

## **AN ANALYSIS OF NATURAL RESOURCES RELATED CONFLICTS IN CENTRAL AFRICA AND THE GULF OF GUINEA**

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### **Abstract**

In the Africa, the presence of natural resources in countries has been the bedrock of despicable conflicts, the effects of which has been slow economic growth, prolonged violent conflicts, and undemocratic regimes. Countries in conflict are also characterized by grave human rights violations and autocratic rulers making little or no room for democracy. This article maps out the various natural resources related conflicts in the Central Africa and the Gulf of Guinea, looking at the causes and overview of these conflicts. The article also highlights community-based conflicts linked directly or indirectly to the presence of natural resources. This approach is useful because most literature available on natural resources related conflicts focuses more on violent conflicts between different groups attempting to gain control of the natural resources.

**Keywords:** Conflicts, civil war, natural resources, Central Africa, Gulf of Guinea, dictatorship, community activism, human rights abuses.

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## 1. Introduction

It has been asserted repeatedly that the presence of natural resources is at the centre of most of the conflicts that have bedeviled most resource rich countries in Africa. Africa is home to some of the best known resource related conflicts in the world today. This assertion is true if we consider the conflicts in countries like Angola, the DRC, Chad, and Republic of Congo, and to an extent in Nigeria. These countries have all witnessed some form of violent conflicts which could be explicitly or implicitly linked to the presence of different kind of natural resources. Despite the absence of any form of violent conflicts in other countries such as Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon, the presence of resources has created a deep seated disgruntlement from a majority of the population as revenue from these resources hardly trickle down to the masses.

## 2. Extractive industries, resources-related conflicts in Central Africa and the Gulf of Guinea

A major cause of most natural resources related conflicts in resource rich countries like those of the Central Africa/Gulf of Guinea region is the way in which these resources are extracted, the distribution of revenues from exploitation, and the level of involvement of local population in development decisions. Explaining the main reason of the conflicts related to natural resources in some of the countries of the region is the fact that warring parties at the level of conventional conflicts need money badly and would take it wherever they can find it. It has been asserted in some studies that of all natural resources, oil has the highest risk of civil conflict because of the large rents it offers and the shocks to which the government and the national economy are exposed.<sup>1</sup> While this assertion is true to countries such as Nigeria, other countries such as Angola, DRC and Central Africa have been involved in conflicts (prolonged in some circumstances) on resources other than oil.

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<sup>1</sup> Aderoju Oyefusi, "Oil Dependence and Civil Conflict in Nigeria", *Centre for Studies of African Economies*, CSAE WPs/2007-00.

The natural (extractive) resources related conflicts in the Central Africa/Gulf of Guinea region could be classified into the following types - separatist conflicts; oil companies and local communities; inter-states conflicts; and conflict between the state and politically armed groups wanting to gain control of the country. It is public knowledge especially in Africa that wealth generated from the exploitation of natural resources has been largely used to prop up undemocratic regimes, line the pockets of elites and fuel violent conflicts. Unbridled corruption, human rights violations, and environmental degradation are residue of the exploitation of Africa's extractive resources. The next sections will examine in brief some of the conflicts that have engulfed this region from independence.

### **3. Republic of Angola**

#### **3. 1. The Angolan Civil War (1975-2002)**

Angola gained independence from Portugal in 1975 after a 13 years guerilla war (1961-1974). However, after independence, Angola became involved in a civil war that lasted for almost four decades. The civil war pitched the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) led by Eduardo Dos Santos who took over power upon the death of Augustinho Neto and became President of Angola, and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) led by Dr. Jonas SAVIMBI.

The Angola civil war could be divided into two phases with the first phase from 1975-1991 that culminated with the signing of the Bicese Accord on May 31, 1991 which called for a cease-fire, the formation of a new unified national army, and the holding of Angola's first multi-party elections for a new president and national assembly. The second phase of the Angola civil war lasted from 1992-2002 involving still the ruling MPLA which emerged victorious in the country's first multi-party elections and UNITA that refused to recognize the results of the elections and instead took up arms.

While the first phase of the Angolan civil war was dominated with foreign interventions and a battleground for the Cold War, the second phase saw the prominent role of natural resources – oil for the government (MPLA) and diamonds for the UNITA rebel group. This war is usually referred to as “Angola’s Resource war”.<sup>2</sup> While oil and diamonds have dominated the war in Angola, it is asserted that during the first phase of the war (1975-1991) UNITA used to sell ivory and hardwood to neighboring countries (Zambia, Zaire, and Namibia). However, UNITA’s war efforts were largely financed by revenues from selling illicit diamonds. It is estimated that between 1992 and 1998 UNITA received about \$3.7 billion from diamonds.<sup>3</sup>

Although diamonds were primarily used to support UNITA war efforts, revenues from oil were used by the government in funding its war efforts in fighting the UNITA rebels. In 1993, UNITA controlled 70% of the national territory, while the government controlled the major oil fields. With the increased oil production in 1994, the government was able to rearm and expelled UNITA from territories it occupied between 1992 and 1993. Oil therefore was especially significant in playing a critical role in the MPLA regime’s war strategy and in the interests of much stronger states that supported the MPLA against UNITA.<sup>4</sup>

