

bulletin

The Conflict, Security
& Development Group

The relationship between war and the extraction of natural resources is now a significant issue on the international-security agenda. Yet such exploitation has long played a role in funding and motivating conflict. For instance, oil has figured prominently in conflicts in the Middle East – Iraq invaded Iran in 1980 with the aim, *inter alia*, of gaining control of Khuzestan's oilfields – and in Biafra's failed secession attempt from Nigeria in 1967–70. Copper was a factor behind Indonesia's annexation of West Papua in 1962, the 1973 coup against late Chilean President Salvador Allende and the Shaba crises in southern Zaire in 1977–78. More recently, it has contributed to the armed separatist struggle in Bougainville (Papua New Guinea). Similarly, gems and timber played a part in the wars in Cambodia and Liberia during the 1990s.

With the end of Cold War patronage, foreign backing became more closely tied to, if not overwhelmingly guided by, commercial considerations. Examples of military interventions overlapping resource-control agendas include Liberian warlord-cum-President Charles Taylor's support for Revolutionary United Front

(RUF) rebels in Sierra Leone and the involvement of regional armies in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Fuelling war?

According to Paul Collier of the World Bank, the risk of war is higher in countries with economies that depend on primary-commodity exports. Notwithstanding the fact that previous bouts of instability and the perceived risk of conflict tend to increase this dependency, as less profitable and more mobile or exposed industries disinvest, this relationship demonstrates, in Collier's view, that 'greed' is the central driving force behind recent wars. These commodities are the most amenable to taxation or looting by governments and rebels alike. Even if greed does play a part, though, the relationship between natural resources and conflict is more complex and goes beyond financing and motivating warring parties to concern development trends and state vulnerability. Furthermore, conflict and looting will depend on the specific location of resource reserves and the mode of production.

Special issue on conflict and resources . . . Philippe Le Billon examines whether natural resources fuel conflict, while Mark Duffield analyses network war. In addition, Abiodun Alao broadens the scope of discourse and Phil Champain looks at business and conflict. Plus Web Watch, Pointers and a call for papers for the *Journal of Conflict, Security & Development*.

Call for papers

Conflict, Security and Development is now soliciting papers for future issues of the journal. Published three times per year by the Centre for Defence Studies at King's College London, the journal contains a combination of extended theoretical and conceptual articles, operational and regional case studies, and concise opinion pieces that establish connections between conflict and security-sector issues on the one hand and development matters on the other, in particular human rights and social development. Its target audience ranges from opinion shapers, research analysts and media representatives, to think tanks, international organisations and government and academic departments that recognise the intellectual and policy challenges posed by the new security agenda.

While a number of journals cover issues and themes relating to conflict, security and development, none are dedicated solely to examining the relationship between security policy and development and to bridging the related disciplines. Not only does *Conflict, Security and Development* fill this vacuum with fresh, objective and intellectually provocative research, but also it offers an interactive forum for the cross-fertilisation of ideas and perspectives, and for reasoned and rigorous debate between members of the northern and southern hemispheres.

Authors wishing to contribute to the journal should, in the first instance, submit a one-page abstract outlining the key arguments of the proposed article and its relevance to the focus of the publication. For more information, contact Richard Jones on +44 (0)20 7848 2947, at rick.jones@kcl.ac.uk or visit the CSDG website at <http://csdg.kcl.ac.uk>.

Resource dependence can distort the economy and the politics of a state. A dominating primary sector encourages political factionalism and corruption, thereby weakening governance and stalling economic growth. An environment is created that is potentially primed for instability and tenuously controlled by a government with weak legitimacy. Affected states are often characterised by underdevelopment, poverty and inequality. Grievance against the individuals and organisations responsible (or those perceived to be answerable) should not be discounted as a factor behind rebellions or aspirations for separatism.

