

Pipeline Disruptions and Surveillance Contracting system in Nigeria's Oil Governance and Security

Esther Egele-Godswill

Abstract

The pipeline system is a relevant material infrastructure that facilitates the flow and exchange of energy resources across space and time (Larkin, 2013). Pipelines are national and international projects that provide income for oil-based, oil-exporting, and transit countries. They provide energy security for governments and create strategic collaborations between countries (Balmaceda et al., 2019). Beyond the enduring economic importance, pipelines have become embedded in socioeconomic relationships, technology, structures, systems, and governmental practices. Pipelines are scripted in the national and international political economy's rules, regulations, and policies (Venkatesan et al., 2018; Bear, 2007). They are also sites of public disputes, disagreements, and contestations over their continuous presence, construction, and maintenance (Adunbi, 2011; Barry, 2013). In other words, active, failed, and ruptured pipelines spring to life as the natural habitat for social and political prospects (Chu, 2014; Graham, 2009; Graham and Thrift, 2007).

Across different countries and regions, pipelines' presence are subject to various disruptions arising from different sources, including external impacts from natural and or man-made interferences and structural as well as durational risks. In other words, operational failures, natural disasters, intentional sabotage, illegal oil bunkering practices, and hacks (Arosanyin, 2005; Chukwujekwu, Chibuzor, and Ekene, 2014; Umar et al., 2021; Kelly and Resnick-ault, 2021) all unite to undermine the integrity of pipelines. These disruptions affect the productivity, flow, and transportation of oil and gas resources, threaten the economy and environment, and impact people's daily lives.

Pipeline disruptions refer to any interruption in the free flow of energy resources. These interruptions could be man-made or natural in the form of rupture, leak, breakdown, illegal bunkering, theft, and hacks on the pipeline. In Nigeria's Niger Delta, the increasing pipeline disruptions are caused by both, although the most common pipeline disruption is man-made, with the activities of artisanal oil refiners/cookers who disembowel the pipes and siphon crude oil for local refining and sale occupying the zenith of human causes of pipeline disruptions. This is otherwise known as oil bunkering and oil theft - provocations for new realities and ways of imagining new systems of oil governance. For instance, oil bunkering and theft bring into visibility the operation of governmental rationality (pipeline surveillance contracting) within the oilscape (Larkin, 2020). Through an ethnographic study of artisanal oil refining in the Niger Delta, this study explores how pipeline disruption becomes a space for entangling non-state arrangements (pipeline surveillance contracting) within Nigeria's oil governance and security frameworks in addition to how pipeline disruption shapes and/or shifts the politics, governance, security and management of oil and gas resources in the country. The aim is to elicit how disruption rather than the connection and flow in oil infrastructure entangles and impacts oil governance and security.

In what follows, the study will begin by contextualising pipeline disruption in Nigeria's Niger Delta. Pipelines are episodically ruptured caused by corrosion, leaks and maintenance regimes, flooding, attacks on the pipelines, and oil bunkering activities by individuals who sabotage and tap the pipelines. This section focuses on the nature, activities, and practices around artisanal oil refining/cooking and

theft. Artisanal oil refining/cooking and oil theft involve disembowelling pipelines and tapping crude oil from creeks and bushes of communities across the Niger Delta (Onuh et al., 2021). The illegal taps go in two directions, first to the camps of artisanal oil cookers/refiners who refine the oil for local and international use. Second, to barges and tankers either for local sales or shipment to the global market. Extant studies attribute the activity of artisanal oil refining to youths who use local technology and makeshift infrastructure to redefine energy practices, competing with multinational oil corporations, and provide a source of livelihood for themselves (Adunbi, 2020). Naanen (2019) contends that artisanal oil refining/cooking is not a resultant effect of poverty but of the country's model of extractive governance, which fails to resolve issues of ownership and benefit-sharing between the Nigerian state and the regions where oil is extracted.

The second section explores the regulatory regimes within Nigeria's oilscape before the overwhelming practice of artisanal oil refining/oil bunkering. The third section discusses the pipeline surveillance contracting system as an extension of the oil governance and security frameworks, which in itself is a fallout of the proliferation of pipeline disruption associated with the illicit economy of artisanal oil refining/bunkering. It will discuss pipeline surveillance, its implication in artisanal oil refining and theft, and how it impacts and shapes oil governance and security in Nigeria.

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