditions, because usually in most of the communities, there is limited infrastructure and high unemployment. And sometimes, these boys are demanding compensation for land use and land trespasses. Sometimes, these companies pollute the water and land, making it difficult for fishing and farming... agitation by community youths with the oil companies is more pronounced (Former Resident of Burutu and member of FGD Ogebe-Ijoh, 2020).

The traditional ruler of Ewreni Kingdom has a similar version of the relationship between oil companies and host communities:

The federal government introduced what is known as local content which involves the award of contracts within the range of (₦500,000-₦2,000,000) to local contractors who hail from the community. However, the oil firms award these contracts to their workers who are non-indigenes when the community has capable hands to execute such contracts. Vacant positions in the firms are replaced with the Hausas or Yorubas who do not have the qualifications to work in such positions

when the community has over three hundred graduate youths and among them are those with qualifications in geology, marine and petroleum engineering. These situations spark violent protests from the youths that result in blocking of exit roads to oil firms, the sabotage of pipelines and bunkering activities (HRM, Kumane, the Ovie of Evwreni kingdom, KII, 2020).

These observations are further supported by intelligence gathered by security officials in the state;

Host communities' vs oil companies; they are always having issues, which is manifested in protests that involve shutting down of petrol stations, blocking of company gates, protests that involve occupation of company access by bringing in household items to camp in front of gates until demands are met. It is often caused by neglect on the part of the OPCs or MNCs to honour agreements entered with most of these communities. MOUs. (Senior Security Officer1, KII, 2020).

Regular conflict is common in Warri South LGA between host communities and OPCs, usually as a result of MOUs neglected by the OPCs...this usually leads to conflict expressed in violence between these two parties...recent example is the on-going issue between the Ugborodo community and Chevron/Escravos...the community insists that the companies are not doing enough to take care of them (Security officer 3, KII, 2020)

Militancy

Although militancy has significantly reduced following the implementation of the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP), the conditions that gave rise to militancy are still prevalent in communities in Delta State. Respondents acknowledged the decline in militancy but cautioned the possibility of a resurgence of its violent activities due to existing governance gaps and OPCs non-compliance with environmental guidelines.

Militancy used to be in the centre of these challenges but you know it is relatively low now due to the amnesty programme. But once in a while,

there is agitation although not violent for now, there is still a possibility of violent agitation. (Security Official 1, KII, 2020)

Uwheru Kingdom: A Case of Fulani Herder Violent Activities

The Fulani herdsmen who are from the northern part of Nigeria pasture cattle as a source of livelihood. Due to resource scarcity resulting from climate change, the Fulani herdsmen migrate every year between November and March to the southern part of Nigeria. Fulani herders migration in Delta State is not a recent phenomenon, however, for about two decades now, a new group of Fulani herdsmen has become violent in their attempt to secure grazing space that has become relatively scarce (Ogege, 2013) due to population explosion. This new crop of herders, unlike the previous one that are known for carrying dagger and stick, possess sophisticated rifles and other weapons of war. With these weapons, they indulge in various forms of violent behaviour ranging from rape, wanton destruction of crops and our property, maiming and killing of residents in their host communities across Delta State.

Respondents argued that the Fulani herders' violent activities are characterized by the forceful entry of herders to communities and grazing of cows on farmers' crops which accounts for scarce resources.

The herders' forceful entry and the destruction of our crops by the cows is responsible for the conflict between our farmers and the herdsmen. When this issue started, our mothers reached out to the herdsmen to dialogue with them but they drove them away. When the issue was brought to our attention, we decided to meet with them to dialogue as men, but the herdsmen resorted to violence by shooting at us instead and this became the beginning of the conflict happening between us and the herdsmen. (Enhwe, FGD, 2020)

The struggle for scarce natural resources such as land which drives the herders to the south; makes them and the local farmers be engaged in conflict which makes them more involved in the ensuing conflict. Also, the high rate of unemployment among youths makes them more involved in cases of armed robbery. (Abraka FGD).

February 13, 2020, recorded the gruesome murder of ten persons in Uwheru Kingdom - Delta State. This led to a collective decision by the community to ban the sale and consumption of cow meat, among others, as a strategy to protest against the activities of herdsmen. The communities that were attacked are Avwon, Agadama, and Ohoror communities of Uwheru Kingdom in Ughelli North Local Government Area of Delta State. This attack triggered reprisal killings, destruction of properties, and the displacement of people. Attempts have been made by the community to solicit the assistance of the state to intervene in the incessant indiscriminate attacks on the inhabitants of Uwheru Kingdom. A major highlight of this crisis was the protest in 2017, where a group of women in Uwheru blocked the popular East-West Road (Ogege, 2017). The above assertion was corroborated by the Commissioner for Higher Education in an interview

The Fulani herdsmen attack on the peace-loving people of Uwheru Kingdom has been a yearly ritual since 2004 till date. There is no year we do not experience our people being killed, maimed, or our women been raped. This, in most cases, goes with the wanton destruction of residential buildings, farms, and farmsteads. This annual invasion has made the life of the inhabitants miserable, brutish, and their survival threatened as they can no longer go to the farm for fear of the killer herders. No Fulani herdsman has been prosecuted. All attempts to draw the attention of the state to it over the years has been to no avail. Instead of protecting the inhabitants of the host communities, the military and other security agents of the federal government aid the Fulani herdsmen during an invasion. (Prof. Patrick Muoboghare, KII, 2020).

The main insecurity problem we have in the whole of Ethiope East local government is herdsmen-farmers conflict; they come to our community without notice, rape our women, maim and kill our people. (Hon. Chief Mrs. Faith Majemite, Ethiope East LGA Chairman, KII, 2020).

I have encountered Fulani youths/herdsmen moving in with their herds into various farms. Sometimes, some of their movements results in the destruction of crops. And in trying to address it, it often leads to conflicts, killings or maiming or injuring of indigenes, owners of the farms. Then along the line, they too as a way of preparation to counter, also organise themselves to insist that the Fulani herdsmen are no longer

welcomed into their territories. So, they start attacking herdsmen. (Security Officer 1, 2020).

According to the PRO of Herders Association of Delta State:

The Fulani herdsmen are of two categories, the violent and nonviolent herdsmen. The violent herdsmen are migrants who possess sophisticated firearms and they are the ones that rape, inflict injury and kill farmers as well as destroy farms and farmsteads.... The nonviolent Fulani herdsmen are those that settled in the various communities in Delta State. They know the residents and the residents know them, if anything happens to their person or farm, they know who to complain to. (Alhaji Jubril Haruna, KII, 2020).

Corroborating the PRO, the chairman Fulani Herders Ogwashi-Uku:

We be Fulani when settle for Delta State; we no dey cause wahala for farmers. We no dey carry gun, wen we dey escort nama. Na knife and stick we dey carry. If our nama chop or destroy the crops of farmers, we dey beg them. If they no gree, we go pay for the crops so that we go fit live together in peace. (Alhaji Abubakar Garba, KII, 2020)

Also, respondents identified the complicity of security agencies in the conflict between the herdsmen-local farmers:

The herdsmen are aided by security agents and others who provide weapons, information, and coverage for them that make them carry out their activities of forceful entry into farms and farmsteads without much resistance that results in conflict between them and the local farmers. (Hon. Godwin Adode - Ughelli North LGA Chairman, KII, 2020).

This crisis is rife across the state and constitutes a threat to locals and their means of livelihood. The violence of herdsmen was also corroborated by FGDs conducted in Asaba and Enhwe, they stressed that the herdsmen's activities of rape, maiming, killings, and destruction of farm and farmstead constitute a challenge in Delta State.

2.3 Ethnic Crisis in Delta South: The Case of Ogbe-Ijoh and Aladja

Ogbe-Ijoh (Ijaw) and Aladja (Urhobo) communities claim ownership of camp Okotonu, which is the only motorable road in that area. There are various vigilantes and interest groups in both communities; the Urhobo Liberation Force and the Supreme Egbesu Assembly seem to be at the forefront of the war for land occupation or invasion. The impact of this sustained conflict is manifested in the migration of natives to Warri town, low economic activities, separation of families, and displacement of people. In addition, this conflict has fostered mistrust and loss of confidence in the state government. A report by Vanguard News in 2017, recorded one of the leaders of the Ogbe-Ijoh community (Chief Monday Keme) stressing the involvement of politicians in sponsoring attacks, but he refused to mention names.

It seems the government is on the side of the Ijaws, as this issue is taking too long to resolve. I say this because they are yet to release the latest Ogbe-Ijoh/Aladja communal crisis report. I am sure that this report would help in resolving this issue permanently...in fact the government has in the past used the 1955 boundary law to resolve boundary issues in the state; so why is our own different? (Native of Aladja, KII, 2020)

Natives of Ogbe-Ijoh maintain that the youths of Aladja are complicit in instigating armed conflict; they argued that they are prevented from accessing the road to get to their community and have to rely on boats. This observation was denied by natives of Aladja, who argued that toll fees and not *deve* which means development level is being collected by the national union of road transportation (Vanguard 2017). Despite the claims and counterclaims of attacks in both communities, the impact of this crisis is felt by natives and residents of both communities.

FGD participants in Enhwe, Okpai, Obiaruku, and Asaba also argued that land dispute issues over boundaries between communities is one of the causes of ethnic conflict and violence in the state as ethnic groups are always involved in crisis in the claim of ownership of the disputed area. Based on empirical findings, ethnic crisis is more prevalent in Delta South and Delta North senatorial districts, especially between the Ijaws, Itsekiris, and Urhobo ethnic groups. Examples of these armed conflicts include land disputes between the Esanma (Ijaw) community and Gbarigolo (Urhobo) community; local government headquarters location

disagreements such as previously Warri South West, and a land dispute related to oil between the Kpakama (Ijaw) and Olodiana (Urhobo); Enhwe and Igbide in Isoko South Local Government Area. In Delta North, there is the age-long Amai and Umuebu communal clash. This is corroborated by the KII across the two senatorial districts.

2.4 Organised Criminal Activities in Delta State as a Function of Insecurity

Organised criminal activities are prevalent in Delta State and usually manifested in violent and nonviolent criminal acts such as kidnapping, crude oil bunkering, cybercrime, land sale fraud, robbery and burglary, illegal sale and distribution of small arms and light weapons, and low-level illicit drug trafficking. The nature of this form of insecurity involves intense organised violent engagement by the perpetrators.

Crude Oil Bunkering and Armed Robbery

Crude oil bunkering and armed robbery are two of the prevailing forms of insecurity, violence, and conflict in the state, both in rural and urban communities. Several respondents commented on this. Chief Benjamin Owshoreko succinctly stresses thus:

...problem of armed robbery where you see men of the underworld mount roadblocks on the highway to rob motorists and commuters of the Warri-Port-Harcourt federal road...armed robbers also terrorize the community but majority of their activities are carried out on the highways. In some cases, they kidnapped unsuspecting travellers and community members. Most of these criminal acts are perpetrated by Fulani herdsmen. (Chief B. O. Owshoreko, KII, 2020).

There are vandalization and bunkering activities carried out along oil pipeline installations in the Delta Central area. This is restricted to communities where there are oil installations, it is very minimal but a form of insecurity in the area. This is coupled with assassinations and armed robbery attacks and political violence. (Chief/Dr.Ominimini, PANDEF Organizing Secretary, KII, 2020).

This position was also corroborated with the FGD from Enhwe youths who argued that:

There is youths' violent protest that involves pipeline vandalization and oil bunkering activities. (Enhwe FGD, 2020)

Respondents identified unemployment, greed, and the absence of a conducive environment for job creation and business as drivers of armed robbery and oil bunkering activities in the state.

Similarly, respondents identified organized crime in the form of oil theft and armed robbery as another kind of insecurity concern experienced in Delta State. These assertions were substantiated by security officials; they identified burglary, highway robbery, and petty robbery, and cult activities as major crime challenges in the state. Another type of crime mentioned was illegal oil bunkering carried out in oil-producing communities.

Armed robbery in Delta is another security challenge manifested in highway robbery and petty robbery...the next security challenge is illegal bunkering activities, by virtue of the state, an oil-producing state...bunkering is done through vandalism of the pipeline, which has been on-going. It has been taken to another level and that is the area of illegal refining, people take the crude illegally from pipelines and take it to their location to refine it in their way. (Security officer 1, KII, 2020)

However, Mr. Charles Ajuyah (SAN) former Attorney General of Delta State and a resident in Igbudu community maintains that:

The question of robberies at home has declined in Igbudu community, except for petty ones. It has declined because of the hire of private security personnel, the barricade of streets, use of cell-phones to alert security and curfews. (Mr. Charles Ajuyah, KII, 2020).

Violent Youth Gangs, Petty Theft, and Piracy

Organised criminal activities are also manifested in the emergence of youth gangs, petty crimes, and piracy in the riverine areas. For example;

In Omadino, the youths are running wild, especially the boys. You see little boys smoking Indian hemp, they are not going to school...even the girls are complicit in juvenile activities. (Omadino FGD, 2020)

Respondents across the state argued that this form of crime is driven by the upbringing of children, and they stressed that the parents, guardians, and leaders of the community are negligent in training the children. The belief is that proper training of children will reduce the emergence of youth gangs and their criminal tendencies.

Piracy is common in the riverine communities, especially in Delta south. This form of crime, according to respondents is popularly perpetrated by youth gangs and less discriminate militants. Respondents blame this occurrence on unemployment and negligence by the state government.

...Piracy, where these same criminal elements will attack the boats that are coming and going to the market; they sometimes attack and steal money and products (Ogbe-Ijoh FGD, 2020)

Kidnapping, Cultism, and Sale of Illicit Drugs

Kidnapping, the sale of illicit drugs, and cultism are other dimensions of insecurity in Delta State, respondents attest to this occurrence. Of significant interest is the sustenance of cultism and its spread on the streets and in primary and secondary schools.

... there is cultism in the state, you recall that...the universities used to be the base for cultism. But now in the state, cultism is on the street...but the more worrisome aspect of cultism in the state today is the fact that even in primary and secondary schools, we are beginning to record cases of cultism. That is a big problem because these children are the future leaders of the country. (Security Officer 1, KII 2020)

Cultism is no longer limited to tertiary institutions but has expanded to secondary and primary schools and the streets of most communities. Respondents believe that this troubling development is rooted in poor parenting and the state tacit support of cultism. The argument is that the use of cultists by the political elite for vote mobilisation and political

thuggery services has encouraged a culture of cultism. This view is supported by PIND (2018) reports which record spikes in cults' activities during election periods. Other forms of organised criminal activities identified by respondents include kidnapping and low-level sale of illicit drugs, this vice is also linked to cultism and organised criminal groups.

...the issue of kidnapping in Warri North LGA is peculiar...so far in the last four years, we have recorded eight kidnappings with ransom paid...last year, we recorded the kidnap of six oil workers from Sahara Energy company, a ransom of 45 million naira was paid by the oil company...we have individuals that have been kidnapped, the ransom ranges from 700,000 naira to 5 million naira. (Security Officer 2, KII, 2020).

Cybercrime and Illegal Sale of Small Arms and Light Weapons

Another dimension of criminal activities, as a function of insecurity and violence in the state, is cybercrime, fraudulent sale of land, and small arms and light weapons proliferation.

We discovered that arms and ammunition are illegally sold and used. We also observed that there is a deliberate effort to acquire more arms by criminals they attack the police and steal their weapons. I can recall that between January and March 2020, policemen on duty in several locations were pounced upon and their weapons were taken away. It is an indication that criminals have not given up. They are rather fortifying, which means you too have to go to the drawing board because as you plan they also plan...we also have cases of cyber-crime perpetrated by the 'yahoo boys'. (Security Officer 1, KII, 2020).

In an attempt to explain the reasons or drivers behind organised crime, political violence, and the emergence of youth gangs willing to adopt violence in Delta State, respondents maintain that;

Most youths who are in cults, commit robberies and violence, kidnapping. Some part of the blame goes to parents; when parents are not committed to raising their children, the children pick up bad habits and exhibit acts of violence as a result of parental neglect. We need to teach them discipline and love for one another. (Omadino FGD, 2020).

Other views largely point to the unavailability of jobs and the absence of a conducive environment for business or job creation. This is aptly captured by Chief Alaawei Broderick Bozimo, a former Minister of Police Affairs & Cofounder PANDEF thus:

... out of hunger and desperation, we have reports of sea piracy caused by youths along the River Niger and Ramos where traders who travel along the riverways are robbed (Chief Alaawei Broderick Bozimo, former Minister of Police Affairs & Cofounder PANDEF, KII, 2020).

The above assertion was corroborated by the FGD from Uvwie and Prof. Victor Teddy Jike, a member of PANDEF, Delta State:

Unemployment is a major factor responsible for armed robbery and cult group activities among youths.... As a result of joblessness, most youths get themselves involved in all kinds of criminal activities for them to make both ends meet. That is why they are available to be used for political thuggery, assassination by politicians. (Uvwie FGD, 2020).

Violence and insecurity are a veiled prism for a very fundamental class struggle which makes the underclass, usually the youths who are manipulated by the rich, mostly politicians, indulge in criminal behaviour that serves their interest not minding the outcome for the youths and society. That is why most crimes committed by the youths are caused by politicians who take advantage of their impoverished status. (Prof. Victor Teddy Jike a member of PANDEF, KII, 2020).

Chief Grant Roy Oke of Uvwie identified the struggle for the control of motor parks as a very fundamental cause of insecurity in Uvwie Local Government Area of Delta State:

Apart from kidnappings and armed robbery that are caused by unemployment, there is also power tussle caused by the struggle over the control of the political structure of the Uvwie Motor Park. The park has its autonomy of operation under the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) but the Uvwie council (LGA) wants to control the park; this sparked off a conflict that resulted in Governor Okowa dissolving NURTW in Delta State because of one Ariyor, and installed a

committee to run the park with Ariyor as the chairman. (Chief Grant Roy Oke of Uvwie KII, 2020).

2.5 Social Violence and Insecurity in Delta State

Social violence in Delta State is manifested in prevalent cult activities in primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions and in the street, youth restiveness is manifested in illegal toll gates and collection of development fees (*deve*). Besides, domestic violence and rape, whilst not publicised, are prevalent in both rural and urban areas. Another alarming aspect of social insecurity is increasing ethnic prejudice in the state against the Fulani and, more recently, the Hausa ethnic group.

Cultism and Youth Restiveness

Cultism and youth restiveness are perceived by respondents as a key source of violence and insecurity in the state, they maintained that:

Youths constitute the bulk of persons arrested and identified by people with cases of armed robbery and cultism. The youths engage in conflicts of supremacy of group and fight over issues such as girls and the show of dominance. (Obiaruku FGD, 2020)

Cultism is prevalent in Burutu Local Government Area and rampant amongst the youths, especially those who are not educated and unemployed. (ACP Adepegba, Burutu Area Commander, KII, 2020)

This observation by respondents underscores the link between cultism, youth restiveness, and violence in society. At the root of this form of social violence is the belief that the rewards of legal occupations are inadequate and the promotion of a culture that associates wealth, respect, and success with force or violence. This belief is propagated by both the youths and elders. Despite these dire observations, the activities of vigilante groups in the state have aided in the decline of street cult groups. For instance, in Warri town, Dore street, Mr. Tunde relates to cult fighting experience.

Cultism rate was very high...60-200 boys. The most powerful cult group in this area is the Vikings. They wanted to kill a boy, they kidnapped him and we were called to intervene. I and my men went there, and when we got to the compound, the boy was already taken, but I told them I had an idea of where he might have been taken to...There were a lot; we got involved in a gunfight, we caught about 10 of them with bullet wounds and handed over to police after beating for further investigations. Since then, this cultist problem has been reduced in my area, they have moved to other communities, we hear of cultist attack there. In fact, they invited me to consult and have form their vigilante group, and last year, I was made the area chairman. (Mr. Tunde Akintola, Chairman of Vigilante Unit, Dore Street, KII, 2020)

Domestic Violence, Rape and Abuse of Street Kids

Domestic violence, rape, and abuse of street kids were also identified:

There is also the case of domestic violence, especially among young couples, it is very common...Regarding domestic violence, most of it is as a result of boys and girls who were not ready for marriage but got married because of unintended pregnancies. (Omadino FGD, 2020).

Others noted the different categories of people affected by child molestation:

Children molestation is not limited to females but males as well, we conducted a study and found that at night, most children do not have homes so they hang around the motor parks, bus-stops at night wandering, and they are molested by adults, homosexuals...there are pockets of it, sometimes arrests are made. (Mr. Charles Ajuyah SAN, fmr. Attorney General, Delta state, and resident of Igbudu community, KII, 2020).

Child trafficking, not so much publicised as a result of limited intelligence, but is a serious security issue all the same (Security officer 1, KII, 2020)

These observations by respondents underscore the link between victims of violence and their transition to perpetrators of violence. In support of

this assertion, Seiyefa (2020) argues that vulnerable abused street kids attract recruitment by violent groups. This same could be argued, in this case, abused street kids who have been abandoned by their families and the society and feel no allegiance to their community; hence they are vulnerable to violent criminal activities.

Perception of Fulani Migrants as Threat to Indigenes

Another form of social violence in Delta State is the increasing perception of Fulani and migrants of northern origin as a source of threat and insecurity.

There is a problem that is waiting to escalate. This influx of Fulanis, for example at Ugboton; they have roughly over 1000 Fulanis coming in, so there is a crisis waiting to happen. The community is not looking at it that way; they think that there is peace, but there is a conflict coming because if there is a misunderstanding between the community and herdsmen, they will overpower the Ugboton people and if you watch in our community, the herdsmen are migrating to Omadino. (Omadino FGD, 2020).

I have encountered H Fulani youths/herdsmen moving in with their herds into various farms. And in some of their movements, they destroy crops and in the process of addressing it, it often leads to conflicts, killings or maiming or injuring of indigenes, owners of the farms. Then along the line, they too as a way of preparation to counter, also organise themselves to insist that the Fulani herdsmen are no longer welcomed into their territories. So, they start attacking herdsmen. (Security Officer 1, 2020).

Whilst these views emphasise the issue of “Fulani invasion,” the underlying point is the increasing intolerance of the Fulani ethnic group by residents and natives of Delta State. Furthermore, respondents noted that this intolerance has expanded to include the Hausa residents as well. There is the possibility that ethnic clashes might not be limited to ethnic natives of Delta State and Fulani herdsmen but also other people of northern origin.

Consumption of Illicit Drugs and Collection of Illegal Taxes (Deve)

Drug consumption is becoming more common across Delta State. Security agents interviewed for this research explain their findings thus:

Also, the use of drugs by children and cult activities including primary, secondary and university students... when not properly handled, the foot soldiers who are the drug addicts and all, will unleash mayhem in the society. (Mr. Charles Ajuyah SAN, fmr. Attorney General, Delta State, KII, 2020)

Drug addiction is prevalent in the state; marijuana and related drugs are some of the most abused; the NDLEA handles this particular threat. Armed robbers and cultists take drugs which impact on their actions – violent activities. (Security Officer 1, KII, 2020)

Respondents also identified the illegal collection of development fees or *deve* by youths as another source of conflict and violence in most communities.

Another issue is youth development fee (*deve*), and this causes conflict between youths and those developing properties. Take for example, as an indigene of this town, I was asked to pay and it became a problem, it felt like a conflict between me and my community. (Omadino FGD, 2020)

These vices which are classified under social violence, while not actively promoted as armed violence and conflict, do pose harm to society. For instance, the case of low tolerance of Fulani and Hausa if not properly addressed could develop into a full-blown conflict between these ethnic groups and host communities. Also, consistent neglect of street kids and trafficking of children will create and promote a culture of violence that will be manifested in the development of cults, gangs, and foot soldiers for complicit politicians and criminals.

2.6 Structural Violence

Structural violence in Delta State, as identified by this study, includes the absence of government presence in communities, state capture, and the abuse of civilians by security officials.

Abuse of Civilians by Security Officials and Complicity

Respondents stressed abuse by security officials as a form of violence and insecurity. They identified bribery, bullying, collaboration with known criminals, and militarisation of communities.

One of the major problems we have is the uniform men aiding those people; for example, if you go to Hausa quarters... at night you see the uniform people in that dirty environment...they will be there smoking with them. You see young girls smoking with them, a situation where uniform men are coming to smoke with some group of people we do not need in the community. We are not safe. Imagine they say the selling of crude oil is not good, but uniform people will come and when those people refuse to give them their share of the money, they will raid them... we have uniform men at the entrance calling themselves security men. Anyone can drive into the community at 2 am, all they do is point a torchlight at you and as soon as they discover that you are not the kind of person they are looking for, maybe oil bunker, they let you pass since you cannot give them money. Anyone can come in with explosives to cause a problem here provided you can give them something at the entrance. (Ubeji FGD, 2020)

These views shared by respondents in Ubeji are replicated in other parts of Delta State. There is a perception that security officials are not there to protect civilians but also to exploit and harass civilians as well. Although most respondents declined comments on security officials' brutality, notwithstanding observations shared by residents of Gbaramatu attest to this.

...we have militarisation... since from 2009 till now militarisation has been up and down... The subsequent one, militarisation as I said earlier, oil bunkering and illegal refinery. The military bombs their camps. Those are some of the conflicts that occur. There was the case of the bombing of communities in Gbaramatu in the search for Tompolo, which led to

the death and destruction of properties. There were also cases of the military torture of Tompolo's father. (Mr. Asiayei, journalist and GM of Gbaramatu Voice Media House, KII, 2020).

There are always issues of conflict between the Gbaramatu people and the security agencies. This conflict arises from the people's strong will not to be subdued or treated like a conquered people by the security agencies. If you travel through the length and breadth of Gbaramatu kingdom, you will see armed boats of security agencies in every one or two kilometres. One for Navy and one for Army...so from time to time, there are conflicts...Yes, there are conflict issues in Gbaramatu, most of these conflict issues come about because of the military presence. The ever-present military people do not look at the welfare of the people. Imagine a military man asking a fisherman to bring out his identity card., Those are the sort of things we see here. So, the conflict comes because of the domineering attitude of the government and security agencies in Gbaramatu kingdom. (Chief Godspower Gbenekama, Spokesman of the Gbaramatu Kingdom and member of PANDEF, KII, 2020).

In response to security officials' abuse of civilians, security officials who chose to respond conceded cases of security officials' complicity in criminal and human rights abuses. However, they stressed that a small population of security officials were involved and maintained that in cases where officers were proven guilty of such crimes, they were prosecuted.

All security officials should collaborate and uphold the law...they should collaborate against criminals...any security officer that collaborates with criminals should face the law. (Mr. Rijau, DCP Operations, KII, 2020)

Absence of Government Presence in Communities

A key prevailing source of structural violence and insecurity identified by respondents is the absence of government presence in communities, which this report identifies as limited or absence of essential infrastructure, limited or absence of primary health care facilities, secondary schools, limited access to clean water, limited access to justice-court, and no police stations amongst others.

People in charge do not feel what the community is going through, they do not understand the needs of the community... If those people that are leading us can be here to feel what we are going through, they do not know how we source for water, how the children go to school, so let them stay here with us, it will help... people who are ruling us are not living in our communities. They should come and build houses here. If they are here, they will feel what we are going through...No street lights...for seven months, no infrastructure. (Omadino FGD, 2020)

Infrastructures are limited – education, health, and potable water. Many of these communities lack power, the entire local government [Warri South West] is not connected to the national grid, some of them are surviving on gas turbines from companies or generators, while some are on their own like Ogbe-Ijoh... they have not had power for close to five years. There is no market in the entire local government, and people travel as far as Warri. (Security Officer 3, KII, 2020)

Electricity supply is a major problem and encourages crime. A lot of criminals and violent groups...lack civilised orientation...normally most communities rely on their community leaders and elders to resolve issues. In most cases, when you come to report, they ask for fines from the perpetrators, and the matter is usually not properly resolved or not resolved. The same acts are repeated. When victims are unsatisfied, they involve the police and it becomes a dispute between the victims and the community leaders for involving the police or the court. (Ubeji FGD, 2020).

The residents are out of touch with the government because there is no light, water... except for one concrete road that was partly completed by the NDDC (Security Officer 2, KII, 2020)

The lack of basic amenities ensures the absence and decline of a conducive environment for business and quality standard of living which leads to economic and social insecurity. This also creates and widens the gap between the state (government) and the people (community), which fosters a sense of ungoverned spaces.

State Capture and Corruption

State capture and corruption is another identified form of structural violence in the state. This report interprets this as manifestations and elements of bad governance. Respondents maintain that:

Corruption within the government and the leaders and corruption within the communities, when companies pay compensation to communities the monies are usually embezzled. This brings agitation. Youths... I want to say this...when the youths see what the politicians are collecting from the government for doing nothing, even though they say they are making laws and we do not see the impact of the law, but they collect money... they collect our resources, local government chairmen will go to Asaba and collect money for the local government and share it amongst themselves and few others. The youths are seeing and hearing all that so they agitate. (Ogbe-Ijoh FGD, 2020)

Leadership in the community is a major problem. A blind man cannot lead a community. People that are leading the people in the community, are not qualified to lead, they make bad policies. Such as allowing strangers to enter the community; all they care about is what they can get from the stranger. For example, the cattle herders, they bring them to the community for grazing without consulting with the community, as long as the cattle herders give them money. These cattle herders we do not know them, they occupy uncompleted buildings and could be complicit in the rash of petty crimes in the community. (Ubeji, FGD, 2020)

The marginalization, exploitation, and injustice orchestrated by those in charge of governance breed economic hardship and frustration.....This inevitably gives rise to all shades of violent behaviour and insecurity either as a form of protest used to undo perceived enemies or to earn a living from violent criminal activities that their class can offer. (Prof. G. G. Darah, PANDEF Chairman, Delta State, KII, 2020).

The views of these respondents underscore the culture of corruption and significantly the capture of state resources and institutions for personal interests. This has impacted the lives of the residents; the general perception is that of helplessness and resignation to this reality, which is ultimately reflected in violence and conflict by agitators. Respondents

believe that the government does not care and the state resources are for a select few.

Gbaramatu- A Case of Insecurity Perpetrated by Security Officials

The major actor of the violence and insecurity in Gbaramatu kingdom is the military... We are getting used to the military presence, we are getting used to the insecurity they bring. For instance, if you cannot beat them you join them, that is what they say. (Chief Godspower Gbenekama, Spokesman of Gbaramatu Kingdom, 2020)

The oil-rich Gbaramatu Kingdom is an Ijaw clan in Delta south and has been embroiled in violence since 1997 leading to the destruction of lives and properties. There are diverse views dating back to the colonial era on the root causes of this crisis; however, respondents identified endemic poverty, limited socio-economic development, unemployment, and significant militarisation of the community as the cause and sustenance of violence in Gbaramatu. History records the 12-day revolution by Isaac Adaka Boro as the beginning of modern violent activism in Gbaramatu. It is against this backdrop that diverse freedom fighters/activists/militants agitators emerged to emancipate Gbaramatu from socio-economic and political injustice. Respondents highlighted the exploitation of Gbaramatu's natural resources and the resultant effects on the environment and the economy, however, the emphasis was on the adverse effect of the Nigerian Army and Navy. They maintained that:

The people are agitated after the 2009 bombing of Gbaramatu Kingdom by the federal government and its agents. we have not been treated fairly...I think in 2017, a sand scooper went to scoop sand and before he got to his community, he was shot and killed by a navy man who thought he was carrying stolen crude oil... Later, the navy admitted they were at fault. The man was buried without any serious compensation. (Chief Godspower Gbenekama, Spokesman of the Gbaramatu Kingdom and member of PANDEF, KII, 2020).

The military invades communities without finding out what is happening in cases of clashes between host communities and oil companies. Women and children panic and move to urban areas. (Mr.

EnaiboAsiayei, journalist and GM of Gbaramatu Voice Media House, KII, 2020).

Furthermore, the year 2002, recorded the attack on women by the military during their peaceful occupation of the Abiteye flow station. Their demands were employment, scholarships, a micro-credit scheme, and the provision of infrastructure. Another example is the brutal attack on peaceful youths protest in Okerenkoko, leading to the death of 22 youths and three soldiers in 2003. Other cases include military invasion of Oporoza, the headquarters of Gbaramatu leading to the arrest of 10 secondary school students (Nigerian Tribune 2016) and more recently in 2019, a few days to the presidential elections, the deployment of 20 armoured gunboats which hindered the movement of the natives of Gbaramatu due to random stop and search. The military presence in the Gbaramatu Kingdom, according to respondents, is limited to the protection of pipelines and oil-producing companies at the cost of the safety and rights of the natives, especially vulnerable groups (women, students, invalid, and the old).

3. Actors and Their Involvement in Conflict, Violence and Insecurity in Delta State

Political Actors	Criminal Actors	Corporate Actors
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complicit security officers• Negligent government officials/political leaders• Community committees• Groups armed and sponsored by political leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Killer/violent herdsmen and farmers• Street gangs and cults (aye queens and vikings)• Political Thugs• Violent militants• Restive youths• Other criminal groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oil producing companies• Multinational Oil Companies• Contractors

Figure 1: Actors involved directly and indirectly in violence, insecurity, and conflict in Delta State.

3.1 Political Actors

Political actors are classified into three categories;

1. Those who are legally charged with managing insecurity, violence, and conflict
2. Those who actively contribute to the sustenance of insecurity, violence, and conflict
3. Those who indirectly contribute to insecurity, violence, and conflict

Respondents acknowledge that the government at all levels is tasked with the security of lives and properties as indicated in the constitution. This is done through institutions set up for such cases, and include the various security agencies, the courts, and other sanctioned committees set up by the state. Also, at the community level, the traditional leaders, the chiefs, and selected committees are usually tasked with resolving

conflicts relating to land and boundary disputes. Furthermore, issues of petty crimes are within the purview of vigilantes working in collaboration with security officials. In essence, there are institutions and processes set up by the government to tackle cases of insecurity, conflict, and violence in the state.

Despite these views, political actors have been complicit in instigating and sustaining insecurity, violence, and conflict in Delta State. For example, respondents maintain that politicians and government officials have been known to sponsor and arm groups willing to serve as political thugs during election periods. In addition, security officials, especially the military are accused of actively violating the rights of civilians significantly in communities such as Gbaramatu. Below are excerpts of respondents' views;

If you look at the Niger Delta today, some of those in position are there through violent electoral process, senators, House of Representatives, ...A large percentage of people in a position in Delta State (low and high) benefited through acts of violence. It is a big-money venture. (Omadino FGD, 2020)

Most of the problems if you look at it from cultism and some of these community issues, the politicians are very central to these activities. Like the area of arms proliferation and cultism, you see during campaigns a good number of them tend to engage these boys to further their interests by creating thugs and when they achieve their political goals, they abandon them. Nobody agrees to identify with these boys, and they deny alliances with these boys. (Security Officer 1, KII, 2020).

The cult groups play key roles for politicians during election period with lofty promises made to them by the politicians but after been elected to positions of authority, they abandon these young men who are left with no means of survival; they resort to using the guns left in their possession to carry out a lot of heinous crimes in the community. (Agadama FGD, 2020).

From these views, it is deduced that complicit politicians fuel violence – political and electoral in the state, this is done through the interpretation of violence as a continuation of politics. Significantly is the use of gangs

and youths for these services, the outcome is an illicit industry of violent foot soldiers and a culture of impunity amongst sponsors and perpetrators.

However, there are instances where the actions or decisions of political actors lead to violence, insecurity, and conflict. For example, the decision to militarize some communities in Delta South as a result of pipeline vandalism, piracy, and militant activities in the area. Other instances include competition for political appointments, unfair allocation of land or land grab, embezzlement of public funds for community development, and ineffective conflict resolution processes. Below are some observations from respondents:

Yes, for example in Ogbe-Ijoh and other communities as well, there are cases of violent crisis when there is competition for executive council communities. (Ogbe-Ijoh FGD, 2020).

...leaders have a way of collecting money from the oil companies and not distributing it to their communities...when you go to the riverine communities there is massive poverty there, that is the truth...when you go and have an assessment of the leaders, the way they live in Warri, Sapele, and Asaba, it is a different thing entirely...the leaders are the problem, their actions lead to violent agitations against the OPCs. (Security Officer 2, KII, 2020)

In essence, political actors who have captured the state resources for personal gains and neglect the tenets of good governance have inadvertently created an environment of conflict, violence, and insecurity.

3.2 Criminal Actors

Criminal actors identified by respondents range from organised criminal groups, cultists, violent herders to petty thieves. The majority of the respondents maintained that active members of these groups include youths between the ages of 15 – 35. They identified them as:

From arrests that are made and from people who have been directly involved, all analysis tends to show that these persons are between the ages of 15 and 25...Because I recall that when I vetted files as attorney

general, I find statements such as I was in primary five or I dropped out of school in class three in secondary school and my father could not pay my fees, so I had to carry load in the market or become a bus conductor, and of course from there, they get involved in drugs and crime. These are people who cannot feed so they have to source for means of livelihood and the easiest they can do that is to get into crime because where they are coming from, they are not likely to get any future. (Mr. Charles Ajuyah SAN, fmr. Attorney General Delta State, 2020).

