Does the Pursuit of Energy Security Drive Resource Wars in Africa?

The Niger Delta in the Energy Security Nexus

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Abstract

As the United States and other Western nations continue to move away from reliance on Middle Eastern oil, Africa has assumed a new degree of importance in international affairs. However, the instability of certain African oil producing countries - particularly Nigeria - has prompted concern amongst Western governments that their energy security may be in jeopardy. An emerging body of literature argues that energy security has become 'militarized', as Western governments arm African regimes to secure oil supplies, driving 'resource wars' in the process. This paper seeks to broaden and deepen this analysis through identifying Africa's place in the global energy security nexus, and exploring the connections between oil and sub-state conflict. It will then apply these findings to the case of Nigeria, arguing that whilst the pursuit of energy security has some bearing on the conflict in the Niger Delta, this is the result of institutional limitations and unintended consequences of current strategies, rather than a calculated attempt to encourage conflict.
Since the early 1970s, Western powers have begun to seriously think through the implications of their energy policies. The vulnerabilities believed to accompany a dependence on Middle Eastern oil imports are driving Western governments to seek out new sources of energy, and diversify towards alternative regions such as Africa and Central Asia.

This emphasis on what has become known as 'energy security' stems from a series of shocks to the global oil regime. These include the Arab oil embargo of 1973-4, designed to punish the United States for its support of Israel during the Yom Kippur war, alongside the nationalization policies and significant price increases imposed throughout the 1970s by the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Furthermore, events in the Middle East have reinforced a sense of Western exposure to the politics of an unstable region. The Iranian revolution of 1979; the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s; and the Gulf War of 1991 have had major impacts on the global oil prices, and threatened the supply of this vital commodity to the West (Yergin, 1991: Ch. 29; Bromley, 2005: 242-44).

Given the necessity of high energy consumption (especially of oil) to the domestic economies of Western countries, such threats to the global supply of energy have been increasingly presented as endangering the very way of life of these states. Energy plays a crucial role in Western economies, being vital for the commercial, residential, industrial and transportation sectors, alongside the provision of state services and armed forces. Since Western countries are (with some exceptions) unable to meet their energy requirements without importing oil and natural gas, the achievement of 'energy security' has become a significant, and elusive, pursuit.

Panning back from present anxieties over the vulnerability of energy supplies, it is predicted that global oil consumption will rise significantly over the coming decades, from around 86 million barrels of oil per day in 2007, to 110.6 by 2035 (U.S. International Energy Outlook, 2010: 23). However, there are increasing concerns that global oil production has already reached its peak, and could soon enter a period of gradual decline (Deffeyes, 2003: 156-58). Whilst confusion persists over the size of the total global reserves of oil, the decline in domestic oil production experienced by countries such as the US, combined with concerns
over the stability of the oil-producing Middle East, is prompting Western countries to consider alternative regions to supply their energy needs.

The global consumption of African oil, particularly from its resource-rich West Coast, is expected to increase in response to these challenges. Whilst extracting oil from West Africa's shores and swamplands is no longer technologically demanding, the region is notorious for its political instability, poor governance and ongoing violent conflict, particularly in Nigeria's oil-producing Delta (cf. Adebajo, 2004). Nigeria alone is now the fifth largest importer to the United States, supplying around 8% of its oil requirements, whilst the African continent as a whole supplies the US with 22% of its oil imports, and 12% of global oil production (U.S. International Energy Outlook, 2010).

Unfortunately, most oil exporting states in Africa suffer from a range of challenges that are in some way attributable to the black gold. Instead of this valuable commodity bringing wealth to the developing countries of Africa, its presence is more often associated with economic mismanagement and poor governance; autocratic and abusive leadership; acute poverty and sagging healthcare and educational systems; and protracted violent conflict (Le Billon, 2005a: 11-13).