Economic impact

Economies that rely on natural resources are highly vulnerable to external shocks, especially fluctuations in market prices. National currencies may appreciate because of greater export revenues, but non-resource sectors, such as manufacturing, shrink as effort and investment are directed towards the high-return extraction industries. State subsidies to support other economic sectors generally fail to address long-term competitiveness and are often embezzled by managing institutions. Over-optimistic revenue forecasts and the use of resources as collateral for loans have a tendency to lead to high debt levels. And as debt arrears rise, corruption and the preferential allocation of public revenue to defence accounts and slush funds reduce the overall rate of production in, and the tax base of, the economy. In the absence of an effective fiscal policy, poverty and income inequality increase.

Political impact

The transformation of natural resources into tradable commodities is a deeply political process, involving the definition of property rights, the organisation of labour, and the allocation of benefits and costs, including environmental

externalities like pollution and migration. Although this process can be peaceful and co-operative, it often proves contentious. Tight economic and political control, exercised by a ruling élite, over key resources, especially minerals, leaves little scope for the accumulation of wealth and improvement in status outside the boundaries of state patronage.

By eliminating the need for broad-based taxation – necessary in a diversified economy – abundant resources facilitate authority that is independent of popular legitimacy and efficient bureaucracy. Rent from resources can finance a repressive security apparatus and can be used to prevent the emergence of a class demanding political change. With sufficient finance, leaders and business associates can ‘clientelise’ the general population, as is the case in many oil-rich (micro) states. Privatisation schemes, whereby foreign firms manage the resources, can also minimise the risk of domestic political competition, consolidate external political support and satisfy the macroeconomic demands of international financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Countries with abundant resources tend, therefore, to have predatory governments that serve sectional interests. Consequently, they face a greater risk of violent conflict. As the wealth and power gap between the ruling and the ruled grows, so too does the frustration of sidelined groups, which increasingly see political change as the only means of meeting their aspirations or expressing their grievances. This may include competing élites, such as peripheral politicians or military officers, and the disenfranchised, like unemployed youths and petty criminals. The take-over of Sierra Leonean diamond fields by government cronies and the ensuing economic marginalisation of young men, for instance, contributed to the emergence of the RUF.

In the absence of effective institutions to achieve political consensus, violence becomes

the main – if not the only – route to wealth, power or simply survival. Even benevolent governments often trade coherent long-term economic policy for short-term welfare maximisation in order to manage immediate social tension. This results in inefficient investment and low growth, with potentially violent political consequences.

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The ‘lootability’ factor

Natural resources are often easily accessible to governments and rebels, requiring minimal bureaucratic infrastructure. This lootability factor facilitates conflict. Unlike manufacturing and, to some extent, agriculture, primary-resource exploration cannot be relocated. The greater the availability of valuable resources at the periphery of state control, the greater the likelihood of a prolonged conflict. In Angola, for example, geographically dispersed alluvial diamond deposits have sustained the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA)’s 26-year rebellion, while offshore oil has granted the government economic sanctuary. If diamonds were found only in Kimberlite pipe deposits, as in Botswana, or on the coastal seabed, as in Namibia, access would have been complicated, if not made impossible, for UNITA. Similarly, the government would be highly

vulnerable if the oil was situated onshore in a border region.

Peace initiatives

Resource revenues undermine the political leverage of international-security agencies, as unaccountable businesses, private security companies and foreign states become key players. Corporations may decide not to invest or to discontinue existing operations. In general, though, they deal with whoever is in power in order to protect their investments and to increase their competitive advantage. This can range from paying a few dollars to let a truck pass a rebel checkpoint, to multi-million-dollar bonuses to belligerents.

Following the 1992 peace agreement in Mozambique, for instance, the cash-strapped Mozambique National Resistance Movement (RENAMO) was forced to rely on an intergovernmental trust fund and adhered to the peace process. In contrast, UNITA, financed by diamonds exploited by private firms, rearmed and returned to war in Angola after the signing of the Bicesse Accords in 1991 and its subsequent electoral defeat. Likewise the government's war effort, following the failed attempt to implement the 1994 Lusaka protocol, has been financed by private loans guaranteed by oil sales. The move by the United Nations (UN) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to involve corporations in the 'business of peace' acknowledges this new balance of power.