Youths are actors in crimes of armed robbery and kidnapping, politicians are actors in political violence while community leaders are actors in the violence involving youths protest against oil firms because of their complicity in dealings of corruption that involves coveting money meant for the community from oil companies for themselves. (Okpai FGD, 2020)

However, some others identify herdsmen as key actors involved in crime in Delta State:

The herdsmen are the main actors and their backers are the police and the military. This is because they go about armed with sophisticated weapons while the locals are told not to defend themselves but report to the police. This is why despite the killings that are carried out in Uwheru, Ossisa, Ogor, Agbarha, and Ubulu-Uku, not one person has been arrested or prosecuted that we know of. In the local issues of kingship tussle, the well to do in the community are the actors because they are always involved. They empower the youths to dethrone the kings without recourse to traditional processes and the youths storm the palace to carry out such orders without understanding why they are dethroning the king. (Prof. Patrick Muoboghare KII, 2020).

This is further confirmed by another respondent, a prominent indigene of Delta State:

The herdsmen are the actors, they move about with AK-47 on their shoulders as if they are invincible because the leadership of the country is controlled by them. I do not know how true this is, but I read recently in the press that all the senior police officers who are not indigenous to

Delta State have been moved away. If this is true, it means the grounds are softened to allow for the brazen attack on our people without much resistance. We are not safe and there is no doubt about that. (Chief Alaowe Broderick Bozimo, former Minister of Police Affairs & Cofounder PANDEF, KII, 2020).

In the case of militancy, there are conflicting views. This is due to the amnesty programme that ensured the rapid decline of violent agitations by diverse militant groups in the state. Likewise, a large majority of respondents maintained that violent agitation by militants or freedom fighters is no longer a source of insecurity and violence in their communities.

Before now, militancy was prevalent in the region and Gbaramatu was not exempted. But I do not see that as bringing insecurity... We do not see the so-called militants as actors of violence but we see them as agitators. (Chief Godspower Gbenekama – Spokesman of the Gbaramatu Kingdom and member of PANDEF, KII, 2020).

From respondents' discussions, criminal and cult groups employ violence as a tool to achieve their goals. The use of violence is a pragmatic or rational choice; moreover, respondents from Ubeji and Omadino maintained that the employment of violence ensures control of territory and inspires fear/respect.

3.3 Corporate Actors

From empirical findings, there is no concrete evidence that corporate actors are actively involved in sponsoring and sustaining violence, conflict, and insecurity. However, the argument that the actions or policies of these actors have contributed to or created events of insecurity, violence, and conflict in the state is prevalent.

There are situations where these oil companies pitch the leaders against each other. Once there is a crisis they can drill the oil to their advantage. For instance, in my community, we have been having a crisis in recent times and the oil companies are having a field day. (Hon. Prosper Irogbo, former Isoko South LGA Chairman Uzere, KII, 2020)

...we have a situation with NNPC JVC partner called NACONDE. They have host communities that they carry out their operations, they have agreements with these host communities – contractors and employments...the company has not lived up to this agreement...this incites these communities to violence...when companies refuse to clean up oil spill immediately and fail to provide some form of compensation to victims it causes tensions. (Security Officer 3, KII, 2020)

There was a consensus that the most powerful of these actors are the political actors. This perception is due to their influence and control over state resources and institutions such as the security agencies and courts.

4. Impacts of Insecurity, Violence, and Conflict in Delta State

In the last decade, the impact of insecurity, violence, and conflict in Delta State is evident in the state's political, economic, and social environment. This has resulted in the displacement of people, a culture of violence, loss, and decline in investments and development, and emergence and sustenance of a political violent class amongst others. In this section of the report, we present the socio-economic and political impacts of insecurity, violence, and conflict in Delta State.



Figure 2: Prevalent Impacts of Insecurity, Violence, and Conflict in Delta State

4.1 Social Impacts

Delta State like other states in Nigeria is rich in culture. Indigenes of the state are known for colourful and lively social and cultural events such as festivals, traditional weddings, naming ceremonies, retirement parties, and funerals. Despite their differences in language and traditional customs, the people of the state share a commonality in location and industry, particularly a strong sense of community. However, the prevalence of insecurity, violence, and conflict has impacted negatively on how socio-cultural activities are carried out in Delta State. The suspension of wake keeping ceremonies during burial is one way that insecurity has affected social interactions and the practice of culture in Delta State. This was reported by different respondents:

Apart from those that are killed or maimed in this recent invasion by Fulani herdsmen, our people are displaced. Up till this moment, some parents have not seen their children. This is because during an invasion, the inhabitants in trying to escape, run in different directions. Thus, families are separated: husbands, wives, and children do not run to the same place in the time of invasion. (Chief Ohworeko, KII, 2020).

In terms of night burials, it is no longer fashionable to do all night wake keeping due to people feeling insecure. All night used to be a part of the custom, due to insecurity; custom had to give way for safety. (Mr. Charles Ajuyah SAN, fmr. Attorney General Delta State, KII, 2020).

Other respondents supported this view by stating that;

Yes, nightlife has died down drastically; people do not hang out the way it used to be. (Mr. Collins Edema – President of National Association of Itsekiri Graduates, KII, 2020).

The FGD in Asaba and the KII report from a security officer corroborated the observation above:

There is no more social life in Asaba as a result of the crimes and herders' activities. I am the owner of the bar where we are carrying out this FGD. Prior to this time, young people, workers, and married men use to come out to relax after the day's work till late into the night but as of now, before around 7.00 pm, I have closed because people will be hurrying home for safety. There are no more night parties, church programmes or functions like burials. All these have been stopped owing to fear and the terror of the night caused by the hoodlums and herders (Asaba FGD, 2020).

In essence, events that are based on social practices and customs have been adversely impacted by violence and conflict. This has negatively affected communal relations.

4.2 Economic Impacts

Farming, fishing, trading, industry - oil, and rubber constitute the main economic activities of the people of Delta State. These activities have

been negatively impacted by insecurity, violence, and conflict. Respondents had diverse views on the impact of insecurity, violence, and conflict on economic activities in Delta State. The majority agreed that there is an adverse impact. Respondents from Omadino, Warri South-West LGA, maintained that insecurity and violent activities in their community have led to a decline in development, specifically in real estate and industry. Notwithstanding, they conceded that oil bunkering activities created jobs for those involved.

Furthermore, another pertinent aspect of insecurity and violence in the state is its impact on business activities. Markets are closed down during crisis; in some cases, goods are destroyed. In addition, night businesses such as bars and pharmacies are forced to close early due to criminal activities in urban areas.

Warri where I stay used to be a bubbling city but all that is gone. I dare say that even the youths are afraid to go out. I ran a hotel but I closed it down a few months ago because of the insecurity issue that has made the place unsafe to stay (Chief Alaowei Broderick Bozimo, Former Minister of Police Affairs & Cofounder PANDEF, KII, 2020).

A lot of people find it difficult to do meaningful things; some even relocate. When cult groups are fighting, you cannot go out. People of that area tend to go to their bed early. Also, people, who own business shops, pack and run away when two cult groups are fighting (Chief/Dr. Obiwevbi Ominimini, co-founder and Organizing Secretary PANDEF, KII, 2020).

Conflict, particularly these herders, has deprived people of going to the farm to produce. Indirectly, it affects the supply of food to the market. Supply of things is bound to increase, the issue of availability to make up demand has increased. Sometimes, these people set fire to forests and plantations just to source for feed for their cattle (Senior Security Officer 1, KII, 2020)

Respondents in communities that have experienced conflicts and incidences of insecurity such as Aladja and Ogbe-Ijoh maintain that in times of crisis, it is difficult to make profits, in most cases shops and goods are destroyed. Landlords are also reported to have lost properties due to violence.

There is a perception, expressed by some respondents, that organised criminal activities such as oil bunkering and kidnapping drive the local economy – job creation, investments in real estate, increase in purchasing power, and employment of domestic staff. Others maintained that those involved do not spend or invest this money in the community and in most cases, they spend their money on luxury goods that do not benefit the local economy.

Respondents also stressed the impact of insecurity, violence, and conflict on development in the community. The consensus is that insecurity and violence discourage development and investment. For example, respondents argued that insecurity is one key reason behind the low economic activity notably in Koko Port in Warri North LGA:

have a deep-sea port in Warri North LGA where large ships can come through like those that come into Lagos port. If we can have these ships bring power turbines the ones they use for electricity, then it means that a ship can also come with goods and cars. They told me that it is not as if we do not have a deep space in Koko port, the activities of the armed men and sea pirates will not allow the ship to come to Koko. If they come, they will be vulnerable to piracy and kidnapping; it is better to stop in Lagos. (Security Officer 2, KII, 2020).

This was also supported by the former chairman Isoko South LGA, Hon. Prosper Irogbo and the deputy spokesman of the Odja community who stressed that no development can take place in a community or state where there is a crisis.

4.3 Political Impacts

The impact of violence, insecurity, and conflict in the political environment in Delta State is evidenced by electoral violence and the sustenance of a culture of violence as a continuation of politics. There is a prevailing perception that access to state power and political appointments is premised on the use of violence.

It speaks for itself; you do not need to be told. People cannot go and campaign freely. Only recently, you hear of the assassination of

politicians especially spokespersons in government circles. The killings have been part of us but the dimension of its occurrence in recent times is very alarming. (Chief Alaowei Broderick Bozimo, Former Minister of Police Affairs & Cofounder PANDEF, KII, 2020).

Some FGS participants agree that violence benefits political elites:

Most of the people that are in positions in Delta State are the people that benefit from violence. There is a link between the local, state, and national; there is a synergy. I will not mention names, those that are going for Senate and House of Representatives when you check their make -up it is bad (Omadino FGD, 2020).

It is pertinent to note that complicit politicians and government officials are not directly involved in electoral or political violence; rather there are alliances with violent groups or sponsorship of gangs or political thugs.

There is a link between the local and state-level politics especially in periods of elections and the use of political thugs and pursuits of existing tensions/interests between opposing factions (Ubeji FGD, 2020).

Mr. Collins Edema, President of National Association of Itsekiri Graduates maintains that insecurity, conflict, and violence in Delta state,

...made rigging of elections worse... INEC officials feel insecure or feel that their lives are threatened. Election materials that are supposed to be distributed to several communities that are linked together, they deliver to just one community and tell the other people to leave their communities to this community to vote...some might come, but in most cases, they do not. At the end of the day, you get people thumbprinting for the political parties that control that area. Furthermore, political thugs are used to ensuring that people vote for who they want them to vote for. INEC officials might be aware but their lives are threatened in that region and they have little choice but to accept because they are in those regions (Edema, KII, 2020).

His observations are supported by security officials,

Politically, we cannot have a perfect election again because of rigging, what supports rigging? Youths who are armed like political thugs to

ensure that elections do not hold to get a legitimate person elected (Security Officer 1, KII, 2020).

Electoral violence such as ballot box snatching and intimidation of voters has become the norm during elections (Security Officer 2, KII, 2020).

Furthermore, Chief Michael Odeli, the Olorogun of Warri Kingdom argued that conflict and violence, due to competing interests such as land and boundary disputes, promote political instability within local government areas and senatorial districts.

A community that has land issues with another community can politically have issues because the person that may want to contest a political position from community A might not have votes from community B; they believe that when they vote the person from community A into power that could be an opportunity for the elected from community A to resolve the issue and use his position to benefit community A. (Chief Odeli Michael, KII, 2020)

Communities Perception on the Ability of Government to Address Insecurity, Violence, and Conflict in Delta State

From the data gathered with the FGD and KII, all respondents expressed great trust in the ability of the government to address the issues of insecurity. In their response, they identified what should be the priority of government when addressing the issues. One common ground is to solve the problem of unemployment: This is summed up thus:

We strongly believe that the government can address the problem of insecurity, violence, and conflict as they relate to unemployment..... if the government has the political will and determinate, it should prioritise the creation of job opportunities and an enabling environment for entrepreneurial prospects. This will enable the idle youths who engage in criminal activities to dissipate their energies on non-anti-social and non-criminal engagement (FGDs, KIIs, 2020).

In addition to the above, the president of PANDEF – Delta State, Prof. G.G. Darah went beyond the creation of jobs to that of the inadequacy of security personnel to nip in the bud, the issue of insecurity, violence, and conflict. According to him:

Creation of jobs alone will not put an end to the problem of insecurity. Those working could perceive cheating and no commensurate remuneration. The government should address this by ensuring that workers are well paid.... Furthermore, the security agents are inadequate numerically and frustrated. That the whole police force in Delta State is just enough to fight crime and insecurity in only 2-4 two local government areas. The government can address this by employing more policemen and be prepared to motivate them with commensurate remuneration (Prof. G.G. Darah, PANDEF Chairman, Delta State, KII, 2020).

In furtherance of the trust on the ability of Delta State Government to address the problem, Alhaji Jubril Haruna the Public Relations Officer of Cattle Rearers Association of Delta State had it that government can stop to farmers-herders clashes. His response is aptly presented thus:

The problem of the violent Fulani herders can be handled because they enter into Delta State through four routes. What Delta State Government needs to do is to identify those routes and mount tight security that can stop them from entering the state. Alternatively, if they must be allowed to enter the state, they can be asked to drop their guns upon arrival and use sticks and daggers like the non-violent Fulani herdsmen (Alhaji Jubrin Haruna, KII, 2020).

Corroborating the perception of the communities on the ability of Delta State Government to address violent conflict and insecurity, the Delta State government relied on the existing security operatives, with different operational code names such as Dragon, SACU, SARS, Crack Team, Eagle Net etcetera and vigilante groups to combat different categories of violent conflict and insecurity. However, these efforts have not yielded the desired result. Consequently, the Delta State Government has designed a multi-part strategy. One aspect is a joint security task force, Operation Delta Hawk which includes the police, DSS, and military into a coordinated effort. This effort will address problems in the existing

communication system and also set up a command and control centre, where citizens can call in for assistance. Bayelsa and Kaduna States have similar structures and Edo is working on its version.

The Operation Delta Hawk model also includes legislation for a Community and Neighbourhood Watch Corps, which was passed by the Delta State House of Assembly in July 2020. This will incorporate the various vigilante groups operating across the state, and they will be documented and trained. A database will be created to ensure that all groups and members are profiled. Also, retired security officers from the NPF and the military will be employed as coordinators in each LGA, and a state coordinator appointed.

The existing vigilantes will be reorganized and rebranded as the Community and Neighbourhood Watch Corps. This initiative will come in several phases.

The roll out established the State Security Coordination with the command and control centre, and local call centres. The Joint Security Task Force is currently initiated, starting with Asaba and neighbouring towns, and the Warri/Uvwie area. The second phase will be the formation of the Community and Neighbourhood Watch Corps, with documentation and training of the members in the Asaba and Warri areas. The final phase will be the expansion of this structure in all parts of Delta State. Another vital initiative is the Delta State Security Trust Fund, which will operate similarly to the one in Lagos State headed by Jim Ovia of Zenith Bank. It is a partnership between the state government and the private sector to make the business operating environment more secure. Thus, the Delta State government is working together with the security agencies, vigilante groups, citizens, and the private sector to make the state more secure for all.

5. Recommendations

Policy Recommendations

To the government – Delta State Government, Federal Government, and Government approved regional institutions such as Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC)

- The Delta State Government should launch a transparent and inclusive inquiry into election violence to verify allegations of sponsorship, identify and prosecute perpetrators, while compensating of victims of electoral violence.
- The Delta State Government should work with communities to standardise the laws governing elections into community governance bodies such as CDC and CDA.
- The Delta State Government should work with communities to establish land boundaries and establish a government institution responsible for addressing land disputes between communities.
- The Delta State Government should establish more programmes that aim to provide non-violent means for youth to engage in politics and governance.
- The Delta State Government should exert influence on MNCs and OPCs to adhere to environmentally friendly production processes and take CSR seriously and be actively involved in pursuing compensation for victims of oil spillage and other adverse impacts of oil production processes.
- The Delta State Government should ensure that the renewed security response especially the State Community Security Corps Agency when signed into law should be given the necessary resources and enabling environment that could make it function effectively in combating insecurity.
- The state government should resuscitate the Delta State anti-grazing bill and ensure it is swiftly signed into law to forestall the recurring menace of the Fulani herdsmen on the helpless farmers in Delta State.
- The Niger Delta Development Commission should increase its support for small scale industrialisation activities that will contribute to job creation for youths in Delta State.
- The Federal Government should mandate security agencies in the state to recognise the human rights of everyday citizens in the fight while intervening in violent conflicts and fighting crime in Delta State.
- The Federal Government should increase the provision of fuel and other forms of energy in rural areas of Delta State to discourage illegal refining of crude oil.
- The Federal Government should formulate and implement policies that ensure resource control or fiscal federalism.

- BRACED Commission should be empowered to implement policies related to curbing insecurity, violence, and conflict in the South-South region – a regional security response.
- Demilitarisation of communities with heavy military presence – Gbaramatu, Uvwie etcetera.

To the Local Government Authorities and Community Committees

- Investigate land dispute issues and liaise with the state government to legally establish clear communal land boundaries
- Organise consistent town hall meetings to facilitate the involvement of community leaders and ordinary citizens in governance.
- Develop specific programmes that are aimed to address drivers of insecurity in respective local governments. Publicly condemn violence as a means to resolve ethnic differences
- Local authorities should improve the transparency of negotiations between communities and oil companies. Local authorities should ensure that they coordinate local efforts to demand implementation of MOUs. These should be transparently done to discourage youths from engaging in violence.

To Security Agencies

- Security agencies operating in Delta State including the proposed Operation Delta Hawk (OPDH) and the State Community Security Corps Agency (awaiting governor's assent) should live up to the expectations of the citizens when carrying out their responsibilities without compromise and with strict respect for the rights of the citizens
- The leadership of security institutions in Delta State should investigate and prosecute their officials that are involved in any form of criminal activity or aiding criminal activity in the state.
- The leadership of security institutions should effectively implement mechanisms to cooperate with communities in the provision of security services in the state. This should involve community-level intelligence.
- Continuous collaboration with registered vigilante groups and other security agencies to identify and combat crime

- Publicly acknowledge the obligation of law enforcement agencies to combat criminal activities and aggressively expose sponsors of criminal operations.
- A special security agency backed by law should be established to specifically protect the farmers from the atrocities of the Fulani herdsmen in Delta State.
- Security agents performing their official duties during crime and civil disturbance control should respect the fundamental rights of the suspects as enshrined in the Nigerian constitution.

To Oil Producing Companies

- OPCs should adopt environmentally friendly production policies and create partnerships with the locals in terms of the conception of projects, awards of contracts, and monitoring the execution of such contracts or projects
- OPCs should discourage the Nigerian government from using military or coercive measures in resolving disputes with communities. Instead, OPCs should facilitate dialogue and interactive practices as a means of conflict resolution.

To Citizens – civil societies, youth groups, religious leaders, and other registered interest groups

- Communities and civil society organisations should develop and strengthen local level mechanisms for peacebuilding and conflict prevention.
- Communities and civil society organisations should develop non-violent neighbourhood watch that will collaborate with security agents.
- Communities and civil society organisations should develop effective and independent project monitoring teams that can provide verifiable information when called upon to do so.
- In dealing with the Fulani herdsmen, citizens should apply the utmost caution to avert their brutality.
- Traditional leaders should develop strategies of revitalising norms and cultural practices that ensure the transfer of good values to young people in communities.
- Community leaders, working with local government authorities, should develop non-violent strategies to youth delinquency.

- Exert influence on the government at all levels to take active steps to investigate and prosecute and prevent political violence by complicit politicians
- Support the state by providing credible and valid information on land boundaries

To International Actors in Nigeria

- International actors, especially diplomatic missions and development organisations, should maintain strong advocacy in support of human rights in Delta State.
- Diplomatic missions and development organisations should fund community initiatives to address insecurity and youth delinquency in Delta State.
- Diplomatic missions and development organisations should increase support for peacebuilding programmes in Nigeria's Niger Delta region.

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Appendix I

<p>Delta South Leadership and kingship tussle, sea piracy, oil theft and bunkering, alliance between leaders and interest, unconstitutional stay of tenure, communal & boundary clash, cultism, herders-farmers conflict, cybercrime, illegal sale & distribution of light weapon, child molestation and illicit drug consumption</p>	<p>Warri South West LGA Ethnic communal clash, sea piracy, oil theft, political violence, criminality, unconstitutional stays of tenure and illegal sale and distribution of light weapons</p>	<p>Isoko South LGA Kidnappings, communal violence and kingship position, herders' farmers conflict</p>	<p>Warri South LGA Ethnic communal tension, mob justice, political violence, Leadership tussle, and dispute, agitation protest criminality, and sea piracy</p>
<p>Delta North Herders-farmers conflict, political violence, kidnappings, armed robbery, cultism, rape, communal and boundary clash, illegal drugs sale, leadership tussle, workers protest and cyber crime</p>	<p>Oshimili South LGA Kidnappings, mob justice, sexual violence, inter communal violence, and cyber-crime, leadership tussle, herdsmen and political violence</p>	<p>Ukwuani LGA Herders-farmers conflict, armed robbery, cultism, kidnappin g, political violence, herdsmen, boundary dispute, leadership tussle and inter communal violence</p>	<p>Ndokwa East LGA Inter communal violence, kidnappings, armed robbery, workers protest, Political violence, illegal sale and consumption of illicit drugs</p>
<p>Delta Central Herders-farmers conflict, political violence, armed robbery, cyber-crime, illegal drugs sale, and cultism, Kidnapping, rape, leadership tussle, kinship tussle and communal and boundary clash</p>	<p>Ughelli North LGA Herders-farmers conflict, armed robbery, kidnapping, cyber-crime, political violence, leadership tussle and cultism</p>	<p>Ethiopo East LGA Herders-farmers conflict, kidnappin g, armed robbery, cultism, political violence, leadership tussle and cyber crime</p>	<p>Uvwie LGA Intra communal clashes, youths protest, cultism, political violence, political violence, leadership tussle, herdsmen and Cyber crime</p>

CHAPTER FIVE

Insecurity in Edo State: Issues, Actors and Solutions

Iro Aghedo and Oarhe Osumah

Executive Summary

This chapter analyses issues of insecurity in Edo State. It identifies key actors involved in perpetuating insecurity and proffers some policy solutions that may help policymakers and relevant stakeholders overcome the challenges identified in the report. The report identified cult clashes, inter-communal land boundary conflicts, land grabbing, attacks by herdsmen, political (electoral) violence, kidnapping for ransom, internet fraud, human trafficking, chieftaincy tussle, and armed robbery as the main sources of insecurity in Edo State. Key actors identified in the landscape of insecurity in Edo State include cultists, kidnapers, armed robbers, cyber fraudsters, and herders. However, both formal and informal political actors such as politicians, religious leaders, and traditional rulers who are supposed to reinforce security and mitigate violence have colluded with non-state violent actors to undermine peace.

Background

The Niger Delta region was the epicentre of oil resource-based insurgency in Nigeria from the early 1990s to the late 2000s. Following several decades of damaging oil exploration activities and the socio-economic marginalisation by the Nigerian power elite, some Niger Delta youth groups began to make aggressive demands for environmental protection and equitable fiscal disbursement for their oil-producing states in the Nigerian federation. As the government and oil companies relied on repression in managing the demands, the agitations morphed into violent militancy. However, in 2009 there was a normative shift from repressive to reconciliatory strategy as the central government announced a Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) for the militants.

The disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) -led peace deal brought about a drastic reduction in the incidence of ransom kidnapping, waterway piracy, and sabotage of critical oil infrastructure in the region (Aghedo, 2013; Ikelegbe and Umukoro, 2014).

However, over a decade since the implementation of the PAP, sustainable peace remains elusive across the Niger Delta states including Edo. Old security threats such as armed robbery, kidnapping, cultism, cybercrime, and human trafficking have not only persisted but have become radically transformed in recent years. For instance, even though the then Bendel State (now Edo and Delta states) was notorious for armed robbery during the Anini reign of terror in the mid-1980s (Marenin, 1987), yet contemporary armed robbery attacks are far more lethal than those of old because of the proliferation of sophisticated weapons. Similarly, kidnap victimization has become more every day, as well as indiscriminate, unlike the targeted form, it assumed during the Niger Delta insurgency. Also, cultism has transited from the campuses of tertiary institutions to secondary and primary schools with devastating consequences on the educational system and the society at large. Likewise, advances in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and greater access of people to the internet have increased the prevalence of cybercrime in Edo State.

Furthermore, apart from the security threats emanating from violent non-state actors, the political atmosphere of Edo State has been heightened in the last two years by the supremacy struggle of key governmental elites, especially within the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) in the state. The tussle over who gets the APC ticket in the September 2020 gubernatorial election in the state has split the APC into two opposing factions. While one faction is aligned to the National Chairman of the APC and former governor of Edo State Mr. Adams Oshiomhole, the other faction is in support of the incumbent Governor Godwin Obaseki. Both groups have allegedly resorted to violence, including the deployment of political thugs to harass opponents (Egbejule, Abuh, and Akubo, 2019).

These insecurities have debilitating implications for lives, livelihoods, and investments in Edo State. For example, in 2019, Edo State recorded the highest cases of most violent insecurities in the country including armed robbery (107), kidnapping (133), and cult activities (60) (Nigeria

Police Force, 2020). Yet there is a terrible misperception about the level of violence in the state as many people erroneously adjudge it as secure. Following this misperception, the attention of scholars, policymakers, non-governmental organizations, foreign donors, and others is focused on the northern states such as Borno, Yobe, Katsina, and Zamfara which make constant headlines in media reportage. Yet, as the latest annual crime statistics reveal, the level of insecurity in Edo State is higher than those of these northern states except concerning terrorist violence.

Thus, this study investigated, assessed, and documented the various forms of insecurities in contemporary Edo State. It highlighted the context of the insecurities, the actors as well as the drivers and consequences of the violence. Importantly, it made policy recommendations on how security threats can be addressed to guarantee sustainable peace and development. The report is structured into six parts. Immediately following this background is the second section which explores conceptual and theoretical notes on insecurity. The third section discusses the context of the study which is Edo State. The fourth section highlights the methodologies adopted for the study. The fifth section is on data presentation and analysis. The sixth and final section concludes the report and makes some policy recommendations.

1. Conceptual and Theoretical Notes on Insecurity

Security is an important and a contested concept. Every person desires it and knows about it. However, individuals conceive security as it applies to them and would expect other people to share their worldview of the subject. This is hardly the case since other people with different backgrounds have their picture of security. In light of this, there have emerged diverse notions about the meaning and scope of security (Imobighe, 2012).

Instructively, for analytical convenience, the diverse views about security have been mainstreamed into two perspectives, namely, the traditional convention of security and the revisionist thinking of security (Imobighe, 2012). In the traditional or classical convention which dates back to the post-cold war era, security is conceived as the protection of physical survival of the territorial state with the existence of a robust

military mechanism to respond proactively to challenges posed by latent or potential threats with expediency, expertise, and promptness.

Over time, the revisionist or the new thinking on security has broadened the scope of the traditional notion of security with the systematic addition of several ingredients. Adopting this broader view implies that beyond military calculations, security encapsulates conditions of life of the ordinary man or woman on the street. This presupposes that in this discourse, security is seen beyond the elimination of threats to the physical existence of the state. It also includes the absence or elimination of threats to the fulfilment of existential needs of all human inhabitants in the affected state or society, their eco-systems, their socio-cultural values and economic and political structures. Security of human inhabitants in a society can be in the forms of physical survival, personal dignity, and access to livelihoods, emotional, and psychological stability.

Thus, when we talk about insecurity, it is about vulnerabilities of threats to humans' acquired values and structures vital to their survival, protection of their property, and environment. In other words, insecurity in this report relates to threats around human persons in the affected state regardless of status – man or woman, young or old, rich or poor. To be insecure is to be in a state of tension or fear arising from actual or potential lack of protection of lives and property of individuals in a community. Insecurity, beyond heightening tension, can spawn catastrophic effects on the political and socio-economic activities of a community.

Insecurity in Nigeria stems from various sources such as political violence, communal land disputes, banditry, cultism, ethnoreligious conflagration, and armed robbery among others. Insecurity in the country has reached such a point that it would seem that Nigeria is now manifesting the symptoms of a collapsing state whose members are perpetually at the Hobbesian state of nature where life is insecure. On account of this, some countries such as the UK and USA embassies have, on various occasions, issued travel advisory to their nationals on the risk involved in travelling to Nigeria (Aghedo and Osumah, 2014).

The security challenge in Nigeria has generated grave concerns from governments and individuals. At the federal level, there have been legislations such as anti-kidnapping laws, anti-terrorism acts, deployment of special squads such as anti-robbery, anti-kidnapping, anti-

cultism, and anti-cybercrime and an increase in national annual budgetary allocation to the security sector (Osumah and Aghedo 2011; Imobighe, 2012). At the state level, there has been a proliferation of local security outfits by states and even the formation of regional security outfits, such as Amotekun in South-Western Nigeria. At both individual and communal levels, rising security challenges have led to target hardening and increasing investment in personal security devices.

Several interrelated factors are attributable to rising insecurity in Nigeria. Central to the appreciation of these factors is the understanding of the character of the post-colonial Nigerian state which has been profiled as crippled, lamed, fragile, prebendal, neo-patrimonial, rentier, bloated, criminal, and roguish (Osaghae, 2002; 2007; Joseph, 1987; Diamond, 1987; Osumah, 2013). These features have conflated with many others in a complex dynamic to undermine the capacity of the Nigerian state to discharge the principal responsibilities of modern states, such as protection of lives and property, maintenance of law and order, and the provision of socio-economic needs and guarantee of fundamental human rights of its citizens. While the Nigerian state is blessed with abundant human resources, solid minerals, and other natural resources, its trustees have not been able to harness these natural resources for the benefit of the vast majority of the citizens owing to self-motivation and reckless management (Dahiru, 2017).

In Nigeria, elective and appointive political offices are conceived as avenues for wealth accumulation rather than serving the common good. This self-motivation is one of the reasons public funds are recovered from many principal functionaries of successive governments after their tenure. Nigeria is still receiving late General Sani Abacha's stolen money stashed away in bank accounts in foreign countries after over two decades of his death. In May 2020, the federal government confirmed the receipt of \$311.7 million looted by the late dictator. The stolen money was repatriated from the United States and the Bailwick of Jersey (Daniel 2020). Also, the nation's anti-corruption agencies such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Crimes Commission (ICPC) have been recovering monies from ex-governors, former ministers, and other principal government functionaries at various levels who served since 1999 (Adesomoju 2018).

However, contemporary privatization of state resources has historical roots. This phenomenon derives from traditional political values and the history of colonial rule. Colonial rule was associated with the illegal exploitation of rents and natural resources. This conduct was transferred to the post-colonial era where it was further adapted for criminal activities by the ruling elite. These criminal activities have been sustained by the existence of traditional political values and moral codes of certain prestigious lifestyles with considerable capacity to legitimize the criminalisation of state power and resources (Bayart, Ellis, and Hibou, 1999).

Apart from the mammoth and brazen fiscal rascality in government circles, Nigerian political office holders are reputed to be among the highest-paid in the world at the same time that the World Bank ranks Nigeria as the leading theatre of poverty globally with 91.16 million Nigerians living in extreme poverty (below a dollar a day) as at February 2019 (Vanguard News 16/2/19). Some of those in government seem not to realize the level of poverty as they are often quick to counter claims that the poverty rating of the country is exaggerated, even as they have repeatedly dismissed people's claims that their remunerations are bloated in the face of the country's limited financial resources (Makinde, 2020). A direct corollary of the self-motivation and irresponsibility in the management of the collective national resources has been a divided state of severe inequalities, unemployment, and poverty which have consequences for security.

With the quick economic benefits and egocentric status associated with ascendancy to state power, the competition and struggle for control, particularly amidst limited economic opportunity outside the state power, have involved the deployment of any means including brigandage, brinkmanship, use of thugs, and negative manipulation of identity. The wilful manipulation of ethnic identity as a battle cry of domination and marginalization by the self-seeking ethnic conflict entrepreneurs has resulted in the emergence of bands of ethnic militia groups such as O'odua People's Congress in the South-West, Arewa People's Congress in the North, and numerous armed groups in the South-South. These bands of ethnic militias, with recruits drawn from the pool of unemployed youths, have heightened hallucination of fear of others, rivalry, disharmony, and weak social cohesion by spreading violence

perhaps as a way of seeking atonement for their apparent neglect in the scheme of things by the self-motivated governing elite (Imobighe, 2003a; Imobighe, 2003b).

Another factor of the post-colonial Nigerian state that has helped to promote insecurity is weak institutions. Although the Nigerian state maintains and parades several security agencies, yet due to inadequate manpower, poor funding, inappropriate skills set, lack of functional modern gadgets, and low personnel motivation, it is not able to ensure law and order and facilitate peace and stability (Osumah, 2019). With the weaknesses of the various security agencies, enough ungovernable spaces exist for insecurity to emerge and thrive.

2. Overview of Edo State

2.1 History

Edo State was created on August 27, 1991, by the General Ibrahim Babangida military administration. It was excised from the northern part of the then Bendel State, the southern portion of which became Delta State. Before its creation, the geographical entity known as Edo State existed as part of the former Mid-Western region, created through a referendum until it was named Bendel State in 1976 by the Murtala military administration. Benin City is the capital and the largest urban centre of the state. The state comprises 18 local government administrative units spread across three senatorial districts. The Edo Central Senatorial District is made up of five local government areas, (Esan Central, Esan North East, Esan South East, Esan West, and Igueben). The Edo North Senatorial District has six LGAs (Akoko-Edo, Etsako Central, Etsako East, Etsako West, Owan East, and Owan West); while the Edo South Senatorial District has seven LGAs (Egor, Ikpoba-Okha, Oredo, Orhionmwon, Ovia North East, Ovia South West, and Uhunmwonde).

2.2 Geography

With a landmass of about 17,802 square kilometres, Edo State is larger than Botswana and Trinidad and Tobago. The state has a short coastline

in the South-South geo-political zone as it is bounded by Kogi State to the northeast, Anambra State to the east, Delta State to the south, and Ondo State to the northwest. The Niger River flows along the state's eastern boundary while the rivers Osse; Orhionmwon; Ikpoba; Owan and Orle drain the land to the sea. The state is also blessed with a marsh vegetation that lies to the south of the state and is bisected by creeks and rivers. The vegetation of the state varies from the mainly mangrove swamp forest in the south-west part to the rain forest in the middle and then savannah in the north. The topography of the state is generally low-lying apart from certain parts in Edo Central and North with plateaus which range from 183 metres of the Kukuruku Hills and Somorika Hill with a height of about 672 metres above the sea level.

The location and diverse geographical features of Edo State have implications for insecurity. Firstly, the location of the state as the gateway for the northern, eastern, and western states of Nigeria makes it strategic for the dispersal of criminal activities. Secondly, its geographical features such as the waterways provide escape routes, while the rocky topography and vegetation provide hideouts for criminals after unleashing terror.

2.3 People

Edo State is home to people of diverse ethnic and linguistic groups comprising Afemai, Akoko, Bini, Esan, Igarra, Igbanke, Ora, Otuo, Urhobo, Ijaw, and Itsekiri. The people of Edo State are largely divided into Christian, Muslim, and numerous traditional religious communities. Christians share 90% of the population; Muslims share 6% while the remaining 4% fall into the numerous traditional religious communities. Although the state is bifurcated along religious groups, it has not witnessed frequent inter-religious tension and conflagrations as has been the case in the northern part of Nigeria. The population of the state which was projected at 4,225,600 in 2016 is nearly evenly split between males (50.13%) and females (49.87%). Despite the demographic strength of the females, they are largely subordinated to their male-folks, owing to the adoption of patriarchy in most of the communities. In the tradition of most, if not all the communities, women are not allowed to be clan heads, village heads, ruling elders, etc.

Beyond the communal settings, men have also dominated political positions in the state. Since 1991, when the state was created, no woman has emerged as governor or deputy governor. Even since the dawn of civil rule in 1999, the state has only produced one female as the speaker of the state House Assembly and chief judge of the state. Instructively, there are some other areas of discrimination and harmful practices against women that have not attracted attention. A prominent one relates to accusations and hostilities associated with belief in witchcraft. However, there are some areas of gender social equilibration in Edo State. Some female version of privileges and titles are restricted to women in some communities, while female diviners and herbalists are also recognized and respected.