### **3.2. The Cabinda War of Separation**

Cabinda is a province of Angola geographically distinct from the rest of the country. Situated north of Angola on the Atlantic coast, it is separated from the mainland by a strip of the Democratic Republic of Congo ("DRC"). To the north, Cabinda is bounded by the Congo. The province of Cabinda has for almost thirty years been fighting for its independence first from Portugal and later from Angola. Like the Niger Delta in Nigeria, Cabinda is Angola’s main oil producing

<sup>2</sup> Saraly Andrade & Joaquin Morales, “The Role of Natural Resource Curse in Preventing Development in Politically Unstable Countries: Case Studies of Angola and Bolivia” *INESAD Development Research Working Paper Series*, No. 11, November 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Kirsten H Andersen, “Resources and Conflict in Angola: An Economic Conflict Analysis”, *Department of Economics*, University of Oslo, Norway (2003).

<sup>4</sup> William Reno, “The Real (war) Economy of Angola”, Institute for Security Studies, <http://www.issafrica.org/pubs/Books/Angola/11Reno.pdf>, accessed May 2009.

region, providing 60 per cent of Angola's oil and this probably is the main reason for the protracted struggle between the secessionists movements led by the Cabinda Forum for Dialogue (FDC) and the Front for the Liberation of Cabinda (FLEC), and the government. Despite the fact that Cabinda is Angola's main oil production area, it is asserted that there is a very little presence of the oil companies' foreign employees in town and those present live in a gated compound called Malongo surrounded by landmines. Lack of employment opportunities for the local population and the contrast between poverty and more obvious wealth has sparked more vocal dissent.

The death of the UNITA rebel leader Jonas SAVIMBI in 2002 signaled the end of more than 3 decades of civil war that left over 500,000 deaths and brought UNITA to the negotiating table. Though a peace deal was signed between the ruling MPLA government and UNITA in 2002 that led to the putting in place of the Program for Social and Productive Reintegration of Demobilized and War Displaced People, political conflict between UNITA and the MPLA remained.

#### **4. Federal Republic of Nigeria**

##### **4.1. The Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970)**

The Nigerian civil war was deeply rooted in ethnic tensions between the eastern region led mainly by the Igbo and the Muslim dominated north. The presence of oil in the Eastern (Biafra) region may have informed its decision to secede from the Federation. At the period of the outbreak of hostilities, the Eastern region produced about 65% of Nigeria's crude oil and Shell-BP was responsible for about 84% of Nigeria's oil production. Shell-BP was a strategic actor in the war with about two thirds of its operations in the Mid Western and Eastern Regions. The position of Shell-BP during the war became very critical to both the break-away Biafra Republic and Federal Government with regard to whom it should pay its royalties. Prior to the beginning of the war in May 1967 total production of

crude oil in Nigeria averaged 580,000 barrels a day but this figure quickly dwindled to about 404,000 barrels per day.<sup>5</sup>

The Nigerian civil war like the Angola and DRC (formerly Zaire) civil wars that broke out in the years immediately after independence was a Cold War proxy war although it could be asserted that the involvement of foreign powers in the Nigerian civil war was also motivated by the presence of oil. The Federal Government was overtly supported by the British with significant interests in the Nigerian oil industry while France supported the Biafra Republic probably to reduce the potential threat of the Nigerian Federation to the French hegemony and its interest in the Eastern Region - the French oil company SAFRAP controlled 7% of Nigeria oil production.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the deeply rooted ethnic tensions between the Northern and Eastern regions branded as the cause of the civil war, it is believed that the Biafra rebellion was encouraged by the presence of oil because a successful secession from Nigeria would be economically beneficial to the Igbo dominated Eastern region. The Northern States who “unfortunately” were not blessed with the presence of oil dissatisfied with the oil revenue sharing formula demanded for a reversal of the manner of calculating Federal payments to State governments; a formula established when the economy was largely dominated by agricultural products. This could explain why during the battle were fought more over control of oil fields, pipelines, refineries, and ports and the highest casualties were registered in oil producing areas such as Ogoniland in the Niger Delta region.

Though the Nigerian civil war ended with the defeat of the Biafra secessionists and the reunification of the country, it became clear that oil would continue to shape the political landscape of Nigeria. For instance immediately after the close of the war, Nigeria witnessed a jump in its oil revenues which unfortunately

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<sup>5</sup> Chibuike Uche, “Oil, British Interests and the Nigerian Civil War”, *Journal of African History*, Vol. 49 (2008), pp. 111-135.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

resulted in widespread corruption and inequitable economic development.<sup>7</sup> After the civil war, Nigeria has been able to maintain a sort of fragile peace sandwiched with ongoing violence and uprising in the Niger Delta region with renewed call for self determination and/or local control of oil resources.

