

ENGAGING ECOWAS IN MANAGING THE CONFLICT IN THE NIGER DELTA: A PERCEPTION STUDY

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Abstract

The Niger-Delta conflict has been one that has shown signs of protraction, with great economic and environmental costs to both the federal government and the local communities alike. Likewise, the conflict increasingly seems to be falling out of the effective management and control of the state despite the availability of capable and mandated international bodies that are established to effectively intervene in such a conflict. As such, this paper is a perception study that examines the option of an ECOWAS intervention in the Niger-Delta in line with the institution's core principle of maintaining and initiating peaceful resolution to conflict, and also how a supranational intervention in the conflict will be received by the Niger-Delta people. The study used a quantitative research approach, a sample size of 482 respondents comprising of 259 males and 223 females from across various fields of life, but all residing in the Niger-Delta region. A non-experimental research design was used with the aid of a cluster random sampling technique in administering the questionnaires to the respondents and also for data collection. The findings of the study strongly indicates that public opinion in the Niger-Delta community agrees with the notion that Nigeria is not taking advantage of ECOWAS as a conflict management and resolution mechanism in meeting its domestic security challenges as found in the Niger-Delta, despite being a host to this prestigious intergovernmental organisation. Key recommendations includes the conceptualization of Nigeria's security needs before ECOWAS Heads of States Summit, and also the effective exploitation of ECOWAS statutory committees to advance Nigeria's security agenda particularly in the Niger-Delta.

Keywords: Perception, Niger-Delta, ECOWAS, Role, Government, Conflict.

Introduction

For several decades, the federal government of Nigeria launched various initiatives to address the yearnings of the Niger-Delta communities. As early as 1961 saw the creation of the Niger-Delta Development Board, the 1992 Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission and the more recent 2001 Niger-Delta Development Commission, among others. The indicatives only helps in demonstrating the largely ineffective policies by a series of seemingly confused government administrations on how to effectively curtail the conflict in the Niger-Delta, which is increasingly gaining greater resonance even across neighbouring states.

For many decades, the federal government and the various militias in the region have on numerous occasions clashed, both claiming to represent the collective interests of the Niger-Delta people. The bone of contention has varied from natural resource ownership and control, to challenges of economic and political marginalization and social deprivation, to exploitation and insensitivity of the government sometimes resulting in gross human right abuses, the disruption of oil flow from which the Nigerian state derives its foreign revenue and the contamination of the ecosystem on which the local communities depend on for subsistent living (Okumagba, 2009). The government's response to these social realities, in one aspect has been the resort to brute force and suppression, and in the other, some degree of political and economic inclusion of the victimised communities. However, these approaches have failed to usher the kind of lasting peace expected from the series of concerted efforts.

The emergence of modern threats to national and international security, and even taking on an unprecedented transnational character, necessitates the reevaluation and thus the revision of existing outlook on national and international security methods. However, the inability of a number of African states to transcend beyond Cold-War mentality to national and international security is in itself a hindrance to the realization of a post-Cold War security agenda, best suited to meeting security challenges in the African setting. The inability of nation states in Africa, to adequately adapt their security apparatus (perhaps due to a lack of political will and/or severe financial constraints/misappropriation) has nevertheless remained a perennial obstacle for many developing countries. The transnational and evolutionary nature of Africa security challenges warrants the need for close cooperation not just between states of a geopolitical region, but also non-state actors (private institutions) in the problem-solving exercise.

States in the West has stringent security apparatus (both at regional and at national levels) and are better placed and largely better adapted to meeting emerging security challenges than most developing countries, particularly African states who are still embattled with various developmental, health, education and infrastructural challenges that undermine efforts towards the building up of security apparatus for a secure society. The underperformance of any of these sectors implies the incapacitation of the security sector, and its inability to perform optimally. It is difficult to imagine a security sector functioning well under a devastated health and education sectors, or a security sector performing its duties under a crippled state of national infrastructures such as transportation and telecommunication networks. Buzan (2008) rightly points to the five dimension of security further making the conditions for attaining adequate security

more stringent for many developing countries, whose mentality is still structured around the Cold War perception of security through military might and power. The broadening and deepening of 'security', as argued by the Critical Security School of thought, drifts the understanding of security away from its conception by the Traditional Security Studies School, which primarily centered the provision of security on the state and the military.