Most communities in Edo State are organized on an age-grade basis which may span from the lowest (youth of about 15-20 years) to the highest (elders 70 years and above). Being male is often central to membership of the age-grades. In most communities, age-grades are associated with status, maturity, and wisdom. Also, the age-grades are largely a frame for the assignment of duties. While the elders are considered agents for making decisions, the youths are agents for implementing the decisions and social functions of the various communities.

Since the 1980s, following the adoption of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and its attendant constriction of employment opportunities, collapse in recreational facilities, and inadequacies of socializations agencies, there has been a new dimension in youth engagements which is negatively affecting security across the state. In the strong desire to move up the social ladder amidst economic constrictions and debasing moral values, there has been an upsurge in the youths' involvement in the black market network, street trading, secret cults, armed robbery, irregular migration, and human trafficking. Edo State provides 63% of Nigeria's irregular migration.

At the threshold of irregular migration in the 1990s, Edo citizens especially women and girls started leaving for Europe in search of menial jobs in factories, offices, and farms. Shortly thereafter, traffickers moved in and began to exploit the situation. Women and girls were deliberately tricked into Europe and sold into sexual slavery or forced to engage in prostitution by their so-called 'madams'. Indeed, Edo citizens were some

of the first to trade in trafficking and they dominated the trafficking routes of women to Italy as the preferred destination because Italy was considered more congenial to operate as prostitutes than many other countries in Europe. Trafficking had become so entrenched among the people especially the Bini ethnic extraction and its environs that over 95% of families had one member or another involved either as a victim, sponsor, or trafficker (Madweke, 2018).

Instructively, while Edo had been the hub of human trafficking, some of the victims trafficked from the state were not necessarily Edo citizens. On account of the awareness of the access to syndicates who could facilitate their travel abroad, some non-Edo people came to Benin City to make arrangements including even changing their names to reflect Edo origin (Okojie, 2003). Nonetheless, the majority of the victims of human trafficking were socially and economically deprived Edo citizens such as the unemployed, orphans, young widows, and persons from polygamous families (Okojie, 2003).

Indeed, many families used to inflate their public image by making a quick reference to having daughters, sisters, or other relations in Italy or other parts of Europe and the remittances and other materials such as cars and houses acquired through them. This was particularly noticeable in obituary announcements wherein the names and European destinations of surviving children of the deceased were mentioned. Also, moderators, masters of ceremony, and musicians at social events repeatedly mentioned or sang praises of the people from Europe with glaze and glamour, further making travelling to Europe very attractive. To live up to the fanciful praises, the visiting diasporas impressed people by ‘spraying’ foreign currencies such as US Dollars, British Pounds Sterling, Euro, and so on. This public display of wealth was stopped following the waves of insecurities from the mid-2000s when many visiting Diasporas became targets of kidnapers and armed robbers.

The phenomena of human trafficking and irregular migration among youths as a survival strategy have direct security implications. While some successful clandestine migrants have used remittances to support their households, the desperation to migrate at all costs have made many young Edo indigenes vulnerable to exploitation by criminal syndicates. Some have been duped and left stranded during the convoluted journey through the Sahara Desert, Libyan detention camps, and the

Mediterranean Sea while others have lost their lives. In particular, some female irregular migrants have been gang-raped and forced into prostitution to pay the exorbitant fees charged by their traffickers (Edo State Government, 2018).

2.4 Economic Activities

Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy. Cash crops produced are rubber, cocoa, cashew, and palm produce, and food crops, vegetables, and fruits such as yam, cassava, cocoyam, groundnuts, beans, rice pineapples, pawpaw, orange, guava, coconut, and mangoes are grown. Animals reared in the state include cows, sheep, chickens, goats, and pigs. Mineral resources found in the state include crude oil, natural gas, clay chalk, marbles, sandstone, and limestone. The few industrial activities include palm oil milling, lumbering, palm wine tapping, local gin making, bronze-casting, smithery, carving, and weaving. Tourism and its numerous attractions also abound in the state including the Okomu Wildlife Sanctuary, Ogba Zoological Garden, Ososo Tourist Centre, Ogirami Dam, the bronze-casting centres, the royal palace of the monarch of Benin kingdom, a repository of Benin history, arts, crafts and culture, the National Museum Benin. Also, there is the Benin Moat constructed during the thirteenth century. It is regarded as the world's largest man-made earthwork before the advent of technology and is the most noticeable landmark encircling the city and meant for its defence.

Higher education institutions in the state include the University of Benin, Benin City; Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma; Edo State University; Iyamho; Igbinedion University, Okada; Benson Idahosa University, Benin City; Wellspring University, Benin; Samuel Adegboyega University, Ogwa; Federal Polytechnic Auchi; Edo State Polytechnic, Usen; College of Education, Ekiadolor; College of Education, Igueben amongst others. Several businesses and industries in the state have become moribund including the Benin Textile Mill, Bendel Brewery, Ewu Feed and Flour Mill, Okpella Cement Factory, and the Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria at Ozalla in Owan West LGA. Direct upshots of the failure of these businesses were mass retrenchment, declining opportunities for employment, and an increase

in the level of poverty that has affected the level of insecurity in Edo State.

3. Methods of the Study

This research relied on Key Informant Interview (KII) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) for the generation of data, in addition to desk research. The KIIs were administered in various communities in the three senatorial districts, while one FGD each was conducted in three communities each in Edo North Senatorial District (South Ibie in Etsako West LGA, Igarra in Akoko-Edo LGA, and Otuo in Owan East LGA); Edo Central Senatorial District (Ekpoma in Esan West LGA, Uromi in Esan North East LGA and Ubiaja in Esan South East LGA); and Edo South Senatorial District (Oreoghene in Oredo LGA, Oza in Orhionmwon LGA and Upper Sakponba in Ikpoba Okha LGA.

The FGD which comprised between 8 and 12 discussants each consisted of youths (male and female), men, women, and opinion leaders as well as members of vigilante groups and security operatives. A total of 40 KIIs were conducted in various communities in the three senatorial districts. The KIIs were administered to political officeholders, senior public servants, union leaders, social and gender activists, lecturers, police, religious leaders, ex-agitators, and community leaders. The study was conducted during the period of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) which affected Edo State terribly. However, through the strict observance of physical distancing and other COVID-19 protocols such as frequent washing of hands, use of sanitizers, and facemasks, the challenges posed to the study by the pandemic were overcome. The results of the KIIs and FDGs are presented in summaries and excerpts.

3.1 Types of Security Threats

Our respondents identified different types of actors of insecurity and violent conflicts in Edo State. These key security threats identified by our respondents are cultism, herdsmen attacks, kidnapping for ransom, armed robbery, chieftaincy tussle, inter-communal land boundary disputes, and land grabbing phenomena, human trafficking, and

cybercrime. The growing crime in Edo State is captured in Table 1 and Figure 1 below.

Table 1: Summary of Major Crime Statistics Recorded in Edo State, 2014-2018

S/N	Categories of crime	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
1.	Murder	73	77	74	59	50
2.	Attempted murder	14	27	16	12	2
3.	Armed Robbery	53	65	52	39	43
4.	Kidnapping	24	76	69	52	59
5.	Rape	42	45	15	70	26
6.	Defilement	27	-	36	-	-
7.	Child stealing	-	-	-	5	4
8.	Burglary	35	43	31	105	24
9.	Stealing	72	238	45	968	336
10.	House breaking	15	45	26	145	44
11.	Store breaking	14	42	49	108	37
12.	Obtaining by false pretence	49	128	26	64	39
13.	Forgery	1	6	11	10	2
14.	Arson	12	7	14	7	10
15.	Receiving stolen property	5	14	4	15	9
16.	Unlawful possession	9	53	55	39	43
17.	Cultism	-	-	32	16	4
18.	Assault occasioning harm	55	187	-	-	-
19.	Assault	68	316	372	1398	306
20.	Wounding	-	-	115	32	80
21.	Conduct capable of causing public disturbance and disorder	18	117	-	-	-
22.	Threatening violence	50	-	-	-	-
23.	Malicious damage	54	-	-	-	-
24.	Suicide	-	-	-	3	-
	Grand total	690	1486	1042	3147	1118

Source: Edo State Police Command

As indicated in Table 1, crime increased from 690 in 2014 to 1486 in 2015, but dropped to 1042 in 2016 and unfortunately, had the highest increase to 3147 in 2017 and another drop to 1118 in 2018. The crime rate has been fluctuating in Edo State. Instructively, statistical figures for 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018 have been on four digits. The fluctuation of crimes stems partly from the geo-strategic location of Edo State. Being a geographic gateway, there is the issue of crime dispersal from neighbouring states. Several criminals relocate to and hibernate in Edo from neighbouring states due to pressure from security agencies.

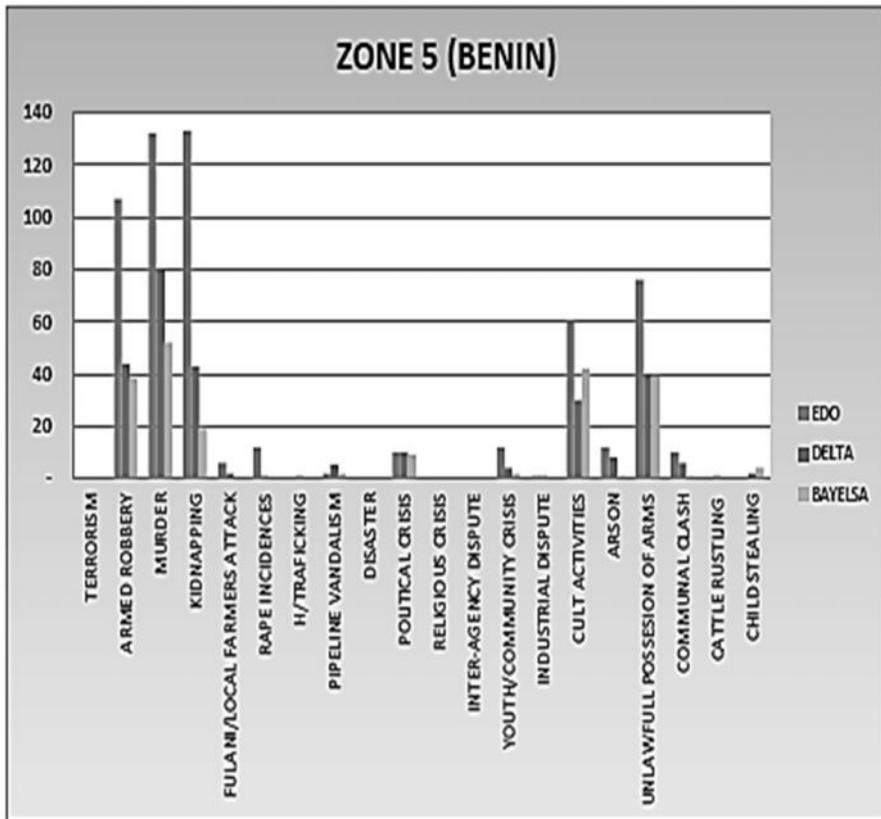
As a key informant interviewee and a former security boss noted;

The effective security architecture of the Mr. Willie Obiano administration in Anambra State has made the state un-conducive for criminals. As a result, many criminals in Anambra State have relocated to Edo State, making the state the hub of criminal violence. You can recall that notorious kidnapper Evans left Anambra State for Edo State where he masterminded the abduction of several rich persons before relocating to Lagos. Similarly, the Ondo State government under Dr. Olusegun Mimiko also had a relatively strong security architecture. This also made many criminals relocate from Ondo to Edo State, especially the Ugbogui-Okada Junction axis of the Benin-Shagamu Road.

Meanwhile, from the table above, criminal activities such as armed robbery, burglary, housebreaking, store breaking, kidnapping, obtaining by false pretence, cultism, rape, murder, forgery, and assault have been preponderant. In the national crime profile, Edo State currently ranks among the topmost states in cases of armed robbery, kidnapping, and cultism. In 2019, Edo State had the highest cases of armed robbery in Nigeria (107), followed by Zamfara (99) and then Niger (88). With 133 cases of kidnapping in 2019, Edo State also ranked topmost, followed by Zamfara (123) and then Kaduna (87) (Nigeria Police Force, 2020). Edo also recorded the highest cult activities (60), followed by Bayelsa (42) and then Rivers 32 (Nigeria Police Force, 2020). Comparatively, in the crime profile of Zone 5 (comprising Bayelsa, Delta, and Edo states), Edo State dominates crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, cult activities, unlawful possession of firearms, youth communities/crisis, political

crisis, and Fulani-local farmer attacks for the year 2019 as captured in Figure 1 below

Zonal Graphical Representation of National Crime Profile for Year 2019



Source: Nigeria Police Force, 2020 (figure 1)

Instructively, most of these preponderant crimes were heightened particularly in 2015 when elections into the Edo State House of Assembly and National Assembly were held and in 2016 when governorship election was conducted. Also, the table indicates a cessation of conduct capable of causing public disturbance and disorder,

malicious damage, and threatening violence, while wounding and child stealing are emerging as new crimes.

Most of our respondents claimed to have experienced or have known about persons that have experienced these forms of insecurity. An informant noted, “I have been shot at on an election-eve”. Another key informant noted, “I was shot by cultists in my buttocks in my house at Ekpoma, Esan West LGA”. Other informants stated that “a 17 years old girl was murdered and her vital organs harvested at Otuo community in Owan East LGA by alleged Yahoo Boys to make quick money. The perpetrators were in turn burnt alive as a deterrent”. A focus group discussant narrated how she and some other traders were robbed by persons who had features that can be associated with the Fulani. While other victims also narrated how they were kidnapped and released after paying some ransom. According to a discussant in Ekpoma, “one of my kinsmen was kidnapped and held for two weeks. He was tortured and made to pay ₦1.5m ransom”.

3.2 Actors of Insecurity and their Power Dynamics

Our respondents identified politicians, traditional rulers, cultists, land merchants, Yahoo Boys, human traffickers, religious leaders, armed robbers, kidnappers, and herdsmen as major actors of insecurity and violent conflicts in the state.

3.2.1 Politicians / Political Class

Politicians by their uncouth attitudes and actions in the struggle for power and the use of public resources seriously promote insecurity and violent conflict. The ruling party (APC) stalwarts have shared key positions and resources of the state among themselves. The ordinary party and non-party members were left out of the sharing. In such a situation, the incentives for investment in political crimes to gain power by those who have the resources becomes very high. Our respondents have alleged that politicians betray the people in the delivery of public goods and use thugs to commit political crimes, such as ballot box snatching and stuffing with thumb printed ballot papers, intimidation of

political opponents and voters, burning of INEC offices, and defacing of campaign billboards.

3.2.2 Religious Leaders

Religion, according to Karl Marx, is the opium of the people. Following an intense economic crisis occasioned by several years of poor governance, many frustrated and disillusioned people have turned to religious organizations for reassurances and hope. This has resulted in a process of creating religious revivalism and the proliferation of reform groups. The idea of these religious groups, as salvation and liberation from the shackles of socio-economic and political bondage, has promoted insecurity. A key informant noted that religious leaders directly and by their rhetoric promote human trafficking. An informant noted at Oza:

Even though our pastor discourages people from sending their daughters abroad for prostitution, yet during end-of-year thanksgiving service, he ensures parents who have children abroad do special thanksgiving in foreign currencies such as Euro, Dollar or Pounds. And from time to time, the pastor calls those abroad to sow seeds. Sometimes, he sells anointing oil to parents to forward to their children abroad for protection and fortune.

The trafficker takes advantage of the desires of the potential victims to migrate, to recruit and gain their initial control or cooperation and once the victims have been moved to another region, the traffickers adopt more coercive measures. Also, some religious leaders preside over oath-taking or memorandum of understanding between the traffickers and their victims. Instructively, our key informant and a member of the Edo State Task Force against Human Trafficking in Benin City noted that 85% of the victims of trafficking are female and subsistent livelihood earners.

3.2.3 Traditional Rulers

Tussles over chieftaincy stool have been a major security challenge in some communities in Edo State. Traditional rulers who head informal administrative institutions at the grassroots have been contributory to insecurity by their ravenous attitudes, actions, and the incentives of holding traditional stools by all means in Edo State. Some of them have also abused their powers over land allocation, receipts of royalties, and participation in the sharing of 4% of the allocation to their local government that hardly trickles down to the indigenes. This has led dissatisfied indigenes to make moves to overrun the age-long hereditary system of traditional stools. Excerpts and summary of some cases relating to the issues and actors are presented hereunder by Senatorial Districts.

Our KII noted that there have been tussles over traditional stools in Ohordua community in Esan South East LGA and Irrua community and Ewu community, both in Esan Central LGA. He noted that the tussles in Ohordua and Irrua communities have been resolved, while the one at Ewu which started in 1997 after the death of Onojie of Ewu, His Royal Highness, Isesele Ojeifo I, is ongoing. The chieftaincy tussle involves two blood relations, the sitting Onojie, Rasak Ojeifo Isesele, and his uncle and claimant, Jafaru Isesele Ojeifo. According to the KII, the sitting Onojie is the grandson of the immediate past Onojie. The father of the sitting Onojie, Rasak was Prince Yusuf Ojeifo. Yusuf who was the eldest son of the immediate past Onojie but died four months before his father and his younger brother became the eldest surviving son.

While ascension to the traditional stool is by primogeniture, the elders of the community have been divided on the rightful heir apparent to the throne. Thus, since the sitting Onojie, Rasak was installed in August 1997, the tussle has continued to fester. Both parties have moved from the High Court to the Court of Appeal and are now at the Supreme Court where judgment is being awaited. Amid the legal firework, our KII noted:

The tussle over the traditional stool has degenerated into skirmishes which culminated in killings. Efforts by some prominent sons of Esanland like the late Chief Tony Anenih and the Onojie of Irrua to resolve the crisis yielded no result. Ewu community is now divided along

the two warring factions with rising tension which inhibits infrastructural and economic development of the community.

Another chieftaincy tussle identified by our KII is at Ikpesi community located in Akoko-Edo LGA. Our KII who is an indigene of the community noted that while primogeniture is the rule guiding ascension to the traditional stool in the community known as Odafe, there has been a fierce contest for the position between two blood relations, Lukman Odama and his uncle Nickolas Odama. While Luckman is the son of the Momodu Odama, the immediate past Odafe, Nickolas was the elder brother of Momodu. Nickolas was abroad when the Odafe before Momodu passed on. Nickolas asked Momodu to act for him as the Odafe. Upon the death of Momodu, Nickolas returned home to take over the throne but was opposed by Luckman on the ground that he is the eldest son of Momodu. According to the KII:

The tussle between these two blood relations has degenerated into bloody violence and shootings that have led to serious injuries and hospitalization of victims. At the moment the position of the traditional stool of Ikpesi community is vacant. The people of the community are factionalized along the two warring factions with rival groups resorting to bullying, name-calling and booing at each other as well as the mobilization of their followings in party politics and electoral contests along these factional lines

Our FGD participants in South-Ibie also held that the tussle for the traditional stool of the community has become a major source of insecurity. South-Ibie, which is a clan located in Etsako-West LGA, shares a boundary with Auchi Polytechnic and harbours about 45% of the total student population of the tertiary institution. According to our KII, the clan has a ruling house known as Okhokho Ruling House, and the occupant of the chieftaincy stool / Clan Head of South-Ibie is known as the Aidonogie. The Okhokho Ruling House has two arms known as Oghiator and Danesi, from which the Aidonogie is installed. The position of the Aidonogie is rotated between these two arms. They held that after the passing of the last Aidonogie in 1997, the two branches of the ruling house have been embroiled in a tussle over a successor. The controversy, according to them, has elicited legal

fireworks that have gotten to the Supreme Court. They also noted that the traditional stool tussle which has polarized the community has degenerated into shooting and loss of lives, and property and has generated animosity among members of different families and supporters in the community. One of the discussants noted that:

The issue of the traditional tussle has destroyed the community and everyone now lives in fear. Those sons and daughters of the community whose dreams are to bring investments to this community now have divided thoughts because of the absence of peace. Even, cultists have been recruited and mobilized by the contenders to intimidate rivals and their loyalists,

There is the notion that the Nigerian police whose responsibilities include keeping the peace have taken the opportunity of the crisis to exhort money from both parties and leave the youths of the factional groups to kill themselves (Sossou, 2012).

Also, traditional chieftaincy tussle has been a source of tension in Atte community which is located in Akoko-Edo LGA. The community, in 2009, was enmeshed in succession tussle over its traditional head after the death of Francis Igbafe. Some members of the community protested against the Edo State Edict of 1979 which made the ascension to the throne known as Ogiewa hereditary instead of rotating it between the two recognized ruling houses of Ewure and Irhofio (Egunyanga, 2009).

Plausible explanations can be constructed for the seeming pervasive fierce tussles for traditional stools in the various communities. Firstly, traditional rulers are highly revered by their subjects in their respective domains. They are perceived as the repositories and custodians of traditions and customs and are believed to be spiritually and divinely invested with the power to connect between the living and the ancestors (Chizea and Osumah, 2015). Secondly, they serve as the intermediaries between their subjects at the grassroots and the principal functionaries of the other higher levels of government (local, state, and federal governments). They can control and influence politics as well as help in the implementation of policies and programmes of higher governments.

Third, and perhaps more importantly, they have powers on certain matters relating to fixing dates for communal/traditional events, land allocations, collection of royalties from companies in their domains, and

entitlement to employment/admission slots in companies and tertiary institutions in their domains. As an illustration, during our field trip, we sighted along the Auchi-Igarra Road, at Ikpesi community, several quarry companies including Goopex Mining and Minerals Processing Limited, Somak Industries Nigeria Limited, Pekolyn Nigeria Limited, Dangi Industries Limited, and Pathughes Solid Minerals Processing Limited. The need to profit from the collection of royalties from these companies can fuel a fierce tussle for the traditional stool in the areas, as the case for the Odafe stool of Ikpesi community exemplifies.

3.2.4 Youths

In the face of economic crisis, youths are relatively the most marginalized segment of the population in the scheme of things. The ways their marginalization manifests include the poor standard of recreational centres, decline in resource allocation to educational institutions, and contraction of employment opportunities. In desperation to survive the economic hardships in the state, the frustrated youths now constitute angry brigades spreading insecure activities such as cultism, internet fraud, and kidnapping as revenge against the ruling elites that have neglected them.

The majority of our focus group discussants noted that most kidnap cases in Edo State are perpetrated by unemployed youths. Through these organized crimes, they target victims who are rich or come from affluent backgrounds, that is, those whose families can pay huge ransoms. The ransom values given and received are determined by the victims' socio-economic or political status, families, or corporate premium on the victims, the type of kidnapers involved as well as the dynamic of ransom negotiation. In the course of abduction, custody, or release, many of the crime victims have been injured or killed. Besides, huge amounts of money have been lost to ransom takers. The victims, their families, and friends suffer psychological trauma. Table 2 illustrates the dynamic power relations between the perpetrators and victims of kidnap.

Table 2: Some Recent Kidnap Cases in Edo State (March 2019-April 2020)

S/N	Date of Incident	Location/LGA of Incident	Victims and their status	Suspected Perpetrators	Outcome
1	March 16, 2019	Ukhiri/Ikpoba-Okha	Enogie (Duke) Godwin Aigbe	Some of his aggrieved Subjects	Released
2	May 19, 2019	Okada/Ovia North East	Kelvin Izevbekhai, Lecturer, Igbinedion University Okada.	Fulani Herdsmen	Shot dead in an attempted escape bid
3	June 16, 2019	Auchi-Igarra road, Akoko-Edo	Rev. Father Isaac Agubi, Clergyman	Fulani Herdsmen	Rescued by police and local hunters
4	July 3, 2019	Utesi town, IkpobaOkha, LGA	Two Chinese Nationals, Employee of Time Multinational	Suspected gunmen	Police attached to them were killed during the operation
5	July 17, 2019	Ekiadolor Ovia River Bridge, Ovia North East	8 travellers, Naval officer, and others	Fulani Herdsmen	Rescued by police
6	July 21, 2019	Along Hausa-Fulani Settlement, Okada/Ovia North East	3 travellers, a tailor, and a petty trader	Fulani Herdsmen	Still unknown
7	August 26, 2019	Ramat Park Ikpoba-Okha LGA	Prof. Sylvanus Akhalufo Okogbeni, Chief Medical Director, Irrua Specialist Hospital	Armed men / Suspected kidnapers	Released. Details of ransom unknown
8	September 5, 2019	Igarra Road, Akoko-Edo LGA	Professor Gideon Okedayo, Senior Lecturer, Ondo State University of Science and Technology	Some unknown gunmen	Found dead
9	October 7, 2019	Airport Road, near Ogba Zoological Garden, Oredo LGA	2 Christian worshippers –	Some unknown gunmen	No call for ransom. Police gone underground to rescue victims
10	October 19, 2019	Benin-Ekpoma road	2 travellers, identity and status unknown	Fulani Herdsmen	Released after an undisclosed

					ransom
11	October 30 2019	Benin City	Justice Chioma Nwosu-Iheme, Court of Appeal Judge, Benin Division	Uniformed policemen	Released. No information on ransom
12	January 13, 2020	Uzebba-Ihuleha Community Owan West	Mrs. Esther Alabi, primary school teacher	Fulani Herdsmen	Released after a ransom of ₦1.7m
13	January 22, 2020	Benin-Lagos road, Gboji	Paul Akpodiete and Lecturer, a transporter and an academic	Unknown Gunmen / suspected kidnappers	Demand for ₦15m
14	February 9, 2020	Jemilla, Ikpoba- Okha LGA	Mrs. Florence Ikhumhen and daughter, Wife of Onojie of Ewatto and Daughter	Unknown armed men / suspected kidnappers	Released. No information on the payment of ransom
15	February 13, 2020	Umelu, Ikpoba- Okha	4 Children	Armed robbers	₦2m paid by parents. Only one of the children has been released
16	February 13, 2020	Benin City	Rev. Father Nicolas Obboh, Clergyman	Unknown gunmen	Released. No information on ransom payment
17	March 3, 2020	Auchi-Igarra Road, after Ikpesi, Akoko Edo LGA	UNIBEN lecturers (3) and students (15) on field trip	Fulani herdsmen	Rescued by local vigilante, hunters, and police
18.	April 17, 2020	Benin-Ekpoma Road, Ogbemudia Farm, Uhunwode LGA	Emmanuel Agbale, Commissioner for Science and Technology	Unknown gunmen	Police orderly killed, man released after payment of ransom

Source: Extracted by Edo research team from various newspaper sources Onwumere, (2016), Shittu, (2020a); Shittu, (2020b); Shittu, S. (2020c).

As indicated in the above table, the victims have been politicians, lecturers, clergymen, top judicial personnel, medical directors, traditional rulers, and their relatives. Some of these victims are in other contexts the oppressors of the unemployed youths, who are largely the perpetrators. Significantly, from the table above, the frequency of victims had several

lecturers. Some explanations can be advanced for this frequency. Firstly, lecturers operate in spaces such as campuses where young persons and cult groups are dominant. Regrettably, many student cultists are also involved in kidnap activities, making lecturers vulnerable (Aghedo, 2015). Secondly, lecturers are presumed to be rich, even when they are not. This misconception is fuelled by the ostentatious lifestyles of some lecturers who project flamboyant image. Thirdly, some lecturers who are supposed to be in *loco parentis* of their students are mean to them. This manifests in the forms of extortion of money through sales of books at exorbitant prices, and demanding of money and/or sex for examination grades. Victims of such unethical conducts by lecturers could report them to kidnap gangs for revenge.

Furthermore, our field study reveals that the various types of security threats and violent conflicts evolve with time and space in response to the adaptation of strategies taken to address them, especially when such strategies are relaxed. As a respondent observed:

Human trafficking has faded away from the Benin Kingdom. However, it may resurface. Remember Oba Eradiuwa (the father and predecessor to the present Oba) once cursed criminals in the Kingdom on June 10, 2010. After the pronouncement, the level of kidnapping and armed robbery dropped drastically. But after several months, criminals began to terrorize Benin City again.

A key informant in Uromi and a politician noted that cultism has a new trend. In her view, cultists have relocated from campuses of tertiary institutions, where they hitherto held sway, to the streets in various communities. Many communities have become a tapestry of cultism, where teenagers and youths are initiated at an alarming rate. Membership of cult groups is no longer limited to tertiary institutions' students.

Locals including farmers, commercial motor drivers, mechanics, electricians, and other artisans are members of one cult group or another.

Indeed, there are eight dominant cult groups in Edo State. Of the eight groups, the Neo-Black Movement of Africa (NBM) alias Black Axe (Aiye) is the oldest and most dominant. It was founded on the 7th of

July 1977 at the University of Benin, Ekehuan campus. The Black Axe has a formidable hierarchical structure according to a KII and former leader in the state:

First, we have the president whom we call the 'First Son' or 'Number One'. The second in command is the Chief Priest who consults the gods on behalf of the organization for protection, providence, and guidance. The third in command is the Chairman Black Axe who is in charge of the day-to-day administration. The fourth in command is the Governor of Central Bank (name of Nigeria's highest bank). He is the financial custodian of the organization's money. The fifth in command is the Butcher (Minister of Defence). He is in charge of managing the armoury of the organization. The sixth in command is the Ex-Official who is a former Capon (leader/ First Son) who serves as an adviser to the current head of the organization. The seventh is the Public Relations Officer who coordinates and gives vital information to all members of the organization. Then you have the ordinary members.

Instructively, the dominant cult groups in the state are all registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission and thus recognized by the government as a civil society organization or a non-governmental organization. However, they operate with their alias (see table 3 below). This strategic use of a decoy probably explains why it has been difficult to proscribe them.

Table 3: Dominant Cult Groups in Edo State

S/N	Name registered with Corporate Affairs Commission	Alias
1.	Neo-Black Movement of Africa (NBM)	Black Axe (Aiye)
2.	Avariance Organization of Nigeria (Supreme Council of Air Lords)	Eiye
3.	Family Fraternities of Nigeria	Mafia
4.	Green Circuit of Nigeria (GCA)	Maphite
5.	Brothers Across Nigeria (BAN)	Buccaneers
6.	NORSEMEN Club	Vikings
7.	National Association of Ground Lords	Warlords
8.	National Association of Air Lords	Jurists

As shown in Table 3 above, the most dominant cults in the state are all-male groups. Many of the members of these groups are male youths. However, some adults among them act as barons and financiers. These highly connected people come to the aid of the younger members when arrested or being prosecuted for criminal activities. However, this does not mean that females do not feature in some of their activities. As a KII noted:

Even though women and girls are not actual members, we use them often as spies on rival groups or prospective targets. Also, we give them our weapons for safekeeping.

The KII further added that there are some female cult groups in the state:

Black Braziers (Black bra) Daughters of Jezebel, Pink Lady, Amazons, White Angels, Lady of Rose, The Damsels, Sisterhood of Darkness, Golden Daughters, The Ten wonderful Girls, White Ladies, The Royal Queens, Daughters of the Knight, Viqueens, White Pants, The Amazons and The Knights of the Aristos, White Angels, Blue Queens, Daughters of Queen, Black Ladies.

A female cultist who participated in the KII gave an insight into the mode of operation of the female cult groups:

We are like a snake in the grass. Though dangerous, we do not strike unless we are cheated or oppressed. And when we fight, it is always to finish. We can fight alone or in conjunction with our male counterparts. We can use our God-given assets including our bodies to lure and strike our targets when they press our red buttons. However, we do not use violence at random.

A KII who is a professor of Sociology attributed the proliferation of cult groups and their growing involvement in criminal activities in urban centres in Edo State to the incessant expulsion rate of cult members from tertiary institutions:

Those rusticated from educational institutions take to other crimes such as human trafficking, drug trafficking, migrant smuggling, armed robbery, etc. to survive.

The confraternities often resort to threat or actual violence to achieve their goals. A Police officer noted during an FGD that:

Cultists are hardened because they abuse hard drugs. There is no impossibility in their dictionary (they can go to any length to get what they want).

Indeed, cult groups have perpetrated several atrocities across the state. For instance, a few years ago, a cult member was beheaded at the College of Education, Ekiador near Benin City, and his head was hung on the school's main gate. This ugly incident was carried out by members of a rival cult group (Aghedo, 2015). Supremacy struggles between cult groups have resulted in several losses of lives, infliction of serious injuries, destruction of properties, and forced migration of those targeted. Table 4 shows a few cases of cult clashes between September 2018 and February 2020. A KII and former capon of Black Axe in Edo State gave an insight into the killing spree:

Violence is normal every time the need be. To us, forgiveness is a sin (he meant every ill-treatment must be avenged).

Table 4: Cult Clashes in Edo State (September 2018-February 2020)

S/ N	Date	Location	Cult Groups Involved	Number Killed
2	September 3, 2018	Auchi, Etsako West Local Government area; Upper Uwa, Isiemwerho between 1 st and 2 nd East Circular Road; Uwhene Ugbague Road; Oliha Market, Ore-Oghene	Black Axe versus Maphites	Five persons killed
3	September 16, 2018	Judges Quarters, Ekpoma	Unnamed cult groups	Two persons killed
4	September 19, 2018	Judges Quarters, Ekpoma	Unnamed cult groups	Two students
5	October 15, 2018	Iyobosa Street, off M.M. Way; Isibor Street off Sokponba; Alohan Junction off Erediauwa by Sapele Road, Benin City	Unnamed cult groups	Two persons killed
6	January 9, 2019	Ogida area; Ugbor area in GRA, Benin City	Unnamed cult groups	Four persons killed
7	February 21, 2019	Oluku; Omozeghiam street, off Okhoro road; Upper Uwa Street, off M.M. Way, Benin City.	Black Axe versus Eiye	Twelve persons killed
8	February 21, 2019	Omozeghian Street, off Okhoro Road; Odemwingie Hotel, Upper Sakponba, Benin City	Unnamed cult groups	Three persons killed
9	March 19, 2019	Oba Akenzua Secondary School, Benin City	Unnamed cult groups	No death
10	May 9, 2019	Iyobosa Street, opposite Edo College; Etiosa by Lucky Junction; Agbor Road near NNPC Depot; Ekiosa along Murtala Muhammed Way; ICC; Isibor junction, adjacent to St Saviour Road; Idaho Street, off Sakponba road, Benin City.	Eiye versus Black Axe	Eleven persons killed
11	August 29, 2019	Uhie, Okha 1 and Okha 2, along Sapele Road, Ikpoba-Okha LGA	Unnamed cult groups	Five persons killed
12	September 24, 2019	Sabo (Ibie-Iyakpe village), Auchi, in Etsako West LGA.	Black Axe versus Jurist	Seven persons

				killed
13	November 8, 2019	Wire and Siluko roads; Isihor area, Osasogie and Adolor areas of Ugbowo; Uwasota; Gani Fawehinmi Layout, Isinoro, Benin City.	Maphites, Black Axe and Eiye	Eight persons killed
14	December 12, 2019	Benin City	Maphites, Black Axe and Eiye	Thirty persons killed
15	February 21, 2020	Osemwende Street junction at Murtala Muhammed Way; and St. Saviour Road, MM Way, by Osa Market; Edo State Property Development Authority, EDPA, along Sakponba Road; Nomayo junction; Aifuwa and Three House area, along Upper Sakponba, Benin City.	Black Axe versus Eiye	Ten persons killed
16	February 21, 2020	Auchi, Etsako West LGA	Vikings versus Black Axe	No death

From Table 4 above, cult violent activities spread across the three senatorial districts of the state as shown by cases of clashes in Benin, Auchi, and Ekpoma among others. Also, most clashes between cult members are deadly. Out of the 16 cases captured on the table above, only two of them did not record any death. However, cult clashes are more rampant in Benin. There are three plausible explanations for this. First, Benin City has a larger population than other towns in the state and perhaps more cult members because the most dominant cult group in the State, Black Axe, was formed in Benin. Second, most headquarters of cult groups in the state are domiciled in Benin City, where decisions to strike are taken by the leaders of the confraternities. Three, most cult members converge in Benin City, the administrative headquarters of the state to access patronage from politicians.

Similarly, our discussants in Ekpoma held that Yahoo Boys have transformed into ritual killers known as Yahoo Plus. When broke, they also mutate as armed robbers and kidnappers. A key informant revealed that in the last six months, corpses of ladies have been discovered at Wire Road, Sapele Road, and Ikpoba Hill (all in Benin City) with their breasts, private parts (virginals), and eyes removed. Indeed, some Yahoo

Boys were paraded on Edo Broadcasting Television *Crime Watch* programme in connection with the gruesome acts.

However, most of these security threats have historical and psychological roots. The character and scope of the current wave of armed robbery is traceable to the Anini saga of the mid-1980s. Anini, a lumpen motor-driver, who transited into a criminal, led a cold-blooded, sadistic and psychopathic armed robbery gang which operated with Robin Hood adventurism. In three months, the gang killed at least nine policemen, nine civilians, injured many policemen and innocent citizens, and committed numerous car thefts, bank robberies, kidnapping, and molestation (Ebohon, 2013). Although Anini and his gang members were caught and executed publicly, they had constructed a criminal economy that has been exploited by criminal elements perpetrating fraud, human trafficking, land grabbing, kidnapping, and herders' attacks in contemporary times.

