

From Regional Agitation to Pipeline Protection Contract: Regional Survival Strategy or Personal Economic Agenda in the Niger-Delta

Emerole, Walter Ginikanwa (Ph.D)¹

School of General Studies, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State, Nigeria

Phone: +2348032745029, Email: waltino2013@gmail.com

And

Ojiako Magnus Chioma (Ph.D)²

School of General Studies, Imo State Polytechnic, Omuma, Oru East L.G.A, Imo State.

Phone: 08038753483, Email: orjiako@imopoly.edu.ng

Abstract:

The years beginning in 1830 to 1914, and especially 1854, when William Balfour Baikie led the expeditions which opened the interiors of the towns and communities along the River Niger, the areas which are known to be the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, were largely unknown to outsiders. However, beginning from 1956, when Shall D'Arcy discovered the first commercially viable oil in Oloibiri in the former Rivers State, the seed of organized militancy, agitation, and resistances to both government of Nigeria and oil companies were sown. Therefore, the consequences and implications of these long-standing resistances were obvious and real, many of which positive, while a lot of others were obviously negative. Thus, the salient question that has not received adequate answers is: were the agitations in the Niger-Delta part of a struggle for regional survival, or for individual creek war lord's and their supporters economic benefits? In trying to provide answers to this question, efforts were made to trace the history of oil exploration and exploitation of oil in the Niger-Delta as well as its benefits and adverse effects to the Niger –Deltans. The study also attempts a chronicle of the history of militancy and resistance in the region, as it also explores the consequence on Nigeria as a whole. The paper concludes by investigating the recent shift of the agitations from what arguably was a regional quest for protection and empowerment, to personal militancy, establishments of private militia companies, individual mercenary contractors and oil pipeline protection, as it also highlights the consequences of this shift on the region. To achieve the objectives of this study, historical research methodology anchored on primary and secondary sources was employed.

Key Words: Niger –Delta, Mercenary, Regional, Diplomacy, Militancy, Consequences