The five other dimensions (political, military, economic, societal and environmental) of security are rather estranged to African countries, evident in their perennial struggle to get a firm grip on their protracted security situation in their country and region. Nigeria in many instances affirms a firm representation of this reality, a country with recurrent security challenges right across different parts of the state. A country stifled by many socio-political challenges facing the health, education and transportation sectors. These challenges often are a product of colonial legacy, formed over decades and often thus resistant to the needed changes and even dismantling where needed. As such, without the necessary transformation of the security sector of weak states, the reliance on a combined and collective domestic and international effort will be required to elevate the status of the security structures of modern African states.

As such, this collective effort is perhaps best found in regional arrangements and supra-national bodies, where common regional challenges are presented on the most appropriate regional platform, for a combined and collective action. For West African states, the use of ECOWAS in addressing common security challenges should not be overlooked. This multilateral international platform presents an advantage often not found through other means of solving problems. This platform allows for the benefit of 'burden-sharing', where the collective contributions of all member states lifts the overbearing problem off the shoulders of single member state. As such, the exclusion of ECOWAS by the Nigerian government, in its security matters as it relates to the Niger-Delta region, is in fact a denial of the transnational nature of the social unrest so prevalent in this volatile region. It gives a false impression of the effectiveness of government policies in addressing the insecurity in the Niger-Delta and beyond.

Nevertheless this study intends to show the level of commitment the Nigerian state has in engaging ECOWAS in the security challenges within the Niger-Delta, and also how public perception is thus positioned to favour or hinder this process of engagement or disengagement of ECOWAS by the Nigerian government. The study centers on the conflict in the Niger-Delta, and how the perception of individuals within various communities in the Niger-Delta, understands the security situation and the possibility of engaging supra-national entities in the conflict management, resolution and mediation process, for a consented and lasting peaceful settlement of dispute between all parties affected.

Statement of the Research Problem

History indicates that no country or region can achieve any meaningful development and prosperity under a spurious security setting. The Niger-Delta people and their communities have suffered years from decades of conflict, poverty and underdevelopment as caused by the presence and the struggle for Hydro-Carbon deposits. While the conflict in the region seems to have no realistic end in sight, the

proliferation has become rather obvious and damaging to the economic activities of neighbouring communities and international communities through acts of environmental pollution, weapons proliferation and the increase in criminal activities (kidnapping, maritime piracy, vandalism and militia groups). The federal government's response to this conflict has been inconsistent and largely ineffective in resolving the conflict in the Niger-Delta. If left unchecked, the insecurity caused by these challenges has the potential to negate all efforts made by the federal government of Nigeria to develop the Niger-Delta, and other efforts made to entrench peace and security in the Niger-Delta and in West Africa at large.

ECOWAS is West Africa's prime inter-governmental organization with specific mandates from the United Nations to address all threat to international peace and security in West-Africa (United Nations, 1999). The institution is empowered with various legal documents and specialized organs to carry out its mandates of security and peace through cooperation across West Africa.

As such, the gap this article intends to fill is to indicate the interventional role ECOWAS needs to play in order to save the Niger-Delta region from collapsing into a total breakdown of law and order, and to determine how well an ECOWAS intervention will be received or rejected by the people of the Niger Delta.

Review of Related Literature

In international relations, the understanding of states' intervention through supra-national entities is often observed skeptically, and if accepted, justified based on individual examination of cases. Where ever external intervention is endorsed by a host state or the international community, it often requires the voluntary or forceful but temporary withdrawal of the host country's legitimacy, sovereignty and the right to non-interference in its domestic affairs. In what Smith-Hohn (2010) recognizes the need for an external intervention in exceptional cases. The author identifies what he calls a 'vampire state', in which the state that is supposed to be a guarantor of security within its geographical territory, rather becomes a threat and a source of insecurity to at least a section of its own populace. Through acts of suppression, police brutality, repression and unlawful detention of citizens of a state, a state can morally lose the right to legitimacy over its own internal security matters, thus necessitating the need for external intervention. The Tutsi genocide in Rwanda in 1992, brought widespread condemnation of the state used by a government to bring the death and destruction of thousands of its own citizens. It reminded the international community that the state can in certain condition lose its inherent legitimacy to be a legitimate guarantor of security in its geographical territory. The author however fails to indicate how regional intergovernmental organisations such as ECOWAS can take this leading role in intervention.