In recent times, land has also become a significant source of violent insecurity. A KII noted:

That most communities across the state, especially in urban areas, have become embroiled in one land dispute or the other. A number of the land disputes have resulted in shooting, maiming, malicious damage, communal invasion, bloodletting, arson, deaths, and even burying people alive.

Some incidents lend credence to the claim of the KII. For instance, on May 10, 2013, a retired police inspector, 82-year-old Samuel Ekhoruyimwen Ajayi was reportedly waylaid, abducted, and buried alive at an "evil forest" in Oghobaghase village of Ewudu community in Ovia North-East LGA over a land dispute (Enogholase, 2013). The victim who was the Oghobaghase village head was invited to preside over the settlement of a dispute in his domain when some youths of Ewudu village pounced on him (Ibileke, 2013). The Deputy Commissioner of Police (Administration), Zone 5, Mr. Dave Akinremi confirmed that a prime suspect, Osamudiamen Uwaila of Ewudu community, confessed to the crime and disclosed that eight others, including the Chief Priest of Ovia deity in Ewudu, 78-year-old Stephen Oviawe, two village heads, and six youths were involved in the murder. The victim was killed

because of the role he played in a land dispute between Ewudu and Orogun communities some years ago (Ibileke, 2013; Enogholase, 2013).

Similarly, a land dispute between factional CDA members in the Arugba community in November 2014 resulted in the burning down of private residential and commercial buildings along with vehicles, motorcycles, wheelbarrows, and several household items. Also, one 22-year-old Andrew Idehen was reportedly killed while many others sustained varying degrees of injury in the fracas (Osarogiagbon, 2018). Also, a land dispute between Ughoton, (Bini) and Gelegele (Ijaw) communities in Ovia North-East LGA which has lingered for decades has degenerated and caused a strain in their relationship (Emenyonu, 2019).

4. Drivers of Insecurity

Across the research sites, our respondents identified some major drivers of insecurity in the state. These drivers are mainly unemployment, poverty (i.e. inability to meet basic existential needs such as food, clothing, and shelter), ignorance, greed, peer influence, lack of parental control, the glorification of wealth, ostentatious lifestyle, self-aggrandizement, availability and use of hard drugs, availability of arms and ammunition. Instructively, among the various drivers of insecurity identified, unemployment, and use of drugs resonated most across the research areas. A discussant noted that

The major problem is unemployment. Our youths who are committing crimes do not have jobs. Some of them have graduated for many years. Many of them are frustrated and angry.

Another respondent held that “people are committing crimes because they are poor and hungry”.

Regarding the use of drugs, a discussant painted a scenario thus:

If you see a young man running and you look behind him and find nobody pursuing him. What is the explanation for it? It is drug. Most of them are using all kinds of drugs.

A key informant also remarked thus “the criminal elements are into drugs because they have to be high to commit violent crimes”. Meanwhile, there is the allusion by our respondents across the research areas that these drivers largely combine in specific, complex, and dynamic manners in fuelling the various security threats. As one discussant noted that while:

The struggle for supremacy is the primary cause of cult clashes; it often combines with excessive in-take of hard drugs, access to small arms and ammunition, loss of parental control and peer group influence to fuel deadly violence.

5. Actors Involved in Resolving Insecurity

The state through its actors and agencies is uniquely vested with the authority to manage security threats and violent conflicts. This is because it has the monopoly of the coercive instrument and authoritative allocation of resources. However, when a state cannot contain and control security threats, it loses its legitimacy. The loss of legitimacy by the state sets the tone for alternative security interventions by non-state actors. Our respondents across the various research areas identified actors involved in resolving insecurity and violent conflicts in Edo State, which are categorized into state and non-state actors. The state actors include political officeholders at state and local government levels, the courts, the police, and the military. While the non-state actors comprise vigilante groups/neighbourhood watch, hunters, youths, women, public-spirited individuals, religious leaders, traditional rulers (communal heads).

5.1 The State Actors

5.1.1 Political officeholders

In recognition of the growing insecurity and violent conflicts in the state, political officeholders at various levels of government, such as the state governor, local government council chairmen, and their appointees have taken various measures. Discussants in Ubiaja and Igarra as well as key

informants in Benin City, Ekpoma, and Auchi stated that in the wake of the insecurity outbreaks like herdsmen attacks and cult clashes, political office holders at the state and local government levels often provide psychological reassurances in terms of condemnation and declaration that they are on top of the situations by charging security operatives to bring perpetrators to book. The Edo State Government under Governor Godwin Obaseki has on various occasions condemned herders' attacks on farming communities and ordered the arrest of perpetrators. In one instance, the Governor released ₦500,000 to a victim in Ojah community in Akoko Edo LGA to offset his medical bill and get other relief materials (Vanguard News 11/1/18; Ebegbulem, Ahon, and Enogholase, 2018). Also, Governor Obaseki has placed a ban on night-grazing and the use of firearms by herders. Also, he has constituted a seven-man committee in each of the 18 local government areas to monitor the activities of herders in Edo State. He also set up another committee comprising members of police, State Security Services, army, National Security and Civil Defence Corps as well as people drawn from communities across the three Senatorial Districts of the state to monitor the activities of herders (Ramon, 2018; Premium Times, 8/1/2018).

Similarly, Governor Obaseki has condemned the crime of irregular migration and human trafficking. In the bid to end the crime, the state government has set up the Edo Taskforce against Human Trafficking to complement the activities of NAPITIP in the area. According to a key informant who is a member of the Taskforce, the Edo State government with the support of the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) and European Union has established farm settlements and skill acquisition centres to engage victims of irregular migration and human trafficking and Libyan returnees. He also noted that the taskforce is undertaking other activities such as advocacy, reintegration of victims, and prosecution of traffickers.

In addition, the Edo State Government under Governor Obaseki in partnership with Action Aid Nigeria funded the training of 2000 youths in Edo State on livelihoods. Also, the Action Aid Nigeria in partnership with NAPITIP, Ministry of Wealth Creation and Cooperatives, Edo State Ministry of Women Affairs, Youth Council of Nigeria have produced jingles and songs such as, "Vbosunu" to discourage illegal migration and crimes. Nonetheless, there is the notion that these rehabilitation stories

are largely television shows. A returnee noted that the government promised to help them set up farms after training but never did. According to the returnee,

Four of my friends I trained with have gone back to Libya because the government failed to set up farms for us as promised” adding “those in government have empowered their relatives who are not returnees at our expense.

At the local government level, a key informant and a principal executive member of NULGE in Afuze stated that some political officeholders set up and provide support for vigilante groups to maintain security in their domains. Added to this, our key informants in Afuze stated that the Owan East Local Government Council undertakes sensitization programmes, and youth empowerment through occasional training, and the rebuilding of police stations razed by armed robbers. Also, the local government holds monthly meetings with security officers to review security situations and to re-strategize for action. Elsewhere, in the sister local government area, Owan West, the council chairman in the wake of the herdsmen killing of a young boy at Sobe community, invited soldiers to mount checkpoints and patrol Sobe and some other flashpoint communities. This action has forced the herdsmen into the bush (Shittu, 2020a).

However, a key informant at Oben noted that the government is not doing enough for the oil-producing communities in Edo State despite the enormous revenues that accrue to the state from the areas. He noted:

Oben has been neglected by both the federal and Edo state governments even though the community has over 60 oil wells and a huge gas plant which are functioning. The community has not had any government presence since oil exploration started here in 1972. There is even no NDDC project in the area. The governments are taking the people in the area for granted because they are peace-loving.

Similarly, a key informant who doubles as the Public Relations Officer for the Ijaw community in Gelegele decried the lack of development in the area despite being an oil-producing community. The Ijaw leader and ex-agitator noted,

Oil has been produced in Gelegele since 1966 when Philip Oil Company was established in the area. The oil company was later bought by Dr. U.J. Itsuehi. To date, Dubril Oil operates in both Gelegele and Ughoton in Ovia North-East LGA. Despite this prolonged extraction of oil, there is no development in the area. We are now being pushed to the wall by the government's insensitivity.

Besides this development crisis, there is a tussle between the Ijaw community who are dominant in Gelegele, and the Bini community who constitutes an ethnic majority in neighbouring Ughoton and the entire Edo State over the ownership of Gelegele Oilfield One. This communal crisis has been escalated recently by the mobilization of the Ijaw nation to support their kith and kin in Gelegele and the Ughoton community's mobilization of the Bini nation including the Benin traditional council for their entitlement claim.

5.1.2 The Police

Police is the Nigerian agency primarily charged with ensuring internal security. In pursuant of this responsibility in the face of the growing trend of insecurity and violent conflicts in Edo State, the police have expectedly initiated various actions. The State Police Command has set up a special squad known as Operation Wabaizigan which specifically targets everyday crimes. Also, some of our respondents claimed that the police have engaged in a manhunt for criminals and have been successful in making some arrests. Truly, between March and April 2020, the Edo State Police Command arrested 146 crime suspects and secured the release of four kidnap victims who were abducted at the Benin Bye-Pass in the state. A breakdown of the suspects reveals that 20 were arrested in connection with the kidnapping, 69 for cultism, 42 for armed robbery, six for burglary, and six for internet fraud, two for rape, and one for murder (The Guardian, April 21, 2020). In addition, the Edo State Police Commissioner stated that 18 stolen vehicles, 13 arms, and 33 ammunitions were recovered from the suspects. And 28 of them have been charged to court (The Guardian, April 21, 2020).

Apart from tracking down criminals, the Edo State Police Command has made attempts to educate people in hotbeds of insecurity issues on the dangerous effects of criminal engagements. A key informant who doubles as the Edo State Police Public Relations Officer noted that the police has organized a sensitization workshop at Upper Sakponba in Ikpoba Okha LGA in response to the increasing wave of cult clashes in the area. Similarly, there have also been some attempts by the police to broker peace between warring communities. The Edo State Police Command has also waded into the land dispute between the Binis and Itsekiris in Ologobo, an oil-producing community and a boundary village between Edo and Delta States, and made several arrests. A peace accord has been signed by the leaders of the two warring communities in the presence of the state commissioner of police. However, even though the people displaced by the conflict have started to return home gradually, there is still pervasive fear that there might be a reprisal attack from the Binis, who lost two young men in the recent violence (Aliu, 2020a).

However, there have been allegations of police complicity in some crimes. For instance, a former Police Commissioner in the state, Hakeem Olusegun Odumosun, once revealed that a police sergeant identified as Ehijie Monday who was killed with two cult members in a clash with a rival group on Saturday, January 26, 2019, at Nomayo Junction at Upper Sakponba road was a cultist himself (Emenyonu, 2019). Besides, two focus group discussants revealed how they were tortured by some policemen who suspected them to be Yahoo Boys. One said,

See where they injured me with the butt of their gun when I said we had no bribe to give them. They thought we were Yahoo Boys because I was driving my elder brother's Lexus 350 car.

Indeed, police harass young men who drive exotic cars across the state in a bid to extort money from them.

5.1.3 The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency

The NDLEA is primarily vested with the mandate of checking illicit drug trafficking and consumption in the country. In Edo State, the NDLEA has arrested some suspected drug traffickers and cannabis farmers. The

agency has also impounded many vehicles used to convey illicit drugs (Aliu, 2020b). For example, between January and June 2020, the NDLEA reportedly arrested 145 suspected drug traffickers including 141 males and four females. During the period under review, the NDLEA also seized 7,905.10 kilograms of various narcotic drugs and destroyed three cannabis farms measuring 2.29 hectares with an estimated yield of 10,993.24 kilograms. During the period, the agency also provided psycho-social counselling to 63 persons with drug disorders and reunited them with their families after rehabilitation. Also, seven convictions were recorded by the NDLEA while 174 cases were ongoing in various courts. However, the agency faces the challenge of collecting intelligence that can help it identify and disrupt the activities of drug traffickers (Bello, 2020). Meanwhile, there are allegations that some unscrupulous members of the organisation compromise with farmers of cannabis.

5.1.4 Nigeria Security Civil Defence Corps

The NSCDC is charged with providing surveillance and protection over critical public utilities such as pipelines, boreholes, etc. Its roles also include prevention and mitigation of vandalism, search and rescue, relief and reconstruction, rehabilitation, and resettlement operations. In pursuit of these roles, the NSCDC in Edo State has been involved in the protection of oil pipelines, raiding of illegal refineries, the arrest of suspected pipeline vandals, and confiscation of illegally refined petroleum products. Between January and November 2013, the NSCDC Edo State Command reportedly arrested 47 vandals and destroyed seven illegal refineries in the state (NSCDC, 2013). However, there has been animosity and rivalry between it and sister security agencies like the police and the army on whose right it is to protect pipelines. Such inter-agency rivalry has led to a fracas which undermined their operations. Thus, the command has called for more collaboration from other security agencies in the fight against vandals and oil theft known locally as oil bunkering (NSCDC, 2013).

5.1.5 The Courts

Through adjudication, the courts help to control and contain insecurity and violent conflicts. Our respondents in Ozalla and discussants in South Ibie have indicated that the courts have been intervening in some conflicts such as land disputes between Ozalla and Uhonmora in Owan West, and the tussle for traditional stool in South Ibie in Etsako West Local Government Area. However, respondents noted that the cases have been stagnated in the courts. An informant in Ozalla noted that the court intervention in Ozalla and Uhonmora has lingered for over four decades. Our discussants in South Ibie held that the Supreme Court judgment delivered on their land dispute was not obeyed due to a lack of enforcement. Similarly, a key informant who has lived at Iguomon for 18 years attributed the lingering land disputes between Iguomon and Ikhuonbo communities, both in Uhunmwonde LGA, to the inability of the Edo State Government to prevail on the Ikhuonbo community to accept the Supreme Court judgment which was delivered on February 3, 2006. According to the key informant, the Ikhuonbo community lost the ownership of the land to Iguomon at the apex court after they refused to accept a similar judgment from the lower courts including at the State High Court at Abudu way back in 1976.

5.2 Non-State Actors

5.2.1 Traditional Rulers and Religious Leaders

Our respondents remarked that traditional rulers and religious leaders comprising native doctors, pastors, and imams have intervened in mitigating security threats such as kidnapping, internet fraud, and human trafficking through the pronouncement of curses on perpetrators and collaborators as well as nullifications of oaths they have subjected their victims to. In particular, the Oba of Benin Kingdom, and his chiefs pronounced curses on kidnappers and masterminds of human trafficking and kidnapping in the Benin Kingdom. The intervention of the Oba of Benin has had a significant impact on crime reduction in the state. According to a KII:

You know, everyone in the Benin Kingdom is subject to the Oba. So, anyone who violates his order does so at their peril. Even all the native doctors and juju priests are subject to the Oba hence his divine authority to nullify the oaths that were taken before the priests

Our key informant at Afuze noted that traditional rulers ensure that vigilantes go round to arrest criminal elements including cultists. Despite these roles, there is a preponderant view that they have not been able to resolve these issues for various reasons. There is the notion that appointment by gerontocracy, whereby the eldest person rules in most communities, limits the effectiveness of traditional rulers to respond speedily to security issues in their domains. On account of old age, most of the communal heads are often suffering from acute dementia. Besides, one respondent held that some village heads harbour the actors of insecurity, while another likened many religious leaders to Yahoo Boys who are in business to rip-off their gullible members. Some other respondents blamed the inability of the communities to resolve insecurities on “lack of sincerity of purpose”, “mutual distrust”, “lack of government support”, and “reliance on government institutions for resolution”.

5.2.2 Vigilante Groups and Hunters

In dealing with insecurities, various communities in the state, according to our respondents across all research, locations have set up vigilante groups with members drawn from indigenes and residents. In Otuo, Igarra, Afuze, focus group discussants noted that vigilantes protect government properties including boreholes from vandalism. The vigilante groups are often armed with locally made guns. They particularly maintain surveillance at night and rely on local intelligence during the day to monitor the movement of strangers in the communities. In an FGD at Otuo, vigilantes noted:

Here, we know ourselves. So, if a stranger comes in, we can know. Besides, we ask people selling at restaurants and drinking spots to inform us if they notice any strange movements. Also, we were all born and bred here at Otuo. We know the terrain including the forests and mountains inside out.

Whenever the vigilantes make arrests, they hand suspects over to security agencies. Added to this, youths and hunters also work independently or in concert with vigilante groups in their areas in search of killer herdsmen and victims of kidnap. The vigilante and hunters in Igarra assisted in the rescue of University of Benin students and lecturers who were abducted by herdsmen along Auchi-Igarra road after Ikpesi while on a field trip (Shittu, 2020c). Although the vigilantes have been helpful, our discussants in Otuo and Igarra comprising mainly members of vigilante groups complained of poor motivation and inadequate logistics equipment to aid their effectiveness.

5.2.3 Individuals

It is a trite saying that security is everybody's business. However, in line with this axiom, individuals have been taking responsibility for managing insecurity and violent conflicts in their communities. A key informant in Benin City stated that individuals have constructed anti-land grabbing rhetoric and phrases such as "This land is not for sale", "Beware of fraudsters/419", "No trespass", "Military zone; keep off". Some mobilize soldiers to sites to combat Community Development Associations (CDAs) and land grabbers. Also, there has been increasing individual procurement of security gadgets such as closed circuit television cameras, private guns and ammunition and the patronage of native doctors for 'African magical powers' for protection against gunshot and machete cuts. Besides, many people have invested in target hardening such as the erection of tall perimeter fences with electrocution devices, bullet-proof doors, and gates. Similarly, our discussants in South Ibie stated that:

Some public-spirited individuals like Mallam Isah Habeeb have intervened in reconciling warring factions over the prolonged chieftaincy disputes; counselling parents on the need to educate their wards rather than pressurising them to engage in quick and criminal money-making activities; as well as providing material support to some indigent members of the community.

The discussants, however, held that these efforts have yielded marginal results and called for more support from other individuals and corporate organizations.

5.2.4 Women

As mothers and wives, women bear the greater brunt of insecurity and violent conflicts. One peculiar consequence for women is rape. Some women have been raped by herders and others by their intimate partners. Yet some, especially commercial sex workers, have fallen victims to ritual killers. Thus, on account of their victimization, they have championed some moves intended to manage insecurity. A key informant, a female college of education lecturer stated that women gather from time to time to

“Rain curses on the perpetrators of insecurity and violent conflicts”.

She further stated that women have undertaken peace marches to draw the attention of their traditional rulers and relevant government authorities such as the police, Department of State Security (DSS), and local government council chairmen to increasing cases of insecurity like allegations of herdsmen raping and killing of women in Ekpoma and its environs. Nonetheless, these responses to growing security threats by actors in Edo State have largely been reactive and state-centric and tend to ignore the notion of human security.

6. Interactions between Context and Security Actors

The various actors of insecurity in Edo State do not operate in a void. Analysis of the KII and FGD shows that there are intricate and complex interactions between the contexts and actors. These dynamic interplays between contexts and actors are shaped by the social, economic, and political forces, such as the values placed on material acquisitions, economic inequality, and the nature of competitions for power. The impact of social values on ransom kidnap was stressed by participants in the FGD at Oza in Orhionmwon LGA, Oreoghene in Oredo LGA, and Igarra in Akoko-Edo LGA, who blamed ostentatious lifestyle for the

spike in recent kidnap targets. A university lecturer who participated in the FGD in Oreoghene put it starkly:

Both the perpetrators and the victims of kidnapping are driven by the same logic of ostentation. The rich derive pleasure in displaying their wealth – chains of exotic cars, mansions, and expensive clothing and jewellery. The have-nots and desperate youth also crave such an ostentatious lifestyle. They then abduct the rich for upward social mobility.

This view partly aligns with the notion of greed as espoused by Collier (2000) who argues that in most resource-rich states, rebellion and criminal violence are mainly driven by the promotion of selfish interests and personal agendas. However, other scholars have attributed violent crimes such as kidnapping, to the grievance of the oppressed who abduct the rich and powerful in the quest for justice (Keen, 2008). Lately, it has been observed that greed and grievance are mutually reinforcing rather than exclusive (Korf, 2005; Osumah and Aghedo, 2011). Indeed, notorious kidnap kingpin Chukwudimeme Onwuamadike alias Evans gave an insight into the role of ostentation in picking on kidnap victims when he said during his trial:

When you see someone that has money, you will know.

He confessed that he knew the financial worth of the victims through their exotic cars. The billionaire kidnapper whose gang abducted several wealthy men in Benin City collected ransoms in “six-figure foreign currencies” (Nigerian Tribune, April 20, 2020). Economic inequality was also underscored as a key motivation for insecurity in Edo State. As asserted by a KII who is a DSS Officer,

Based on interrogation, unemployment is one of the major causes of violent insecurity in the state. Edo State alone has over 15 tertiary institutions including seven universities apart from the hundreds of secondary schools. All these institutions produce thousands of graduates every year with little or no hope for employment.

Since the state is not industrialized, over 90% of these graduates roam the streets without jobs. As a result, many of them get involved in crimes. He further added that,

Most of those we arrest blame unemployment for their involvement in kidnapping, armed robbery, ritual killing, etc. However, this is not an acceptable excuse in law.

A former police boss added that the deadly nature of insecurity has been accentuated by the easy availability of cut-to-size firearms and illicit drugs which criminals take to be “high and ruthless”.

Both crises of social values and increasing economic inequalities are largely effects of poor governance in Edo State where many political leaders have been indicted for corruption and obscene embezzlement of public wealth. Most KII and FGD respondents blamed the escalation of insecurities in the state on the corruption and promotion of elite self-interest. The theme of corruption came out vividly in the view of one KII respondent who said:

Edo State has not been lucky to have selfless political leaders such as Osaigbovo Ogbemudia and Ambrose Alli who were driven by the public rather than private interests in the then Bendel State. The university lecturer further added that most of the infrastructures we enjoy in the state today were built in the 1970s and 1980s by Ogbemudia and Alli" who were exceptional political leaders.

Apart from embezzling the funds meant for the development of the state and thereby causing hardships to many, especially unemployed youths who then take to criminal violence to survive, some politicians in the state have been linked to sponsoring violence. As noted by many FGD participants, violent insecurities are heightened by the do-or-die stance of politicians in their struggles for power to promote private interests. In agreement with this view, a former police boss revealed that there has been a political alignment with criminals in recent years. He revealed that:

During the second tenure bid of a former governor in Edo State, he had an aide who was saddled with the responsibility of sharing money to

cultists to incentivize them for the election. On one occasion, unfair sharing of money led to cult violence which claimed about 15 lives. We went after the kingpins. Can you believe that many of those we arrested were from Government House? A few were also arrested at the universities. Those arrested in connection with the killings were taken to Force Headquarters in Abuja for a thorough investigation and they were later charged to court. Can you believe they were never prosecuted because of political interference?

Indeed, two notorious cult leaders who were used by a former governor to rig elections in the state were later rewarded with positions as revenue collectors from commercial drivers. The duo became so powerful that the police could not arrest them because of their connection to the governor at the time. A former aide to the governor asserted,

Their impunity continued when a new governor was elected. Considering the threat they posed, the new governor tried to distance himself from them. When this did not work, he revoked the revenue collection contract awarded them by the former governor, leading to their threatening to make Edo State ungovernable because they were used to rig the election that brought in the new governor.

One of the two cult leaders was later arrested and detained at Oko Maximum Prisons for several months. But the former governor allegedly intervened in the matter; got the man released; and helped him secure the position of Acting President of the National Union of Road Transport Workers in Nigeria.

Similarly, a key informant who works with the National Security and Civil Defence Corps asserted that:

During the 2019 election, my colleague and I arrested three Black Axe boys who destroyed ballot papers in a polling booth at Uzebba in Edo North. But a call came from our 'Oga' (boss) for them to be released.

A key informant opined that it is difficult to win a party primary in Edo State without 'belonging' (a euphemism for joining a cult). He noted that cultists populate the youth wing of most political parties in Edo State, adding that the development is not new:

A few years ago, one Mr. Olukoga who was then leader of Black Axe was arrested in Edo State. When the police searched his house, they found 43 AK-47 rifles. His neighbours were happy thinking that his end had come because he was terrorising the community. However, despite the crime of possessing illicit fire weapons, he was released because of his connection to the government.

Apart from using cult groups to harass and sometimes assassinate their political opponents, politicians also act as financiers/barons to these gangs. A key informant who is a serving police officer at Ugbekun Police Station, Upper Sakponba Road, stated that two of the armed robbers they arrested in 2018 confessed that they got their weapons from a politician in the area. He said,

The politician was arrested when he came to bail the boys.

Such rapport between politicians and cultists makes the latter to be more daring and to have a culture of impunity, which heightens violent insecurity in the State. This probably explains why criminals have been on a rampage at Upper Sakponba in the last two years, especially Nomayo Street and a place called Three House where commuters have been assaulted, robbed and many women raped on their way home. Participants in the FGD noted that all Edionwere and Enigie (traditional rulers and street heads) had to place a curse on the criminals and their sponsors similar to what the Oba did.

While these measures have forced some Eiye, Black Axe, Maphites, and other cult members abroad, they have also led to a new development. As a key informant noted,

Some of these cultists have set up criminal rings in Italy because they meet and re-unite abroad. Some of them now run shows in Libyan camps. They kidnap migrants and demand that ransoms be paid into Nigerian bank accounts. This has been on since 2015. They are not only involved in the human trafficking chain; they are also involved in drug trafficking and other criminal activities such as migrant smuggling. It has become very lucrative given the thousands of youths who want to be trafficked or smuggled into Europe from Edo State.

Similarly, the traditional rulers who are supposed to maintain law and order in their domains also sometimes promote insecurity. As the KII and FGD respondents noted, many traditional rulers make use of cultists and gang members to collect dues and levies from those who want to build houses in their domains. It was revealed during the FGD at Oredo LGA that most leaders of the Community Development Associations who work hand in hand with traditional rulers are gang members. Especially, the leaders of the 'Bush Patrol' teams are hardened gangsters who can seize the property and sometimes beat up land developers who are reluctant to pay imposed levies such as 'emolu' (food for the laying of foundation which is now largely monetized), crops, road, electric pole, decking, roofing and even for erecting a fence or sinking a borehole in some areas. Apart from providing drinks, Indian hemp, and other illicit drugs for the leadership of CDAs, many traditional rulers also reward them with plots of land. Sometimes, CDA members sell a piece of land to several persons and collect money from all of them, leading to the use of police, soldiers, or non-state violence to retrieve the land or the money paid. A few years ago, the exchange of gunfire between the police and CDA members at Ugbor community led to the killing of the CDA chairman. Until the recent ban of the obnoxious activities of CDAs by Oba Ewuare II with the support of Governor Obaseki, the violent struggle for CDA leadership was a major driver of communal conflicts across Edo South.

Besides the interaction between traditional rulers and youth gangs, some key informants also revealed that several traditional rulers are bribed with cows by herders to graze in their domains. This bribery which takes the form of giving gifts and paying homage has become a norm across Edo State particularly in Odighi community in Ovia North-East LGA, Esan West LGA, and Uhumwode LGA. After bribing traditional rulers with cows, the Fulani herders operate with impunity including grazing their herds on cultivated farmlands, leading to violent clashes between farmers and herders. Several lives have been lost to such clashes in recent years. Another key informant revealed that traditional heads in Uzebba collude with Indian hemp producers. She said,

Uzebba has the largest Indian hemp producing-farms in Nigeria. The criminal economy thrives on the connivance of different actors including

the so-called local chiefs. A few years ago, some National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) officials who tried to effect the arrest of Indian hemp producers were killed. Even last year, a police van was set ablaze by the farmers.

Also, some traditional rulers who act as mediators in communal shrines between the living and their ancestors have been indicted of colluding with perpetrators of insecurity. FGD respondents in Oredo, Esan West, Orhionmwon, and Ikpoba-Okha LGAs opined that many traditional rulers have abused their roles by colluding with human traffickers, who bring their victims to take oaths before such traditional rulers who are also native doctors. It has been difficult to prosecute the few traditional rulers who have been indicted because of the coverage they get from the youth groups in their domains and the politicians who rely on the traditional rulers for grassroots electoral mobilisation.

Also, the rate of cyber fraud has increased tremendously in recent years across Edo State. A week hardly passes without media reports of cyber fraud or activities of Yahoo Boys. Apart from defrauding people of their monies through the internet, some Yahoo Boys are now involved in ritual killings and human organ harvesting. A key informant who works with the DSS asserted that the violent insecurities by Yahoo Boys are a reinvention of cultural practices, as “the history of Benin is replete with human sacrifice and occult practices especially during prominent burial rites”. Also, organ harvesting (cutting of female breasts, genitals, eyes, etc.) as it is in contemporary times has been a regular practice among cult groups. So, there is need to look inwardly to the people’s culture to find answers to these bizarre happenings and security threats. Several Yahoo Boys use their relationship with politicians and police to cover up their atrocities. Some of these fraudsters have begun to participate actively in politics to legitimize their stupendous wealth and secure protection for their violence. A key informant in Benin revealed:

I know two Yahoo Boys who helped to finance the 2019 House of Representatives election for a contestant in Ovia North-East with the rallying slogan ‘Our guy must win’. Many people did not believe he would have money to buy votes compared to his rival, a daughter of a rich entrepreneur. Yahoo Boys who are not interested in elective

positions now sponsor candidates and they are rewarded with slots for appointive positions such as commissioners, chairmen of boards, public corporations, etc.

7. Key Findings

Based on the investigation of this study, the following findings were made. First, there are shades of insecurity issues and violent conflicts in contemporary Edo State. The key and routinized ones are cult clashes inter-communal land boundary conflicts, land grabbing phenomenon, herdsman attacks, political violence, kidnap for ransom, internet fraud, human trafficking, chieftaincy tussle, and armed robbery.

Second, these insecurities and violent conflicts are linked and not mutually exclusive. They are shaped and influenced by the socio-economic and political contexts of the state. Specifically, the various types of insecurity have largely been fuelled by a blend of factors such as the geo-strategic location of the state, unemployment, mass poverty, drug abuse, political desperation for ascendancy and a debased social values such as ostentatious lifestyle, get-rich-quick syndrome, and glorification of wealth.

Third, the various insecurity issues and violent conflicts have produced developments that puncture peace and security across the state, with devastating consequences for men and women, young and old, and those based in both rural and urban areas.

Fourth, the insecurities have been perpetrated by different actors such as unemployed and frustrated youths who parade as cultists, kidnappers, armed robbers, cyber fraudsters, and political thugs among others. However, both formal and informal political actors such as politicians, religious leaders, and traditional rulers who are supposed to reinforce security and mitigate violence have colluded with non-state violent actors to undermine peace. Thus, there is a dynamic power relationship among the actors.

Fifth, concerned individuals, groups and governments have attempted to intervene and resolve these raging security threats and violent conflicts. Some of the efforts include the formation of vigilante groups, the invocation of curses on criminals by traditional rulers and women, intervention by police and judicial personnel, military surveillance around

flashpoints, protests and peaceful marches or procession to draw the attention of relevant authorities, setting up of task forces, sensitization programmes and construction of anticrime rhetoric.

However, these responses have produced marginal results due to their state-centric and trifling ideas of human security calculations. As a result, violent insecurities have remained endemic across the state.

7.1 Recommendations

Edo State Government should go beyond mere impressionistic programmes and psychological re-assurances – telling the people after attacks that the criminals would be arrested and prosecuted. While this is convenient and cheap, there is a need for strategic thinking on bolder steps to deter the outbreak of insecurities. The following steps are important:

7.1.1 Vigilante Empowerment

There is a need for government to empower the vigilante groups through training and remuneration. Functional operational equipment such as torch/flashlight, communication gadgets, patrol vehicles, and motorcycles, should also be provided and maintained for them. Speed boats should be made available for members of vigilante groups in Gelegele and other riverine areas. Also, solar-powered street lights should be installed and maintained in vulnerable and hotspot areas. Furthermore, to guarantee the professionalism of vigilante groups, there is a need for government regulation to ensure that members of the non-formal security organization are detached from partisan politics. Added to this, every local vigilante should be mandatorily registered with the relevant security agencies such as the NSCDC and the police for proper identification, training, and monitoring.

7.1.2 Police-communities Interaction

The current disconnect between the communities and the law enforcement agencies should be addressed. A bottom-up and citizens-driven approach can be adopted for the people to claim the ownership

of security management. This will ensure that the people who have good knowledge of the local terrain, language, and culture are in charge of security management. For example, some security roles can be assigned to traditional rulers who are law-abiding. Besides, the various security agencies particularly the police should be strengthened to be more effective in nipping security issues in the bud. For optimal performance, the various security agencies require adequate funding, proper personnel recruitment, regular training and re-training of men and officers, and the provision of adequate and functional operational equipment. To ensure police professionalism, it is imperative to take punitive measures against corrupt police personnel.

7.1.3 Youth Empowerment

The government should revamp the ailing factories such as the Bendel Brewery, Edo Textile Mill, and several others across the state to create job opportunities for the teeming unemployed youths. For young persons without employable skills, the governments and other stakeholders should support the acquisition of specialized vocational skills that can make them earn a living through legitimate means.

7.1.4 Infrastructure Development

The Edo State Government needs to provide functional infrastructures such as regular electric power supply that is supportive of the growth and development of small-scale businesses and artisanship such as welding, hairdressing, and hair cut/barbing services. To attract investment in infrastructural developments, there is the need for grassroots leaders to purge themselves of ethnic sentiments and land disputes, such as the case over the proposed Gelegele seaport development.

7.1.5 Enactment and Enforcement of Anti-open Grazing Legislation

To stem the rampant incidences of herders' attacks and other criminal activities associated with cattle herding in Edo State, the State House of Assembly must enact anti-open grazing legislation as has been done in

other states, such as Benue and Ekiti. The new legislation and other extant regulations by the state government on anti-open grazing should be strictly enforced by the concerned security agencies.

7.1.6 Synergy amongst Security Agencies

There is a need to reposition and strengthen the security architecture by forging harmony among security agencies. This is in recognition of the fact that each security agency has unique capacity and operational skills that can complement the others. Thus, the synergy among relevant security agencies can be in the administration and management of institutional, material, and human resources that are deployed to combat, curtail, or neutralize security threats and their promoters. To achieve this, there should be minimal rivalry and maximum cooperation among the security agencies saddled with the responsibility of managing and containing insecurity.

7.1.7 Speedy Delivery of Justice

Critical steps are imperative to ensure speedy delivery of justice rather than stagnation of cases in courts, which makes aggrieved people take the laws into their own hands. The government needs to improve human capacity in the courts through appointments, training, and retraining of magistrates or judges. Added to this, the government should build more courtrooms and equip court personnel with improved and modernized basic facilities, and logistics. Also, there is the need for equitable distribution of work amongst judges while magistrates or judges should avoid tardiness by refusing to grant applications for frivolous adjournments by lawyers and litigants. Added to these measures, people should be encouraged to use peaceful and credible Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) systems such as communication, conciliation, and negotiation to ventilate and resolve their grievances, rather than resorting to violence.

7.1.8 Control of Drug Abuse

The government should, in concert with various stakeholders, provide education on the specific dangers of drug addiction, dependency, or

abuse on individuals and their communities. To achieve this, households, communal groups, religious institutions, and schools should be involved in providing this education. Also, governments at both state and local levels should be involved in assisting leadership and financial supports for the recovery and rehabilitation of drug addicts. Furthermore, there is a need for government interventions aimed at discouraging supply and demand for hard and dangerous drugs. To achieve this, the government should provide alternative development initiatives or incentives to drug-producing communities that can make farmers have real and legitimate choices. This can be complemented with the sustained manhunt, arrest, seizure of drugs, and incarceration of drug offenders by relevant security agencies such as the NDLEA.

7.1.9 Role of the Family

Every family head should assist in monitoring the activities of their children and wards. They should strive to know their whereabouts, companies, and engagements. Added to this, they should educate them to imbibe virtues and to shun vices. For this to be effective, they should by their actions be models of excellence worthy of emulation.

7.1.10 Effective Arms Mopping Up

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons requires urgent management. Illegal firearms that are in the wrong hands of armed robbers, kidnappers, cultists, and other criminals need to be mopped up through frequent raids of hotspots and effective stop-and-search operations by the security forces. The activities of local blacksmiths need to be regulated to prevent the production of cut-to-size guns. Also, rogue security elements who hire out their ammunition to criminals should be prosecuted and sanctioned appropriately to deter others.

7.1.11 Registration of Religious Groups

The government and other stakeholders need to maintain effective oversight of religious groups such as churches, mosques, and shrines of practitioners of African traditional religion. Since some native doctors,

pastors, and imams offer services to criminals such as human traffickers (administration of secret oaths) and armed robbers (preparation of charms), their activities should be regulated strictly. For example, most uncompleted buildings in Edo State are now occupied by religious groups on account of unbridled proliferation. Thus, there is a need for religious groups to be regulated to prevent quacks that exploit gullible worshippers and promote insecurity.