#### **4. 2. The Niger Delta Region: Oil-Related Violence and Uprising**

The crisis in the Niger Delta region is could consider as multidimensional considering the different perspectives held by the different protagonists. The problems of the Niger Delta have been attributed to the presence of oil. The Niger Delta alone accounts for over 90% of Nigeria's oil revenue. The region is also richly endowed with natural gas, Nigeria's next greatest potential earner.<sup>8</sup> Geographically the Niger delta comprises of the following states; Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo, and Rivers. Ironically, the Niger Delta region has been described as the most backward and underdeveloped region in Nigeria despite its endowment in oil and gas.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the widespread poverty reported in the region, the situation of the population is further compromised by activities of the oil corporations on the environment. For instance, due to the many forms of oil-generated environmental pollution it has become extremely difficult for the populations to farm and fish. The Niger Delta crisis began as an appeal to public disaffection by the population of the Niger delta region but this appeal which in the 1990s was in ways of organized protest usually met with military repression which sometimes led to deaths of protesters. The execution of nine of the Ogoni activists including Ken Saro Wiwa in 1995 by the military junta of General Sanni Abacha amidst international condemnation is considered the turning point in the crisis.

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<sup>7</sup> John Bacher, "Nigeria: Oil and Dictatorship", *Peace Magazine*, Sept-Oct 1998, <http://archive.peacemagazine.org/v14n5p12.htm>, accessed June 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Aderoju Oyefusi, note 1 above.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

The Niger Delta region has now become an archetypal case of what can be referred as a “zone of violence”.<sup>10</sup> Unlike other conflicts herein discussed, the Niger Delta conflict is one led by community members of the oil producing areas against the oil companies and the government. Disenchanted with the non-compensation of their lands by oil companies as well for environmental damage, there has been the emergence of militant groups such as the Niger Delta Peoples’ Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). MEND has become the umbrella militant group for the Niger Delta region with a claim of fighting for the defence of the rights of the larger population of the Niger Delta.

MEND objects to environmental degradation caused by the oil companies, underdevelopment of the region, and the lack of benefits to community from exploitation of its extensive oil resources. The attack by this militant group is greatly distorting oil production and causing lost of revenues to both the Nigerian government and the oil companies. For instance in 2003, some 70 percent of oil revenue was stolen or wasted, while MEND attacks on two Shell oil fields in February 2006 accounted for some 477,000 barrels per day of the reduced output.<sup>11</sup> The avalanche of problems faced especially by oil companies in the Niger Delta is prompting them to redirect their attention to offshore oil activities moving far away from the risks of MEND attacks.

The conflict in the Niger Delta region may be far from being resolved anytime soon despite laudable efforts made by the government such as the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Commission in 2002 and Community Development Projects financed by oil companies such as Shell. Despite these efforts there are some pertinent issues such as the fact that these projects are

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<sup>10</sup> Michael Watts, Ike Okonta & Von Kemedi, “Economies of Violence: Petroleum, Politics and Community Conflict in the Niger Delta, Nigeria”, *Institute of International Studies, University of California*, <http://www-geography.berkeley.edu/PeopleHistory/faculty/Economies%20of%20Violence.pdf>, accessed June 2009.

<sup>11</sup> Stephanie Hanson, “MEND: The Niger Delta’s Umbrella Militant Group”, *Backgrounder*, Council on foreign Relations (March 2007), <http://www.cfr.org/publication/12920/>, accessed May 2009.

carried out by the companies simply for purposes of public relations and not as a need to respond to real life problems of the local communities. The extensive use of repressive force as a response to protests by local communities demanding for greater share of oil revenues or for reparation for environmental damage will only go a long way to prolong the conflict. Therefore the Nigerian Federal Government need to initiate a credible sustained dialogue on control of resources with Niger Delta civil society groups and the local populations, and ensure improvement and transparency in the management of revenues from oil. Also oil companies should prioritize long term ability to operate in Nigeria over short-term goals and seek community assent before proceeding with production related projects.<sup>12</sup>

## **5. Democratic Republic of Congo**

The Democratic Republic of Congo formerly Zaire, is a glaring example of a country bedeviled by the availability of natural resources. The DRC is potentially one of the richest countries in Africa endowed with a wide range of natural resources from oil, minerals, and timber. The fight for control of the enormous revenues flowing from the exploitation of these resources has been at the centre of the violent conflicts in the DRC. Unlike the conflicts in Angola and Nigeria that were based on oil and to an extent diamond, in DRC the conflict was largely fuelled by the enormous availability of solid minerals such as gold, coltan, diamonds, and to an extent timber. This conflict has been referred to as the “Second Congolese War” and it began in 1998 one year after Laurent Kabila became President following the overthrow of President Mobutu Sese Seko who was president for over 30 years.

The Congolese civil war has been described as one of the world’s deadliest war since the Second World War with an estimated 3.3 million deaths. Unlike the first civil war that broke out immediately after the independence and became a spillover of the Cold War with the dominant presence of both Western and Soviet

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<sup>12</sup> International Crisis Group, “The Swamps of Insurgency: Nigeria’s Delta Unrest” *Africa Report*, No. 115 of 3 August 2006, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4310>, accessed May 2009.

forces, the second war has been dictated primarily by the interests of surrounding African states.<sup>13</sup> The war has been referred to as “Africa’s world war” with each of these countries supporting one or more of the warring factions. The conflict was sustained by the desire of armed factions to control large reserves of gold, diamonds, copper, and other minerals. The rebel groups in the eastern region of DRC fighting the government were supported by Rwanda, Uganda, possibly together with Burundi, and anti-government UNITA rebels from Angola; while the government of the DRC was supported by Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Chad, and possibly also with Sudanese soldiers and Rwandan Hutu extremists.<sup>14</sup>

Alongside the African countries in the Congolese conflict was the growing presence of multinational extractive industry companies. In a report released by the UN appointed Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth in the Democratic Republic of Congo,<sup>15</sup> several corporations were linked to the activities of rebel groups within the DRC. About 33 companies from Germany, Belgium, Rwanda, Malaysia, Tanzania, Switzerland, Russia, India, the UK, Netherlands, and Pakistan were involved in the importation of minerals from the DRC through Rwanda. There were also companies that directly supported rebel groups such as the Citi Bank that facilitated loan payments to the Rally for Congolese Democracy that held monopoly over coltan resources in the Goma area.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> The following African States were directly involved in the Second Congolese War; Angola, Burundi, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda.