Likewise the actions of the federal government of Nigeria under General Olusegun Obasanjo's administration and subsequent administration's handling of security matters in the Niger-Delta, demonstrated acts of economic marginalization, police and military brutality and the indiscriminate and unlawful killings and detention of members of the Niger-Delta communities, as potential grounds for the Nigerian state to loose its legitimacy to exercise its monopoly over security in the Niger-Delta region. Likewise, in the absence or the incapability of the state government to exercise its duty of providing security in the Niger-Delta, the international community through regional

organisations may have better grounds for a legitimate intervention in matters of security of a given state. Marc et al, (2015) also leans towards legitimate supra-national intervention primarily as a result of the state's incapability to provide adequate security for any given section of its populace. In the author's view, states are known to become sponsors of gross human right abuses and atrocities against its own citizens. Likewise, the author does not indicate how an ECOWAS intervention in the Niger-Delta would serve as a panacea to the conflict in the Niger-Delta.

Most studies on ECOWAS engagement in the Sub-Saharan Africa completely overlooks the possibility of an ECOWAS intervention in the Niger-Delta conflict. Abubakar et al (2017) rightly examines recent security challenges in West Africa since the inception of ECOWAS in the 1970s. The author examines ECOWAS interventions in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire for the purpose of peace mediation and order restoration. The authors came close to examining insecurity in Nigeria but stops at examining the influence of Boko Haram on regime change in Nigeria. As such the authors offer no insight into addressing the conflict as found in the Niger-Delta using ECOWAS as an instrument.

Ezirim (2010) examined the effects of the expectations from oil and gas resources allocations in the Gulf Of Guinea states, and how this inequalities in resource distribution has engendered violence in the region. The author goes as far as identifying Nigeria as the birthplace of conflict in this region, and coins 'misgovernnace' in Nigeria as the biggest cause of the crisis in the region. However the author stops short of identifying ECOWAS as a necessary tool for effect intervention in this conflict, to safeguard international peace and order in the region.

Ajodo-Adebanjoko (2017) examined the effort of the Federal Government of Nigeria to ameliorate the conflict in the Niger-Delta. The failure of the Federal Government according to the author is hinged on the inability of the government to address the deep seated issues responsible for the conflict, and the overreliance on the use of force as its core instrument of conflict resolution. Although the author recommends multilateral cooperation and "a collective Non-Violent Conflict Management approach" comprising of negotiators and mediators from both the local and international arenas, the author nonetheless overlooks the intervention of ECOWAS as the starting point to any meaningful intervention to the conflict in the Niger-Delta.

Obi (2009) examines the complex causes and drivers of violent oil-related conflict as found in the Niger Delta, with special emphasis on the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). Although accurately recognizing the national and international ramifications of this conflict, it falls short of identifying and ECOWAS approach to addressing this conflict. Kwaja (2017) anchored on the platform of an ECOWAS intervention in post-conflict Liberia. It examined the efforts of ECOWAS in the aspect of post-conflict rehabilitation program in Liberia and how it could help manage the consequences of the violent conflicts in Liberia, and the benefits of such intervention to the peace-building efforts in Liberia. However the shortcoming in the author's works is that it is limited to interventions in Liberia, thus leaving out an ECOWAS intervention in the Niger-Delta.

Mlambo (2010) argues that in many Africa states the security apparatus is often positioned to serve the interests of despotic leaders or elites against the interest of political oppositions or groups. In doing so, the state risks losing the legitimacy over the use of force, as non-state actors may rise as alternatives to challenges the legitimacy of the state. The conflict of interest and the contention for monopoly over the use of force and the provision of security often gives rise to armed conflicts. The author rightly explores the abuse of security apparatus by despotic leaders. The author however offers no insight into the possibility of addressing a transnational conflict like that found in the Niger-Delta. Hobbes (1996) simply identifies the role of the state in the provision of security, the author maintains that the state remains the sole and the highest provider of security for its populace, while all other security formations within the state should serve as compliments and not rival to a state's authority.