7.1.12 Intelligence Gathering

To stem the tide of rising insecurity in Edo State, the security forces need to improve their intelligence gathering. For now, the police and other agencies only react to security threats when what is needed is a proactive approach to nip such threats in the bud before they happen. Thus, the capacity for the security agencies to gather, analyze, and disseminate information relating to insecurity needs to be effectively upgraded through retraining, inter-agency cooperation, and the use of state-of-the-art technological gadgets. For example, the insecurities engendered by the gateway location of Edo State can be mitigated through intelligence sharing by neighbouring states' police commands. Through effective inter-command communication strategy, wanted suspects in adjacent states can be exposed for easy crackdown.

7.1.13 Value Re-Orientation:

The values, orientation, beliefs, and attitudes of the people in a society set the tone of their engagements. Ostentatious lifestyle/culture should be discouraged through de-construction and reconstruction of the current value systems which have a bias for the get-rich-quick syndrome. Edo people should be made to imbibe the culture of questioning the sudden wealth of their neighbours. Also, excessive display of affluence should be considered in bad taste while a passion for reaching out to the poor in the neighbourhoods should be considered as admirable.

The rich should be made to understand through enlightenment that they cannot enjoy good sleep when they live amid an angry brigade of hungry people. In particular, those in government should be re-orientated to develop a passion for economic nationalism and social

justice for ordinary people rather than self-motivation. The task of value re-orientation should start from the family to schools, churches, and workplaces. The admirable initiative of peace education in Nigerian secondary schools and tertiary institutions should be complemented and strengthened by families, traditional rulers, and religious institutions so that they can be internalized and given meaning in day-to-day lives and social relations.

8. Conclusion

There has been a surge in violent conflicts and insecurities in Edo State in recent years. While these insecurities can be acknowledged as regular features in social life, their routinization in the last decade in Edo State has become a source of grave concern to individuals, corporate organizations, and governments at various levels as manifested in the establishment of alternative security control and containment mechanisms. A combination of state-centric and human-centric measures has been adopted to contain the prevailing insecurities in the state with marginal success. Thus, there is the need for more proactively-sustained containment measures if the increasing wave of violent insecurities and conflicts in the state can be stemmed.

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CHAPTER SIX

Insecurity in Rivers State: The Issues, Actors and Solutions

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Executive Summary

This report is an outcome of the findings of the study on insecurity in Rivers State which focused on identifying the major issues and key actors that define the insecurity landscape of the state on the one hand, and the possible solutions to identified drivers or causes of conflict and insecurity on the other hand. When juxtaposed with other states in Nigeria and the Niger Delta region, in particular, the study area (Rivers State) represents a major laboratory for conflict analysis, especially because of the interplay of the peculiar political, economic, ethnic, and social factors that generate appreciable conditions for violent conflicts.

To understand the nature and context and the key actors in the insecurity equation in Rivers State, which formed the core objectives of this study, data was collected from a broad spectrum of stakeholders drawn from nine (9) local government areas (Port Harcourt, Obio/Akpor, Okrika, Andoni, Khana, Gokana, Akuku-Toru, Abua/Odual, and Ogba/Ndoni/Egbema) spread across the three (3) Senatorial Districts in the state, using purely qualitative tools such as Key Informant Interview (KII) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Correspondingly, qualitative analytical techniques such as thematic and content analysis methods were used to organize the data and logically present them with a focus on the context, trends and dynamics of insecurity, analysis of security issues and actors, analysis of the interaction between issues, actors and drivers of insecurity, analysis of impacts of insecurity and conflicts in Rivers State and an appraisal of

existing interventions by government and critical stakeholders to curtail insecurity.

Based on the clustering of themes and the outcome of the content analysis, findings point to the fact that like other crude oil-bearing states in the Niger Delta region, the insecurity equation in the state is energized by long years of neglect by the federal government that is now very obvious in the infrastructural and human development deficits which are manifested in widespread underdevelopment, youth unemployment, and poverty. This adverse development scenario stands as the underbelly of the largely resource-based conflict with an obvious proliferation of criminal social agitations that have graduated into a protracted constellation of cult killings, militia violence, kidnapping, bloody contestations for illicit crude oil and refining turfs, inter and intra-communal conflicts. This trend continued with an additional challenge of militant groups who increased the complexity of the economy of oil theft. Interestingly, patronage from the political elite alongside economic rewards from multinational oil corporations provided incentives for sustained violent conflicts and insecurity in the state. Sadly, due to the associated rewards, the actors in the insecurity arena of the state have continued to expand while equally broadening the contest for socio-economic rights accruing from illicit activities such as oil bunkering, refining, armed robbery/sea piracy, kidnapping, and meddling in the community and state electioneering struggles. This, is besides, the peculiarities of the Ogoniland, where new environmental conflicts have emerged as a result of the politics of oil spill cleanup and environmental remediation exercise.

The study also found that the unique economic position of Rivers State, coupled with infighting amongst its political elites, notably the current governor of the state and the Minister of Transportation Rotimi Amaechi, continue to serve as strong motivations for conflict along ideological and party lines while shielding personal grievances which are believed to be the remote driver of political tensions in the state. This is in addition to the emergent power elite in the form of militia capitalists who now constitute a potent third force that defines the community power structure wherever they are found. Also, the study highlighted the fact that the impact of widespread conflict and insecurity has been quite devastating for Rivers State, especially in terms of loss of revenue,

human lives, and properties. Although, different stakeholders have made considerable attempts to restore relative peace such as the different amnesty programmes of the state and Federal Governments, as well as community-based efforts such as the OSPAC and ASPAC, pockets of violent conflicts still go a long way to undermine peace and security in the state.

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations were made that are expected to feed into the different stakeholders' attempts to resolve the problem of conflict and insecurity in the state. Although these recommendations target the different stakeholders, it is strongly believed that having these stakeholders work under fairly coordinated planning and management structure will yield more realistic and sustainable results. In this regard, technical input and guidance from expert organizations such as the Academic Associate Peace Works will help drive home a balanced approach towards institutional synergies for addressing conflict and insecurity and the optimization of peace opportunities in Rivers State.

1. Introduction

Rivers State is host to critical oil and gas infrastructure in Nigeria and has over the last six decades remained a significant contributor of revenues to the socio-economic stability as well as the development of the country. The state's economic prowess which has earned it the enviable status as the nerve centre and capital of Nigeria's petroleum industry has catapulted its relevance in the political landscape of the country over the last two decades. The socio-economic and political gains associated with its enviable status have also attracted a plethora of associated negative consequences ranging from widespread environmental pollution arising from oil and gas exploration to different forms of environmental conflicts and political violence that are often exacerbated by resources-based competition and agitations by armed militia groups.

During the last two decades, Rivers State has been confronted with different forms of social conflicts and complex security challenges. In the mid-2000s, militancy marked by the struggle for resource control and self-determination significantly defined the security landscape of the state as it was in the rest of the Niger Delta region. The state became an

epicenter for armed militia agitations with groups such as the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), the Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV), and the Movement for Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), who launched guerilla-styled attacks on critical oil infrastructure. During this era actors like Ateke Tom, Alhaji Asari Dokubo, Soboma George, Sobomabo 'Egberipapa' Jacreece and Farah Dagogo emerged as the major militant leaders and actors in the state (Ebienfa, 2011). The introduction of the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) by the Umaru Musa Yar'adua led Federal Government in the Niger Delta in 2009 saw a fundamental shift from oil militancy to other forms of insecurity in the state, including grassroots-based armed cult groups in local communities, intensified violent kidnapping, electoral violence, oil theft, and artisanal refining.

Ten years into the implementation of the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP), the state experienced what could be described as a resurgence of cult violence, kidnapping, and armed robbery activities that almost brought the economy of the state to its knees. Most communities in Ikwerre, Ogoni, Andoni, Etche, and Emohua were overwhelmed by cult violence and kidnapping. The East-West Road, particularly the Emohua area up to the Rumuekpe Junction, were practically made impassable due to the activities of armed robbers and kidnappers despite the presence and proximity of heavily armed military and police personnel at various checkpoints on that road. This was also the case with the Elele Alimini axis of the Owerri-Port Harcourt road where commercial buses filled with passengers were frequently hijacked and commuters abducted for ransom. In some cases, abducted passengers would be raped (Otubor, 2019). This was the pathetic situation of both passengers and commercial drivers on these two major roads before the Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area (ONELGA) Security and Peace Advisory Committee (OSPAC), a government-backed local vigilante group, emerged to restore order and security in the area.

This study was initiated to explore the unfolding trends and dynamics of insecurity in the post-Amnesty era in Rivers State. The study took critical account of the emerging dimensions of insecurity, the drivers and actors of these forms of insecurity, as well as the context of the interactions between issues, drivers, and actors in the insecurity landscape of the state.

Objectives of the Study

The study was set to achieve the following objectives

1. Explore the current context and dynamics of insecurity in Rivers State
2. Identify the key actors in the security landscape in Rivers State
3. Explore the interactions between actors and context.
4. Provide policy guidance to addressing the issues of insecurity in Rivers State

Key Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do security dynamics manifest in cities and communities in Rivers State?
2. What types of actors are prevalent in the security landscape in Rivers State?
3. What is the nature of the interaction between actors and context?
4. What policy guidance should best address drivers of conflicts, insecurity, and violence in Rivers State?

2. Insecurity in Rivers State: The Context, Trends, and Dynamics

Rivers State was created on May 27, 1967, out of the defunct Eastern Region of Nigeria, with Port Harcourt as its capital. A section of the original Rivers State was later cut off in 1996 to form Bayelsa State. The state is made up of twenty-three (23) local government areas. It occupies an area of 11,077 km² and is bounded on the south by the Atlantic Ocean, to the west Bayelsa and Delta states, to the east by Akwa Ibom State, and to the north by Imo and Abia states.

A predominantly low-lying pluvial state, its inland part consists of tropical rainforest and freshwater swamps and towards the coast, many mangrove swamps as well as coastal sand ridges. With a population estimate of over seven million people (Nigerian Population Commission, 2015), Rivers State is home to many ethnic nationalities

including the Ikwerre, Ijaw, Ndoni, Ogoni, Etche, Ekpeye amongst others, who predominantly rely on fishing, farming, and mangrove forest harvesting as means of traditional livelihoods.

In modern economic terms, the state is the hub of the oil and gas and maritime industries as it plays host to several multinational oil companies (MNOCs), the Liquefied Natural Gas Company located in Bonny, Port Harcourt Refinery, Indorama Eleme Petrochemical Company as well as the Port Harcourt and Onne ports. This has had significant implications for the revenue profile of the state both in terms of oil revenue accruals from the federation account and internally-generated revenue (IGR). According to the report of the National Bureau of Statistics, Rivers State ranked second after Lagos with the highest IGR of N75.9 billion between January and June 2019. This economic advantage enjoyed by the state presents not only opportunities but threats as the strategic position of the state in Nigeria's oil-dependent economy also increases the possibilities of social risks derived from oil-related conflicts and political violence in the state. This is because the federal government's grand strategy in the Niger Delta as a whole has historically prioritized uninterrupted oil production activities and oil revenue flow from the region over people's wellbeing.

More fundamentally, the contradictions due to the mutual reinforcement of the oil-conflict and insecurity in Rivers state inevitably exacerbate the curse of the black gold. The rich biodiversity and agricultural resource base notwithstanding, dependence on crude oil reinforces the resource curse syndrome and creates a dialectical relationship between political corruption and underdevelopment in the state (Onapajo, Francis, & Okeke-Uzodike, 2015; Allen, 2012)

There is a mismatch between the huge revenue accruing from crude oil and the infrastructural and economic development. For example, data from the National Bureau of Statistics revealed that between January and July 2019, Rivers State got N54.1 billion in oil revenue. However, poverty, unemployment, and general economic hardship continue to plague the state. Despite the abundance of natural resources, the state is economically and industrially backward with serious implications for unemployment. Noticeable evidence of the collapsing economy of the state is deindustrialization, infrastructural decay, and declining foreign investments. Until 1998, the popular Trans-Amadi Industrial Layout was

the hub of industrial activities in the state. Then, both state-owned and foreign companies dominated the manufacturing sector and created jobs for thousands of people. Today, the Trans-Amadi Industrial Layout is a shadow of itself as most of the companies have either collapsed or relocated. Michelin, a French multinational tyre manufacturing company was the first to leave in 1998, in the wake of the evolving armed militancy in the state. For example, the National Bureau of Statistics in its 2018 Third Quarter Report noted that with 36.4%, Rivers State emerged as the second state in the federation with the highest rate of unemployment. This situation has serious implications for the youths who constitute about 4.5 million out of the 7 million Rivers population in terms of their social mobility and transition to responsible adulthood. The last massive employment that took place in the state was in 2003 when about 10,000 teachers were recruited into secondary schools and the youths were the major beneficiaries. Since then, no comparable employment opportunity has emerged. A rapidly growing youth population without corresponding socio-economic opportunities puts the state at the risk of youth restiveness and violence. Arguably, it is not unusual, therefore, to find that youth-based violent crimes marked by cultism, oil bunkering, kidnapping, armed robbery, drug peddling, and trafficking have come to define the social space in the state (Kpae, 2019).

The social, economic, and political conditions of women in the state are not significantly different from that of the youths as they lack access to socio-economic resources that would improve their basic conditions. In the political sphere, women are also marginalized through a well-structured culture of patriarchy and other indigenous practices that perpetually make them subservient to their male counterparts. Of the 32 members of the Rivers State House of Assembly, the 8th Assembly had only one woman legislator while the 9th Assembly has no female representative. However, the Deputy Governor of the state is Dr. Mrs. Ipalibo Banigo; women representation in other executive positions remain scanty and unimpressive. While the incumbent governor of the state Chief Nyesom Wike has made it a policy for all vice-chairpersons of the twenty-three (23) local government councils to be females, gender-based vulnerabilities and insecurities that disproportionately affect women continue to undermine their visibility and political progress.

The interactions of complexity of socio-demographic, socio-economic, gender, and political contexts in the state over the years have produced diverse manifestations of violence and conflicts in the state over the last two decades. Taking a historical approach to the discourse, the rise of ethnic militia groups and cult gangs in the wake of the 2003 general elections birthed the escalation of youth restiveness and insecurity in the state. Two militia groups namely, the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and the Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV) were reputable in this regard. Although the groups claimed they emerged in furtherance of what they termed "Niger Delta Struggle", it was long before they demonstrated that control of the emerging economy of violence was their motivating factor. While the Niger Delta Vigilante was formed as a cult group or rather as an outfit of a political party's quest for power, the Bush Boys was believed to be an Okrika collective military formation due to the communal war between Okrika and Eleme communities of Rivers State. After the "war", it was a widely held belief that the group was hijacked by a faction in the chieftaincy divide. It was this perceived hijack of the Bush Boys by one faction of the chieftaincy divide that led to the formation of Niger Delta Vigilante as a counterforce to the rival Bush Boys which later had its base at Amadi-Ama, a suburb of Port Harcourt.

The emergence of the Niger Delta Peoples' Volunteer Force (NDPVF) which seemed to be a very highly organized movement with articulated philosophy escalated violence in the state. NDPVF claimed responsibilities for hostages, pipeline breakages and the willingness to confront government authorities for environmental exploitations accentuated violence. This movement later shrunk following the arrest, detention, and release of Asari Dokubo and his subsequent denouncement of the "struggle". This simultaneously gave rise to the emergence of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), which later became a central group for militant agitation in the region. More so, a multiplicity of cult groups have already emerged at the same time the militant agitations were ongoing; the most prominent were the Icelanders and the Germans who sought to control the waterfronts in some parts of Port Harcourt as their areas of dominance. They were also involved in illegal oil bunkering, pipeline vandalization, kidnapping, hostage-taking, and extortionist negotiations for money. University-

based cults/confraternities such as the Vikings Confraternity and Klansmen Konfraternity extended their influence by creating street and creek wings. For instance, the Klansmen Konfraternity established a street arm called “Deybam” to fight for supremacy and territorial control through organized violence, banditry, and criminality. In response, the Vikings Confraternity formed the “Deywell”. In this way, different versions, shades, and types of cult groups began to proliferate and spread, compounding the insecurity situation in Rivers State. Ironically, while Deybam controlled Diobu, Deywell controlled the Port Harcourt township area. Notwithstanding their aims and objectives, the groups were criminally minded and they were often recruited as “private armies” by mainly the political elite, catapulting their leaders to prominence because of the agency of violence in the “capture” of political power (Joab-Peterside, 2016).

By 2007, Port Harcourt, the state capital witnessed unprecedented violence in which many lost their lives, especially in the fratricidal war associated with bloodletting only surpassed by what took place during the civil war. In Port Harcourt, sporadic shootings and killings that emanated from inter-cult clashes and fighting for supremacy became the most pronounced phenomenon. The state became the focal point of negative reference as kidnapping almost became synonymous with Rivers State. It is pertinent to note that while the major militant movements appeared to have embraced Dr. Peter Odili’s government amnesty deal in September 2004, key leaders either formed or supported cult groups in their quest for the occupation of illicit business spaces and a foot in the politics of Rivers State. The orgy of violence derives from the emergence of cult groups that partitioned the State, especially Port Harcourt, as their enclaves or areas of influence as an integral part of the political contestation processes of the elite group.

Predictably, by 2009 the Nigerian state was confronting a disruptive home-grown insurgency in the Niger Delta. A grave political crisis in Nigeria’s deeply contentious political landscape has led some to conclude that it resembles a form of ‘violent democracy’ (Araias & Goldstein, 2010). A simultaneous crisis of both customary and modern governance has created a vast space of alienation and exclusion, a world populated by a large class of impoverished youths who are neither citizens nor subjects. The rural and urban underclasses are alienated and excluded

from the world of legitimate authority, and the market order (Nwajiaku, 2012; Watts, 2011). The aggravated disruptions of oil production due to the phenomenon of alienation led to the initiation of the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) by the Umaru Musa Yar'Adua led Federal Government, which accounted for the relative peace later experienced in the region.

Despite the reduction of armed insurgency and militancy in the state, largely attributable to PAP-induced interventions, the menace of cultism has been on the increase in recent years. Cultism is expanding geographically with its roots in Port Harcourt from where it has continued to spread to other parts of the State. The rising wave of cult gangsterism is frightening; with activities that now attract the status of social anomie to the state. For example, in February 2016, virtually daily, criminal gangs and cult groups armed with automatic rifles, knives, bottles, and other dangerous weapons engaged in savage fights against one another. The cultists have strongholds in Abua/Odual; Ahoada West, Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni (ONELGA), Khana and Gokana, Andoni, Akuku Toru, Port Harcourt, and Emohua local government areas. The location of the groups implies that they are community-based. The clashes have been between Deebam and Deywell, Icelanders and Greenlanders, Bar Beach, and other lesser-known groups. These fights forced the incumbent state governor, Nyesom Wike, to ban commercial motorcyclists in affected local government areas. Generally, the insecurity situation is alarming as the state's current security landscape contains potential threats such as communal clashes, sea piracy, armed robbery, cultism, killings and robberies, vandalism, oil theft, drug wars/addiction, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs).

3. Theoretical Perspective – The Commodification and Circle of Violence Framework

Over the last two decades, armed conflicts and violence in Rivers State and the Niger Delta generally have been represented and interpreted from the perspective of youth resistance to inherent structural injustices and marginalization of oil-producing communities by international oil companies and the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN). These

perceived injustices arose from the long years of pervasive poverty, youth unemployment, political marginalization, and infrastructural deficit coupled with decades of environmental pollution arising from oil spills and gas flaring. Armed militia groups such as the Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV), Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF), and Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) operated under the guise of the struggle for 'resource control' and self-determination for the Niger Delta region.

While the activities of militant groups secured the needed attention from the Nigerian Government and international community on the plight of the Niger Delta, it created an economy of conflict where opportunists and conflict merchants hijacked the Niger Delta struggle for selfish gains. As Ikelegbe (2005) rightly observed, with the proliferation of arms in the region, the emergent economy of conflict became characterized by an intense struggle for resource opportunities including illicit business spaces within the oil industry such as oil theft and artisanal refining, kidnapping, sea piracy, drug trafficking and so on. The actors in these activities, including militant warlords and cultists, cash into the violent economy and create a new class of militia capitalists who capture benefits from the violent economy (Amadi, Imoh & Obomanu, 2016).

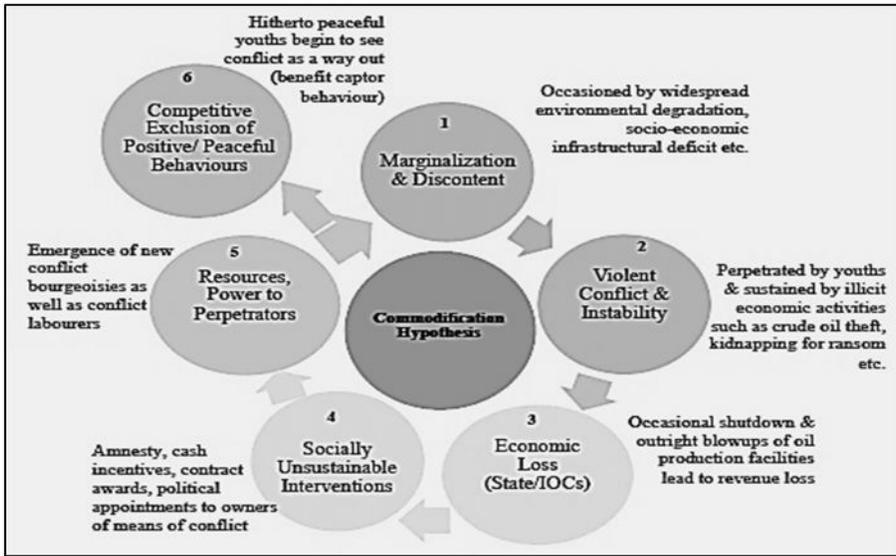


Figure 1: The Commodification and Circle of Violence Framework
 Source: Adapted from Raimi and Boroh (2018)

The response from the Nigerian government has always been amnesty for conflict actors and cash for arms programmes while international oil companies (IOCs) pacify conflict actors especially the ‘Generals’ who are at the top of the pyramid of the conflict value chain with pipeline surveillance and escort contracts. These measures targeted yet unsustainable strategies at buying peace while working in conflict. Within this context, a thriving practice by desperate political actors is to recruit the services of conflict actors for electoral violence, thuggery, assassination, and intimidation of perceived opponents, particularly before and during each election circle. It is given this that Joab-Peterside and Zalik (2009), as well as Raimi and Boroh (2018), shared the perspective that the economy of conflict has led to the processes of ‘*commodification of violence*’ in the region where violence has assumed the status of a commodity that can be bought (by political actors, government, IOCs) and sold (by militant youths, cultists) in the conflict market. Besides, Raimi (2017) postulates that the logic of the economy of conflict, the commodification of violence, benefit captor behavior, and militia capitalist has engendered a new kind of violent mode of

production with its unique social relations of production between those who own the means of conflict and those who he referred to as labourers of violence in the region. In essence, the benefit captor behaviour provides the owners of the means of violence opportunities to launch themselves into the conflict economy and becoming *conflict capitalists*.

The implication of the foregoing is the institutionalization of the conflict economy as violent behaviours are incentivized by economic, social, and political rewards thereby reinforcing a '*cycle of violence*'. In other words, as the government, political class, and IOCs continually patronize violent actors with amnesty deals and multi-billion-naira contracts; this serves as incentives for new entrants, most of whom were hitherto peaceful youths, to cash into the violence-reward- economy. Thus, this cycle of violence explains the increasing trends in violent crimes such as sea piracy, kidnapping, armed robbery, as well as contestation for illicit business spaces such as oil bunkering, drugs, and arms trafficking plus the unending supremacy battles between and within cult groups and other armed gangs in Rivers State and the Niger Delta in general.

4. Research Methodology

This section presents the research methods utilized in conducting the study, which includes the following:

4.1 Research Design

The study adopted the participatory qualitative research design. This approach enabled the documentation of the narrations of the lived experiences of respondents and an in-depth understanding of the subject matter of the study.

4.2 Sampling Techniques

The study relied on both the probability and non-probability sampling approaches which involves a combination of cluster and purposive sampling techniques. The state was clustered into three zones according to the senatorial districts, which include Rivers East Senatorial District,

Rivers South-East Senatorial District, and Rivers West Senatorial District. While the manifestation of insecurity is across all 23 local government areas of the state, due to time and financial constraints, samples were selected from each zone to be part of the study. Hence, local government areas were purposively selected for the study based on nature, and severity of the issues as some LGAs are more impacted than others in each of the zones. In this light, while Port Harcourt, Obio/Akpor, and Okrika LGAs were selected for Rivers East Senatorial District, Andoni, Khana, and Gokana were selected for Rivers South-East District. Lastly, Akuku-Toru, Abua/Odual, and Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni LGAs were picked for Rivers West Senatorial District. Communities were sampled in each local government area utilizing the criteria above, and respondents were selected purposively to participate in the study based on considerations of their knowledge, expertise, or experience of insecurity in the state. Accordingly, research participants included scholars, security personnel, political elite, policymakers, community leaders/chiefs, youth leaders, former cultists, human rights activists, leaders of women organizations, and opinion leaders of communities and civil servants.

4.3 Data Collection Methods

This study relied on Key Informant Interviews (KII), Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and secondary sources for data collection. The secondary sources of data amongst others included data obtained through an extensive review of extant scholarly literature, newspaper articles, and reports on the nature and sources of insecurity in Rivers state.

Participants' informed consent was secured and the purpose of the research was made known to them. On average, each interview session lasted for about two hours. Barring a few cases of telephone interviews, all interviews were face-to-face in-depth conversations in which respondents were asked semi-structured questions around the nature of insecurity that constitutes a pervasive threat to their freedom, rights, and daily life. Each interview session was recorded subject to the participants' approval. Their consent was also sought regarding citing their views

verbatim, which most of them declined because of the sensitivity of the issue being investigated.

4.4 Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was based on a combination of thematic and content analysis methods as follows. First, after every interview, the data were subjected to critical analysis to discover themes by ascribing meaning from the ideas presented by the interviewees. Second, the themes were further analyzed to identify differences and similarities. The idea was to observe coherence and patterns. This analytical process was also applied to the FGD data.

5. Data Presentation and Analysis

This section of the report presents the analysis of data collected from the fieldwork concerning providing an overview of the insecurity issues, drivers, actors, and impacts across the state. The analysis is conducted within the following thematic considerations as presented below:

5.1 Analysis of Insecurity Issues and Actors

The study revealed the existence of a wide range of heterogeneous insecurity issues in River State which are differentially situated concerning the state, oil companies, inter and intra-cult clashes, communal crises, politically motivated violence, and organized crime involving quite different clusters of actors and agents.

5.1.1 Cultism and Cult Related Violence

The menace of cultism in River State has its origin in the 1990s and early 2000s with the emergence of street gangs in Port Harcourt affiliated to campus-based confraternities such as the Vikings and the Klansmen. During the early days of cultism in Rivers State, the major cult gangs such as the DeyBam and DeyWell had their operational bases in Port Harcourt metropolis and parts of Okrika Local Government Area. Two

decades after, a plethora of cult gangs including the Icelanders, Greenlanders, Bobos, Outlaws, etc. as well as female wings of these gangs such as Ice-Queens, Girl-Girls have emerged and permeated the nooks and crannies of the state. There is a general perception that the proliferation of grassroots-based armed cult groups and associated violence are the most important security threats to the life, safety, and livelihoods of the people in Rivers State. For example, a predominant viewpoint amongst respondents in the study was that there is a relationship between cultism and the dynamics of violent crimes such as kidnapping, armed robbery, communal killings, and oil theft in the state. To put it differently, cult gangs have been implicated to have cashed in the violent economies perpetuating all manner of criminal activities in the state.

Furthermore, inter-cult clashes, cult killings, and recently, cult invasion of local communities are fast becoming an integral part of social life in Rivers State, such that it can be argued that cult groups have been let loose in the state with impunity of violence. While the presence of cult groups and cult violence are visible in almost all parts of the state, the study revealed that some LGAs and communities are worse hit than others. For instance, in the last four years, Ogba /Egbema/Ndoni LGA has been notorious for cult violence and beheading of suspected cult members by rival gangs. Participants of the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) from ONELGA believe that until the killing of 22 persons who were returning from a cross over church service on January 1, 2018, in Omoku by suspected cultists, the government (federal, state, and local) appeared to have turned a blind eye to atrocities committed daily and flagrantly by these cultists for over three years. The respondents while addressing the reasons for government inaction argued thus:

The cultists were generally useful in securing electoral victories for local politicians in the state through the prosecution of violence. For this reason, even though their reign of terror was well known to the state, the government demonstrated impotence in bringing them to justice (FGD Participants/ONELGA/2020).

The conflict that engulfed ONELGA which lasted for over five years resulted in the loss of thousands of lives and destruction of properties—all in the name of emancipating the people from exploitation from oil

companies and perceived political enemies. This resulted in a nosedive of the oil and gas economy in the Orashi region as multi-nationals operating in the area relocated to other safe places to continue their explorations. A key informant reported that:

The death toll can be estimated to be over 15,000 souls that range from young men and women, children, adults, and the aged. Girls and women were regularly raped and some were taken forcefully for co-habiting. Also, properties worth millions of naira and some in US dollars belonging to the multi-nationals in the territory were seized. It also produced child soldiers and school drop-outs, who could no longer go back to school; and some parents banished without reason from their ancestral homes, churches and market places were not spared from these unwarranted under development (KII/Male/Community Leader/ONELGA/2020).

Cult related violence in Port Harcourt Local Government Area is a familiar phenomenon that dates back to March 23, 1993, when students of the University of Port Harcourt under a movement known as Abuja Monitoring Group (ABUMOG) mobilized fellow students to engage known members of campus confraternities whose activities endangered students' safety and security on campus. Some of those affected ran away from the rampaging ABUMOG and settled in Port Harcourt Township, to plan a counteroffensive aimed at returning to campus. The affected groups commenced off-campus meetings and in no time founded a secondary school confraternity known as Red Skin in one of the private secondary schools in Port Harcourt. This marked the beginning of secret cult in secondary schools as other cult groups soon emerged in other private secondary schools. The private secondary schools proved to be a healthy nesting ground for cult activities, as students in these schools were from wealthy and reputable families who often intervened when their children were implicated in unwholesome behaviours.

Port Harcourt has been partitioned by cultists based on their perceived spheres of influence with each group guarding its area of control. Cult violence is often triggered when one group dares to penetrate another's sphere of control. Some of these spheres of control traverse various illicit socio-economic activities such as drug trade, marketing of illegally refined petroleum products, taxi/bus/daily

markets' toll, thuggery, 'protection' fee by commercial sex workers, petty theft, armed robbery, and kidnapping, amongst others. Of these illicit self-help engagements, political thuggery appears to be the most conflict escalating. For example, at least one person was shot dead in a rival cult clash and the accompanying mayhem unleashed on innocent residents of Mile 3 axis of Ikwerre Road in Diobu area of Port Harcourt on Friday, 8th May 2019. As a consequence of the attack, cultists went on a rampage, robbing residents and vandalizing vehicles of motorists plying the road in the area. The conflict was between Deybam and Icelanders over the collection of daily market tolls. A respondent recounting the incidence reported thus:

The crisis in Mile 3 was sparked off by shooting to death of a suspected Deybam cult member by rival Icelanders cult member early Friday at Bishop Okoye Street, Mile 3 Diobu, Port Harcourt over the right to collect daily dues (popularly known as "marching") from traders at Bishop Okoye Street. A member of Diobu Vigilance Group recalled that contest over the right to collect marching ground two weeks earlier claimed two lives. The deceased was identified as a suspected Iceland member and another suspected Deybam cult member (KII/Male/Mile 3/PHALGA/2020).

Similarly, the Chief Security Officer of Diobu Vigilance Group, Rumu-Elechi Community Unit, during his interview alleged that:

Deybam cult members attacked him and his men before the Divisional Police Officer in charge of Nkpolu Division and his men arrived. Mr. Ihunwo further stated that while they were trying to contain the situation that led to the killing of the vegetable seller at Mile 3 market, the suspected Deybam boys who were on rampage attacked and injured them in the presence of the police and none of the cult members was arrested. He also explained that before the suspected Deybam boys left the scene, they issued a direct threat that they must kill him and his men for the death of their member. (KII/Male/CSO/Diobu Vigilante/Rumu-Elechi Community/2020)

Also, the toll collection in old Port Harcourt Township and the Abuloma axis was well portioned and supervised by a serving member of Rivers State House of Assembly who belonged to one of the cult groups based on which he was nominated by his party. Icelanders collected transport toll from taxi drivers at Lagos Bus Stop, Aggrey Bus Stop and Borikiri, Amadi Ama Roundabout, and Abuloma.

Furthermore, Port Harcourt was taken by a shockwave in the middle of 2019 when a serial killer who specializes in killing young girls in hotel rooms was let loose. On the 19th of September, men of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) arrested the culprit by name Gracious David West, a 38-year-old man who confessed to being a member of the Deybam cult gang. Mr. West confessed that he took his victims to hotels, had sex with them, and strangled them with white clothes with their hands and legs tied. The suspect confessed to have killed about 18 girls across Lagos, Owerri, and Port Harcourt. The suspect is currently facing trial in a Port Harcourt High Court.

For most of 2019 and early 2020, the Ogoni axis of the state has become the new hotspot for cultism and cult-related violence. Khana local government is worst hit with cult killings and destructions resulting in the sacking of several communities, including Okwale, Taabaa, Nyokuru, Zaakpor, etc. On the 9th of June, 2019, for instance, some members of Iceland invaded Kpa and Lueku communities in the early hours of that day with over 150 of their members, killing and displacing the villagers. In that incident, two Dey Bam group members were killed, dismembered, with their heads and private parts taken away, sparking a reprisal attack launched by Deybam. Similarly, on May 19, 2019, the Kono Boue community in Khana LGA was subjected to armed attacks by a network of members of the Deywell cult group from across the state between the hours of 5 am and 7 am. On the following day, May 20, 2019, the same cult group burnt down houses and killed several people. Describing the unfortunate incident, a Bua Boue youth leader from the Kono Boue community who is a repentant militant, recounted thus:

On that faithful day, armed men believed to be members of the DeyWell cult group invaded our community shooting sporadically. In both consecutive attacks, 21 people, out of which three were cultists, lost

their lives in the community. Not only that, unarmed non-members of cult groups were forced out of their houses and murdered in cold blood, victims were mainly males.

(KII/Male/Youth Leader/Bua Buoe/ Khana LGA/2020).

The targeted killing of only male members of the community introduced a new pattern of gender-based violence in cult brutalities in Nigeria for the first time. But the important point about cult groups being let on the loose in the state is that neither the police nor the state government responded to protect the lives and properties of the innocent people who were gruesomely murdered in cold blood. The Bua Buoe killing marked a dangerous new trend in the evolution of a microform of genocide committed by cult groups in Rivers State. A sizeable number of community members fled and took refuge in several camps in Bori as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), from May to December 2019. Schools were closed and other social and economic activities were disrupted as the entire village was deserted. Unfortunately, no arrest or prosecution has been made except that on August 24, 2019, the Rivers State governor, Nyesom Wike, merely visited the community and promised to build a police station there .

The contracting of the cult groups by the two prominent political parties (APC and PDP) to enhance their political advantage and the partisan disposition of State Security Forces were the core reasons the Governorship and House of Assembly elections became highly militarised. Soldiers invaded all units in Ward 2 in Bodo and Nweol Biara communities in Gokana Local Government Area and took all electoral materials away. Two men were shot dead in the early hours of Saturday, 9th March 2019 in Luwaii community in Khana Local Government Area. Several vehicles conveying materials to communities in Khana were attacked by gunmen who hijacked election materials. All of these were to heighten the struggle of cultists and other armed and criminal gangs to determine who emerged as the council chairman. This perception of control and exclusion of cult groups in the security of Khana Local Government Council explains the extreme violent eruptions that characterized the last Governorship and House of Assembly Elections and the Local Government Council Elections in the area. In addition, cult groups supportive of the council, also collect “market and illegal motor park tolls”.

In Akuku Toru LGA, cultism and cult-related wars have continued to constitute insecurity for communities. Cultists are known to be engaged in all forms of criminality, including rape, armed robbery, sea piracy, oil theft, and political violence. Cult groups were also implicated as major actors in the 2019 general election violence that took place in Abonnema, the headquarter of the LGA. The two major dreaded cult groups existing in Abonnema are the Icelanders and Greenlanders. These groups are engaged in an unhealthy rivalry for occupation and control of illicit socio-economic spaces especially political thuggery and oil theft activities.