Yet the process of resource exploitation can also fragment and lead to the criminalisation of armed groups. This can potentially undermine their chains of command and the mobilisation of troops, thereby decreasing military strength. As with the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, there may be tensions within the leadership over spoils, while field commanders and foot soldiers may see a financial advantage in collaborating with 'the enemy'.

The international community could play on the ambivalent impact of resources on peace transitions, using a regulatory framework involving effective sanctions and 'business incentives'. Including in peace deals the provision that resource revenues be channelled through an internationally supervised escrow account could prevent their misuse by warring parties during peace processes. Monies could be directly allocated to peace consolidation, public services and rehabilitation activities.

Conclusion

Natural resources are not systematically fuelling war. Many countries with abundant reserves are not affected by conflict, and not all belligerents rely on them to fund their struggles. Natural-resource control and exploitation, though, can create or exacerbate conflict, as well as extend and intensify it. Where it is a factor, however, a generalised interpretation of war as 'greed-driven' can dangerously depoliticise the fighting and thus prolong it. Initiatives to prevent and resolve conflict, therefore, need to understand better the role of resource (mis)governance in shaping greed and grievance – and their interaction. This applies not only to very profitable, internationally traded primary commodities, but to land and other local economy resources.

The policy implications are not new. Economic diversification and greater access to international markets, fair and transparent revenue allocation schemes, local and accountable governance, sustained external assistance during periods of crisis, and targeted sanctions against war criminals and profiteers have long been on development and peace-building agendas. But putting them into practice means challenging the political economy of commercial networks, which are shaped by the self-interest of politicians, soldiers, businesses and consumers.

Philippe Le Billon
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Network war

A distinct 'political economy of violence' (PEV) has emerged over the past decade. This article does not intend to focus, directly at least, on what PEV tells us about conflict. Rather, it concentrates on its unintended consequences or collateral effects: how PEV shapes a particular understanding of organised violence and our own institutional response to it. In particular, its tendency to produce what could be called a *them and us* dichotomy in the way we view contemporary conflict.

A common theme surrounding PEV – shared with much of the developmental literature on conflict – is that the new wars are a 'failure of modernity'. This is reflected in many different ways: the exclusion of the South from global capitalism and, as a consequence, the deepening of poverty; the wrong type of 'top down'

development; or the unintended and harmful effects of humanitarian assistance. Such failure is usually represented as a loosening of the civilising grip of social organisation, allowing aberrant and discordant entities to emerge.

Conflict as a failure of modernity feeds into the common perception of war as a form of social regression leading to breakdown, excess and barbarity. But what if conflicts in places like Afghanistan, Colombia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo were not failures of modernity, but, rather, the realisation of its inner potential? Instead of being a characteristic of *them* rather than *us*, what if they were part of a shared condition, in which the capacities and opportunities of modernity create the possibility for both organised violence and countervailing forms of external intervention and regulation?

It can be argued that *their* wars are ambivalent forms of regionalised political struggle, including resistance to the complex process of globalisation. And *our* wars are increasingly concerned with attempting to regulate and manage these often violent forms of resistance and autonomy. This emerging regulation is unevenly developed and takes many interconnected forms, including humanitarian intervention, conflict resolution and social reconstruction, the activities of non-governmental organisation (NGOs) and consumer groups, and the formation of 'global compacts' with the business sector.

With the end of Cold War patronage, warring parties have had to become more self-supporting in order to engage in organised violence. To the extent that funding and supplies are not provided by outside sponsors, they have to be generated internally. This, in turn, implies the creation of systems to exploit local resources, to support transborder supply networks, and to establish regional and international political circuits.

Pointer Unrest that has spread across the North African state of Algeria since April 2001 is continuing to gather momentum. For the first time since the army suspended elections in 1992, widespread popular protests, led by the country's *Berbers*, have focused directly on the military-backed regime in Algiers.