Like all intervention, there exist positive and negative consequences to it. Fournier and Fini (2013) write on the potential drawbacks to foreign sources of intervention in the domestic affairs of any given state. The authors particularly frown at military interventions led by Western powers against African member states (French in Mali and the rest of French Franco-phone Africa). Often negatively perceived as a manifestation of neo-colonialism, foreign military intervention can easily exacerbate existing underlying hatred for foreign powers (particularly the West) often perceived as advocates of imperialism, colonialism, capitalism and anti-Islamic agendas in the region. Despite these assertions, the authors falls short of indicating how African intervention in Africa states would promote ideals of colonialism, imperialism, capitalism and anti-Islamic sentiments as is understood under a Western led military intervention in Africa.

Okhumagha (2009) wrote on the government's policies and approach to addressing conflict in the Niger-Delta as the obstacle to resolving the conflict itself. Several decades of government policies and remedial approaches against acts of terrorism in the Niger-Delta has at most succeeded in ceasing hostilities for a short while, and likewise, is contributing to the formation and development of a culture of mutiny and criminality (arms trafficking) that spreads across national and international borders and waters (maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea). According to the author, the culture of insurgency has given rise to acts of vandalism against state infrastructures, particularly crude-oil pipelines and storage facilities. In what Olusola (2013) wrote as the government's "...*wrong understanding of the essence of the crisis in the region...*" the increase in criminality is also attributed to the government's consistent policies of suppression of civil institutions and platforms for expressing social discontent (Okumagba, 2009). As such, Okhumagha (2009) and Olusola (2013) drifts away from indicating how regional intergovernmental organisations such as ECOWAS can play a role in upholding human right values in communities suffering from state brutality and oppression.

Olusola (2013) sees the conflict in the Niger-Delta as caused by the government's wrong perception of the conflict. According to the author, it serves as a hindrance to a search for a peaceful settlement of dispute in the Niger-Delta. The government fails to recognize the diversity of views on the actual cause of the grievances that gave birth to the restiveness and uprising in the Niger-Delta. He identifies the presence of a

diversity of opinion amongst the various communities that rages from agitations to return to the 50% derivation principle, partial resource control, complete natural resource autonomy, a greater social and economic inclusion, inter and intra communal squabbles, implementation of environmental sanitation, youth unemployment, resolution of communal MNC disputes, the annulment of the Petroleum Act, Land Act & the National Inland Waterway Authority Act or a combination of any of these above mentioned demands (Oshio, 2009). The author says that the failure by the government to recognize these unique community demands and to see them separate from each other, misleads policy makers into looking for a one-dress-fit-all solution to a diversity of communal agitations.

Mlambo (2010) writes that ECOWAS remains the most appropriate and legitimate tool for intervention in security crisis found within the geographical territory of West-Africa. It is empowered by the United Nations to undertake various forms of interventions on various grounds. The United Nations recognizes the importance and the need for regional inter-governmental institutions to supplement the agendas of the United Nation in playing an active role in the restoration of peace where conflicts are found in a given region, especially where democratic institutions and the protection of human rights is consistently and grossly violated as evident in the Niger- Delta. Despite these assertions, the author does not indicate the need to carry out a perception study, determining if a community will welcome a regional body to intervene in a conflict. Ebo (2015) writes that there are a number of policy documents encouraging supranational intervention in the affairs of member states, primarily on the grounds of threats to international peace and security. Such policy document is Chapter VIII Article 52(1) of the UN Charter, which equally mandates the peaceful settlement of local disputes through regional arrangements (such as ECOWAS). Chapter VII of the same UN article also encourages collective self-defence as an inherent right of states against threats to regional peace and security. Likewise Article 4 of the ECOWAS Charter empowers ECOWAS to make legitimate intervention in the affairs of member states on specific grounds of “humanitarian intervention”. In addition, ECOWAS is empowered with an internal machinery called the ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security (The Mechanism), the most significant and appropriate instrument for conflict management in the entire West Africa, created primarily for peace and security objectives. Packed with several specialized organs within it, Ebo (2015) writes that ‘the Mechanism’ offers a unique advantage to conflict management through the principle of “supra-nationality” which offers the benefit of “burden-sharing” than the Cold War dogma of “non-interference” in domestic affairs. Article 25 of ‘the Mechanism’ necessitates the need for intervention based on internal conflicts that threatens a humanitarian disaster, and/or a threat to peace and security across national borders. As such, Ebo (2015) accurately indicates the suitability of ECOWAS in capacity and on legal basis to serve as the most important instrument of intervention in West African conflicts, however the author still overlooks the need to ascertain the opinion of the people of the Niger-Delta, before any intervention can occur.