Obio/Akpor Local Government Area is also known to be infested by cultism and cult-related violence. Akpor kingdom was reputed for cult-related crisis derived from fights for supremacy between Icelanders and Deybam- the two dominant cults existing in the area. Although secret cults have long existed in the area, 2015 was characterized by violent social eruptions as cultists who fled from the onslaught against them at Obga/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area took refuge in the Akpor Kingdom. Notable among the fleeing cultists were key players from the Iclander group who settled down and established the Icelanders cult group in the area. Before the arrival of the Icelanders, the Deybam group was on the ground in Akpor Kingdom and had a well-established structure of Deybam in all the nooks and crannies of the area. The Executive Council of Deybam was selected from all ten communities that make up Akpor Kingdom. This implies territorial dominance of this cult group over the Icelanders. However, both groups fed on the land dispute between Choba and Rumekeni as each of the cult group pitched tents with either of the communities in dispute. The climax of their involvement in the settlement of land disputes was the usurpation of communities' right to allocate land in the warring communities.

The inter cult rivalry resulted in the murder and burning of an Iclander member by another Deybam . Also implicated in the crisis of insecurity in the Akpo axis is the subsisting chieftaincy crisis between the chiefs and youths of Choba, the host community of the University of Port Harcourt. While the youths wanted an election to pick the Community Development Committee (CDC), the Chiefs preferred that the CDC chairman be appointed by the traditional governance

institution. There is also the issue of collection of tolls at the motor parks which is directly connected to the chieftaincy matter. The CDC chairman was eventually murdered in the violence that ensued. Within this context of insecurity, armed robbery, murder, burglaries, kidnapping as well as rape were regular occurrences. The leader of the Deybam group in Akpor was alleged to be sympathetic to the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and had over three hundred able-bodied young men on his payroll and was given the responsibility to deliver the electoral wards located in the ten communities that constituted Akpor Kingdom to PDP in the 2019 general elections. Consequently, on the eve of the governorship election (Friday 2nd March 2019), there were sustained gunshots that spilled over to the morning of Saturday 3rd March 2019 that prevented people from coming out to vote, yet results were collated and the PDP expectedly won overwhelmingly. The cultists in Akpor were also into big-time kidnapping business from which they raked huge sums of money as ransom from their victims. The prevailing state of insecurity resulted in the collapse of businesses as shops opened late and closed early. Choba, being a host community to the University of Port Harcourt, depended on rent from tenants who were mostly students and university staff. Consequently, the abandonment of their accommodations for safer locations translated to a loss of income. The same situation applied to hotels that depended on visitors to the university as customers.

The prevailing state of hopelessness in the Akpor Kingdom prompted a mass protest against insecurity by women from Akpor communities. As women, their protest attracted the attention of the press and subsequently deployment of more security forces to maintain peace. The community, drawing inspiration from the success story of Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, which had established the ONELGA Security, Peace and Advisory Committee (OSPAC) established Akpor Security, Peace and Advisory Committee (ASPAC). The members were selected from the ten communities that constitute the Akpor Kingdom in the ratio of ten (10) persons per community and sent to ONELGA for training. The community funds ASPAC through donations. Efforts are being made to solicit the financial support of the Obio/Akpor Local Government Council to sustain the organization because ASPAC has restored peace to the communities

The study also revealed that cult groups have close ties with the political class and the government both at state and federal levels. Dating back precisely to 2003, cultism as an instrument for securing victory in elections was a creation of the Peoples Democratic Party in Rivers State under the administration of Sir Dr. Peter Odili. This legacy has since 2003 continued to confront the state in its effort to deal with cultism decisively. This is because cult members have found their way into government as elected/appointed officials including being chief security officers of local government councils. A retired military officer while describing the link between cultism and government argued thus:

What we currently have today in Rivers state is what I refer to as '*cultocracy*' which is the main sustaining factor of cultism and cult violence in the state. Cultocracy as a form of government refers to the government of the cults, by the cults and for the cults".
(KII/Male/Retired Military Officer/Port Harcourt/2020)

Another case in view is the contest for the occupation of the chieftaincy space in Asama community in Andoni Local Government Area which has exacerbated the crisis of insecurity as aspirants contracted cultists and militants to enhance their competitive advantage. The two dominant factions in the chieftaincy conflict also contracted or aligned with cult groups to intimidate their opponents. While one faction aligned with the Icelanders, the other faction stuck with the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) (an amalgamation of other cult groups except for Icelanders, not to be confused with the regional MEND of 2006). Similarly, the factions involved in the chieftaincy crisis in Ngo and Ataba have contracted the two dominant cult groups/militant movements in furtherance of their struggle for the occupation of the chieftaincy space. The area is also reputed for inter-cult conflict for the occupation and control of illicit business spaces such as oil theft, sea piracy, and other criminal activities. The climax of the gang wars was the battle between Icelanders and MEND in which MEND eliminated Icelanders and established its dominance over the area. It was reported that on March 20, suspected cultists launched an attack on Ikurut, the hometown of Uche Secondus, the National Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Several houses were

destroyed in the attack including the houses of Uche Secondus and Engr. Tele Ikuru, a former deputy governor of Rivers State. Things got to the extent that people have to pay levies to these criminal gangs to hold events especially, burial ceremonies.

Drawing from the foregoing, it is, therefore, against this background of the significance of cultism to the political elite and political parties that the effectiveness of state and societal responses to the issue of cult violence in Rivers State can be meaningfully appreciated.

Table1: Landscape of Cultism in Rivers State

Local Government Area	Dominant Cult Groups
Ogba/Ndoni/Egbema LGA	Icelanders, Deybam Greenlanders
Port Harcourt Local Government	Deybam – Sphere of influence Diobu and D-Line Iceland – Sphere of influence Old PH Township, Abuloma, Amadi-Ama, Borikiri. Deywell – Sphere of Influence Mile 3 Diobu
Khana	Iceland - also known as Ogoni Defence Council Deybam - also known as Ogoni Peace and Unity Forum
Akuku-Toru	Icelanders – Established close ties with the PDP leadership in the LGA and played key role in 2019 Election violence in Abonnema. Greenlanders - Established close ties with the APC leadership in the LGA and played key role in 2019 Election violence in Abonnema
Obio/Akpor	Deybam Iceland

Ahoada-West	Greenlanders – Operate from Uweshi forest across the Orashi river
	Icelanders
Andoni	Icelanders
	Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) (an amalgamation of other cult groups except for Icelanders)

Source: Compiled by Authors

5.1.2 Oil Theft and Artisanal Refining

The rise in the oil theft and artisanal refining economy across the state has further compounded the insecurity challenges currently faced in the state. The existing frame of arguments on the prominence of oil theft and artisanal refining in Rivers State is that it produces quick money for the local actors at the expense of public interests (Ezirim, 2018; Vrey, 2014). A more radical view argues that oil theft can be understood as a form of local resistance by deprived, frustrated, angry youth “who claim that they cannot steal what belongs to them” (Naanen, 2019, p.702; Akpomera, 2015; Oyesufu 2014), raising the question: What does oil theft as a form of resistance mean for extractive resource governance and peace in the Niger Delta as a whole? Not the least because perceptions of oil ownership and the contestations thereof fuel oil theft and artisanal refining activities and intensifies the dangers and contradictions of environmental insecurity in the state.

Oil theft can be categorized into five namely, small-scale oil theft and illegal local refining; large-scale illegal bunkering in the field; theft at the export terminals; theft from fuel trucks; piracy and oil tanker hijack. Although small-scale oil theft and local refining are pervasive, it almost exclusively involves low-level criminal elements and accounts for a minor percentage of the overall problem. However, environmental problems associated with oil theft and artisanal refining activities are devastating to the survivability of the long-neglected, and vulnerable rural majority. The latter categories of theft, however, are associated with significant issues of the country’s political economy and involve more sophistication and

sophisticated networks comprising facilitators, community elites, militant/criminal groups, oil company workers, as well as some segments of state security forces and political officials.

Although our focus in this report is oil theft and artisanal refining of stolen crude, it is apposite to underscore the fact that small-scale oil theft and local refining; large-scale illegal bunkering in the field; theft at the export terminal are not mutually exclusive because as cooperation on the ground evolves, the lines between domestic and international oil rings get increasingly blurred. They all shape and are shaped by the political economy of the opaque oil business equation. The interest in oil theft and artisanal refining derives from its devastating environmental and socio-economic consequences for inhabitants of the oil resource-rich region and, the fact that this criminal economy is often ignored by policymakers and analysts who are preoccupied with oil bunkering that features the use of small vessels to transport oil from vandalized facilities. But more important is its tendency to fund insecurity because money derived therefrom is used to purchase arms and ammunition that fuel other criminal activities.

The medium-scale pattern of oil theft involves direct tapping of crude from the oil companies' pipelines which are then connected to barges hidden in creeks with mangrove forest cover; illegal bunkering is the process of loading stolen crude oil into barges and ship in the high sea for export. The stolen crude is sold to registered oil trading firms or their proxies. The small-scale oil theft involves the pilfering of condensate and petroleum products meant for the Nigerian market; including illegal artisanal refining activities; bursting of pipelines to steal refined products. Stolen products from this process are sold in both the open and black products market.

There are different levels of actors and players in the illegal business as much as different instruments of conveyance. The domestic low-level oil theft involves players such as militants, cultists, refined products sellers, truck drivers, community persons; serving/retired oil workers' (including laid-off contract staff), serving/retired security/public servants. The market for domestic level oil theft depends on refining scenes in the bush and proxies of small buyers in the creeks. The instruments for conveyance are jerry cans and drums in speed/Cotonou boats and heavy-duty tankers. The high-level oil theft and bunkering

involve powerful, high but less visible players such as politicians/politically exposed persons (PEPs), transnational actors in the financial and legal institutions; including lawyers, crude oil traders, and security agents. The market levels are international waters outside the 200 nautical miles from Nigeria (West African Coast), Rotterdam, Eastern Europe, and Asia. The instrument of conveyance includes daughter-to-mother ship loading, forged bills of lading, and escort by security operatives. It is pertinent to note that there are diverse and cross-cutting domestic, regional and international markets (informal and formal) for stolen oil, with instruments for conveyance such as illicit businesses/money laundering (CSOC, 2020).

The sources of security and protection of the personnel and infrastructure of the oil theft economy are internal and external. Internal security is provided by armed gangs/cult groups controlled by the commander of the armed gangs/cult groups. These gangs/cults are contracted by camp owners who are usually the owners of the oil theft enterprise. The internal security system is well organized and enough to secure and protect the supply chain in some areas, while in some others, the internal security system is loosely organized hence, oil theft entrepreneurs are supported by a cult or community-based gangs. Icelanders cult group provide security in cooking camps located at Isaka and Bakana axis; Greenlanders around Baptist High School and Marine Base waterfronts (also involved in the security architecture are members of Icelanders). External security is provided by some segments of state security forces (Nigerian Army, Navy, Civil Defence Corps and Special Squad of the Nigeria Police) established by the Nigerian state for protection and security of oil and gas infrastructure in the Niger Delta who has now turned accomplices to the illicit trade in crude oil. Camp owners through their union contribute huge sums of money for the settlement of the respective forces who in turn alert them of raid/visitation by special forces (federal). Those whose camps are attacked and camps raided and burnt are usually those that failed to contribute to the common security fund by camp owners. Although authorities of state security forces vehemently deny collusion with oil thieves, in some areas, there is an established cordial relationship between state security forces and oil thieves. There were cases where security forces charge new entrants into the oil theft industry daily

security levy, while in others, every new entrepreneur pay stipulated fees through the bunkers' unions to secure their trade.

The oil theft industry is almost becoming the biggest economy in Rivers State contributing to employment and income generation in communities where the illicit business thrives such as Bille, Okrika, Bodo, Bakana, etc. The study revealed that there are about 300 refineries in the Cawthorne Channel area and 56 refineries in Okrika. A major landing port for products from Okrika is located at Abuloma, where the community chief in charge of the jetty charges landing levies and taxes of between N200 – N250 per drum, and then provides support for the product market located in the area. The rouge industry is a monopoly business with established command and control structure. In some cases, there is a separation of ownership and management operation. Supply to ships is highly controlled with regular loading from a private jetty under the control of an appointed administrator who oversees the marketing operations. Describing the distribution network of the illicit business in Okrika LGA, a respondent who is an active oil bunker and refiner in the area reported thus:

The distribution points for “accredited dealers include Abuloma, Okrika Island, George Ama, Okrika waterside, and Marcoba jetty. Tankers en-route Lagos load products from George Ama, while in-state dealers convey their products in drums loaded in boats. The sources of security and protection of the personnel and infrastructure of the oil theft economy are internal and external. Internal security is provided by armed members of the gang-controlled by the commander who is usually the owner of the oil theft enterprise. In the Okrika area, the internal security system is well organized and enough to secure and protect the supply chain. (KII/Male/Oil Bunker and Refiner/Okrika LGA/2020)

Oil theft and artisanal refining also thrive in the Ogoni axis, especially in Bodo community. The situation in Ogoni is more worrisome as these illicit activities go on side by side with the environmental clean-up of Ogoni land with implications for re-pollution. Crude stolen from Bodo is mostly bought by refiners in Okrika, Ogu, Alakiri, Ikpokiri, Owu-Ogono, and Ojukiri. Stolen crude from Bodo also goes to other Ogoni communities, Obiaku in Abia State and Akwa Ibom State. Consequently, oil theft entrepreneurs are supported by ex-militants and cultists.

Regrettably, external security is provided by a random portion of accomplices in the military Joint Task Force (JTF) established by the Nigerian state for the protection and security of oil and gas infrastructure in the Niger Delta. There is an existing cordial relationship between the state security forces and oil thieves. For example, the study revealed that in the Bodo axis, the JTF charges new entrants into the oil theft industry about N300, 000 daily as a security levy.

The enabling environment is also provided by the number of unemployed youths. Evidence from the study indicates that the oil theft industry employs about 1, 548 persons in Okrika, 2, 827 in Cawthorne Channel, and 5,000 persons in Bodo, making Bodo's operation the largest in volumes and size, with a direct employment average of 3, 125 per community operation (SDP/LDS, 2012). The implication is that the oil theft industry is the dominant economy and source of livelihood in communities where it exists. The camp/cooking areas are located in Isaka, Alakiri-behind Dutch Island, Bile, Bakana, Ke, and Bolo. Cooking of the crude based on advice from the State Security forces are usually done at night (from 8 pm-4.00 am) because the smoke/flame of the cooking process is easily noticed by day. Those operating in Cawthorne Channel export their products in barges through Bonny. The loading point for tankers otherwise known as "trucking" is located in the Borikiri axis (behind Government Comprehensive Secondary School). The Divisional Police Officer in-charge of Borikiri is usually "settled" by cash payment. Ibeo Cement Road (off Stella Maris College) is another "trucking point". There is also a loading point at Nembe Waterfront, Creek Road, Port Harcourt. Some buyers come from Cross River State by boat to purchase the products at the Nembe Waterfront. Another group of buyers comes from the northern part of the country in trailers/911 trucks to buy the products. Women provide catering services at the "cooking camps" – they sell food, drinks, water, and other consumables; while youths from adjoining communities constitute the workforce. In addition to this, the study establishes a link between oil theft and arms proliferation in the state as waterways and seaports provide havens for arms trafficking through ships and speed boats on the high sea and the use of canoes in the creeks. Arms/ammunitions are exchanged for stolen crude by oil bunkers or sea pirates, their financiers, and collaborators with the connivance of some unscrupulous state

security forces. These illicit trade networks contribute largely to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) in local communities which become potent conflict energizers in the state.

5.1.3 Chieftaincy Tussles, Crude Oil Related Conflicts, and Communal Crises

Communal conflicts continue to pose a significant threat to peace and security in Rivers State. A spatial analysis of community conflicts from 1990-2015 suggests that communal conflicts are on the rise in the state, occurring “more in the upland areas than in the riverine communities” (Arokoyu and Ocholor, 2016, p. 30). Particularly instructive is that whether intra or inter-community crises, communal conflicts are not without their complications. They result in the acquisition of sophisticated weapons and the maintenance of community armouries by local communities for protection (Ebienfa, 2011; Davidheiser and Nyiayaana, 2011; Bisina, 2003). Again, by its inherent logic, community weaponry tends to fuel and intensify violent inter and intra community conflicts with destabilizing effects. Most inter and intra community crises across the state have been driven by the struggle for environmental resources, land disputes, and most recently cultism as evident in communal cult wars in Ogoni land.

Local communities are constantly faced with issues of land ownership, sites of facilities, political representation, and zoning that have the potential of leading to intra-inter community conflicts. The chieftaincy institution lost much of the power attributed to it by the colonial state, yet, it remains an appropriate institution of community representation, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution in contemporary Nigeria. At present, the institution has been integrated into the state as an administrative extension, though this role is fraught with ambiguity due to the absence of any constitutional role assigned to chieftaincy functions. Also, designation as a host community brings benefits in the form of community development funds and promises of labour and security contracts, etc.

The oil companies (both multinational and indigenous firms) negotiate such contracts and benefits with community representatives who are mostly chiefs. Consequently, chieftaincy institutions became

more lucrative and their occupants more powerful and in turn a fiercely contested governance space in the oil-bearing communities. As competition to occupy chieftaincy stools intensified it is not uncommon to find interested candidates recruit cultists and other criminal gangs who they provide money and small arms to intimidate perceived opponents in their struggle for access and control of chieftaincy space. There are instances where chiefs have been implicated in cult-related violence. The latest case is the withdrawal of the certificate of recognition and suspension of a traditional ruler from Ogoni for alleged involvement in cult-related activities. The chieftaincy space in the state has become a fiercely contested terrain because it guarantees access to either state or community resources. While some contestants attempt to rewrite community history to their advantage, others resorted to procuring armed cultists or state security forces to enhance their competitive advantage. A chief during his interview alluded to this fact thus:

Chieftaincy tussle is one of the causes of insecurity because candidates contesting to occupy chieftaincy stools in Ogoniland in recent times are either affiliated to Iceland or Deybam. If the candidate to occupy stool is an Iclander, when he becomes a chief, Iceland cult group will support him while Deybam will not vice versa. (KII/Male/ A Chief/Gokana/2020).

The chief, therefore, suggested that any Ogoni son aspiring to become a chief should not be an affiliate or member of any cult group. He also drew attention to the fact that some of the causes of insecurity derive from unclearly demarcated local government boundaries/community farmlands in Ogoni land. He submitted that often, crisis derived from this source have the potentials for stoking violent conflicts.

There is a record of violent conflicts between oil companies and local youth groups (over compensation, employment, and access to cash payments); conflicts between community leaders and chiefs and companies over host community status, spill compensation, and MOUs; oil triggers intense and often violent chieftaincy struggles; and not least the rise of organized gangs involved in providing protection services in the oil bunkering business, mostly as local operatives. Also widespread are inter-ethnic and intra-community disputes over property and access

to oil-bearing lands and struggles over the establishment of political machinery (local governments areas and the state), which provide access to the revenue allocation. The petro-state is thus defined by high levels of discretion over resources at the center, sectional contention over rents, and a weak or absent social contract among the broader population.

A classic example is the unhealthy relationship between the Aminigboko community of Emughan Clan in Abua/Odual LGA and Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) on the “Enwhe Feld Development Project (Gbaran Phase 3). Enwhe field is located in the South-Western corner of license block OML 22 and extends into OML 23 and is located about 34km to the East of Gbaran CPF. It is pertinent to note that the Aminigboko community, Emughan Clan, is the heart of the Enwhe Oil Field operation. The community reported to the research team that efforts made to get a copy of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report conducted by SPDC on the impact of the project on the host community had been greeted with refusal. The company was alleged to have jettisoned the authorized representatives of the community that signed all documents that enabled oil prospecting activities in the area and created the Abua/Odual Cluster Development Board. Consequently, the Emughan community is demanding that SPDC should unbundle Abua/Odual Cluster Development Board and establish Emughan Cluster Development Board and stop “All illegal interface with purported Shell Abua/Odual Cluster Development given pending litigation from Emughan Community.”

The strategy to unlawfully hijack, interfere, and purporting to establish Aminigboko community Trust and Abua/Odual Cluster Development Board by SPDC and “politicians” is a matter subject to litigation at the Federal High Court Suit No FHC/PH/CS/87/19. The Federal High Court has recently delivered a ruling affirming its jurisdiction in the said suit. Consequently, the stage is set to hear the suit. Very worrisome is the forceful entry and occupation of the land of Akipo Family, Aminigboko community by Daewoo Nigeria Limited, Enerco Nigeria Limited, and Okmas Nigeria Limited. The same applies to Ogbolo family, in Aminigboko community, where Mife Construction Nigeria Limited, Okamas Nigeria Limited, and Morpol Engineering Services Limited forcefully occupied their land while carrying out

construction activities for SPDC. Formal complaint to the SPDC Managing Director, Contracting Companies Managing Directors, on the forceful entry under heavy security, and occupation of the land of Akiro family and Ogbolo family were presented to the research team. We observed that the mobilization/usage of earthmoving machines and trucks by the SPDC currently made the Ochiba-Okana Road impassable at the time of the visit to the community.

Akuku Toru Local Government Area is also reputed for oil exploration activities induced communal crisis. Overtime, crises emanating from the struggle to occupy kingship and chieftaincy spaces in Akuku Toru have exacerbated the crisis of insecurity. For instance, Kula community in the recent past was shocked to its foundation by the assassination of some of her chiefs. Prominent amongst these chiefs is the former leader of the Kula Council of Chiefs, Chief Oposingi. The cold war created by the chieftaincy crisis subsists as expressed in their affiliation in politics and other social spheres. At the heart of the matter are attempts by highly placed and politically exposed persons to rewrite the history of the community for selfish accumulative purposes. The benefit accruing to the chieftaincy institution is enormous. There is a weekly and monthly sharing of royalties collected from the multinational oil company operating in the area.

There are regular protests from community members arising from the inaction and action of the multinational oil company (Shell Petroleum Developing Company-SPDC) operating in the area. Sometimes, these protests resulted in a confrontation between state security forces and community members. Most recently, in Kula, the host communities of OML 25 protested against SPDC's marginalization and community underdevelopment. Women from the host community occupied the Belema flow station for two years. The shutdown of the Belema flow station resulted in the loss of over 35,000 barrels of oil production per day. The flow station was reopened by the Group Managing Director of NNPC, Mallam Mele Kyari, and the Minister for State for Petroleum, Chief Timipre Sylva. Peace was brokered when the Federal Government intervened in the ongoing crisis and it was agreed that the OML 25 would be operated as a Joint Venture between the NNPC, SPDC, and Belema Oil Producing Ltd, an indigenous company owned by a Kula son, Mr. Jack-Rich Tein Jr. While SPDC remains the operator of the

OML, Belema Oil would be in charge of maintenance, operations, surveillance, and patrol. In addition to the re-opening of the Belema flow station, the Kula Water project and the 85km Kula-Degema-Port Harcourt Road were flagged off. The OML 25 community engagement approach has been highly commended by Niger Delta leaders especially the Pan Niger Delta Elders Forum (PANDEF) and it is already being advocated as a model to be replicated in other host communities' engagements across the region.

5.1.4 Political Violence

With the return to democratic rule in Nigeria in 1999, Rivers state has featured prominently in political violence in which youth and cult groups have been effectively used as instruments by the political elite to pursue their selfish ambitions of winning elections through intimidation strategies. Consequently, Rivers State has been frequently identified as one of the states in Nigeria that is vulnerable to electoral and political violence hence a focus for international elections observation as well as for analysis of early warning signals that include post-election intervention strategies (Verjee, Kwaja & Onubogu, 2018).

The picture that emerges from this is an ideology which views politics as a form of war, in which the pursuit of power by the political class has led to a lack of respect for the formal rules governing party electoral competition, with competitive electoral politics assuming ruthless dimensions, based on zero-sum calculations, with the assumption that the winner wins all, and the loser loses all (Joab-Peterside, 2007; Joab-Peterside & Zalik, 2009, Joab-Peterside, Porter and Watts, 2012; Joab-Peterside, 2016). Under such circumstances, instead of democracy being anchored on tolerance, moderation, fair play under the rule of law, and respect for the sanctity of the electoral process, it has become a battle in which the political leadership and the masses of the people are increasingly engaged in violence-spinning fraudulent electoral practices. Central to this political culture which views electoral politics as a form of war is the creation and use of cult groups and militias by political parties in power either as part of their electioneering campaign arsenal or election control mechanism. Below are case studies that highlight the trend of political violence in Rivers State.

Case Study 1: The Abonnema Election Crises of 2019

For ages, Abonnema, the headquarters of Akuku-Toru Local Government Area was considered an island of serenity in the State. But the violence which led to the death of many during the presidential and National Assembly elections shattered the peace and tranquility of the usually peaceful Abonnema (Ebiri, 2019). The level of violence associated with the 2019 General elections in Abonnema was unprecedented. There was a high level of political intimidation in the community deriving from the politics of “winner takes all”. While those politicians in “power” at the federal level appropriated state security forces for their political advantage, those in opposition but out of the reach of what has been termed ‘federal might’, relied on the recruitment of non-state armed groups and criminal gangs to enhance their competitive advantage. Those with support of the “Federal Security Forces” also engaged the services of “non-state armed groups as a back-up fire support”. Within this context, cult groups became a highly-priced commodity in the political contestation market.

The study also revealed that during the presidential and National assembly elections held on the 23rd of February, 2019, over twenty persons were killed during the disturbances between rival political thugs that brought the presidential and National Assembly poll to an abrupt end. A key research informant reported that before the 2019 general elections key political actors in AKULGA were accused of sponsoring and recruiting the Icelander's cult in Abonnema. This set of politicians were further accused of masterminding the arrest of the key leaders of Greenlanders to provide a safe ground for the Icelanders to work for PDP victory in the area. Also implicated in the violence that erupted in Abonnema were former militant leaders who pitched tents with both political divides. Consequently, as early as 7.00 am, scores of political thugs from an opposition political party armed with lethal weapons including guns and machetes stormed a Registration Area Centre (RAC) located in Abonnema Girls Secondary School where INEC ad-hoc staff, party agents, and election observers were waiting for the commencement of distribution of election materials and shot one person dead. As news of the incident filtered into the community, members of the PDP were quickly mobilized for possible reprisal attacks but before they arrived at

the scene, military men deployed to Abonnema had moved into the area, shooting sporadically. The intense shooting forced voters to scamper for safety and made it impossible for the distribution of election materials and for voting to take place on schedule. It was under this circumstance that armed thugs snatched ballot boxes in the Abonnema community as voters could not exercise their rights during the governorship and House of Assembly elections. This was the case in Ward 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, and 12. The situation sent panic across the coastal town. The politically motivated crisis resulted in the death of some community people as well as security operatives. The shooting of late Mrs. Don Pedro, a National Youth Service Corps member and one of the ad-hoc staff of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and men of the Nigerian Army created panic as residents scampered out of the community to Degema, Buguma, and Port Harcourt in fear of reprisal attack despite Amanyanabo's plea for calm.

A community leader who participated in the study claimed that a day after the presidential and National Assembly polls were botched in the LGA, the military who lost a Lieutenant, laid siege at Abonnema attacking and vandalising houses as scores of people were feared killed by the military. Another key informant in his narrative informed the research team that the insecurity situation was accentuated by another attack of gunmen who were dressed in military camouflage and approached an army checkpoint and pretentiously stopped to exchange pleasantries with the unsuspecting military men on duty at Obonoma community. While exchanging compliments, some of the gunmen opened fire and killed three on the spot before escaping to an unknown destination. When the news got to Obonoma and Abonnema, an atmosphere of fear over possible reprisal attacks by the military quickly pervaded the communities. The Amanyanabo of Abonnema, King Disrael Gbobo Bob-Manuel denounced the killing as a criminal act committed by oil bunkers who invade the community regularly. The Nigerian Army in a press release made available to the research team stated that troops of 6 Division killed six political thugs in Rivers during Saturday, February 23, 2019, Presidential and National Assembly elections because they attacked the troops. It is against this backdrop that the people of Abonnema were denied the right to exercise their

franchise in the 2019 Presidential and National Assembly elections and the Gubernatorial and House of Assembly elections.

5.1.5 Kidnapping

Kidnapping hijacks, and hostage-taking for ransom along the major highways and waterways in the state have increasingly become a recurring feature in the security landscape of the state. In 2019, the state experienced what could be described as a resurgence of cult violence, kidnapping, and armed robbery activities that almost crippled the economy of the state. Most communities in Ikwerre, Ogoni, Andoni, and Emohua were overwhelmed by cult violence and kidnapping. The East-West Road, particularly the Emohua area up to the Rumuekpe Junction, were made impassable due to the activities of armed robbers and kidnappers despite the presence and proximity of heavily armed military and police personnel at various checkpoints on that road. This was also the case with the Elele Alimini axis of the Owerri-Port Harcourt Road where commercial buses filled with passengers were frequently hijacked and passengers abducted. In one case on July 20, 2019, the 16 passengers in a commercial bus returning from Owerri to Port Harcourt were abducted at Emerule-Ubima junction (Ofiebor, 2019). In some cases, the abducted passengers would be raped (Otubor, 2019). This was the pathetic situation of both passengers and commercial drivers on these two major roads before the Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area (ONELGA) Security and Peace Advisory Committee (OSPAC), a government-backed local vigilante group emerged to restore order and security.

Kidnappings have featured prominently in other parts of the state; for instance, on May 7, 2020, one Mr. Joseph Osademe was kidnapped alongside his wife by four armed men around the Rumuokoro axis of Obio/Akpor LGA and were subsequently rescued by the men of the Rumuokoro police division. In March 2020, four persons were kidnapped including a member of the ONELGA Security Peace and Advisory Committee (OSPAC) in Owube and Ubarama communities Ahaoda West LGA. It was reported that more than 60 persons have been killed by hoodlums in Ubara and Owube since 2017. Also, in March 2020, Mr. Soalabo West, a Lawyer and former governorship

aspirant of Rivers State was kidnapped on his farm in Eneka axis of Obio/Akpor LGA.

In its attempt to curb kidnapping in the state, men of the 'Operation Sting' on October 1, 2019, killed one notorious kidnapper, Mr. Ekweme Brown, aka 'Lucifer' or 'Satan' who was alleged to be responsible for the kidnappings and hijacking of commercial buses at Ndele axis of the East-West road. Similarly, on October 6, 2019, men of the Bori Police Division killed a notorious kidnapper, Linus Lebari alias 'Devil' or Bobby' when his camp in Okwale Forest in Khana LGA was raided by the police.

5.1.6 Sea Piracy and Armed Robbery

Sea piracy is the most prevalent insecurity issue in coastal areas of the state like Andoni, Bonny, Bakana, Bille, Kula among others. Targets of sea pirates are usually passenger boats, local market boats conveying foodstuff and consumables to coastal communities and local fishermen. Occupants of boats undersea pirates' attacks are usually robbed, kidnapped, raped, and sometimes murdered. In most cases, occupants of the boats are asked to disembark into the mangrove forests and sometimes into the river while the sea pirates dispossessed them of their valuables as well as the boats and engines, leaving them stranded in the swamps. Degema and Bonny LGAs have remained hotspots for sea piracy attacks. For instance, on the 16th of April, 2020, sea pirates with a speed boat engine of 200 horsepower attacked a vessel along the New Calabar River. Also, on April 6, 2020, a 12-seater passenger speed boat from Port Harcourt en-route Bakana was intercepted by sea pirates who robbed the occupants and made away with their boat while dumping them in the swamps. On December 8, 2019, eleven corpses were discovered in a boat by security agents patrolling the Jerusalem creek in Ke community. An assault rifle was discovered alongside the corpses and locals told newsmen that the victims were travelers killed by pirates. Sea pirates seized nineteen (19) expatriates on board a vessel loaded with Bonny Light crude oil on December 4th, 2019. Similarly, on September, 26th 2019, two passenger boats were attacked simultaneously along the Bonny waterway, where passengers were robbed and two persons were abducted, including a serving councilor in the local government.

Armed cultists and militants have been implicated as the key actors and perpetrators of sea piracy and robbery along the state's waterways thereby making it difficult for the movement of people and goods to coastal communities. The near absence of waterway security in the state as men of the marine police and navy hardly patrol the waterways serves as an incentive for hoodlums to terrorize the waterways.

In the upland areas, cases of armed robbery have been on the increase as cultists and militants utilize light weapons and small arms to intimidate and rob innocent individuals of their valuable possessions. Sometimes, the armed robbers go as far as maiming and killing their victims just to take their valuables.

5.1.7 Police Brutality and Human Rights Abuse

The brutality and abuse of the fundamental human rights of citizens in the state by men of the police and other security operatives have continued to constitute insecurity risks in the state. The police are notorious for extortion of money from commercial vehicle drivers and private road users, mass arrests, illegal detention, illegal extortion of money for bails, harassment, torture, and extrajudicial killings. The men of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) are known to be implicated for such kinds of activities as framing-up and incriminating innocent citizens as well as extrajudicial killings in parts of the state. This led to series of unrest and protests with the hashtag #StopSARS in October 2017 by hundreds of youths under the aegis of the Niger Delta Non-Violent Youth Leaders Assembly (NDNVYLA) in Port Harcourt calling for the Inspector General of Police to investigate the SARS and the then commander Mr. Akin Fakorede whom the RiversState governor accused of perpetrating electoral violence in the 2015 general elections in the state.

In the past four years, (2016 - 2020) commercial bus and taxi drivers have become easy targets for trigger happy cops who snuff life out of them for refusal to part with bribes on major streets of Port Harcourt city. The incessant killing of commercial drivers has equally provoked the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) and other drivers' associations to go on rampage and protests over unwarranted deaths of their colleagues.

Also, on the 19th of December, 2019, men of the ‘Eagle Crack’ team attached to the Mile 1 police division in Port Harcourt wrongfully arrested and tortured five men popularly known as the ‘Ikoku 5’ leading to the death of one Chima Ikwunado in police custody. The ordeal of Chima and four others namely Victor Ogbonna, Osaze Friday, Ifeanyi Osuji, and Ifeanyi Onyekwere began when Chima, an auto-mechanic at the popular Ikoku Spare Part Market in Port Harcourt and the other four were test-driving a Toyoto Corrola car and a Toyota Camry car belonging to their clients. They were apprehended and arrested by men of the ‘E-Crack’ for one-way traffic offence; unable to pay for their freedom, they were accused of armed robbery and cultism. The five arrested mechanics were locked up in the ‘E Crack’ cell, severely tortured in a bid to obtain false statements that they were armed robbers. Chima eventually died from the torture; however, the police reported that Chima died of high sugar levels. The death of Chima led to massive public outcry as protests were earlier held by mechanics at the Ikoku Spare Part Market resulting in the arrest of over 30 protesters. The police charged the remaining four victims to a Port Harcourt magistrate court for armed robbery and cultism and they were remanded in the Port Harcourt Correctional Facility. However, the Coalition of Civil Society Organisations in Rivers State took to protest on Wednesday, 29th January 2020 which they tagged ‘Black Wednesday’, launching the viral social media campaign #FreeIkoku4 #JusticeforChima. On the same day, however, the magistrate court acquitted and released the four victims from prison while the police hierarchy said it has launched an investigation into the matter.

The enforcement of the COVID-19 induced lockdown directives by the Rivers State Government by security operatives has been marred by cases of human rights violation of the civil population as well as key workers on essential duties such as health workers and journalists. The Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), Rivers State Council has condemned the unwarranted assault and flogging of a journalist who is a staff of Rhythm/Silverbird Television, Nkan-Kpo Johnson by a soldier deployed to enforce lockdown order by the Rivers State Government at Ikoku area of Port Harcourt.

Elsewhere, at Eneka in Obio/Akpor LGA, on April 21, 2020, at about 5 pm a policewoman, Sergeant Lavender Elekwachi was shot dead

by another police officer, Sergeant Bitrus Osaiah while enforcing the lockdown order of the government. Sergeant Bitrus who was attached to the state's task force on illegal parks and street trading was said to be harassing some street traders when Sergeant Lavender waded in to pacify him before he shot at her. Sergeant Bitrus has been sacked from the police and has been arraigned in court.

It was also reported that on Sunday, 10th May 2020, at Rumuodara Junction by East-West Road, men of the Rivers State COVID-19 Task Force accosted service providers working with the Rivers State Waste Management Agency (RIWAMA) who were on essential service of keeping the state clean. The Task Force members molested the waste management service providers, inflicting deep cuts on their heads with machetes. The RIWAMA boss, Bro Felix Obuah has condemned the continued unwarranted attacks, arrests, and detention of service providers working with the agency.