<sup>14</sup> Mika Vehnamaki, “Diamonds and Warlords: The Geography of War in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone”, *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2002), pp. 48-74.

<sup>15</sup> Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (UN Expert DRC Panel Report S/2001/357 dated 12 April 2001), <http://www.un.org/News/dh/latest/drcongo.htm>. In a Security Council Meeting of May 11, 2002, Neighbouring Countries challenged the report on exploitation of resources of Democratic Republic of Congo, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2002/SC7561.doc.htm>.

<sup>16</sup> Vuyelwa Kuuya, “The Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth in the Democratic Republic of Congo”, (1 November 2008), *Lauterpacht Centre for International Law*, University of Cambridge. [http://www.business-humanrights.org/Links/Repository/737123/link\\_page\\_view](http://www.business-humanrights.org/Links/Repository/737123/link_page_view), accessed April 2009.

A 2005 Human Rights Watch report stated that AngloGold Ashanti had deals with FNL rebels notorious of their human rights abuses in Ituri. Though the company denied any wrong doing, it was named by the UN Panel of Experts' report as one of the eighty five (85) multinationals operating in DRC and not being in compliance with the OECD guidelines for multinational enterprises. The Rwandan Army that was also supporting some of the rebel groups through, Rwandan Metals according to the UN Panel of Experts' report is estimated to have exported at least 100 tons of coltan per month and that within a period of 18 months, Rwanda must have made at least \$250 million providing it the resources to sustain its stay in the DRC. The report also stated that the government management of State resources was void of any transparency and accountability and promoted patronage by allocating mining concessions to companies from Zimbabwe to ensure the Zimbabwean government's continued support in its war efforts against the rebel groups.

With the assassination of Laurent Kabila in 2001 and the ascension to power of his son Joseph Kabila, the Congolese war of resources entered a new phase marked with the need for peace. On April 19, 2002 following the Inter-Congolese Dialogue at Sun City in South Africa, a partial agreement was signed between the Mouvement pour la Liberation du Congo (MLC) led by Jean Pierre Bemba and the Government led by Joseph Kabila. Though the Sun City Agreement was supposed to signal the end of the conflict in DRC with the withdrawal of all foreign troops and a formation of a transitional government, Rwanda and Uganda continued supporting rival militia groups in the eastern part of DRC.

The Congolese conflict took an international dimension primarily because of the country's rich natural resources. For instance between 1998 to 2003, mainly in the northeastern Congo, Uganda troops took direct control of gold rich areas and coerced gold miners to extract the gold for their benefits and looted Congolese

gold valued at over \$ 9 million.<sup>17</sup> Uganda's role in the war was stated in an International Court of Justice ruling in 2005 which found that Uganda violated Congo's sovereignty by invading it and providing military, financial, and logistical support to Congolese rebels within the country between 1998 and 2002.<sup>18</sup> It is estimated that between August 1998 and April 2004 almost 3.8 million people died in the DRC. The Congolese war of 1998 to 2004 sandwiched with skirmishes until early 2009 depicts the role of natural resources in fuelling conflicts in Africa.

## 6. Central African Republic

The Central African Republic (CAR) has for more than ten years been trapped in recurrent armed conflict with a civil war between October 2002 and March 2003. These years of armed conflict has led to a complete collapse of basic infrastructure, social services, and high insecurity. Though Central African Republic is hugely endowed with a wide range of resources such as timber, diamond, gold, uranium, and ivory, the conflict in the Central Africa Republic seem not to be directly linked to the presence or even control of these resources. This view is supported by the International Peace Information Service (IPIS) which in a study revealed that most of the territories held by rebels contain only few natural resources.<sup>19</sup> This is in contrast with what obtained in the war in the DRC where the rebels and government troops controlled sizeable areas endowed with natural resources. The IPIS report also reveals that the only violence in the CAR that had a direct link to obtaining access to natural resources is from heavily armed illegal poachers interested in ivory.

<sup>17</sup> Human Rights Watch, "The Curse of Gold" (1 June 2005), <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2005/06/01/curse-gold>, accessed March 2009.

<sup>18</sup> Henry Wasswa, "Will Uganda Pay Up for Congo Occupation?", *Global Policy Forum*, 26 July 2007, <http://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/163/28685.html>, accessed May 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Steven Spittaels & Filip Hilgert, "Mapping Conflict Motives: Central African Republic", *International Peace Information Service (IPIS)*, Antwerp, February 2009, [http://www.ipisresearch.be/dbpdfs/20090217\\_Mapping\\_CAR.pdf](http://www.ipisresearch.be/dbpdfs/20090217_Mapping_CAR.pdf).