For our purposes, it is the association between the pursuit of African oil by Western governments and African conflict that constitutes the primary focus of this enquiry. Several prominent conflicts, including the ongoing insurgency in the Niger Delta, the concluded civil war in Angola, and the lengthy north-south conflict in Sudan, are associated with the production of oil. As both the largest consumer of oil in the world, and the largest importer of African oil, America has shown increasing unease with the vulnerability of its energy interests in the region (Barnes, 2005: 236-7).

Recently, an emerging body of literature has begun to associate the pursuit of energy security with sub-state conflict in Africa, arguing that energy security has become 'militarized', and that the effects of this militarization process are having consequences for the security situations in sub-Saharan states (e.g. Klare, 2004, 2009; Barnes, 2005; Stokes, 2007). Of notable concern to these authors are the effects that Western military and financial assistance
to African regimes are having in driving these conflicts, particularly when these conflicts revolve around issues associated with natural resource extraction.

In sum, as existing sources of energy - particularly oil - become scarce or politically problematic to extract, Africa will assume an increased role in the global energy nexus. However, current understandings of energy security may not be sufficient to capture the implications of increasing African oil production, let alone the present association of oil extraction with conflict on the continent. Investigating the relationship between the pursuit of energy security and 'resource wars' in Africa should improve our understanding of the connections between oil and conflict, an issue of increasing relevance as newcomers such as Ghana, Uganda and the unstable Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) enter the global energy market (see The Economist, 2nd January 2010; 10th April 2010).

This investigation will explore more thoroughly the issues surrounding the pursuit of energy security - particularly by the United States - and resource-based conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa. In the process, a broad and deep analysis of the relationship between the two will be undertaken. In order to this, this paper is structured around three research questions, which test and expand our current understanding of this relationship.

We begin by asking: "what is Africa's place in the energy security nexus?" Here we set out the concept of energy security, and outline the global energy 'nexus' in which the concept has become imbedded. After laying out the various dimensions of energy security - including diversity of supply, stability of energy markets, and the physical protection of infrastructure - we identify where Africa fits into this energy security nexus, and consider the opportunities and challenges Africa brings to the energy security debate.

Secondly, having identified oil as being the energy source most closely associated with the African dimension of energy security, we ask: "What role does oil play in African sub-state conflicts?" In order to unravel the complex association between oil and conflict, we first look towards the theories of 'resource wars'. Noting methodological problems with existing studies on the relationship between oil and conflict, we employ a qualitative analysis of the conflicts
in Sudan and Angola to locate the role of oil in African conflict, and suggest that a number of patterns can be discerned from these two conflicts.

Finally, we bring the theoretical and empirical conclusions of the first two research questions to ask the third: "How, if at all, is the Niger Delta conflict driven by the pursuit of energy security?" As the archetypal example of an oil-related conflict, the Niger Delta highlights the complex interactions between energy security and sub-state conflict. After outlining the conflict, we consider theories which charge Western energy security strategies with having a key role in driving this crisis. We seek to test these arguments by exploring whether the pursuit of energy 'diversification', and the subsequent 'militarization' of energy security that is alleged to be underway are indeed connected with the Delta conflict, arguing that whilst Western energy security strategies do have some role in the crisis, this is most likely the result of the unintended consequences and institutional limitations that characterise recent Western engagement with African security issues.

1. What is Africa's place in the energy security nexus?

We begin our investigation of the relationship between the pursuit of energy security and African conflict by considering what the 'energy security nexus' denotes. From here, we analyse the theoretical underpinnings of the concept, before considering how Africa fits into this energy security nexus. This chapter argues that the energy security nexus represents the convergence of various economic, physical and political threats to the global energy infrastructure, whilst energy security itself, rather than being a component of 'national security', is concerned with the unending pursuit of stability amongst these structures. Africa is becoming increasingly integrated into this nexus; however, alongside presenting significant opportunities for energy security, the continent is also introducing new anxieties for Western importers.