The conflict has claimed over 120,000 lives since 1992 and recent allegations – some made by former security officers – point to the regime's direct involvement in a significant number of atrocities. In June 2001, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika came under mounting criticism for remaining largely silent about the clashes.

On 9 April 2001, the European Union (EU) General Affairs Council adopted new policy guidelines on the prevention and eradication of torture in third countries. The European Union is currently negotiating an Association Agreement with Algeria.

Each one of these systems and points of exchange constitutes a site on which new forms of legitimacy, identity and authority are continually reproduced, giving rise to complex forms of social transformation. In realising the possibilities of modernity, such networks exploit the loopholes and ambiguities that exist within the international economy and the ambiguous ethics of the business world. Borrowing from Ulrich Beck, we can see the new wars as symptomatic of an alternative *reflexive modernity*.

Another collateral effect of PEV relates to how 'winners' and 'losers' are understood. An implicit horizontal division is usually held to exist between a criminalised élite, which, driven by greed, destroys the developmental opportunities of society in general. If there is such a scission, however, it is vertical and not horizontal. New wars are not hierarchical, class-like engagements that pitch élite interests against those of subaltern groups. Instead, they tend to throw networked social systems against one

another. These systems have their own local and non-territorial mixture of élite/subaltern, rich/poor and male/female dynamics, which are affected in different ways by organised violence. It is this system division between winners and losers, moreover, which helps to give network war its complex characteristics.

In the process of making local–global connections, networks have long transregional tails. Fluid borders in a changing political climate have offered many social groups the opportunity to reinvent themselves. Structural adjustment, for example, saw a massive redeployment of personnel from the decaying public bureaucracies of the developmental state to the informal networks of the dynamic shadow economy. In Central Africa and the Chad Basin, long transborder supply chains have energised rural economies and reversed the earlier urban–rural bias. The mining of diamonds and the cutting of hardwoods – as with the growing of coca and poppy in other conflict zones – has provided small producers with an income greater than that which could have been derived from legitimate endeavours. These chains, furthermore, require armies of drivers, porters and guards. Truck-stop markets appear, providing a demand for local produce and services. At border crossings legions of officials are needed to fabricate documents and to falsify destinations. And so on.

Rather than destroying development, the reflexive modernity of the new wars has, borrowing from Rudolph Bahro, encouraged an *actually existing development*. That is, an arena of survival in which the potentialities of modernity are exploited to the full and, in the process, identities and authorities are continually changed and reproduced. It has not arisen because of 'official' development, it has emerged despite it.

An important characteristic of actually existing development is its ambivalence. It can

Light weapons report

The Centre for Defence Studies (CDS) and Saferworld published a joint report in June 2001 on *The proliferation of illegal small arms and light weapons in and around the European Union: instability, organised crime and terrorist groups*. The report, written by Domitilla Sagramoso, a Research Fellow at the CDS, was timed to coincide with the United Nations (UN) Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons and, incidentally, the designation by the UN of 9 July as small-arms destruction day. It can be ordered from Saferworld, 46 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0EB, United Kingdom. Phone +44 (0)20 7881 9290, fax +44 (0)20 7881 9291, e-mail general@saferworld.demon.co.uk.

support life just as easily as it can take it away. This ambivalence can, perhaps, be understood in relation to the internationalised nature of network war. The more successfully external supply and political networks can be mobilised the greater the danger that internal relations of reciprocity and traditional forms of restraint are undermined. The ability to draw in foreign interests and activate external resources – from weapons to humanitarian assistance – weakens the link between actions and responsibility. Ambivalence can be defined in terms of local massacres not only becoming normal but also being dependent on the reflexive modernity and transregional networks of actually existing development. Through the parallel networks of the shadow economy, actually existing development is also capable, in equal measure, of keeping millions of people alive.