In a separate event, the President, Nigerian Pharmaceutical Association, Pharmacist Chima Ogbo berated the police in Rivers State for arresting and brutalizing a pharmacist, Dr. Lucky Legbosi Nwidu while on essential duty on the 10th of May, 2020. Dr. Lucky was arrested and taken to the Uzoba divisional police command in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. He was allegedly locked in a crowded cell without any precautionary measures to protect him from COVID-19 infection. He was requested to pay ₦100, 000 or be sent to the quarantine center where he would pay much more. With the intervention of his lawyer, he pay ₦20, 000 after he had been seriously brutalized by the police officers. The use of brute force on civilians and the abuse of human rights by the police and other security agencies have continued to pose security challenges for residents of the state.

5.1.8 A New Environmental Conflict: The Case of Environmental Clean Up and Oil Resumption in Ogoniland

The Ogonis have been known to live in their present location for over five hundred years and occupy an area of approximately 700 square kilometres (604 acres) lying at the easternmost extension of the mainland fringe bordering the eastern Delta of the River Niger (Saro-Wiwa, 1992), making the area one of the most densely populated in Africa (CLO,

1996). Ogoniland is divided into four local government areas in Rivers State namely, Eleme, Gokana, Khana, and Tai. Although the Ogoni ethnic nationality is a distinct group in the southern part of the Niger Delta, their villages have over the years expanded to form towns with huge populations. Eleme, Tai, Gokana, Babbe, Ken-Khana, and Nyo-Khana are the six existing kingdoms constituting the Ogoni nation (Mitee, 1999).

Most of the communities in Ogoniland have access to the sea for fishing and enough fertile coastal land for farming. The UNEP report presents the best understanding of what has happened to the environment of Ogoniland and the corresponding implications for the affected population underscoring the persistent demand for environmental security. The report confirms that oil contamination in Ogoniland is widespread and severely impacting many components of the environment. Although the oil industry is no longer active in the area, oil spills continue to occur with alarming regularity. Ogoni people live with this pollution every day. This implies that the crisis of insecurity in Ogoni derives from a complex history of the struggle for the emancipation of the Ogonis, the diverse structural, institutional, and sociological processes set in motion by petro-economy and the overbearing Nigerian state. The specific mode of Ogoni's encounter with, and incorporation into the wider world via hegemonizing petro-economy created material and institutional outcomes strong enough to provide the basis for discussing contemporary Ogoni security problematic. The Ogoni problem derives, in the main, from the historically deep-seated characteristics of Nigeria's political economy. The entire history of the petroleum history is replete with criminality, corruption, the crude exercise of, and the worst of frontier of capitalism (Yergin, 1991; Watts, 1998).

The current crises rocking Ogoniland today has been further compounded by the ongoing environmental clean-up by the Hydrocarbon Pollution and Remediation Project (HYPREP) as part of the implementation of the recommendations of the 2011 United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) report, an environmental assessment conducted in Ogoniland. The UNEP report and the ongoing clean-up exercise was a product of 26 years of non-violent struggle for political control of oil mining rights, environmental protection, and

economic justice that has generated new conflict dynamics and new actors, underscoring the political economy of oil and oil conflict in several ways. First, there is an internal agitation by youths for inclusiveness (benefit sharing) in the distribution of social and economic benefits generated by the clean-up process such as employment and capacity building opportunities. Second, there is a competitive struggle by the political and the business elite for benefit capture as clean-up contractors. Third, there is the proliferation of socio-cultural groups that compete with the widely recognized Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) for power, leadership, and legitimacy in Ogoni. Fourth, MOSOP is increasingly factionalized partly because the leadership of the body automatically guarantees the leader a place in either the Governing Council or Board of Trustee of the Hydrocarbon Pollution and Remediation Project (HYPREP). HYPREP is the federal government agency responsible for the implementation of the clean-up programme in Ogoni. Summarizing the political economy of the clean-up exercise and the heated contestations amongst several groups in Ogoni land, a key interviewee, Mr. Lawrence B. Dube, an Ogoni Environmental Activist, and Director, Citizen Trust argued thus:

Being on the Board of HYPREP enhances access to securing contract opportunities relating to the cleaning up process (KII/Male/Ogoni Environmental Activist/2020)

Taken together, the internal struggle for benefit capture and benefit sharing concerning the clean-up is critical to understanding the contemporary conflicts in Ogoniland today.

Meanwhile, amidst the Ogoni clean-up quagmire, a supposed plan by the Federal Government to resume oil production in Ogoniland has exacerbated the conflicts as Ogoni leadership has remained divided on the issue.

In the face of these challenges, the Gbo Kabari Ogoni (the Ogoni Elders Forum) - a pan-Ogoni leadership group made up of elder statesmen and seasoned professionals of Ogoni extraction - in a letter to the Managing Director, Nigerian Petroleum Development Company (NPDC), dated 8th May 2019 referred to an earlier communication in

which it called for a dialogue opportunity, and addressed the concerns of the re-entry plan.

The letter, signed by Senator Dr. Bennett Birabi and Dr. Aluba Desmond Nbeta, Chairman and Secretary respectively, was not even accorded the mere courtesy of a reply even though it the said letter was received

The group stated that it was for this reason and the need to avert the looming crisis that they decided to give the current letter a wide publicity with the hope that well-meaning persons and authorities may intervene as may be appropriate. Gbo Kabari Ogoni was worried about the advertised OML-11 Ogoni re-entry plan and commencement of activities, including the procurement preliminaries and timelines for the Ogoni re-entry project contrary to the UNEP report also made clear recommendations for the clean-up and remediation of the affected sites, which have not been done and certified by the relevant regulatory agencies (see UNEP Environmental Assessment of Ogoniland I, pages 118 and 132-135). Gbo Kabaari Ogoni further stated that:

1. Production activities in OML 11 stopped about 26 years ago and in line with industry practices, such fields like OM 11 ought to be treated as greenfields, and not brown fields. It is thus unacceptable to summarily commission the Early Production Facility (EPF) to start oil production, without the necessary procedures and approvals for a greenfield development. Therefore, we expect that the extant provisions and industry regulations for greenfields, would be applied appropriately.
2. According to DPR guidelines for the design and construction of oil and gas surface production facilities, there are four stages of approval for execution of any Project: (i) Conceptual Design (ii) Detail Design (iii) Pre-Commissioning/Oil & Gas Surface Operating Permit and (iv) Decommissioning. The conceptual design, which we believe is the current stage, ought to be accompanied by (a) A copy of an approved Field Development Plan (FDP) and (b) A copy of the letter of approval of preliminary EIA report, among other requirements.
3. We are aware that you do not currently have an approved FDP, as required in (2) above. Also, our checks with DPR, Federal Ministry of Environment, and other stakeholders, clearly show that no EIA has been done for this project. You may not that EIA for oil and gas

- field development is listed in the mandatory schedule (Projects that must be preceded by an EIA) of the EIA Act Cap. E12, Laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
4. The Ogoni environment is already severely stressed and dangerously polluted. This is not a speculative statement, as the UNEP report documented the toxic baseline of Ogoniland. For instance, in Korokoro Oilfield, which you have earmarked First Oil for Q2 2019, the UNEP Environmental Assessment of Ogoniland(2011), popularly known as UNEP Report noted that the soil and groundwater have been contaminated by Total Petroleum Hydrocarbon(THP), at levels greater than 14,000 mg/kg(for topsoil) and 5,000-6,000 mg/kg(for 4-5 meters depth), respectively; all of which exceeded the EGAPSIN threshold. On the security implications, Nigerian Petroleum Development Company (NPDC) OML and the Ogoni Re-entry Project Execution Plan, Gbo Kabaari Ogoni submitted that:
 5. Finally, as stated in our earlier letter to you, Ogoniland and OML 11 have a unique history that cannot be wished away by a mere directive. We hereby re-emphasize our earlier call to you, to put a pause to the process, and commence an extensive and transparent dialogue with the Ogoni people, and all key stakeholders. Picking and isolating a village or a few individuals for “engagement” is a sure recipe for internal crisis in Ogoni, especially given our recent history.
 6. Also, please. Note that the Ogoni situation cannot be solved with your planned concession of mere grass cutting and menial labour contract projects to Ogoni indigenous companies. No, it goes beyond settling a few individuals or interests.

The admonishment of Gbo Kabaari Ogoni is instructive given a meeting between the Honourable Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (HMSPR) with key stakeholders from Ogoniland on the 3rd of May, 2018, in the Ministry of Petroleum Resources, Abuja. Present at the meeting were royal fathers from Ogoni, the Ogoni Youth Congress, MOSOP, Robomichael limited, and Ken Saro Wiwa & Associates. Also, in attendance were the management of NNPC, NPDC, and SPDC.

Meanwhile, a letter dated 20th June 2018, reference COS/HMS/001/Vol.1/03 from the Federal Ministry of Petroleum Resources, Office of the Honourable Minister of State for Petroleum

Resources addressed to Chief Gani Topba, National Coordinator, Ken Saro Wiwa Associates, 6 Kenule Street, Bori, Ogoniland, Rivers State conveyed issues that were discussed and agreed at the meeting thus:

- i. The need to resume crude oil production in Ogoniland. The resumption of crude oil production must be done in concurrence with the ongoing Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) for the remediation and restoration of Ogoniland.
- ii. Subsequent crude oil production should demonstrate strict adherence to environmental standards and rights of the Ogoni people.
- iii. A comprehensive framework for the social and economic development of the Ogoni land should accompany the resumption of crude oil resumption.

As a consequence of the above, the office of the HMSPR initiated another stakeholders' engagement with the Ogoni people to secure their understanding of the framework for the resumption of crude oil production in their land, and you are hereby invited by the Honourable Minister to participate in the Ogoni Stakeholders' engagement scheduled to hold as follows: Date: Monday 9th July 2018, Time: 9.00 am, Venue: The Palace of His Royal Majesty, Gbenemene Tai Kingdom, Korokoro Tai, Local Government Area, Rivers State. The invitation letter was signed by Ms. Oge Funlola Modie, Chief of Staff, for Honourable Minister. Ogonis have been further factionalized along the lines of those in support of the resumption of crude oil production alongside the ongoing clean-up of Ogoniland and those against it.

5.2 Analysis of the Interactions between Issues, Actors,, and Drivers of Insecurity

Structure, agency, collective and individual actions are critical determinants of the course of conflict and the forms and nature insecurity may take (Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution 2017, p. 52). In Rivers State, a political culture shaped by the conceptions of the strategic importance of the state has influenced the contours of political conflicts and insecurity in the state. Historically, Rivers State has been conceived as a prize to be captured by political parties during periodic elections in Nigeria. Inthe strategic political and economic permutation

of both local and national political elite, two reasons can be advanced for this. First, is the unique economic advantage and position of the state as the centre of Nigeria's oil and gas economy. The party that controls the centre has access to controlling additional oil money from Rivers State, especially given the character of Nigerian politics (Onapajo, Francis & Okeke-uzodike, 2015). Second, Rivers State is the sixth populous state in Nigeria and the most populous in the South-South. The population of the state has increased its national electoral and political significance and value, making it a battleground for capture by political parties. In the era of two dominant political parties in Nigeria, namely the All Progressives Congress (APC) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the battle to capture the state in electoral contests has been very violent, especially if the state is led by a different political party from that at the centre. This is a trend that has evolved and is being consolidated in recent times, from 2012 when Amaechi defected to the APC. In the February 2019 presidential election, the battle appeared to have been well fought in Abonnema, where the election turned out to be war. The army of the APC-led federal government clashed with cultists in a gun battle, leading to the death of a soldier and 37 people in Abonnema. In May 2020, Governor Wike compensated the families of those who lost their lives during the violent elections with N450m (National Network, 2020, p.5).

Furthermore, and logically related to the electoral and economic value of the state, governors of Rivers State have developed a political culture of using the state's resources to sponsor and fund presidential ambitions of candidates of any of the dominant political parties since 1999. This sponsorship is directly tied to the political ambitions of the sitting governor. Sir Dr. Peter Odili, started this culture as governor of the state from 1999 to 2007, Rotimi Amaechi 2007-2015, as well as the present governor, Chief Nyesom Wike, who is predictably displaying similar behaviour. Governor Wike is alleged to have been a major sponsor of the PDP, including the 2019 PDP National Convention held in Port Harcourt.

Crucially, this culture of sponsoring political parties at the national level does not only contribute to draining the resources of Rivers State but has also significantly shaped the context, nature, and dynamics of political violence and insecurity in the state. It intensifies political corruption and creates a dialectical negation between democratization

and security in the state on one hand and democratization of disempowerment and poverty on the other. It is against the background of general disempowerment that “cult groups are able to recruit from the large pool of unemployed youth, many of whom are university graduates, frustrated with decades of extreme poverty, underdevelopment, and the lack of job opportunities” (Human Rights Watch 2005, p. 7). Socio-economic conditions of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and hunger are, therefore, critical contextual variables that engender the mobilization of youths and cult groups by the political elite to participate in electoral violence and criminality. The foregoing conditions also influence youths’ participation in violent economies: kidnapping, armed robbery, cultism, and oil and drug trafficking.

Conversely, improving the social and economic conditions and political awareness of the youths has the potential of enhancing the security situations in the state. In the absence of these, the youths become key actors connected to diverse cult groups who control the machinery of violence in the state. However, the political elite, the government, and political parties appear to be the most relevant actors both in the causation and solutions to cultism and sundry criminality in River State.

Small arms are at the centre of political violence as well as cultism and its related dynamics of kidnapping, armed robbery, and oil bunkering activities. Yet, these violent economies provide cash and funds for the purchase of more dangerous weapons. These dynamic exchanges create mutually reinforcing interactions of cultism, violent crime, and arms proliferation. And more fundamentally, since, there is an increasing proliferation of armed cult groups in local communities, the diffusion of weapons into society takes on a more rural character. In many local communities, especially those heavily impacted by cultism, cult boys from 15-30 years, carry and move freely with unlicensed but highly sophisticated weapons such as the AK-47 rifles. These structures and dynamics of small arms proliferation contribute significantly to the militarization and weaponization of rural communities with increasing threats to peace and security of the grassroots. Not the least, because it adds to the complexities of community conflicts and political violence in rural areas.

Also implicated in the insecurity question in Rivers State is the presence of an established illicit drug distribution network across the state. Hard drugs ranging from cannabis (often called Indian hemp to cocaine, heroin, and amphetamines are increasingly available in the streets of Port Harcourt; Bori, Bodo, Tai, Eleme, Abonnema, Ahoada, Omoku, Choba, and communities in Andoni, etc., and abused by the young and some old people. These substances cause serious problems to the users in particular and the society at large. The most common amphetamine-type stimulants and over the counter drug being increasingly abused is codeine. The cult leaders across the communities are also paid to provide security protection for drug traffickers, while street sales require peddlers, packers, watchdogs (surveillance), and assistants to handover the drug to customers. Depending on the peddler, different types of persons are employed. Generally, a large number of youths, between ages 15 and 25 who are hopeless, are recruited into the business. Some of these youths belong to different cult groups. To protect their trade, the drug dealers quickly aligned with cult groups to consolidate their trade zones. The quest for territorial expansion by drug barons and cult leaders necessitated inter-gang invasion of territories to the extent that Port Harcourt that was once safe and secure from violence became exposed to a multiplicity of violent conflicts. Drugs use is of strategic importance to cult and criminal groups operations. Drugs are known to embolden cultists to dastardly attack opponents and sometimes, state security forces. The study revealed that most cultists use one type of drug or another. However, marijuana, alias cannabis is generally used, followed by heroin and codeine. These drugs are cheaper than cocaine, hence very attractive; however only the “big shots” (conflict bourgeoisie) could afford to purchase cocaine. Alcoholic drinks are also used by cultists; for example, before embarking on any operation members of the DeyBam cult drink Chelsea (alcoholic drink) while those who are of the DeyWell cult drink Squadron. The aim is to boost their morale and give them a false sense of courage during violent campaigns. Members of the communities; that are non-members; where these cult groups exist yet consuming the alcoholic drinks known with a particular cult, risk being attacked by the opposing group. The rate at which vulnerable groups among the youths and the old were getting

hooked on illicit drugs is accentuating the cult and other criminal related insecurity in Rivers State.

Furthermore, the emergence and gradual consolidation of the phenomenon of government recognized chiefs in the state reflects another way in which the dynamic interactions between political actors and structures shape the nature and patterns of conflict and insecurity in a mutually reinforcing manner. Successive Rivers State governors, contrary to extant traditional and cultural norms, and acting like the colonial masters of the late 19th century, appoint and recognize some chiefs/kings as it suits their political fancy. Moreover, the government-recognised chiefs tend to act as warrant chiefs, and most often, do the biddings of their benefactors in ways that degrade the traditional leadership institutions. More importantly, in some contexts, both the 'new warrant chiefs' and traditional rulers hardly work together. Relying on social structures of traditional norms and cultures that establish the chieftaincy institutions as their sources of legitimacy, the traditional rulers do contest the power and authorities of the government-recognised chiefs. On the other hand, backed by the state in funding and political recognition, government-recognised chiefs command power and influence. Taken together, the result is a clash of authorities between government-recognised chiefs and traditional leaders, a clash that ultimately leads to chieftaincy/leadership tussles and communal conflicts as in some Ogoni, Etche, and Andoni communities. Resorting to the people's culture in the selection of chiefs will promote stability as in Orashi where cultures and traditions are strong.

Some of the new power elite in local communities who evolved from being militants or cultists are critical players that contribute to the causation of conflict/insecurity in Rivers State (see, for example, Tarila, 2017). Members of this new power elite are repentant cultists or former militant leaders who have assumed positions of power, authority, and influence in the state and local communities as youth leaders, members of Community Development Committees (CDC), political office holders, or even chiefs/ kings. Backed by state authorities and wielding some power (political, traditional, and economic), these actors exercise leadership, and often influence outcomes of peace processes, especially concerning issues of cultism and general insecurity in local communities.

Nevertheless, the territorial expansionist ambitions of these leaders in the control of cult groups are an issue for peace and security in the state.

Lastly, the international oil companies are not exempted from the question of insecurity in the state as they play a major role in local oil politics in the state with a direct bearing on environmental insecurity and economic scarcity in host communities. For instance, Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) has been largely indicted for stoking crises in Rivers State, and their operation in Ogoni specifically is a classic illustration of the logic of accumulation by dispossession (Obi, 2010), which reinforces the interactions of environmental degradation, poverty, and social conflicts. The historic grievances of the Ogoni people against Shell centers on the company's nature of exploitation and infamous attitude towards community rights and environmental security.

5.3 Analysis of Impacts of insecurity and conflicts in Rivers State

The diverse forms of insecurity confronting Rivers State come with severe socio-economic, political, and environmental deficits for government and the communities. For instance, the upsurge in crude oil theft and artisanal refining has continued to pose serious threats to the sustainability of the Nigerian economy and the security of oil-bearing communities. In August 2019, the National Economic Council (NEC) headed by Vice President Yemi Osinbajo alleged that 22.6 million barrels of oil estimated at \$1.35 billion were “stolen” between January and July 2019. In a similar vein, the National Executive Council's Federal Committee on Pipeline Vandalism headed by Governor Godwin Obaseki of Edo State drew attention to Nigeria's potential risk of losing \$2.7 billion worth of oil in two years. Similarly, the Nigeria Natural Resources Charter (NNRC) and the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) put the country's loss to crude oil theft at N4.57 trillion between 2015 and 2018 and \$41.9 billion between 2009 and 2018 respectively (CCSOs, 2020). The country also lost \$41.9 billion between 2009-2018, averaging \$11.47 million/day; \$349 million/month, and \$4.19 billion annually (NEITI, 2019). Details of the losses are as follows: crude losses- \$1.5bn (NNPC); refined products losses- \$1.84bn (NNPC); and crude losses-\$38.54bn. The Nigeria Natural Resources Charter (NNRC) submitted that Nigeria lost N4.57 trillion between 2015

and 2018 while the National Executive Council (NEC) stated that Nigeria lost 22 million barrels of oil valued at \$1.35bn. Although the above figures emanated from official sources, they do not necessarily capture other sources of leakages such as industrial scale over-lifting and other pilfering that happen through official channels. Conservative estimates from some international oil companies (IOCs) (SHELL, Chevron & Agip) self-reporting indicate that Nigeria lost between 150,000b/day-400,000b/d (7.5%-20% of the total production of 2mbd) amounting to \$10.9 billion to oil theft from 2009-2011(NEITI, Undated).

The social impact of oil theft includes a decline in school enrolment figures in the area as many young people have abandoned formal education to become refiners, product marketers, security guards and transporters of stolen crude (UNEP, 2017). This has been backed up by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) 2013 and 2014 school registration reports. Also, the risk to health associated with proximity to oil has terribly impacted the lives of the people in proximate communities. The Niger Delta's public health profile is abysmal in comparison to other regions; life expectancy is just 40 years compared to 54.5 years' national average (CSO, 2020). Social vices such as drug abuse, alcoholism, and prostitution have increased over the years due to activities around crude theft and refining settlements.

More important is that the oil theft economy and artisanal refining engenders significant environmental impact because the process spills substantial quantities of oil into the environment (Naanem, & Tolani, 2014). In addition, the simple and inefficient processing of crude oil leaves a large amount of wastes which would have been much reduced in industrial refining. Industrial experts believe that the crude refining methods by oil thieves can only utilize about 40% of what is stolen. The remainder is treated as waste and dumped into the environment, thereby contributing largely to the environmental devastation of affected areas. Accordingly, Mr. Ikoma Friday, an Assistant Director, Federal Ministry of Environment and Controller of Environment in Port Harcourt, during his interview with the research team stated that the soot pollution experienced in Rivers State is linked to the cooking process in artisanal refining camps across the state and this has constituted an environmental public health disaster in the oil-rich state . Soot causes respiratory

disorder and has been implicated in aggravated asthma among children, heart attacks, and strokes, as well as premature death (Yakubu, 2018).

Furthermore, the hydra-headed menace of cultism, kidnapping, and sea piracy have impacted society negatively in diverse ways. It has destroyed families and decimated the social and cultural fabric that holds society together. In some communities like Asarama in Andoni, festivals like Nwatom has completely collapsed, and it is believed that some deities have moved away from several other Andoni communities due to regular spilling of blood occasioned by cult killings. Economic activities in most coastal communities like Bonny, Bille, Bakana, and Ke have severely been disrupted by the activities of sea pirates who hijack and rob market boats conveying consumable goods from Port Harcourt to these communities. This has resulted in an excessive hike in prices of consumables in coastal communities that are already struggling with pervasive poverty, environmental degradation, and economic hardship. Cultism has also permeated the traditional leadership institutions as cult members have been appointed into the chiefs' council in some communities and villages. In some cases, cultists have seized power and legitimate local authorities in such a way that they have become key stakeholders in the decision making processes of communities, raising questions about the political sociology of these communities. Cultism has also destroyed economic activities. Cult members kidnap people and rape women in the farms; they also engage in sea piracy, leading to the gradual collapse of the local fish economy in the state. Inter-cult supremacy battles including cult invasion of communities have resulted in the death of innocent people, internal displacement, or outright uprooting of the entire community. The cult attack on Kono-Boue community in Ogoni on May 19, 2019, led to the displacement of almost the entire community members and dispersed in several internally displaced persons Camps (IDPs) in Bori for seven months between May-December, 2019 (Ebi, 2019, p17; National Network, 2019, p.8).

5.4 Appraisal of Existing Interventions by Government and Critical Stakeholders to Curtail Insecurity

The Rivers State Government has over the years responded to the worsening insecurity trends in the state through some policies,

programmes and legislation. In September 2004, dialogue commenced to stem the tide of violence, with the leaders of NDPVF and NDV agreeing to disband their militias and discontinue their activities. In keeping with the terms of the agreement, militia members were to receive cash for turning in their weapons voluntarily; however, if they refused to do so, they would face legal sanction. The Dr. Peter Odili government offered USD 1, 800 for an assault rifle. It was doubtful how this amount was arrived at. It was a highly held belief that the amount was highly inflated to satisfy the accumulative propensities of the implementers of the programme. Unfortunately, the total number of arms collected was not known while the amount offered per weapon boosted the small arms market in the state in particular and the Niger Delta region, as militia leaders and cultists sourced arms from elsewhere and sold them back to the government, making a sizeable profit; while some government officials involved in the disarmament process profited by using it to strengthen their private armies. The distribution of funds derived from the arms submission process soon created rifts among the rank and file of the militia groups who accused their masters of keeping the proceeds to themselves rather than sharing the same (Small Arms Survey, 2006). Also, Dr. Peter Odili's administration introduced the anti-cult law of 2004. The law prescribed punishment for any known member or supporter of any cult group. The anti-cult law remains in force today but has been observed more in the breach than obedience hence the increasing threats of cultism.

On his part, the Rt. Hon. Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi's administration in a bid to stem the tide of arm-related violence in 2009 appointed the Rivers State Social Rehabilitation Committee (RSSRC) to rehabilitate all cultists and militants who renounce violence. The Committee in the discharge of its mandate established the Rivers State Social Rehabilitation Institute located at Okehi, Etche. Repentant cultists were sent to Shere Hills in Jos for reorientation and thereafter returned to the institute for skill acquisition training. The overall goal of the programme was to promote sustainable development of young people through rehabilitation and capacity building for self-reliance thereby contributing to the reduction of the incidence of cult violence in the state. Although the first batch successfully graduated, cult wars and armed related violence

continued as the programme did not include the surrender of arms. More so, the leaders of the cult groups did not sign-on to the project.

In a bid to stem the increasing wave of cult-related violence in the state, the incumbent governor, Nyesom Wike in March 2018 assented to the Rivers State Secret Cult and Similar Activities (Prohibition) (Amendment) Law No.6 of 2018, which prescribes the death penalty for any cultist who kills during cult activity and life imprisonment for any cultist apprehended (Ofiebor, 2018; Onuoha, 2020). The Rivers State governor in September 2016 also appointed and constituted the Hon. Ken Chinda led seven-member State Amnesty Committee drawn from the Nigerian Army, the Nigerian Navy, the Nigerian Police, and the Department of State Services (DSS), amongst others. Iriekpen (2016) reported that after the first phase of the Rivers State Amnesty programme on 15 November 2016, Twenty Two Thousand, Four Hundred and Thirty (22, 430) cultists and militants renounced criminality to embrace the programme, while 1, 500 assorted arms, 7,661 assorted ammunition and 147 explosives were surrendered to security personnel in the state. Despite the successes recorded in the form of collection of arms, the unparalleled level of brutality and savagery that characterized the 2019 general elections attests to the fact that Governor Wike's Amnesty programme failed to attain set objectives. The security condition during and immediately after the 2019 general elections seems to approximate the Hobbesian state of nature where life was solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short. In response to the carnage that took place during the 2019 general elections, Governor Nyesom Wike appointed a high powered committee headed by the deputy governor, Dr. Ipalibo Banigo to (1) identify those killed during the February 23 2019, Presidential and National Assembly elections in Abonnema, Akuku Toru Local Government Area; (2) identify the soldiers who died during the Presidential and National Assembly Election and March 2, 2019 killings; (3) identify the bereaved families and (4) identify damaged property affected by the election crisis so that the Rivers State Government will offer the required assistance for their repair. The committee had since submitted its report on the basis of which the state government released the sum of four hundred and fifty million naira (N450 Million) to be disbursed for the afore-stated purposes.

Earlier in 2018, the government of Chief Nyesom Wike established the Neighborhood Watch Agency, a state-backed vigilante institution to fight crime and the scourge of cultism in the state. The APC-led Federal Government in Abuja allegedly ordered the military to stop the training of the operatives that was ongoing in Nonwa in Tai Local Government Area in November 2018. The reason for the action of the military, according to Dr. Uche Chukwuma, the Director-General, Neighbourhood Watch Agency during an interview with him at his office in Port Harcourt was based on unfounded allegations by the state APC that Governor Wike was training a private militia group under the guise of establishing a state vigilante structure, which was to be used in prosecuting his gubernatorial ambitions in the March 2019 general elections. Although the state government went to court to challenge the actions of the federal government and won, it appeared that the contradictions of the forces of partisan politics that frustrated the effective take-off of the agency as evident in the actions of the military also undermined the continuity of its operation in the aftermath of the court's verdict. The above notwithstanding, the Rivers State government in collaboration with the security outfits established, and currently funds another intervention outfit code-named '*Operation Sting*' to fight crime and insecurity in the state.

Beyond the intervention of the state government, there have been collective efforts at the community and local government area levels aimed at curtailing security challenges drawing strength from their cultural and traditional norms. Community responses to cultism have centered on the administration and invocation of traditional oaths on cultists in local communities. Oaths are administered by chiefs to cultists upon their public renunciation of cultism in communities. Generally, the strategy of oath-taking has not been effective. This notwithstanding, the establishment and success stories of Ogba/Ndoni/Egbema Security, Peace and Advisory Committee (OSPAC) and Akpor Security, Peace and Advisory Committee (ASPAC) in addressing cult-relate violence and other criminal activities in their domains are evidence of progress in this regard. The erstwhile Caretaker Chairman of ONELGA, Barrister Osi Olisa established the OSPAC with Dr. Maxwell Ahakwo appointed as its pioneer chairman and commander to curtail the rising insecurity perpetrated by cultists in the area. While OSPAC was established

through a bye-law of the ONELGA council, its operatives swore by traditional oaths to perform their services creditably. OSPAC currently operates in six local government areas of the state including ONELGA, Ikwerre, Emuoha, Obio/Akpor, Etche, and Andoni. These local governments have enjoyed relative peace, security, and stability due largely to the activities and presence of the OSPAC vigilante group. However, OSPAC has its own structural, logistic, and operational challenges. For example, OSPAC security operatives are largely repentant cultists. They are also involved in instant justice that violates the rights of suspects to claim innocence until proven otherwise by a competent court of the land. The OSPAC has been accused of perpetrating several extrajudicial killings with a resemblance of the Bakassi days in South-East Nigeria. This has increasingly resulted in reprisal killings of OSPAC members by cult gangs and, in some cases, outright banishment of OSPAC activities in some communities where it was alleged innocent people were killed by the OSPAC vigilante group.

6. Conclusion

The problem of insecurity is a consequence of the interplay of a web of political, economic, social, and cultural conditions and processes that generate and sustain violent conflicts in the state. These conflicts may be on a small or large scale; they may occur within and among groups, communities, or organizations; and may be triggered by ethnic, political, or economic differences, or arise from differences in values, beliefs, and attitudes regarding issues. Insecurity in River State has manifested in diverse forms such as political violence, sea piracy, oil theft, and artisanal refining, cultism and related crimes of kidnapping, armed robbery, arms, and drug trafficking, as well as armed inter/intracommunity conflicts arising from chieftaincy tussles and competition for environmental resources.

Increasing political competition in the state and the criminalization of the Niger Delta struggle by militia capitalists created a violent economy where cultists, militants, criminal gangs thrive, and perpetrate acts of criminality and state-sponsored violence for selfish economic and political gains. It is the same bitter politics between the leader of APC in the state, and Minister of Transportation, Rt. Hon Chibuike Amaechi

and Governor Nyesom Wike that has frustrated the effective implementation of mitigation approaches such as the inability of the state to kick-off with the Neighbourhood Watch Agency since its establishment in 2018. Only recently, Governor Wike and the PDP alleged that Abuja-based APC stalwarts are planning to stoke violence in the state as part of a grand plot to invoke a state of emergency rule by the Federal Government in Rivers State. The trend in the spate of armed political violence in the state as witnessed in the 2015 and 2019 general elections has earned the state an unenviable '*Rivers of Blood*' tag in Nigeria's public opinion space.

Given the above, a psycho-cultural reorientation of the outlook of the state's political class, in particular, is inevitable. The implication here is that there is a need to rehabilitate politics in Rivers State and Nigeria as a moral force for social change and social justice. Besides, the political class must demonstrate the political will to curb the menace of insecurity in the state by dismantling the economy of violence through a genuine effort at discontinuing all forms of rewards and incentives for violence and criminal actors while utilizing the instrumentality of the state to enforce strict sanctions and punishments on criminals, militants, and cultists.

7. Policy Recommendations

Based on the foregoing, the following recommendations are put forward to the various stakeholders in Rivers State:

a. Government.

- i. Socio-economic empowerment is key because the study shows that some of the challenges of insecurity are necessitated by massive youth unemployment and lack of socio-economic development. Consequently, there is an urgent need for the promotion of community development programmes and access to refined petroleum products, especially in coastal communities.
- ii. Some of the sponsors of cult and electoral violence have been identified by state security agents yet, the government has not deemed it necessary to bring them to book by charging them to court

following the State's Anti-Cult Law and other related statutory laws. There should be no sacred cows in the task of curbing armed violence in Rivers State. Hence, the government and security operatives must strive to be firm at all times and ensure that those found culpable face the law.

- iii. Future disarmament of cultists and militants should be based on a sustainable package of amnesty, job creation, and placement programmes, and law enforcement initiatives should not be predicated on biased information about the actual culprits.
- iv. As preparation for the 2023 general elections approaches and party electoral activities intensify, there is the possibility of recurrence of electoral violence on a larger and more decimating scale, with unregulated electioneering campaign, accelerating this anticipated implosion of electoral violence. Hence, the need to channel electioneering campaign away from their historic disruptive role in the electoral process to a supportive role for the democratic process and its consolidation in the state. To this end, the government should emphasize the need for political parties to develop and enforce an electoral code of conduct for party officials and candidates, especially in respect of electioneering campaigns.
- v. The federal government should introduce electronic voting system to minimize or reduce the role and political significance of cult groups in rigging elections in Nigeria. The disengagement of cult groups and cult members from the political and electoral process will diminish political support, backing, and patronage of politicians for the former. INEC is planning to use electronic voting in 2020 in the Edo and Ondo elections. Advocacy must be geared in this direction to pressure INEC to implement electronic voting nationally.
- vi. There is a need to increase civic awareness on the part of the electorate about their rights and obligations in the electoral process generally, thereby, enhancing public commitment to uphold, defend and strengthen the sanctity of the electoral process.
- vii. State government should discontinue the implementation of ad-hoc amnesty to cultists and establish an agency that will provide a structured response to small arms control in terms of Disarmament,

Demobilization and Rehabilitation (DDR) programming and research on arms proliferation in addition to the strengthening of state-level security outfits such as the OSPAC and Neighborhood Watch.

- viii. The government should embark on boundary demarcation and adjustments in areas identified as flashpoints and potential trouble spots.
- ix. Deepen the democratization process, through the incorporation of excluded groups, which have historically been denied access to political power at all levels -federal, state, and local government and in doing so, create informed, a strong and durable consensus across ethnocultural lines, across party lines, and social stratification or status lines in the state.
- x. There is a need to evolve or create viable and sustainable institutions that will deepen the democratic process along the lines charted above.

b. Multinational/Indigenous Oil Companies.

- i. Part of the problem derives from the harmful business and environmental practices of major oil companies operating in the area. It is, therefore, important that these companies clean up oil spills immediately and end gas flaring, support conservation, and environmental restoration activities in impacted communities.
- ii. The companies should commence payment of special compensation to communities devastated by environmental degradation occasioned by oil prospecting and exploitation.
- iii. Partnership with genuine community stakeholders (that is devoid of primordial incentives to militia warlords and cult leaders) for surveillance of oil facilities (pipelines).
- iv. Adoption of technology, including the use of surveillance drones to monitor pipeline vandalization and movement of crude oil.
- v. Communities routinely complain of non-implementation of memoranda of understanding between them and the oil companies. Consequently, companies should honour such agreements. Against

this backdrop, SPDC should honour the existing MoU between her and Aminigboko community and to conduct stakeholders meeting with Aminigboko community before the commencement of ENWHE FIELD Development Project-GBARAN PHASE 3.

- vi. Nigeria Petroleum Development Company (NPDC) should adhere to the proposal of Gbo Kabari Ogoni to cash-in on the “genuine opportunity to robustly engage all stakeholders” before coming up with a comprehensive re-entry plan and a sustainable development blueprint that is acceptable to Ogoni people and all stakeholders in respect of OML 11 which production activities stopped about 26 years ago.
- vii. Nigerian Agip oil company should as a matter of urgency meet with Umuokilide and Umuochidepelu its landlords in Ukpeliedde town of Ahoada West Local Government Area to address their grievances to avoid the looming showdown between the host communities and the company.
- viii. The wanton destruction of communities, properties, and violation of human rights of communities’ people emanated from invitations of “state security forces to maintain law and order”. To ensure re-entry and build confidence, oil companies should desist from using and endorsing the heavy-handed military approach to the resolution of communities-companies’ disputes.

c. Communities

- i. Community leaders have a responsibility to assist the authorities to ensure peace by refusing to allow the establishment of crude oil cooking camps and cult/criminal gangs’ operational camps in their communities.
- ii. Contestants for chieftaincy spaces should desist from recruiting and arming community youths and contracting cultists in their struggles for access and control of the chieftaincy space and also demobilize their “private armies” wherever they exist.
- iii. There is an urgent need for community leaders to rebuild community governance institutions to promote transparency and accountability

in the management of funds and other benefits accruing to communities

- iv. Participation is not easy to achieve in communities where there are marked hierarchical relationships. The challenge is to mainstream socially excluded groups in community administration. Consequently, concerted efforts should be made to promote participatory and inclusive governance by communities' leaders especially, the inclusion of socially disadvantaged groups such as women, youths, and people with disabilities in the decision-making process.
- v. Governance by communities' leaders especially, the inclusion of socially disadvantaged groups such as women and youth in the decision-making process.

