



Niger Delta oil damage. Photo by flickr.com/socialistiskunqdom

RESOURCE WARS & GOVERNMENT FAILURES: WEST AND HORN OF AFRICA

Resources, Militancy and Organised Crime Programme

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Abstract

Recently, regions in the West and Horn of Africa have experienced a significant rise in both the number of militant groups and their followings. Insurgents in these areas are becoming increasingly more tactical in their approach to oppose governments and enforce their beliefs. Natural resources have played a crucial role in fuelling this instability, as both governments and the opposition, have used this wealth to further their cause.

The Collier-Hoeffler model suggests that resource rich countries are more likely to encounter armed rebellion as groups are often driven by the motive of greed. Although it is easier to blame insurgent groups, corrupt governments equally contribute to the exploitation of natural resources and it is no accident that ‘nearly every country facing an extremist insurgency is run by a kleptocratic clique’¹. Governments contributing to illegal trade are pivotal instigators in fuelling future conflict and this gives those living in abject poverty the necessary motives to turn to violence and start looting resources. Foreign interests will take priority if instability ensues, which could suggest future intervention to protect natural resources.

Oil, Gas and Energy

In South Sudan, tensions have been rising since Riek Machar’s attempted coup against Salva Kiir’s government. Forces loyal to Machar have made ambitious efforts to loot and capture oil sources in the Unity state, making oil supplies a major source of contention. This is the result of poor protection in those regions, allowing easy access to rebels and armed groups. This has led to a 30 per cent reduction in crude oil production, threatening the new state’s economy². This puts South Sudan in a compromising position, as it needs to assert its position within the region as a strong economic and political contender, rather than a conflict torn country led by an unstable government.

“THE GOVERNMENT IS EQUALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR IGNORING THE ROOT CAUSE OF INSTABILITY IN THE COUNTRY”

Similarly, in Nigeria, oil in the Niger Delta has fuelled both poverty and conflict. As Africa’s highest oil producing state and the world’s seventh biggest oil producer, the Niger Delta is an extremely important source of income for the Nigerian government, as oil alone makes up 90 per cent of the country’s wealth³. However, under President Goodluck Jonathan criminal networks have been increasing rapidly, which has led to an annual estimated loss of \$20 billion due to trade in stolen oil. The Islamist militant group, Boko Haram, has gained global notoriety since kidnapping 276 schoolgirls from a local school in the village of Chibok in the Borno state and President Jonathan has stated that ‘in terms of security, Boko Haram is the biggest challenge we have at the moment’⁴. However, although the group is responsible for terrorising Nigerians and opposing the government through violence, the government is equally responsible for ignoring the root cause of instability in the country. The distorted gap between the price of exported oil and the revenue that accounts for government budgets, suggests significant tampering by government officials. Restricting oil revenues to a certain group of people, mostly the elite, only adds to the population’s grievances and could explain why Nigerians living on the margins of society are sympathetic towards insurgent groups. This corruption is equally evident within the Nigerian military and the defence sector, as means are often employed to exploit state budgets for personal expenses. This has a substantial effect on the Nigerian military who are less equipped and motivated than Boko Haram⁵. On the other hand, some

Nigerians are feeling increasingly abandoned by the Nigerian military and have formed their own militant groups to counter Boko Haram forces. This can only lead to further instability in the future, as the Nigerian government will find itself helpless in the face of multiple divided forces.

Additionally, the government has failed to protect its citizens from environmental degradation. The Niger Delta region has suffered extensively from oil spills over the last few years that has fuelled poverty in the region as both food growth and the water supply have been severely affected.

Fishermen and farmers' livelihoods have been threatened by this, influencing more people to distance themselves from the current government. Boko Haram is able to exploit these grievances to expand recruitment and

gain a wider support base. Clear trends are surfacing as some suggest that 95 per cent of the Borno youth is associated with the insurgent group⁶. It is therefore crucial to recognise the Nigerian government's failure to respond to civilians' welfare and security as a prime agent in contributing to the current situation.

This notable corruption within Nigerian politics should be considered ahead of any plan for the US to ally itself with the government in its quest to counter terrorism. Corruption in Nigeria needs to be addressed, and perpetrators should be held responsible, as this is the only way to target instability. More importantly, dealing with corruption would yield better levels of education, healthcare, infrastructure and power supply, all of which are instrumental in preventing

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groups like Boko Haram from gaining power. Nigeria's oil corruption has influenced insurgency, and this should resonate as a lesson for all African states. Sudan, South Sudan, DRC, Congo, and Equatorial Guinea are just some that have the potential to develop their oil production on a similar scale, but steps have to be taken to ensure that income generated through resources is translated into benefits for the population as a whole.

On a wider scale, these problems have provoked an international response.