Methodology

Study Design and Location

The study adopted a Non-Experimental survey research design. This method is preferred because of the nature of the variables been examined in this study. This is the preferred choice of research design within the social sciences as the field of study deals with animate objects that are observed and unable to be subjected to pure experimental conditions like in the natural sciences. The study was carried out in the Niger-Delta focusing on three key crude-oil producing states that are of strategic importance to security in the Niger-Delta; they are River State, Akwa-Ibom state and Delta State in Nigeria. Primary data was carefully collected from the target population of this study using questionnaires and audio tape recordings, which were directly administered on the participants.

Analytical Construct

The analytical construct for this study will be the theory of Functionalism. Although, there are other theories that may be of relevance to this study, but their shortcomings render them less useful in explaining the crisis in the Niger-Delta, than the theory of functionalism. Functionalism as a theory of international relations leans on the principle that the absence of the state to meet its statutory obligation of providing security and protecting human rights, the supra-national entity should assume this obligation, in the interest of international peace and security through a conciliatory settlement of dispute. This approach is supported by the inherent belief in the principles of collective ideals, goals, challenges and interests, functional close cooperation, burden-sharing through member states voluntarily relinquishing a portion of their sovereignty to achieve the collective ideal. This theory is most suitable for addressing the conflict in the Niger-Delta because of its numerous inherent principles that supports intervention through cooperation. This theory is not a strong advocate of military engagement, but supports pro-active cooperation across various sectors of life, including but not limited to international information sharing, refugee assistance and resettlement, human rights protection and intra-regional economic development. The Niger-Delta conflict has become transnational in nature and should best be addressed through the theory of functionalism, as the organs within the institution of structuralism are highly hierarchical and specialized in their composition to meet the demands of emerging security challenges to societies such as that in the Niger-Delta communities. The 'Greed-versus-Grievance' theory postulates that the belligerents of armed conflicts are driven by the urge to improve their situation, by examining if the benefit of joining a conflict exceeds its costs, and also that people become rebellious over perceived deprivations. The 'Greed-versus-Grievance' theory rightfully explains to some degree the underlying causes of the conflict in the Niger-Delta region, by highlighting that perceived economic and political gains in the Niger-Delta conflict serves to drive and escalate the conflict, and as such once these gains are increased or removed for one or either of the belligerent parties, then the scale, intensity and the reasons for the conflict will thus be affected.

Likewise, the feminist theory in conflict examines gender in relation to power. The Feminist theory has merits in its simplified identification of the threats to security, the victims of insecurity, and the solution to it. In the African setting, and according to this theory, the state is the perpetrator of insecurity, the women (and children) the

predominant victims of insecurity. Therefore the victims of insecurity (predominantly woman) should be given greater influence over the application and management of security at all level. The feminist theory to a lesser degree proffers a reasonable explanation to insecurity in the Niger-Delta, attributing it to marginalization of women in security related matters. This theory makes an attempt to proffer a solution to a proposed problem, which is to call for a greater representation of women across all levels of security. By identifying women as the highest victims of insecurity and thereby the cornerstone to effective security, the workability of this approach offers reasonable hope for change and increased effectiveness in the strides for a better security sector reform in the face of a new and emerging dimension to threats to security, far different from the Cold-War conception of insecurity. In essence, and in this view, the state as an actor is displaced as the legitimate guarantor of security. As such, and with this in mind, the Feminist theory exhibits a flaw that makes it less suitable than the Theory of Functionalism. It fails to show how greater representation of women in the state security apparatus would bring a profound policy transformation in the security sector and how it could completely wipeout insecurity. They fail to show how the absence of a (vampire) state as a legitimate guarantor of security, can be replaced by a supra-national (or any other) entity in assuming the responsibility of providing security and protecting human rights from defilement.