Currently an uneasy peace now reigns in CAR assured by the MICOPAX, a regional peace keeping force under the auspices of Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the European Union Force (EUFOR) which was a bridging operation until the United Nations peacekeeping force (MINURCAT) took over in March 2009.<sup>20</sup> While natural (extractive) resources have not been directly linked to the conflict in CAR, it could not be excluded that in future the presence of these resources might become a potential source of conflict. The possibility that oil might be discovered in the North of CAR and the possible exploitation of uranium in the South could also be seen as potential drivers for insecurity and conflict in future.

The major rebel groups fighting against the government of the CAR are the Armée Populaire pour la Restauration de la République et la Démocratie (APRD), Union des Forces Démocratiques pour le Rassemblement (UFDR), and Forces Armées Centrafricaines (FACA). While these are the main fighting groups, other actors with stakes in the CAR conflict include Chad, Libya, France, and Sudan. All these actors either support the government or the rebels and their interests are diverse as that of the fighting groups. For instance the government of Ange Felix Patasse gave Libya rights to prospect for and exploit oil, uranium, and other minerals following Libya support to the government in May 2001 to quell an attempted coup.

The Brussels based International Crisis Group had criticized the international community for their complacency in devaluing the political dialogue which gave up on reconciliation in return for simple disarmament and also by "...granting blank concessions to rebel leaders without demanding anything else from them except lip-service to legality".<sup>21</sup> According to Human Rights Watch the conflict in the CAR has led to the death of hundreds of civilians, more than 10,000 houses

<sup>20</sup> For more information about MINURCAT, see <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/minurcat/facts.html>.

<sup>21</sup> International Crisis Group, "Central Africa Republic: Untangling the Political Dialogue" *Africa Briefing*, No. 55 of 9 December 2008, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5800&l=>, accessed March 2009.

burned, and approximately 212,000 persons forced to flee their homes to live in desperate conditions deep in the bush in northern CAR and the neighbouring countries. From the above, the conflict in CAR unlike that in countries such as Angola, DRC, or Nigeria has no direct bearing on the presence of natural (extractive) resources. However, we cannot at this juncture exclude the potential of these resources (oil prospects in the north and exploitation of uranium in the south) to fuel a full scale resource-related conflict in the future if the present peace deal is not closely monitored as political, socio-economic, and security challenges keep CAR in a vulnerable position.

### **7. Republic of Congo (Congo-Brazzaville)**

The Republic of Congo like the other countries of the sub-region has had its own share of the resource-related conflicts that have been ravaging the region. Like Nigeria, the conflict in Congo-Brazzaville is hugely motivated by the presence of oil and the need for the different warring factions to capture the gains from oil exploitation. The Congo-Brazzaville conflict began after the results of the first multiparty elections in 1993 that saw the defeat of Denis Sassou-Nguesso who has been in power since 1979. Pascal Lissouba became President but his tenure was short-lived (1993-1997) as tensions heightened between his supporters and supporters of former President Denis Sassou-Nguesso ahead of the 1997 scheduled presidential elections which never took place as the country became immersed in a civil war that saw Denis Sassou-Nguesso come back to power.

Oil was considered a crucial factor in the war and like in the other countries different actors had very high stakes in the country. Oil is the mainstay of the economy of Brazzaville accounting for over 94% of the country's export earnings. During his more than twenty years as President, Denis Sassou-Nguesso established a neo-patrimonial state, redistributing oil profits to allies and potential enemies through educational benefits, military employment, and an ever-

expanding civil service.<sup>22</sup> According to Englebert and Ron<sup>23</sup> the country's monthly oil production during the height of the political tension between Lissouba and Sassou-Nguesso was 200,000 barrels with an estimated monthly earning of \$75 million in export revenue and this probably served as an incentive for whoever could claim legal control over the government.

The fight for the control of the country's oil revenues was split along ethno-regional and factional lines leading to the establishment of prominent three militia groups; Lissouba's Cocoyes, Sassou's Cobras, and Kolelas' Ninjas. Angola supported militarily Sassou's cobras helping secure Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire. By October 1997 Sassou-Nguesso emerged victorious in this first wave of violence that lasted for almost three years. A transitional government was instituted in Congo-Brazzaville by Sassou-Nguesso with a promise to hold presidential elections in 2001. Shortly after the transition period was established, war broke out between the government backed by Angola and the southern militias. Unlike the war in DRC, Angola, or even in Nigeria, the war in Brazzaville did not deteriorate into a war of secession. Though the southern militias may have had the motive and the base for secession given that Congo-Brazzaville's oil is located directly off the southern shores, it never developed into a determined secessionist movement. The failure of the civil war in Brazzaville in deteriorating into the type of resource-related wars seen in other African countries such as in Sierra Leone, Angola, or Sudan could not be easily explained by the resource curse theory.<sup>24</sup>

Considering that the impetus for the conflict in Congo-Brazzaville was political uncertainty and a desire by elites to control a greater share of the country's oil for themselves and supporters; southern military and political leaders were quick in surrendering in return for amnesty, reintegration into their former public sector

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<sup>22</sup> Pierre Englebert & James Ron, "Primary Commodities and War: Congo-Brazzaville's Ambivalent Resource Curse", *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (October, 2004), pp. 61-81.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

jobs and a desire in sharing in the country's oil wealth. While the peace agreement was signed in December 1999 brokered by President Omar Bongo of Gabon, had there been no political upheaval and uncertainty, it is unlikely that Congo-Brazzaville's resources would on their own have triggered a civil war.