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Appendices

Table 1: Recent Trends in Kidnapping in Rivers State

Date	Description	Location	L.G.A
May 17, 2020	Four-man robbery gang apprehended using a red Golf said to be terrorising residents.	D-Line, Diobu	Port Harcourt City
April 21, 2020	One member of “Ghana Police” robbery gang arrested.	Diobu	Port Harcourt City
April 9, 2020	A suspected truck driver beat and stabbed Rivers State task force personnel to death.	Trans Amadi	Port Harcourt City
March 18, 2020	Four unknown gunmen attacked and shot one person. They stormed Illoabuchi attacked a member of the Diobu vigilante.	D-Tiger street Mile 2, Diobu	Port Harcourt City
March, 2020	Men of Operation Sting in the Rivers State Police Command has arrested a suspected leader of a militia group operating as a local vigilante who are alleged to be involved in criminal activities. That the leader has been using fake letter headed paper of the police to recruit more than 500 persons across the three Kalabari	Bakana	Degema

	speaking Local Government Areas and Diobu axis of Port Harcourt. Items recovered from his office were more than 100 passports belonging to applicants, 82 recruitment forms and 74 police emblem crested berets.		
February 14, 2020	A popular DJ, popularly known as DJ Wheelz shot dead by assailants resulting from robbing him.	Elekahia	Port Harcourt City
January, 2020	A suspected GSM phone thief apprehended and almost lynched before arrival of the police.	Mile 3	Port Harcourt City
January 11, 2020	An officer of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) was killed by unknown gunmen.	Rukpokwu community	Obio/Akpor
January 10, 2020	A vigilante personnel who keeps watch at Abuja shot by gunmen suspected to be armed robbers.	Mile 3, Diobu	Port Harcourt City
November, 2019	Operatives of the Anti-Robbery Squad of the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID)		

	<p>have arrested the leader of a criminal gang specialized in car snatching in the state and its environs. A Toyota Camry car with registration number: Abuja GWA248 YK and another Toyota Corrola car with registration number: RLU 386 KM was recovered from the criminals.</p>		
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Source: Compiled by author

Table 2: Recent Trends in Armed Robbery in Rivers State

Date	Description	Location	L.G.A
May 1, 2020	Men of the Anti-Kidnapping Unit of the Rivers State Police Command exhumed decomposing corpses of three undergraduates of the University of Port Harcourt.	Eto	Eleme
April, 2020	A notorious kidnapper killed by police. Items recovered from the camp include one GPMG, G-3 rifles, one SMG rifle, one rocket launcher, five pump action guns, 933 rounds of 7.62mm live ammunition, and 3,249 cartridges.	Ogoni-Uyo axis of the East-West road	Ogu-Bolo
March 7, 2020	One Mr. Joseph Osademe kidnapped alongside his wife by four armed men and rescued by police	Rumuokoro	Port Harcourt City

March 6, 2020	The Rivers State Police Command in collaboration with the Nigerian Army led to the killing of a wanted kidnapper, Ekeni-Ore-Owaji Titus Sunday, popularly known as 'Small Witch'. The spokesperson of the Rivers State Police Command, Mr. Nnamdi Omoni revealed that the gang led by 'Small Witch' was responsible for the kidnap of two policemen, ASP Godwin Anwuri and Sergeant Gift Ojimini alongside their boat driver, Festus Friday who were abducted along Ngo River in November 2019 and were held for three months. In addition, the police recovered ammunitions from the gang including five magazines, one AK47 containing about 120 live	Asarama community	Andoni
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	ammunition, and a wooden gun.		
March, 2020	Four persons were kidnapped including a member of the ONELGA Security Peace and Advisory Committee (OSPAC).). It is reported that more than 60 persons have been killed by hoodlums in Ubara and Owube since 2017	Owube and Ubarama communities	Ahaoda West
March, 2020	Kidnap victim killed and suspects apprehended. The victim is a Port Harcourt based Lawyer and a former Governorship Aspirant in Rivers State, Soalabo West.	Eneka-Igbo Etche	Etche
February, 2020	It was reported that kidnapping has been rampant as people	Obagi and Oboburu	Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni

	are attacked and kidnapped at home and in their farms. This is coming as the Onelga Security Planning and Advisory Committee (OSPAC) is increasing its efforts in curbing insecurity in the area.	communities	
February, 2020	Some elderly persons including women were reportedly kidnapped in their farmlands. It was revealed that ransom was paid for the victims to be released.	Idu Osobile community	Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni
January 29, 2020	A Port Harcourt High Court sentenced two men to life imprisonment for kidnapping in 2012.		Port Harcourt City
January 26, 2020	A real estate magnate kidnapped alongside his guest and a taxi driver. Two policemen, a sergeant and	Bonny Island	Bonny

	corporal were shot during the operation leading to the death of the corporal.		
January 25, 2020,	On a GSM phone repairer, arrested in connection with kidnap syndicate.	Bori	Port Harcourt City
January, 2020	Meanwhile, one Mr Williams Ebulefu, a Chief Priest of a deity has been arraigned at a Rivers State Magistrate court sitting in Port Harcourt for providing medical assistance to kidnapping suspects. Ebulefu was alleged to have removed a bullet from the body of a suspected kidnapper, Charles Orlu who is standing trial before the court on a three-count charge of murder, cultism and kidnapping.		Etche
January, 2020	Two Police Officers, Gift Ojimini and Godwin Anwuri and a boat driver, Festus Friday have been		Andoni

	released by their captors almost 3 months after they were abducted. They were kidnapped while on patrol along the Ngo River on the 8 th of October 2019.		
November 28, 2019	A woman kidnapped and her corpse found days later.	Rumuosi	Port Harcourt City
November, 2019	A joint operation by the Nigerian Army and local vigilante led to the killing of three kidnapers and three others who sustained serious gunshot wounds.	Elele Alimini community	Emouha
October 6, 2019	Men of the Bori police station killed notorious 35 years old kidnapper, Linus Lebari who went by the alias 'Devil' or 'Bobby' when his camp was raided by the police.	Okwale forest	Khana
October 1, 2019	'Operation Sting' killed one notorious kidnapper, Mr	Ndele axis of the East West	Emouha

	Ekweme Brown who went by the alias 'Lucifer' or 'Satan' who is alleged to be responsible for the kidnappings and hijacking of commercial buses	road	
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Source: Compiled by authors

Table 3: Recent Trends in Oil Bunkering and Artisanal Refining in Rivers State

DATE	DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	L.G.A
May 12,2020	Some maritime assets allegedly involved in oil bunkering activities were handed over to the Port Harcourt Zonal Office of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) for further investigation. The equipment comprising a Motor Vessel Rock 1, Barge Julianah and two unmanned metal barges laden with unspecified quantities of illegally refined Automotive Gas Oil were handed over to the Commission by the Nigerian Navy Ship Pathfinder.	Onne,	Elemo
May, 2020	The Nigerian Navy revealed it has destroyed a total of 2,287 illegal refineries in the last five years. Making the disclosure during a press briefing to mark the Nigerian Navy 64 th Anniversary at the Naval Headquarters, the Chief of Policy and Plans, Rear Admiral Ifeola Mohammed, stated that the Service has drastically reduced illegal oil dealings in the Nigerian Maritime environment from 2017 to 2019.		Port Harcourt City
March, 2020	Governor Nyesom Wike inaugurated a high-powered Technical Committee saddled with the responsibility of carrying out scientific investigation and proffering necessary abatement measures.		Port Harcourt City
January, 2020	The Nigeria’s National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA) in its latest report said it recorded 219 cases of pipeline vandalism in Rivers State in the year 2019 with devastating pollution of the environment.		Port Harcourt City
January 10,2020	The Nigerian Navy handed over 9 suspected oil thieves to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). The suspects were arrested on December 1, 2019 lifting		

	stolen crude on a vessel named MT Lady Ochy along the Sombriero River.		
October, 2019	Nigerian Army raided and destroyed 11 illegal refineries and 13 storage tanks. The Nigeria Army Operations Media Coordinator, Colonel Illiyasu Aminu revealed that the operation was undertaken by the troops of 343 Artillery Regiment after it arrested a truck with Registration number EPE 24 XG loaded with stolen crude. Other items recovered from the suspected oil thieves include two boats loaded with 3,200 litres of illegally refined petroleum products, three metal tanks containing refined products, one speed boat mounted with 75 horse power engine, four Cotonou boats, three welding machines, three generating sets, one gas cylinder, two iron plates, eight iron pipes, five pumping machines, and seven boilers under construction.	Elele Alimini	Emouha
October, 2019	The Nigerian army is currently conducted mop up exercise with swamp boogies to destroy illegal artisanal refining and oil bunkering camps in the locality.		Akuku-Toru
October, 2019	The Nigerian army has invaded a sea pirate hideout, leading to recovery of arms and ammunitions.	Ogu	Ogu Bolo

Source: Compiled by authors

Table 4: Recent Trends Police Brutality in Rivers State

DATE	DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	L.G.A
10 MAY, 2020	Moreover, on Sunday, 10 th May, 2020, at Rumuodara junction by East-West road, men of the Rivers State COVID-19 Task Force accosted service providers working with the Rivers State Waste Management Agency (RIWAMA) who were on essential service of keeping the State clean. The Task Force members molested the waste management service providers, inflicting deep cuts on their heads with machetes. The RIWAMA boss, Bro Felix Obuah has condemned the continued unwarranted attacks, arrests and detention of service providers working with the agency.	Rumuodara	Obio/Akpor
April 21, 2020	A policewoman shot dead by another police officer, while enforcing the COVID-19 lockdown order.	Eneka	Obio/Akpor
January 11, 2020	An officer of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) was killed by unknown gunmen.	Rukpokwu community	Obio/Akpor
January, 2020	Men of the ‘Eagle Crack’ team attached to the Mile 1 police division wrongfully arrested and tortured 5 men killing one. The four apprentices’ technicians popularly known as the ‘Ikoku 4’ who were arrested along with the deceased auto-mechanic Chima Ikwunado are demanding adequate compensation for the alleged dehumanizing treatment they received while in the custody of team E-Crack of the	Ikoku	Port Harcourt City

	Nigerian Police Force, Rivers State Command. The victims SMr. Victor Ogbonna, Osaze Friday, Ifeanyi Onyekwere and Ifeanyi Osuji are also insisting that their abductors be persecuted in line with the laws of the land. Meanwhile, the Rivers State Police Command has appealed to the family of the late Chima Ikwunado who was tortured to death by the E-Crack team to have an out-of-court settlement.		
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Source: Compiled by Authors

Table 5: Recent Trends in Sea Piracy in Rivers State

DATE	DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	L.G.A
JUNE 4, 2020	A passenger boat coming from Abonnema Wharf in Port Harcourt to Ke community was attacked along the Namasibi waterways of the New Calabar River.	Ke	Degema
JUNE 3, 2020	A passenger boat was hijacked by sea pirates along the Ke waterways in Degema LGA, a nursing mother and her baby were among passengers taken away by the pirates	Ke	Degema
May 12, 2020	Troops of the Nigerian Army raided and destroyed an identified pirates/militants hideouts killing two of the militants. The troops recovered one AK47 rifle and seven magazines, one pump action rifle, one pistol and magazine. Other weapons recovered include one round of 7.62 mm NATO ammunition and 102 rounds of 7.62mm special ammunition, three rounds of 9mm ball ammunition and one live cartridge. In addition, one camouflage uniform, one head gear, one speed boat and four 85 Horse Power engines were also recovered during the operation.	Arugbanama community	Bonny
April 16, 2020	Sea pirates with a speed boat engine of 200 horse power attacked a vessel along the New Calabar River.	Bakana	Degema
April 6, 2020	12 seater passenger speed boat from Port Harcourt en-route Bakana was intercepted by sea pirates who robbed the occupants and made away with their boat while dumping them in the swamps.	Bakana	Degema
February 11, 2020	Men of the Nigerian military besieged the community on two military gunboats, several speed boats in search	Ke Community	Degema

	of suspected sea pirates. Several persons were reported dead as the community is locked out by the military as there is neither entry nor exit.		
January, 2020	Local Government Authorities have purchased gun boats for the marine Police to aid patrol and secure the waterways for travellers.	Bonny	Bonny
December 8, 2019	Eleven corpses were discovered in a boat by security agents patrolling. An assault rifle was discovered alongside the corpses and locals told newsmen that the victims were travellers killed by pirates.	Jerusalem Creek, Ke Clan	Degema
December 4, 2019	Sea pirates seized nineteen (19) expatriates on board of a vessel loaded with Bonny Light crude oil.		Bonny
November 2, 2019	Two passenger boats en-route to Port Harcourt were attacked by sea pirates. Two passengers were killed and several others wounded. The pirates carted away with the boats and their personal belongings. A third boat sent to rescue the passengers was shot at and sunk into the river by the sea pirates.	Bakana	Degema
September 26, 2019	Two passenger boats were attacked simultaneously along the water way, where passengers were robbed and two persons were abducted, including a serving Councilor in the local government.		Bonny

Source: Compiled by Authors

Table 6: Recent Trends in Cult Violence in Rivers State

DATE	DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	L.G.A
JUNE 11, 2020	Suspected cultists numbering about 8 raided Olokuma community looting monies and goods from shops and petty traders worth over N200,000	Olokuma	Ahaoda West
JUNE 2020	A notorious cultist and kidnapper, General Odieroke David has ordered his community Owube, to pay the sum of N500,000 within seven days or desert the area, stressing that any failure to abide by the two conditions will attract death. David has been terrorizing the community over the last three years.	Owube	Ahaoda West
MAT 29,2020	Suspected cultists assassinated one Mr. Chima Wagu, Financial Secretary to Omuma Community, in Igwuruta Kingdom, Ikwerre LGA. He was shot and murdered in cold blood by 3 armed men while on his block industry along Owuru Okemini Farm Road.	Omuma-Igwuruta	Ikwerre LGA
May 9, 2020	One Deybam confraternity dead. The ordeal started when a Deybam gang member reportedly robbed a pregnant woman of her handset and money which angered some factional member of the gang who then seized the suspect and tortured him to death.	Mile 2, Diobu	Port Harcourt City
May 2020	Soldiers in search of cultists terrorising the area. The military men arrived Andoni with over six gunboat razing a house suspected to be the hideout of one of the cult groups.	Dema, Ibotirem, Ajakajak, Otuaful, Udungama and Samanga Communities	Andoni
April 8, 2020	Cult members belonging to the Deybam and Deywell gangs had a clash resulting from a struggle for control of the market and extortion.	Mile 3, Diobu	Port Harcourt City
April 2020	A member of the Omoku Security, Peace and Advisory Committee (OSPAC) was killed. Greenlanders cult group allegedly killed the OSPAC member while inflicting injuries on innocent people. Also destroying properties. The cultists also shot one a member of the	Ubarama community	Ahoada West

	community and attacked the former traditional ruler.		
March 8, 2020	Five persons were shot dead. Also, an ex-cultist known as Legbosi who recently denounced cultism and surrendered his weapons to the police has alleged that politicians are behind the rising spate of cultism and violence in Ogoni land. He reiterated that politicians arm cultists to secure their interests as most of the cultists could not afford to purchase arms.	Gwara community	Khana
March 2020	Suspected members of 'Small Witch's gang regrouped and launched a reprisal attack, the hometown of Uche Secondus, the National Chairman of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Several houses were destroyed in the attack including the houses of Uche Secondus and Engr. Tele Ikuru, a former Deputy Governor of Rivers State.	Ikuru Town	Andoni
February 14, 2020	About seven persons were shot dead.	Okpororo-Ogbakiri community	Emouha
February 10, 2020	Seven persons shot dead and several others injured.	Igbodo, Amaku-Mba Agbalu, Etche	Etche
February 4, 2020	Four persons were killed. It was revealed that the gunmen were on a reprisal attack following several cult clashes in the area.	Aleto and Agbochia communities	Eleme
February 2020	Some cultists in Zarkpor community led by Mr Legbosi has denounced cultism and surrendered their arms to the Police Command at Bori Division. Mr Legbosi however expressed fears that his opponent one Mr. Ella who also leads a rival cult gang is yet to submit their weapons.	Zarkpor community	Khana
February 2020	Community indigenes sent a Save Our Soul (SOS) message to the Rivers State Government over incessant killings in the community arising from clashes from rival gangs. That one Lale Alaboy who is the leader of the Iceland gang is responsible for the attacks that have led to the killing of several persons in the community including the Youth President of the community who was	Ebubu community	Eleme

	recently butchered to death.		
January 13, 2020	Cultists killed and beheaded three (3) members of the Odegu Security and Advisory Planning Committee (OSPAC) and a commercial motorcyclist	Rumuodogo community	Emouha.
January 8, 2020	Buildings belonging to rival members set ablaze.	Kereke-Boue community	Khana
January 2020	Three persons killed and the Paramount Ruler house burnt down resulting from a face-off between suspected cultists and the Odegu Security and Advisory Planning Committee (OSPAC).	Egbeda community	Emouha
January 2020	Four persons have been killed by men suspected to be members of the Odegu Security and Advisory Planning Committee (OSPAC). This is believed to be a reprisal attack following the killing of the four OSPAC members in the area. There has been increased tension over the last few weeks between the security outfit and cultists in the area.	Egbeda Community	Emouha
December 14, 2019	Icelander cult leader known as “Skillywa” has been killed by the Ubima Security and Advisory Planning Committee (UBISPAC). The clash between the vigilante and the cult group occurred after the cult leader and his group invaded the community; however, the cultists were overpowered by the UBISPAC.	Ubima community	Ikwerre
December 7, 2019	A final-year student in Rivers State University raped and stabbed to death by unknown assailants.		Port Harcourt City
December 7, 2019	ONELGA Security Planning and Advisory Committee (OSPAC) shot and killed more than ten persons.	Okomoko, Egwi and Chokocho communities	Etche
December 5, 2019	The leader of the Omerelu Security Planning and Advisory Committee (OSPAC) was attacked by group of cultists.	Omerelu community	Ikwerre
November 2019	The Secretary of the APC in the LGA, Mr. Success Amefule and another member of the APC, Mr Harrison Nwosu has been arrested for cultism.		Omuma

<p>November, 2019</p>	<p>Six suspected cultists from the Iceland extraction has been arrested and paraded by operatives from State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID). The six suspects were reported to have been terrorising the area and they were also responsible for the killing of a PDP chieftain, Chief Nwozuruaka Anele.</p>	<p>Alakahia community</p>	<p>Obio Akpor</p>
<p>October 16, 2019</p>	<p>Khana Local Government Council Chairman, Hon. Lahteh Loolo granted amnesty to over one thousand warring youths and cultists after they surrendered their arms and ammunition to security agencies. The weapons surrendered by the repentant cultists include nine AK 47, one Barret Pistol, two K2 rifle, one FMC rifle, two pump action, one multi-purpose machine gun, twenty one AK 47 magazine as well as two K2 rifle magazine.</p>		<p>Khana</p>
<p>October, 2019</p>	<p>Communities have been sacked by extensive clashes between rival cult gangs. The proliferation of gang violence in Ogoniland has been attributed to the limited presence of security forces in the area, as only one Divisional Police Outfit operating from Bori is servicing the whole Local Government Area. It was also revealed that the increasing intensity of cultism in the area is as a result of the complicity of some traditional rulers in the area who are also alleged to be cult members themselves.</p>	<p>Kono Boue, Taaba</p>	<p>Khana</p>
<p>September 19, 2019</p>	<p>The Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) arrested a serial killer who is also a member of the Deybam cult gang.</p>		<p>Port Harcourt City</p>

Source: Compiled by Authors

General Conclusion

Celestine Oyom Bassey, Tarila Marclint Ebiede, and Judith Burdin Asuni

Transcending Insecurity in the South-South Zone

This empirical survey of the six states of the South-South zone has provided systemic insight into the deep structural and psycho-cultural factors driving the pervasive insecurity in Nigeria's Niger Delta region. As explained in the introduction to this volume, the studies have outlined the multiple factors that account for the structural conditions perpetuating unemployment, crime, youth restiveness, and catastrophic existential crisis in the region. In varying degrees, the studies identified low-capacity governance, systemic corruption, lack of transparency and accountability, weak laws and order/security infrastructure, social decadence, and elite connivance as key factors behind the prevailing insecurity of lives and property in the zone.

All six studies point to the weak law enforcement capacity in the South-South zone. The reports indicate that there is a crisis of leadership at all levels of society, predisposing communities, and individuals to self-help which sometimes results in crime and violent conflicts. The lack of leadership also affects the ability of institutions within the security sector to deliver their mandate. In addition to a lack of leadership, there is also a lack of capacity within these institutions. Security institutions have limited capacity to address insecurity across the region. It was observed that the Nigerian government placed significant emphasis on the security of oil industry facilities. Human security is neglected.

As evident in the study, the complex social and political factors sustaining the crisis of insecurity in the South-South zone have multiple roots. Instead, the analysis in each chapter shows that there are multiple drivers of insecurity in each of the states. Comparatively, it is also evident in the chapters that there are similarities and linkages between drivers of insecurity in all states. The relevant highlights of the study are summarised below:

i. Akwa Ibom State in Brief

- The report shows that the vectors of insecurity in Akwa Ibom State mainly emanate from the realm of governance. They include issues such as unemployment, political and infrastructural marginalization, lack of basic amenities, corruption. The major issues of insecurity in the state are sea piracy, cultism, communal and land disputes, protests and youth restiveness, armed violence, kidnapping, child trafficking, and drug abuse.
- The major actors that carry out acts of violence that drive insecurity are male youth groups. These acts of violence are carried out in the context of cultism, militancy, piracy, violent protest, rape, and kidnapping for ransom. There is also a growing number of females who indulge in child trafficking and drug abuse. Politicians and traditional rulers are involved in perpetuating insecurity as patrons of violent youth groups. Politicians and traditional rulers are often patrons who use violence carried out by youths to perpetuate themselves in power or to influence electoral outcomes.

ii. Bayelsa State in Brief

- Insecurity in Bayelsa State is an outcome of a set of complex interconnected and mutually reinforcing factors. The insecurity is largely enabled through the renewed dimensions of violent conflicts associated with youth-based restiveness such as militancy, sea piracy, kidnapping, illicit oil bunkering/artisanal refining, attacks on military personnel, military invasion of communities, armed robbery, cultism, drug trafficking, inter-communal environmental resource conflict and intra-communal leadership and resource management crises.
- Several categories of actors influence the security landscape and outcomes in Bayelsa State. While some actors are actively involved in violent conflicts such as young men and women clustered as youth groups, cult gangs, militants, and ex-militants. Other actors associated with the prevalence of violence in Bayelsa State are politicians, community leaders, and international oil companies (IOCs). It is

reported that politicians provide finances and arms for active actors such as youth groups. IOCs are implicated through their influence in community politics and unintended outcomes of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects that tends to create divisions within communities.

iii. Cross River State in Brief

- Cross River State has a history of insecurity ranging from communal conflicts, cultism, political violence, kidnapping, and armed robbery, transitioning of street children to criminality, militancy and piracy, internal displacement, neglect, and statelessness (especially in the Bakassi area). There is also an emerging host communities – refugees and farmer-herder conflicts. The research also identified a growing influx of unidentified and undocumented young men migrating in large groups from northern Nigeria and the widespread availability and use of narcotics as indicators of insecurity. To a large extent, the issue of the movement of unidentified and undocumented young men is a problem of perception. This perception by indigenes of Cross River is fuelled by the increasing insecurity associated with itinerant herdsmen across Nigeria. Although this is perception, its growing traction in the minds of the people creates an environment of insecurity for both the local people and the migrant groups in the state. The traction of this perception fuels tension that sometimes escalates into violence at the local level.
- The actors involved in insecurity in Cross Rivers, as identified in the study, include cultists, politicians, kidnappers, traditional rulers, pirates, militants, Skolombo, and Lacacera youths. Specifically, young people associated with the Skolombo and Lacacera groups are involved in the perpetuation of street crimes in metropolitan areas such as Calabar.

iv. Delta State in Brief

- Historically, Delta State is known as one of the hotbeds of militancy in the Niger Delta region. The state has experienced decades of ethnic-based socio-economic activism. This contributed to the outbreak of armed and non-violent resistance in the Niger Delta. The present report identified issues that go beyond armed militancy. The report shows that the landscape of insecurity in Delta State is shaped by armed robbery, internet fraud gangs, oil bunkering, land, and communal disputes,

farmer-herders conflict, militancy, and piracy. In the study, issues around structural violence were also identified as being drivers of insecurity. Such issues include lack of infrastructural development in rural communities, corruption, and lack of opportunities for young people.

- Three main actors were identified as drivers and perpetrators of violence, conflict, and insecurity in Delta State: actors (complicit security officers, negligent government officials/political leaders, community committees and groups armed and sponsored by political leaders), criminal actors (killer/violent militants, restive youths and other criminal groups); corporate actors – international oil companies (IOCs), and oil industry contractors. The most powerful of these actors are the political actors due to their influence and control over state resources and institutions such as the security agencies and courts.

v. Edo State in Brief:

- The report identified inter-communal land boundary conflicts, land grabbing, attacks by herdsmen, political (electoral) violence, kidnapping for ransom, internet fraud, human trafficking, chieftaincy tussle, and armed robbery as the main sources of insecurity in Edo State.
- Key actors identified in the landscape of insecurity in Edo State include cultists, kidnappers, armed robbers, cyber fraudsters, and herders. However, both formal and informal political actors such as politicians, religious leaders, and traditional rulers who are supposed to reinforce security and mitigate violence have colluded with non-state violent actors to undermine peace.

vi. Rivers State in Brief:

- Despite the reduction of armed insurgency and militancy in the state, the menace of cultism has been on the increase in recent years. Cultism is expanding geographically with its root in Port Harcourt from where it has continued to spread to other parts of the state. The rising wave of cult gangsterism is frightening; with activities that now attract the status of social anomie. Within the context of the current socio-political realities, Rivers State has deviated from its place as a peaceful economic

and social hub. Generally, the security situation is alarming as the state's current security landscape contains potential threats such as criminal clashes, sea piracy, armed robbery, cultism, killings, vandalism, oil theft, drug wars/addiction, and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

- The study reveals the existence of a wide range of actors in the landscape of insecurity in Rivers State. These actors include youths who are members of cult gangs, traditional rulers, politicians, international oil companies (IOCs), and security personnel.

Cross Cutting Issues of Insecurity Across the South-South Region

The overarching conclusion from the reports that make up this study is that insecurity is an urgent problem in Nigeria's South-South geopolitical zone. While the implementation of the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) was designed to address insecurity linked to armed militancy, other forms of insecurity remain unaddressed in the Niger Delta. Since the implementation of PAP, issues of insecurity that goes beyond militancy have become an everyday affair in cities, towns, and villages across the South-South geopolitical zone. These dimensions include kidnapping, armed robbery, militancy, cultism, sea piracy, drug, and human trafficking, bunkering, intra and inter-communal resource conflicts, youth restiveness, farmers-herders conflict, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, the rising poverty index, and political thuggery. This is not to say that these issues were not there during the height of armed militancy. These issues co-existed with armed militancy and in some cases cultism, political thuggery, communal conflicts, and piracy, were linked to militant insurgency in the region. The problem was that they did not receive adequate attention from policymakers and international actors as the emphasis was on the security of oil industry infrastructure and personnel in the Niger Delta region.

The research identifies issues that are linked to failing socio-cultural values across the different ethnic groups in the region. Historically, social values are determined by ethnic cultures. These values were used to moderate socio-political relations among individuals and groups. However, the reports identified declining values. Traditional institutions are weak due to the abuse of power among local leaders. The nuclear and

extended family systems are also failing. These issues make it difficult for individuals and groups to be influenced by ties that normally would influence their behaviours. In the region, it is now common to observe how political violence turns teenage militants into psychopathic killers. Failure to raise the consciousness of the people to adopt the right socio-cultural values left young people to drift into political thuggery and criminality. This sociological phenomenon of violent cultures among young people is central to the analysis and understanding of the core issue of the involvement of children and young people in armed gangs as perpetrators of violence in the Niger Delta.

One outcome of the events in the South-South, as identified by the research, is that there seems to be a “violence trap” in the region. By ‘violence trap,’ we mean a situation in which identities and violence reinforce each other in a recurring cycle. In this condition, insecurity becomes protracted and self-reproducing, becoming a sub-culture of its own within society. This sub-culture of violence shapes socio-political relations and has economic outcomes in towns, villages, and cities across the region. It is a typical situation where violence begets violence. In the circumstance that violence became an important determinant of social and political outcomes, young people tend to be attracted to groups that promise economic rewards in the use of violence. This issue is particularly observed in the linkage between youth gangs and cults and electoral (political) violence. It also creates an intersection of different layers of insecurity in the region.

Unabated kidnapping, militancy, armed robbery, cultism, and inter and intra communal (resource) conflicts have serious implications for development in the Niger Delta. Widespread insecurity in the region disincentives investments. Insecurity contributes to “the destruction of both human and physical capital, the disruption of economic transactions, including the increased cost of conducting such transaction; the distortion of resource allocation by the state”. The extensive manifestation of this malaise in the South-South zone is visible in the unfolding megatrends in the region’s public space: diminishing power generation, collapsing education, decay in health and physical

infrastructure, joblessness as well as an increase in crime rate among young people. The study notes the tragic emergence and “institutionalization of the conflict economy as violent behaviours are incentivized by economic, social and political rewards thereby reinforcing a “cycle of violence.”

All of these anomalies conspire to hinder individuals from realizing their potentials and entrepreneurial ambition. Reports from Cross River and Bayelsa states indicate that membership of cult group seems to be an important criterion for government recognition and appointment into political office. By incentivizing persons with the capacity to unleash violence in the social space, political actors undermine people's power as the bedrock of democracy. This negative conditioning is aggravated by the existing governance system in Nigeria in which sub-national units depend on federal allocations, characterized by “weak formal institutions, personalized authority, pervasive corruption, and large scope of discretion among public officials.” This system of patronage has paralysed the industrial development of Nigeria; as governmental units gulp revenue allocations for which they hardly can account. The political circumstances of ‘patronage or money-sharing’ largely preclude market realities, thereby discouraging private actors from commitments to fixed assets, aiding assets mobility and capital flight, and give rise to economic stagnation. What this amounts to for the Niger Delta is that the preconditions for productive investments never take root due to the unfriendly market environment. In this situation, the destructive interface of aggravating crisis compromises both the contextual and convergent preconditions for the stability and peace that are a sine qua non for investment in the zone.

Impact of Insecurity and Response of the Nigerian Government

The impact of the widespread and paralyzing insecurity in the zone on the politics, people, livelihoods, infrastructure, and economy has been extensively discussed in the preceding chapters. As manifest in the six states reports, domains of impact could be seen in the four “core fundamental component of human security”: social, political, economic, and psychological components:

- Social Impacts:
 - Disruption of social life: weddings, funerals, festivals, schools, etc.
 - Emergence of the culture of violence
 - Loss of trust
 - Hegemonic motivation and genocidal impulses resulting in reckless killings with or without provocation.

- Political Impacts:
 - Violent political culture
 - Militarisation of the state
 - Governance failure
 - Predatory and corrupt elite
 - Human rights abuse by security personnel
 - Compromised judicial system
 - Manipulation of the electoral process
 - Politics of vengeance

- Economic Impacts:
 - Discourage foreign direct investments
 - Proliferation of illicit industries
 - Poverty, immiserization, unemployment
 - Early closure of night businesses: supermarkets, bars, and night clubs, pharmacies.
 - Food insecurity due to the destruction of farms.
 - Disinvestment (withdrawal of investors/companies)

- Psychological Impacts:
 - Atmosphere of fear, mistrust, and aggression propelled by negative images, malignant stereotypes, and dominant metaphors that condition individual perception of reality and social exchanges.
 - Alienation: often “resulting in unleashing of cruel, sadistic, lascivious, rapacious and envious impulses” (Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass*

Psychology of Fascism). A cruel example and evidence could be seen in the periodic exchanges between the Ijaws, Itsekiris, and Urhobos.

- Mental Health Disorders: resulting in schizophrenia, neurosis, psychopathy, and post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD).
- Mass addiction in illicit drugs, alcohol, and other psychotropic substances in communities.

Insecurity is an existential challenge to the people of the Niger Delta region that requires urgent action from all levels of government in Nigeria. The six states reports contain several overlapping recommendations based on a “prevention-oriented strategy which emphasizes a combination of both the top-bottom protection approach and the bottom-up empowerment approach”. These multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral recommendations involve the specification of contextual and convergent responses on the part of state-actors (government), communities, multinational oil companies, civil society organizations, and relevant international and regional organizations and agencies.

However, these recommendations have generally focused on symptoms of the crisis (social pathologies) rather than the deep-fissure of structural (root-cause) issues that generate and sustain the multiple and multiform crisis in the zone. The first of this structural issue is the development conditions of the South-South zone. In a fundamental sense, the crisis and attendant insecurity in the Niger Delta is a crisis of underdevelopment accelerated by the failure of industrialisation in the region. The intensification of this contradiction of underdevelopment is visible in the total absence of entrepreneurial skills among the youths and the “deplorable mass poverty, unemployment, decimating disease, pervasive illiteracy, technological backwardness.” Once this is accepted, determining the nature, causes and possible remedies for the persistent syndrome of underdevelopment becomes relevant in the sphere of public policy.

As a consequence, one of the keys to addressing the drivers of insecurity in the South-South region is revisiting the historical questions of resource allocations and management in the region. This conclusion seems, at the same time, to be the most profound inference that can be drawn from a survey of the current realities. While insecurity and its

drivers are everyday realities in the region, the overarching issues here are fundamentally structural. The structural distortions, inequalities, environmental degradation, and extensive decapitalization in the Niger Delta is a direct result of the exploitative linkages between international capital (the multinational oil companies) and the hegemonic fraction of the domestic ruling class in Nigeria. This transactional relationship of consumption is sustained by the rentier state system.

The second of these structural issues relates to the “mode of political behaviour” in the governance system of states in the zone (as a reproduction of the Nigerian condition). Richard Joseph has observed that “Nigeria’s present and future depends upon a prior understanding of the nature, extent, and persistence of a certain mode of political behaviour, and of its social and economic ramifications”. This “mode of political behaviours” is the materialist culture which “sees politics as a clearinghouse for jobs, contract, and official plunder”. It is often wasteful, unproductive, and contributes to the increasing affluence of a relative few, paltry gains for a larger number, and misery for the great majority of the people. This entrenchment of “primitive accumulation” has been seen as the greatest challenge to democratic consolidation in the South-South zone and Nigeria in general. It is not uncommon for Nigerians to hear reports of bogus allocations to public office holders serving in different levels and arms of government. This is in addition to significant public funds lost to corrupt and sharp practices of these same public officials. This corrupt political culture has significantly impacted the development of the Niger Delta region. For example, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), established to address the development challenges in the region, has been the subject of numerous corruption scandals since its inception. Despite huge allocations to the NDDC, the commission has since been reduced to a platform for political patronage, instead of a development institution, within the politics of the Niger Delta and Nigeria at large.

The third structural issue is the lack of an effective conflict transformation framework in the Niger Delta region. This is so because official government responses in conflict flashpoint, focusing on the use

of military, have tended to be ad hoc, incomplete, indecisive, and inconclusive at best. In other words, governmental responses have invariably resulted in a “win-lose” outcome for parties involved which often generate bitterness on the part of the “losers” and results in a vicious cycle of protracted crisis and recurrent mission of vengeance. What is required is a complementary process towards a “win-win” situation through mediation and constructive conflict management programming. Comparative experiences in conflict management suggest that the goal of conflict transformation could best be achieved through a programme of action geared towards the empowerment of institutions, local communities, and associations of civil society with the requisite power, personnel, skills, and logistics to prevent and manage conflicts when they are still latent.

The data provided in the six reports in this volume allude to the imperative of trust-building among critical stakeholders (government: executive, legislature, judiciary; security agencies, civil society, politicians, investors/economic actors, traditional institutions, communities, etc.) to ensure the establishment of enduring partnerships in countering the pervasive insecurity in South-South zone. This will require multi-stakeholder commitment, including the transformation of existing public policy-formulation frameworks, the culture and context for policy-making and implementation, and the substantial upscaling of transparency and accountability principles and practices in security management at the subnational and national levels.

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