In pitching non-territorial socio-political systems against each other, network war has the ability to place on the line the right of one group or another to life itself. The interface of conflicting networks – the local sites of organised violence – easily becomes an arena of *total war*, where Westphalian distinctions between civilians, armies and governments break down. Total war is a terrible form of unrestrained conflict that *we* first invented, but which has now proliferated to *them*. In many respects, this proliferation is the only thing that is ‘new’ about the new wars and is an important aspect of our shared condition.

A serious weakness with PEV is its inability to engage with ambivalence. It would rather create a world where cardboard figures of greedy and criminalised warlords constitute the enemy. The depiction of the new wars as a form of social regression creates a cultural *them* and *us* dichotomy that is essential for external intervention. This dichotomy functions to veil and separate our actions and morality from theirs and implies that our violence is somehow better or more

civilised. Rather than distancing ourselves, however, we should look for similarities and start to map our shared condition. As Martin van Creveld has argued, war is a site of imitation and replication in which conflicting systems, if they are to survive, come to resemble each other.

Our wars – an attempt to control and regulate the reflexive modernity of actually existing development – are also increasingly networked and non-territorial. Similar to their wars, our networks bring together public and private actors in new ways. New contractual regimes, strategic frameworks, compacts and codes of conduct, for instance, now link metropolitan states, United Nations’ agencies, NGOs, militaries and private companies. These emerging trans-border ‘public–private networks’ of international governance have also become sites on which new identities are created and roles reinvented. Since development is now seen as a strategic tool of conflict resolution, for example, development bodies have transformed themselves into security actors.

The point of contact between our wars and their wars defines the new public–private security terrain of the post-Cold War era. What we now call ‘human security’ is a metaphor for the interface between the resistant modernity of actual development and the regulatory practices of a networked and non-territorial system of international governance. Sub-Commander Marcos of the Zapatista National Liberation Army in Mexico has perceptively called this encounter the Fourth World War. Until we learn how to avoid the collateral effects of the PEV approach and its developmental derivatives and, especially, to find ways of effective political engagement with ambivalent and alternative modernities, international instability is likely to continue.

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Business and conflict

Transnational companies in the extractive industry (oil, gas and mining) generate significant revenues. Many of the countries in which these corporations operate, however, lack the social and political structures to manage these revenues and deal with rapid economic growth, trade liberalisation and globalisation. The resulting crises of governance can destabilise the state and exacerbate violent conflict. Transnationals are, therefore, under rising pressure to tackle some of the socially and politically sensitive issues which underpin the inequalities that, paradoxically, emerge via the generation of huge revenues from mineral extraction.

But it is not always clear what a company should do in order to have a positive impact on a conflict. For example, how should it deal (if at all) with a repressive regime? The Free Burma Coalition urged Unocal to disengage from Burma, while the oil giant argued that its approach would be more responsible than that of the next corporation in line.

Even if companies sign up to international tenets, such as the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Anti-Bribery and Corruption Convention of 1997, and International Labour Organization standards, there are huge obstacles to implementing these commitments on the ground. Recognising the right to employment, clean water and security is one thing, but making it happen is another, raising questions about roles and responsibilities. If the government is not engaged, should the company fill the vacuum? On occasion this happens, but it is not a sustainable situation in the long term and can confuse the functions of the state and those of the private sector.

A joint UK–US initiative in 2000 established voluntary principles for the extractive industries in the areas of security and human rights. With regard to companies that provide hardware to

public and private security forces, for instance, it calls for 'adequate controls to prevent misappropriation or diversion of equipment that may lead to human-rights abuses'. These guidelines are reportedly being incorporated into the performance contracts of many units within transnational operations, but, as yet, no external monitoring procedures exist. Moreover, companies still face the dilemma of having to recognise the authority of the military or police of the residing state, while trying to influence the way security operations are conducted.