According to western narrative, these insurgent groups in Africa pose a major threat to international security and controlling this trend could imply expanding the borders of the war on terror. Due to its position as Africa's largest exporter of oil into the US and arguably as Africa's leading economy, Nigeria is a strategic player for foreign powers. Consequently,

it is subjugated to a degree of foreign military control. Recently the Boko Haram insurgency has prompted both France and the US to move their intelligence and military equipment into Nigeria⁷. Whether this will involve a full-scale international war, similar to Iraq and Afghanistan is debatable, but the idea that intervention is on the table, reinforces the idea that the fight against terrorism is in fact a fight over resources.

Blood Diamonds

Similarly to Nigeria, both the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo strongly fit the model of the conflict-mineral perspective. As resource rich countries, they have been subjected to extreme periods of conflict and instability, mostly as a result of rising insurgent power and weak policies due to a

corrupt government. Past rebellions, such as Angola's civil war, have been directly fuelled by the diamond industry. The illegal diamond trade is extremely damaging to a country's GDP, and more importantly, it is explicitly tied to the direct abuse of basic human rights.

In the CAR, bandits and rebels contribute to the deterioration of security in rural areas as they have made ambitious efforts to exploit the country's dilapidated infrastructure in order to claim territory to terrorise people from driving through⁸. Most of the diamond deposits are found in the South West and North East of the country, in which very few towns are located. This suggests that government access is limited, especially if armed groups are active. For instance, Anti-Balaka rebels have taken control of diamond rich areas and are trading rough diamonds to finance their activities, i.e. arms, fuel and food. An Amnesty report finds that in February 2014 anti-balaka forces were responsible for killing over 40 people in Bouguere, a town recognised for its diamond wealth⁹. Although the attacks are believed to be part of a revenge plot against Seleka fighters, the ensuing instability will make the region prone to future violence and control by armed groups. Additionally, Seleka rebels are a major concern to foreign resource companies as the group has often raided businesses for supplies¹⁰. In addition to increasing security threats, the conflict has also limited the government's access to mines, which has ultimately resulted in the reduction of the national budget. However, it is difficult to determine where the blame lays as little form of rule exists outside of the capital, and therefore both insurgents

“THE KP NEEDS TO UNDERGO EXTENSIVE REFORMS IN ORDER TO HIGHLIGHT THE DIRECT CORRELATION BETWEEN BLOOD DIAMONDS AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS”

and bandits might be mistaken for one and the same.

In the DRC, armed rebels continue to afflict prospects of stability. The country's history is tainted with the corruption and trade of conflict diamonds. Its previous leader, Jean Pierre Bemba, is infamously remembered for financing the lengthy war through the sale of one to three million dollars worth of diamonds a month, most

of which were sold or laundered through the CAR¹¹. Although violence has substantially declined, fighting continues between Congolese troops and M23 forces. This lack of stability is reflected in the country's GDP per capita, which ranks as the lowest in the world¹², despite the fact that it is responsible for

producing 8 per cent of the world's diamonds¹³. This failure is mostly due to a combination of factors, including a lack of transparency, corruption and increasing external debt.

As a result of this link between diamonds and conflict, the Kimberley Process (KP) was formed as an official institution that offers to track the origin of diamonds by establishing controls that impede the flow of conflict diamonds from entering the supply chain¹⁴. However, De Morais, author of *Blood Diamonds: Torture and Corruption in Angola*, finds that the KP needs to undergo extensive reforms in order to highlight the direct correlation between blood diamonds and human rights violations¹⁵. The process has also been criticised for its bias during the Zimbabwe case as it neglected to highlight trade in 'blood diamonds' due to its members' close affiliation with the Mugabe government. In order to actively end

conflict diamonds from fuelling violence and human rights abuses, the KP needs to re-brand itself as a neutral system. ‘Refusal to evolve and address the clear links between diamonds, violence and tyranny’ will otherwise render it ‘increasingly outdated’¹⁶.

Conclusion

A combination of vast resources and weak governance have exposed many African countries to a condition of continuous conflict. Although these countries have the potential to become some of the continent’s leading economies, they have been systematically dragged down by the resource curse. This situation is not limited to oil and diamonds, water, food and ivory have also played crucial role in financing criminal activities. The Elephant Action League (EAL) has described ivory as the “white gold of jihad”, allowing groups like Al-Shabab to continue gaining power in the Horn of Africa.

Breaking the cycle of conflict and greed requires extensive political reforms influencing transparency and equality. Officials need to be held accountable for withholding potential revenue from the

economy and efforts need to be made to uphold a more honest form of governance. Additionally, resource rich countries should be dissuaded from relying on resource rents, as dependent economies are more prone to fluctuations.