## **8. Republic of Chad**

Though prospection for oil began in Chad as far back as the 1950s, oil was discovered in the 1970s and by 1989 Exxon Mobil, Chevron, Shell, and later PETRONAS began negotiations with the Government of Chad to exploit oil. During all these years before the construction of the Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline between 2000 and 2003, Chad has been involved in a civil war (1979-1982) followed in 1989 with a short rebellion that led to the overthrow of President Hissen Habre. Chad's first civil war had no direct linkage to the presence of natural resources because during this period until the start of oil exploitation in 2000, the country was considered one of the poorest countries in the world.

Chad's second civil war which began in 2005 could be described as having a direct link to the country's emergence as a producer of oil. In some instances, the civil war is described as a "spillover" from Darfur, Sudan and to an extent these two wars are entangled. Chad oil production is marginal compared to countries like Nigeria or Angola (200,000 barrels per day from the three Doba oil fields). From 2003 and 2005 the Government of Chad received huge sums as royalty payments from the oil consortium and oil revenues (in 2004 the Government was expected to receive between \$140-150 million as oil revenues paid into Chad's escrow account at Citi Bank in London and over \$200 million in 2005). During the life-span of oil production (25 years) it is expected the government may earn more than \$5 billion in oil revenues. The major goal of the civil war between the rebels and government was to topple President Idris Deby whose government has been described as corrupt and does not allow the profits from the oil exploitation to trickle down to the impoverished Chadian people.

Unlike in Nigeria, DRC, or Angola, the war in Chad was fought principally in the capital N'djamena far from the southern oil producing region of Doba. Though it could be said that the 2005 civil war was sparked off by those disgruntled with the way the government was managing the oil revenues, i.e. the rebel groups (United Front for Democratic Change, United Forces for Development and Democracy, amongst others), ethnic and political tensions between the North and the South fomented the current violence. It is estimated that by January 2006 almost 614 Chadian civilians had been killed. On February 8, 2006 a cease-fire agreement (Tripoli Agreement) was signed between the government and the rebel groups following mediation by President Muammar Kaddafi of Libya. Despite the peace deal, fighting continued until 2008 even with a comprehensive peace deal signed in October 2007. Peace in Chad is assured now by a European Union Peacekeeping Force (EUFOR). While Nigeria's militants focus most of their assaults on oil platforms and pipelines in an effort to throw the country's production offline, Chadian rebels have not threatened oil production in their attempts to oust Idris Deby.

## **9. Republic of Cameroon**

### **9.1. The Anglophone Problem and Oil**

Cameroon has been described as an island for peace in a region marred by conflict. In 2009, Cameroon was considered by the Global Peace Index as the 95th safest country in the world from 92nd in 2008 and 76th in 2007.<sup>25</sup> According to the Fact File on Cameroon published by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in South Africa,<sup>26</sup> the government to an extent managed to ensure political stability but this is largely contradicted with huge concern for human security. While Cameroon like all the other countries of the Gulf of Guinea and the Central Africa is endowed with a diversity of natural resources, it has not witnessed any overt conflict in exception of the 1984 attempted coup, political unrest in the 1990s and the skirmishes with Nigeria over the Bakassi peninsula. Nonetheless,

<sup>25</sup> Vision of Humanity, *Global Peace Index Rankings*, <http://www.visionofhumanity.org/gpi/results/rankings.php>, accessed June 2009.

<sup>26</sup> Cameroon: Fact File Security Situation available on [www.iss.co.za](http://www.iss.co.za), accessed June 2009.

there is the potential of conflicts related to regime security and human security with direct or indirect linkages to natural resources.

On regime security, Cameroon's potential security threat is from the secessionist groups in Anglophone Cameroon. In the 1990s at the wake of political liberalization that swept across Africa including Cameroon, several Anglophone associations and pressure groups emerged protesting against Anglophone marginalization, assimilation, and exploitation by the francophone dominated government. One of the most articulated reasons amongst others for the re-awakening of Anglophone nationalism and a potential source of conflict in Cameroon has been the relative underdevelopment of the Anglophone regions and the fact that according to these groups they have not benefited sufficiently from its rich resources, particularly oil. According to Jua and Konings,<sup>27</sup> this has led to a feeling of not being recolonised by the francophone dominated regime but marginalized in all spheres of public life and considered as second class citizens. The claims of these Anglophone associations and pressure groups to the presence of oil could not be considered baseless. Since 1975, they claim 75% of crude oil produced in Cameroon comes from the Rio del Rey offshore basin which span from Fako and Ndian divisions in the South West region. In addition, Limbe another Anglophone town is host to Cameroon's lone oil refinery station, SONARA with majority of those working there mostly from the Francophone part of Cameroon.