Research Hypothesis

The hypothesis underpinning this study is hinged on the perception that:

- 1) The Niger-Delta people will welcome an ECOWAS intervention in the Niger-Delta conflict.
- 2) Nigeria is not taking full advantage of ECOWAS as a conflict management and resolution mechanism for addressing the Niger-Delta security crisis.

Participants and Procedures

The population for this study comprised of 546 inhabitants of the Niger-Delta communities, representing approximately 2.5% of the total sample taken from 21, 805 of the accessible population relevant to this study. In the process, the Cluster Random Sampling method was the researcher's choice of sampling for the selection process. Relevant to this study were three Niger-Delta states having a total Amnesty population of approximately 17, 319, to represent 85% of the entire amnesty participants in the entire Niger-Delta region (Ugwuanyi 2014: 78). In total, 433 participants were needed to represent 2.5% of the target population relevant for this study, and thus sampled from the selected Niger-Delta states (Rivers, Akwa-Ibom & Delta) used in this study. However, to improve the accuracy and the quality of the result of this research, the researcher conveniently increased the total number of participants by 49 persons, making it a total participant of 482 respondents. Consequently, this raised the total percentage value of the participants to 2.7% of the target population.

Out of the 482 respondents, 113 were randomly selected using a cluster random sampling from Rivers state, comprising 23.4% of the total participants. Likewise, 205 respondents were derived from Akwa-Ibom state, representing 42.5% of the participants. Finally, 54 respondents were derived from Delta state, thus representing 11.2% of the total respondents. A Cluster Random Sampling technique was used in selecting the three clusters of participants.

The respondents were either Amnesty beneficiaries and/or were acquainted with one. The Method of sampling used here was the Probability/Cluster Sampling for administering questionnaires to collect the data, and the parametric statistical tool (T-test and Analysis of Variance-ANOVA) were used in testing the hypothesis and for data analysis.

Data Collection Procedure

This study made use of primary instruments in the collection of data. It preferred the use of quantitative approach over qualitative and mixed approaches, because the study seeks to identify the basic outlook or the simple opinion of ordinary/everyday inhabitants of the Niger-Delta communities, on the desirability of an ECOWAS intervention in the Niger-Delta crisis. As such, structured questionnaires developed for this purpose mimicking the Likerd scale forms of questions. This psychometric scale is suitable for scaling responses in this survey study, where the simple opinion of community inhabitants on local a security matter, is required. A researcher and four research assistants were instrumental in distributing and collecting the questionnaires with their responses back for collation. Anonymity was guaranteed while consent forms were also administered to all the participants to notify them of the ethical values underpinning this study. Precisely 500 questionnaires were initially distributed, however 482 were returned and usable for this study.

Data Analysis

After a careful collation of the gathered primary data from the respondents, an appropriate analytical method most relevant to this study was used. In this case a parametrical statistics (Analysis of Variance-ANOVA) was instrumental in analyzing the data and for testing the hypothesis. Particularly SPSS statistical package software version 20 was used in analyzing all the data.

Result and Discussion

To determine the basic opinion of the everyday Niger-Delta inhabitants on the desirability of seen the government of Nigeria engage ECOWAS in the Niger-Delta security crisis, for the purpose of bringing a permanent resolution to the crisis, precise and relevant questions were asked and their degree of responses were recorded and thus represented in the tables below.

Table 1

Niger-Delta inhabitant’s responses on whether the federal government (as a host country to ECOWAS), is making full use of ECOWAS to protect the rights, views and the demands of the people living in the Niger-Delta.