1.1. What is the energy security nexus?

According to Michael Klare, energy security comprises two elements; firstly, ensuring the affordable and reliable supply of energy and secondly, guaranteeing the unhindered delivery of that energy "from point of production to ultimate consumer" (2008: 484-5). Whilst Klare's
conception of energy security seems clear enough, we need to understand the various issues the concept is being marshalled to address. Chester (2010: 891) suggests that the meaning attributed to energy security varies over the time-frame we are using, be it short, medium or long-term, providing a simple analytical framework to begin outlining the concept. We begin by identifying the short-term threats to energy security.

The principal short-term threats concern physical attacks on critical energy infrastructure, such as oil and gas pipelines, refineries and transportation networks. The global energy infrastructure, which extracts, moves, refines and then sells oil and natural gas, is both complex and vulnerable. Recent attacks on Middle Eastern refineries and pipelines by Islamist insurgents, the abduction of oil personnel in Nigeria, and the threat of conflict between oil producing states have helped generated significant apprehension amongst Western governments, dependent on imports to satisfy their nations energy needs (Klare, 2008: 485, 492-3). The sheer size and complexity of this infrastructure often makes attempts at physically securing it impractical, if not futile.

 Attacks on maritime trade routes, either from state or non-state actors, would also fall under this short-term threat category. Of particular concern to Western governments is an attempt by a state (possibly Iran) to block the vital oil transit route through the narrow Straits of Hormuz, which connects the oil-producing Persian Gulf to the Arabian Sea (ibid: 487). Such choke points exist throughout the world. For instance, the Gulf of Aden - through which ships using the Suez Canal must pass - has been the site of multiple hijackings of oil tankers by Somali pirates, whilst militants operating in the coastal regions of the troubled Niger Delta have been able to hijack ships and attack off-shore oil facilities (The Economist, 18th April 2009).

In addition to these physical threats, energy security also covers the short-term economic threat of disruptions to the supply of energy. This can include strikes by oil workers, or political turmoil within a country's oil industry. The leading South American oil producer - Venezuela - has become the focus of many of these anxieties, with strikes in December 2002 removing almost 3 million barrels of oil per day from the global energy market, and continuing internal political tensions surrounding reform of the state oil company reducing the overall output of Venezuelan oil since then (Verrastro and Ladislaw, 2007: 100; Klare, 2004: 122-5).
The US Strategic Petroleum Reserve, alongside the reserves of the International Energy Agency, forms a bridge between short and medium-term threats to energy security. Established after the Arab oil embargo in 1973, these strategic reserves were designed to cushion Western countries in the event of a sudden disruption to oil supplies, or to prevent an attempt by producing countries to use the "oil weapon", and starve importers of oil as a form of geopolitical leverage (Yergin, 2006: 75-8).

Reserves, together with the pursuit of 'diversification', are the principle strategies through which an attempt by oil importers to jeopardise the supply of oil to energy importers would be averted. 'Diversification' rests upon the idea that multiple sources of energy imports will reduce the risk that a sudden disruption to oil supplies (intentional or otherwise) will cripple an importing nation's economy or security. Statements such as 'diversification is the first principle of energy security', or Winston Churchill's adage "safety and certainty in oil lie in variety and variety alone", have become mantras in energy security debates (ibid: 69; Bahgat, 2003: 448).

Alongside the threat of the "oil weapon", fears of instability in the global energy market constitute an additional medium-term anxiety. Moran and Russell summarise the current functions of the energy market succinctly: "[u]ntil now energy markets have been expected to do no more than ensure that supply kept up with demand, and that prices remained within a range that buyers and sellers would tolerate" (2009: 5). Both energy importers and exporters have an interest in stable and predictable prices, whereby exporters ensure that energy is priced sufficiently high as to provide adequate government revenues, but not so high as to spur increased efficiency initiatives or begin a trend towards alternative fuel sources in importing countries. The stability of the energy market highlights the interdependencies amongst the threats outlined above: an attack on an oil pipeline, or political tensions between exporting and importing states, can swiftly generate instability in the global energy market.