All the Anglophone groups are unanimous on the grievances of the Anglophones, however there are divergences as to the approach to be adopted that would benefit this population. The Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL) for instance stands for an armed struggle as a viable option in the face of the intransigence of the government to open any meaningful dialogue with them. The position of the SCYL is equally shared by the Southern Cameroons National

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<sup>27</sup> Nantang Jua and Piet Konings, "Occupation of Public Space: Anglophone Nationalism in Cameroon" *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, Vol. 175, No. 3 (2004), p. 609-634.

Council (SCNC) which is advocating for an independent Southern Cameroons i.e. a return to the pre-1961 status quo. In pursuing this approach, on the night of December 30, 1999 militants of the SCNC took over the CRTV Buea Radio Station and on December 31 proclaimed the independence of Southern Cameroons. This incident could have degenerated into an armed conflict had the government responded with arms. The independence proclamation ring leaders were later arrested and detained in Yaoundé.

While Cameroon until now may have escaped any extractive (oil) related conflicts, the claims of the Anglophone secessionist groups especially with regards to the fact that they have not benefited from revenues from oil exploitation should not be undermined. Some scholars have however considered that because of the offshore location of its oil, Cameroon may unlikely witness any resource related conflict.<sup>28</sup> This assertion is justified that unlike in Nigeria where there are particular groups (Igbos and Ogonis) “sitting” on the oil, in Cameroon there is no group sitting on the oil, even though the population in Ndian Division in the South West Province claims that crude oil exploited in Cameroon is from Rio del Rey in the Ndian Division.<sup>29</sup> Such discontented population could easily align its support with the secessionist groups.

The government has refused to acknowledge the existence of “an Anglophone Problem”. In 1999, President Paul Biya for the first time in a dismissive manner alluded to such a problem but that it is orchestrated by a handful of hotheads and vandals. Like in Nigeria, Angola, and even in DRC where particular groups have overtly fought the government to secede because of not having proceeds from natural resources found in their regions trickle down to them, Cameroon it could be said it is just a matter of time if enough caution is not taken now. Cameroon therefore harbors a latent conflict, especially as the government is engaged in

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<sup>28</sup> James D Fearon & David D Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War”, *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 1 (Feb 2003), pp.75-90.

<sup>29</sup> Andre Edimo, “Oil Production in Our Land”, *The Frontier Telegraph*, [http://www.thefrontier Telegraph.com/content/oil\\_production\\_in\\_our\\_land.html](http://www.thefrontier Telegraph.com/content/oil_production_in_our_land.html), accessed June 2009.

cracking down on Southern Cameroons activists and there is the existence of an exiled Southern Cameroons' government allegedly with basis in Nigeria. It is possible that this group could win the sympathies of militant groups in Nigeria which are fighting the same course in Nigeria and the two groups have a common interest over the Bakassi peninsula.

## **9.2. The Chad-Cameroon Pipeline and Local Communities in Cameroon**

The Chad-Cameroon Pipeline Project financed jointly by the World Bank Group and a consortium of oil companies comprising of Exxon Mobil, Chevron, and PETRONAS is one of the largest private investment into Sub-Saharan Africa. This project held a lot of mixed expectations from local and international NGOs and local communities in Cameroon and Chad. This project involves the transportation of crude oil exploited in southern Chad through a 1070 km pipeline through Cameroon to the coast of Kribi in south Cameroon. More than half of the pipeline cuts across Cameroon's tropical rainforest which is home to the indigenous pygmies and the Bantu communities.

While the project was perceived as a "development" project it was also a source of potential conflict. In Chad there were already rebel groups in the south fighting the Muslim dominated government in N'djamena. However, what is interesting in the Chad-Cameroon pipeline analysis in relation to oil related conflicts is that the local communities considered the project as a solution to their problems but according to different opinions from these communities their lot may instead have worsen with the passage of the pipeline. During the construction phase there were several strikes mostly by local workers laying pipes in Cameroon. In most cases these strikes were often brutally repressed by police forces deployed by the government at the behest of the consortium. Ever since the end of construction of the pipeline in 2003 there have been many outstanding claims by communities that they have not been compensated or inadequately compensated for damage caused to their lands with the passage of the pipeline. While these claims in some cases have been resolved, the problem of

compensation if not totally resolved is a potential source of conflict with a possibility of sabotage of the pipeline by aggrieved local communities.

Unlike the ongoing oil exploitation which is mostly located offshore, the Chad-Cameroon pipeline project is the first oil related project in Cameroon with a direct relationship with the local communities. An open confrontation between the local communities, the consortium, and the government may have been avoided during the construction phase; however, these communities are expecting to see the revenues from the oil used both in Chad and Cameroon to improve their livelihoods through the creation of social facilities. In the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, cases of the sabotage of pipelines by local communities disgruntled with oil companies have been widely reported, and the prospect exists that such strategies may be adopted in Cameroon if the exploited communities feel abandoned by the government and the oil companies.