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
STRONGLY DISAGREE	30	6.2	6.2	6.2
DISAGREE	41	8.5	8.5	14.7
UNDICED	63	13.1	13.1	27.8
AGREE	181	37.6	37.6	65.4
STRONGLY AGREE	167	34.6	34.6	100.0
TOTAL	482	100.0	100.0	

(Source: SPSS Output in the field survey in the Niger-Delta: 2020)

Table 1 above indicates a 72.19% level of agreement to the statement made in the questionnaire, with 348 respondents agreeing with the statement, with 63 (13.07%) who were undecided and 71 (14.7%) respondents disagreed with it. As such, the significance of the outcome of the responses captured by table 1 strongly indicates that the people of the Niger-Delta community acknowledges that the government of Nigeria is actually underusing ECOWAS in addressing existing security matters as found in the Niger-Delta, despite ECOWAS been hosted in Nigeria and having the capability to contribute meaningfully to the resolution of the security crisis in the Niger-Delta.

Table 2:

Niger-Delta inhabitant's responses on whether ECOWAS organization has the political will to address the security crisis associated with militancy in the Niger-Delta of Nigeria.

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
STRONGLY DISAGREE	28	5.8	5.8	5.8
DISAGREE	84	17.4	17.4	23.2
UNDICIDED	106	22.0	22.0	45.2
AGREE	175	36.3	36.3	81.5
STRONGLY AGREE	89	18.5	18.5	100.0
TOTAL	482	100.0	100.0	

(Source: SPSS Output in the field survey in the Niger-Delta: 2020)

Table 2 above indicates that 54.77 % level of agreement with the statement made, with 264 respondents agreeing with the statement, and 106 (21.99%) undecided and also 112 (23.236%) respondents disagreeing with the statement. As such, the significance of the responses in this table suggests that inhabitants of the Niger-Delta communities are of the view that ECOWAS has the political appetite to intervene in the Niger-Delta security crisis for the purpose of facilitating lasting peace in the region. Likewise the result to the responses suggests that absence of ECOWAS intervention in the Niger-Delta is not as a result ECOWAS policy towards Nigeria, but perhaps is cause by Nigeria's foreign policy towards ECOWAS that precludes external interventions in 'domestic' affairs.

Table 3:

Niger-Delta inhabitant's responses on whether ECOWAS can play a greater/leading role in assisting the government of Nigeria, in building a stronger democratic institution and culture in (the Niger-Delta region) Nigeria.

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
STRONGLY DISAGREE	29	6.0	6.0	6.0
DISAGREE	40	8.3	8.3	14.3
UNDICIDED	39	8.1	8.1	22.4
AGREE	212	44.0	44.0	66.4
STRONGLY AGREE	162	33.6	33.6	100.0
TOTAL	482	100.0	100.0	

(Source: SPSS Output in the field survey in the Niger-Delta: 2020)

Table 3 above indicates a 77.59% level of agreement, with 374 respondents agreeing with the statement, and 39 (08.09%) undecided and 69 (14.31%) respondents disagreeing with the statement. The significance of the result of this table shows that the people of the Niger-Delta communities are in high favour of resolving the security crisis in the Niger-Delta through partnership especially between ECOWAS and the government of Nigeria, in building institutions that promotes democratic ideals for effective public representation of the community inhabitants in the Niger-Delta. It indicates that there is a strong public support for an ECOWAS intervention in the Niger-Delta, with ECOWAS assuming a leading role in building these democratic ideals, for the purpose of creating the platform on which lasting peace can occur in the region.

Table 4:

Niger-Delta inhabitant's responses on whether they are not aware of any ECOWAS security program that have occurred in any of their community.

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
STRONGLY DISAGREE	28	5.8	5.8	5.8
DISAGREE	52	10.8	10.8	16.6
UNDICIDED	80	16.6	16.6	33.2
AGREE	174	36.1	36.1	69.3
STRONGLY AGREE	148	30.7	30.7	100.0
TOTAL	482	100.0	100.0	

(Source: SPSS Output in the field survey in the Niger-Delta: 2020)

Table 4 above indicates a 66.80% level of agreement with the statement made, with 322 respondents agreeing with the statement, with 80 (16.59%) undecided and 80 (16.59%) respondents disagreeing with the statement. The significance of the result of this table is that any ECOWAS security program, efforts or intervention within the Niger-Delta region is largely unknown to the local inhabitants, and thus means that concerted efforts if any, is at best ineffective in meeting the objective of realising an insecurity free Niger-Delta region.