There has been some success in addressing the problem of just distribution of revenues from mineral extraction, particularly during the early stage of exploration when contracts are being negotiated. Proposals for a Cameroon/Chad pipeline, for example, involving Exxon and Shell, include revenue allocation plans, earmarking funds for social projects and allowing non-governmental organisations (NGOs) representation on the bodies governing these funds. Yet, where oil revenues have been in dispute for decades, such as in the Niger Delta, the task of amending contracts is more complex and is, perhaps, no longer an option.

In a global society it is not, therefore, evident where the responsibility of transnationals ends and that of government begins. Consequently, any engagement with business in conflict transformation needs to take into account the roles of other groups, including the public sector and civil society. But defining the division of responsibility is no easy matter and corporations need to negotiate the extent of their liability and responsibility. This is further complicated by the fact that companies operating in the same country will have different approaches, and will be wary of the competition in situations that often demand a collaborative effort.

Business needs to take a broad, holistic view to addressing violent conflict. Following a



Neftyanje Kamni oilfield near Baku, Azerbaijan

process of analysis, stakeholder dialogue and problem solving in Azerbaijan, for example, oil companies are now engaged in a wide spectrum of activities. The Enterprise Development Committee, for instance, which brings together oil companies, local businesses, civil society and the international community, is implementing policy recommendations and practical projects aimed at building the capacity of local firms. This broadens the country's economic base, in an effort to counter growing oil dependency and the instability that could ensue.

Companies can contribute to conflict prevention and transformation by undertaking participatory analyses of the potential sources of conflict, including acknowledging their own role, and looking to address problems in tandem with government, civil society and the international community. Such a move recognises the complexities of the context and the need to tackle the causes of instability on a number of different fronts.

Phil Champain, Business and Conflict Programme Manager, International Alert

Expanding discourse

Between 1960 and 1990, resource conflicts were mostly discussed under the broader theme of the environment and security. But there were two major limitations to this approach. First, it tied conflict to a scarcity of resources, when, in reality, resource abundance was much more of a problem, as demonstrated by the wars in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Sierra Leone. Second, the framework was more concerned with how changes to the environment, especially through pollution by artificial and natural means, could affect security, rather than with how the management of natural resources can lead to instability. A new focus on the 'economics of conflict' has emerged over the past decade, however, which centres on the activities of warlords, the role of mercenaries and how natural resources feed into and prolong fighting. Nevertheless, this approach is also limited in terms of how it conceptualises conflict and the resources it encompasses.

Natural-resource selection

Many countries with major natural-resource problems are overlooked because they do not impact on international business interests. Studies tend to focus on natural resources that have high profit margins, such as diamonds, gold, rubber and timber. Yet land is the most important natural resource in Africa, with social, economic and religious significance. Other vital natural resources, such as water and fish stocks, are also often ignored, since ownership and control are more intrinsically linked to communal and cultural value systems.

In 1994–95, for example, northern Ghana was engulfed in a civil war that resulted in the deaths of several thousands of people. It was rooted in an age-old land dispute between the *Kokombas* and the *Dagombas*, *Gonjas* and *Nanumbas*. And Kenya's land conflict dates back to the 1952–59 *Mau–Mau* rebellion against British rule, and

involves ethnic groups like the *Kalenjins*, *Kikuyus*, *Kissi*, *Lous* and the *Masai*. Finally, multi-dimensional conflicts in Sudan and Uganda involve the *Toposas* and *Karamajongs*, respectively, and centre on pastoral activities.

At the root of this problem is the way in which 'conflict' is conceptualised, particularly with regard to Africa. Generally, it is believed that war must involve the state: for example, armed struggles against government control or secessionist rebellions. Such an analysis is grossly inadequate, though, as it ignores a range of conflicts that involve natural-resource management. For example, urban violence sometimes takes the form of:

- communal clashes, often over the control of resources, especially land;
- ethnic fighting, disguising resource-centred differences; and
- class-based conflicts, with the poor attacking government installations and the shops and homes of the rich.

All of these are common to Sub-Saharan Africa. Only when approaches to conflict give more attention to 'the people' than to 'the state' will more types of natural resources be included in general analysis of natural-resource conflicts.