## **10. Oil Related Inter-State Disputes**

### **10.1. The Cameroon-Nigeria Dispute over the Bakassi Peninsula**

Nigeria in an unprecedented move invaded Cameroon in 1994 claiming sovereignty over the Bakassi peninsula. This move by the then government of General Sani Abacha of Nigeria heightened tensions between the two countries. Bakassi was considered as a territory of Cameroon before Nigeria's invasion. Cameroon immediately after the invasion took the case to International Court of Justice and after more than five years of legal wrangling the ICJ ruled in 2002 that Bakassi belonged to Cameroon pursuant to the Anglo-German Agreement of 1913. The ICJ went further to uphold the existing maritime boundary between the two countries in accordance with the Declarations of Yaoundé II and Maroua signed by Nigerian former military ruler General Yakubu Gowon and Cameroon's former President Ahmadu Ahidjo in 1971 and 1975 respectively. Despite the ICJ judgment, Nigeria troops finally withdrew from Bakassi only after a series of diplomatic interventions facilitated by UN former Secretary General Kofi Annan

that culminated to the signing of the Green Tree Accord in 2006 in the USA between Cameroon and Nigeria on the timeline of the handing over of Bakassi to Cameroon. Cameroon only regained full sovereignty of the Bakassi peninsula only on August 14, 2008.

It is alleged that the possible presence of large reserves of oil in the Bakassi peninsula must have motivated Nigeria's invasion of the peninsula in the first place considering that Bakassi lies adjacent to the Niger Delta oil rich region in Nigeria. One of Cameroon's pleas that offshore blocks found around the Peninsula to which Nigeria had already accorded exploration and exploitation licenses should be ceded to Cameroon was rejected by the ICJ as it instead endorsed Nigeria's delimitation method which kept intact all the country's existing offshore fields. The 1994 invasion of Bakassi by Nigerian troops added to earlier skirmishes between the forces of the two countries in 1981 and in both cases an open conflict involving the two countries was only narrowly avoided thanks to the resolve of the leaders of the two countries to find a peaceful solution. The conflict between Nigeria and Cameroon over control of the Bakassi peninsula could be considered as a low level conflict but with enormous potential that it could have escalated into a violent interstate conflict.

## **10.2. Equatorial Guinea - Gabon Dispute over Corisco Bay**

For several years, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea have been engulfed in a dispute over the sovereignty of the potentially oil-rich islands in Corisco Bay. Dispute over these islands have in several occasions brought these two countries at the brink of war. While Gabon has recognized Equatorial Guinean sovereignty over the inhabited islands, it has refused to do so over the three uninhabited islands of Mbanie, Coctotiers, and Congas probably because of the high chance of finding more oil in the islands. Any of the countries that gained sovereignty over the disputed islands will automatically get exploration rights to much larger potentially oil-bearing offshore areas. In 1972 Gabonese troops in an unprecedented move

invaded the island of Mbanie chasing out the Equatorial Guinea army and this event sparked off sporadic clashes between the two countries.

However, for long it was seen as if the conflict was over until in 2003 when during a visit to the Island by Gabonese Defense Minister Ali Bongo, he re-stated Gabon's claim to the Islands. This statement sparked off new tensions between Gabon and Equatorial Guinea and following a meeting with the then UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan at the UN headquarters the two presidents agreed to UN mediation. It could be said that the resolve of the two countries and the UN mediation may have put off another oil-related conflict in the Gulf of Guinea but with no definite solution yet insight, nothing is certain. Like the Nigeria-Cameroon conflict over the Bakassi peninsula, probably only a decision by the International Court of Justice may bring any certainty to this dispute between Gabon and Equatorial Guinea, and just like Nigeria and Cameroon, the implementation of any such decision could require extensive diplomatic intervention.

## **11. Conclusion**

In 2005, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution that recognized the link between the illegal exploitation of natural resources, the illicit trade in such resources and the proliferation and trafficking of arms<sup>30</sup> as one of the factors that fuel and exacerbate conflicts in countries such as the DRC. Of the countries in the Central Africa sub region and the Gulf of Guinea, only Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, and Sao Tome and Principe have not had any sort of overtly natural resources-related conflicts despite being endowed with wide range of resources (oil, minerals, and timber). Some scholars have justified the absence of any significant violence in these countries as a result of the combination of two factors; location of offshore oil and the institution of neo-patrimonial political system. These countries could have been spared any significant outbreak in

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<sup>30</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 1607 (2005), adopted by the Security Council at its 5208th meeting, on 21 June 2005.

violence for now but the failure to institute a political system now that guarantees good governance considered as central to creating an environment that fosters sustainable and equitable development that in essence will promote sound revenue management only places them in very precarious situation.

As seen in some of the cases above, when a government depends largely on wealth from the exploitation of natural resources, there is a tendency for such a government to reduce its dependence upon its citizens, making it less accountable to them and depend less on them for its legitimacy. It is within this context that most of the conflicts in the Central African sub region are situated as governments tend to become very concerned about any threat to what can be effectively their main source of power. During a UN Expert Group Meeting on Natural Resources and Conflicts in Africa in Cairo in 2006<sup>31</sup>, it was agreed that natural resources are inherently good as they can generate wealth and contribute to peace and development. The Experts said that to ensure that Africa's natural resource wealth serves as an engine for sustainable socio-economic development rather than a source of inter and intra-state conflict and under-development, good political, economic, and corporate governance is of primary importance.

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<sup>31</sup> UN Expert Group Meeting on Natural Resources and Conflict in Africa: Transforming a Peace Liability into a Peace Asset, 17-19 June 2006 Cairo, Egypt, <http://www.un.org/africa/osaa/reports/EGM%20Natural%20Resouces%20and%20Conflict%20in%20Africa.pdf>, accessed June 2009.