Transparency and government monitoring needs to gain more momentum in order to counter violence associated to the looting of natural resources. Strategies such as the Open Government Partnership (OPG), the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and the Kimberley Process are making proactive attempts to reduce corruption and inefficiency. However, many states still remain non-members which highlights the limitations of institutional power in fighting internal corruption. Countering insurgency is a multifaceted problem that requires a structured approach, but overall, governments should be aiming to create stronger relationships with their civilians in order to promote trust and stability; this is the only way to prevent the poor and powerless from identifying the government as their enemy.

¹ <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-chayes-nigeria-corruption-insurgency-20140327-story.html>

² <http://www.platts.com/latest-news/oil/juba/south-sudan-receives-35-bil-from-oil-sales-over-26800182>

³ <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/61fb070e-bf90-11e1-a476-00144feabdc0.html#axzz33IrBkooY>

⁴ <http://allafrica.com/stories/201405290890.htm>

⁵ <http://allafrica.com/stories/201405290890.htm>

⁶ <http://carnegieendowment.org/2014/05/16/nigeria-s-boko-haram-isn-t-just-about-western-education/hb23>

⁷ <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2014/06/07/365959/africa-current-phase-of-imperialist-war-drive/>

⁸ <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Gold%20and%20diamonds%20in%20the%20Central%20African%20Republic.pdf>

⁹ <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/life-midst-horror-central-african-republic-2014-02-18>

¹⁰ <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/life-midst-horror-central-african-republic-2014-02-18>

¹¹<http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Gold%20and%20diamonds%20in%20the%20Central%20African%20Republic.pdf>

¹²

http://diamondfacts.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=129&Itemid=167&lang=en#DRC

¹³ <https://data.undp.org/dataset/GDP-per-capita-2005-PPP-/navj-mda7>

¹⁴

<http://www.globalwitness.org/campaigns/conflict/conflict-diamonds/kimberley-process>

¹⁵<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/south2north/2013/11/dark-side-diamonds-20131112142622258368.html>

¹⁶

<http://www.globalwitness.org/campaigns/conflict/conflict-diamonds/kimberley-process>

ABOUT OUR PROGRAMME: RESOURCES, MILITANCY AND ORGANISED CRIMES IN WEST AND HORN OF AFRICA

Brief Background and Scope

Africa's GDP is the most rapidly growing of any continent but corruption, crime, and militancy are rife. Much of this centres on the continent's wealth of natural resources, including petroleum etc. Foreign investment in Africa has grown exponentially over the last decade and will continue to rise. Consequently, foreign & African governments and criminal/militant groups' interests and sphere of influences will clash with increasing intensity over the coming years. This will have direct implications on energy, regional and global security agendas. Furthermore, areas such as West and

Horn of Africa regions are strategically located, which enhances their role in the international trade system through shipping routes and transnational linkages etc. The creation of AFRICOM reflects the rising global importance of the region, with the exportation of oil only expected to drastically increase from the continent by 2025. Yet with the region still lacking institutions of effective governance and reliable security structures, the levels of violent insurgency have jeopardised economic development in countries such as Somalia, Ethiopia, Mali and Nigeria etc. Different militant groups finance their operations through employment of traditional criminal enterprises, such as smuggling and drug sales. Resources are also exploited for revenue by both criminal organisation and militant groups. Militant organisations such as Al-Shabab and other Jihadists and nationalist movement operating primarily in Somalia & Sahel – have exploited the security vacuum that exists in the regions. In addition, issues such as piracy continue to effect maritime security whilst increasing costs for counter-piracy measures. The implications of above is severe on all three fronts i.e. Energy security, regional security and global security. To address these problems and develop solutions, we must now confront all three facets holistically, with due appreciation of their interrelated attributes.

Programme's Deliverables:

1. Mapping the interplay between resources, militant groups and the dynamics of organised crime in West/horn of Africa.
2. Conflict forecasting and risk analysis of the current and future dynamics of militancy, resources, organised crimes and their repercussions on energy security, regional and global security.
3. Situation analyses on above issues, regional positioning and global powers interests etc.
4. Alternative policy analyses that may serve in policy making on regional and global governance levels
5. Creating a useful guide and knowledge base for stakeholders and public for future oil, gas and aid endeavours in West/Horn of Africa.

ABOUT US

IISA is a think-tank and an intellectual forum for addressing the current and future dynamics of the Islamic-world and its interaction with Western civilisation. Based in London, IISA will create trans- Islamic and global reach. IISA seeks to establish a platform where Islamic-world's dynamics, trends, issue, problems or crises are analysed within the Islamic-world and by working on local models and realities and not against any external standards or perceptions. We will be one of the leading think-tank on the Islamic-world and its role in the contemporary global system. In a short span of time we have attracted great academic support and a reputation for both open and track-II dialogues. IISA is the only think tank initiative that goes beyond national and regional inclinations and addresses strategic and socio-political issues/crises of the Islamic-world in its totality. For more information i.e. our mission statement, current programmes and our academic and regional expertise please visit the following links:

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