Table 5:

Niger-Delta inhabitant's responses on whether the Nigerian government lacks the political will to take full advantage of ECOWAS, and to put a sustainable end to acts of militancy in the Niger-Delta.

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
STRONGLY DISAGREE	32	6.6	6.6	6.6
DISAGREE	73	15.1	15.1	21.8
UNDICIDED	78	16.2	16.2	38.0
AGREE	157	32.6	32.6	70.5
STRONGLY AGREE	142	29.5	29.5	100.0
TOTAL	482	100.0	100.0	

(Source: SPSS Output in the field survey in the Niger-Delta: 2020)

Table 5 above indicates a 62.03% level of agreement, with 299 respondents agreeing with the statement, and 78 (16.18%) persons undecided, while 105 (21.78%) respondents disagreeing with the statement. The significance of this result indicates that community opinion suggests that the government isn't doing enough nor maximizing its resources, potentials and capabilities to curb insecurity in the region and particularly to end militancy. This indicates that the Nigerian government is displaying laxity in providing security in the Niger-Delta. The result strongly indicates that the people of the Niger-Delta expresses confidence and desire to see an international intervention in the security crisis as found in the Niger-Delta, but however sees the government of Nigeria as an obstacle to the panacea to insecurity in the region.

The result of the study derived from the responses from the five (5) tables presented above generally indicates a high level of agreement by the participants to the questions asked. However, Table 3 above that indicates the highest percentage of agreement, with 77.59% level of agreement thus gives the strongest impression that if the government of Nigeria decides to partner with ECOWAS in building a stronger democratic institution and culture for the aim of improving security in the Niger-Delta, will be well accepted and well received by the Niger-Delta communities.

Findings

Based on the research questions asked, the following findings were derived out of the responses of the respondents in tables 1-5:

- 1) The Niger-Delta people acknowledges that their rights and demands are under-protected by the state, and more protection can come from an ECOWAS intervention in the region.
- 2) The Niger-Delta people have confidence in the political will and willingness of ECOWAS to intervene for the purpose of resolving the conflict in the Niger-Delta.
- 3) The Niger-Delta people have confidence in ECOWAS to play a significant but supportive role in assisting the Nigerian government in resolving the conflict.
- 4) The Niger-Delta people are unaware of ECOWAS conflict resolution activities in the Niger-Delta region.
- 5) The Niger-Delta people see the Nigerian government as an obstacle and lacking in political will to resolve the conflict in the Niger-Delta, through an ECOWAS intervention.

Conclusion

The study began by trying to determine if the Niger-Delta communities would favour the intervention of ECOWAS in the Niger-Delta security crisis, serving as an entity for crisis management and resolution in the region. The opinion of the people in the Niger-Delta in all indicates that the federal government of Nigeria needs to do more to address the yearnings of the people, particularly through the thorough and effective engagement of ECOWAS in the conflict resolution mechanism. ECOWAS in itself has proven to be the most appropriate regional intervention mechanism for conflict management and resolution in the West African region, with numerous specialized bodies within it, of which the most significant of them (as mentioned) is the "ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution,

Peacekeeping and Regional Security” (also known as ‘The Mechanism’), to play an active and effective role in this dimension of crisis in the Niger-Delta region.

Despite having an instrument of such magnitude for conflict resolution at its disposal, the challenge has always been on the part of the federal government of Nigeria, to develop the necessary political will to engage this legitimate and internationally recognized and accepted conflict management and resolution body, in the resolution of conflict related issues distabilising international peace and security, and economic productivity in West Africa.

Recommendations

It is thus recommended that, the federal government of Nigeria should demonstrate the political will to effectively address the conflict in the Niger-Delta, by taking all necessary steps towards engaging ECOWAS as the rightful mechanism for resolving disputes affecting international peace and security in West Africa. This begins with the head of state conceptualizing and tabling the security needs of the country, and particularly in the Niger-Delta, and presenting it before the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government summit for a regional response to the crisis.

Likewise, existing ECOWAS Statutory Committees like the West African Police Chief’s Committee (WAPCCO), the Committee of Chief of Security Services (CCSS) and the Committee of Chief of Defence Staff (CCDS), are readily available avenues for the exploitation of the Nigerian government in resolving some of its internal security challenges.

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