Recent analysis has been dominated by critiques of the 'greed-versus-grievance' thesis. But this is limited in that it is only applicable to conflicts in which individuals or groups have benefited from prosecuting them. Almost implicitly, the resources that are included in this paradigm are of the same high profit-yielding variety as those mentioned earlier. Again, this ignores conflict at the communal level, where livelihoods are at stake and people are less prone to engage in 'greedy tendencies', and where grievance is a result of the leadership's failure to meet governance challenges.

Greed and grievance have only become factors in developing societies because of a lack

of strong governance mechanisms. Studies should thus pay more attention to the role of governance in natural-resource conflicts. A number of issues are vital to developing this understanding, including: the instruments in place for addressing real and perceived acts of injustice; and the role the judiciary and parts of civil society can play in arbitrating resource conflicts. Making such a link will also help to answer a fundamental question: why a particular natural resource is a cause of conflict in one country and not in another? It would help to explain why, for example, oil is a source of war in Nigeria, and not in Libya, and why fighting has bedevilled the diamond-rich west African nation of Sierra Leone, while the mineral has continued to be a significant blessing for the southern African state of Botswana.

Countries of interest

In addition, most studies focus on countries that have either collapsed completely or are on a 'life-support' mechanism, such as Angola, the DRC and Sierra Leone. This gives credence, even if unintentionally, to the erroneous assumption that the outbreak of war was sudden, and that there were no cases of misconduct prior to the start of the violence. In many developing societies, the collapse of the state has been preceded by decades of economic and political abuse of natural-resource wealth. But commentators often ignore this fact. Indeed, with the exception of Angola – where the 26-year-long civil conflict is rooted more in the complexities of decolonisation – all countries that have experienced major natural-resource conflicts have suffered decades of mismanagement.

Consequently, there is a need to examine resource wars in states that still have a semblance of stability, but which have structures that are gradually been eroded through resource mismanagement. Such an approach may make it possible to curb the outbreak of violent con-

flicts. Currently, it appears that natural resources are determining which countries are being studied, rather than the other way around.

Globalisation

Another area that requires greater attention is the nexus between natural-resource conflicts and the effects of globalisation. Key issues include the deregulation of the global economy, improved means of transportation and the impact of information technology. Advances in information and communication technology, for example, have made it possible for warlords and their international business partners to finalise deals throughout the world. Websites have been set up to attract financial assistance for communal clashes over natural resources, and to make the wider international community aware of developments – Nigeria is a case in point. Improved transportation has facilitated the movement of armed groups, while deregulation has meant that money from illegal business dealings can be moved easily between international capitals and is difficult to trace.

Conclusion

In the coming decade, it is almost certain that the management of natural resources will be the main cause of conflict in developing societies. Deep economic crises are likely to put an additional strain on the environment, and resulting conflicts will further weaken the structures of governance. Furthermore, an increasingly aware civil society is likely to become more militant in its demands for accountability in the administration of natural resources. Understanding the complexities of the problem is, therefore, crucial to tackling the impending challenges.

Abiodun Alao, Research Fellow, Centre for Defence Studies, and Director of its Africa Security Unit

web watch

www.worldbank.org/research/conflict/papers

World Bank

See paper 'Greed and Grievance in Civil War' by Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler.

www.international-alert.org

International Alert

See 'The Business of Peace – the private sector as a partner in conflict prevention and resolution'. Report by International Alert and the Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum and the Council on Economic Priorities.

www.oneworld.org/globalwitness/reports

Global Witness

See 'Conflict Diamonds' report on the possibilities for the identification, certification and the control of diamonds.

www.diamonds.net

Diamond Trade Network

View selection of articles relating to conflict and diamonds.

www.idrc.ca/reports

International Development Research Centre

See reports on alternative approaches to managing conflict over natural resources.

www.globalpolicy.org/security/docs/minindx.htm

Global Policy Forum

The Dark Side of Natural Resources includes articles on oil, water, diamonds and timber.

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