Panning back from the short and medium term threats, there is an increasing concern that the world's existing reserves of oil and gas are being rapidly depleted, and that the discovery of new oil fields has already peaked (Deffeyes, 2003). Since these resources are finite, and renewable and nuclear energy play only a minor role in global energy consumption, it is not clear how states would adapt to this eventuality. This is known as the "peak oil" thesis.
There is some need for restraint when speculating on declining global oil reserves, however. As Yergin notes, such predictions are not new, and "global output has actually increased by 60 percent since the 1970s, the last time the world was supposedly running out of oil" (2006: 74). It should also be noted that oil is not the only energy resource that can fuel the global economy, as natural gas assumes an increased role in electricity generation. Furthermore, new technologies make available previously unusable forms of energy, such as tar sands and shale gas. Nevertheless, the most viable alternatives to oil are themselves finite, and will merely prolong the lifespan of global energy reserves (Elhefnawy, 2006: 102). Thus, a pressing need for finding efficient, renewable sources exists.

A quick survey of the issues that fall under the ambit of energy security reveals the multidimensional nature of the concept. Energy security is concerned with the smooth extraction and delivery of energy (principally oil); the physical safety of crucial energy infrastructure; the necessity for reserves and diversification in importing countries; continuing stability in the global energy market, and the prospect of global resource depletion. We can therefore identify economic, political and physical security components to the concept. Thus, a complex energy security nexus exists, in which issues from various domains of social activity intersect, and merge with the infrastructures that connect energy importers and exporters together.

Having outlined the issues and relationships that are entwined in the 'energy security nexus', we can delve deeper into the theoretical underpinnings of the concept of energy security. Is there a discernable theoretical basis to the concept which can assist our study of the African dimensions to energy security? We shall now consider this in more depth.

1.2. Is energy security a form of national security?

Energy security seems to be an unusual and broad concept of 'security', especially since the physical dimensions play only a limited role, most notably in the short-term threats to energy infrastructure. What, then, is the theoretical basis of energy security? Is energy security related to national security, or is it simply a response to practical challenges? On first inspection, it would seem natural to associate energy security with classical Realist notions of 'national security', and 'national interests'. After all, energy is crucial to the global
economy, and any disruption to energy supplies could have severe economic consequences for both consuming and producing states.

Statements from senior Western officials frequently appear to confirm the absorption of energy issues into the term 'national security'. For instance, when arguing for the necessity of oil imports from Azerbaijan to the US, President Bill Clinton claimed that in forming such an energy partnership, "we not only help Azerbaijan to prosper, we also help diversify our energy supply and strengthen our nation's security" (in Klare, 2002: 4). Similarly, in the United Kingdom, former Minister John Hutton asserted that future energy supply is "fundamental to our way of life and our national security" (in Dyer, 2008: 7).

This understanding of energy security as a component of a broader 'national security' agenda could be inappropriate, however. Firstly, any attempt to merge the two often results in an inadvertent conflation of energy security with energy crisis (Alhajji, 2007: paragraph 10). An energy crisis, such as the 1973 oil embargo, may well threaten a nation's economy or ability to undertake a war. However, not all threats to energy security can plausibly be described as crises. A strike by Venezuelan oil workers or an attack on a Nigerian pipeline, whilst significant, does not seriously endanger the entire global energy nexus. Moreover, efforts by energy importing governments at co-ordinating energy policy through strategic reserves, alongside co-operation with oil-producing states to increase production in times of crisis or market instability, have significantly insulated individual nations from such threats (see Bahgat, 2003: 457).

Secondly, a more convincing strategy aimed at realising energy security would not be constrained by the concept of national security, but would be more concerned with creating and maintaining such international co-ordination. As Dyer argues, "the long chains of energy production, supply, and demand are not conducive to national energy autonomy"; something shared with the environmental issues that have also been shoehorned into the conventional security framework of 'national security' (Dyer, 2008: 7). The transnational nature of the global energy market, with all its interdependencies, is simply not "amenable to a purely national strategy" (ibid: 7). Whilst states may well view energy issues through the lens of national security, it is not an appropriate concept to understand the complexities of the global energy security nexus.
If energy security is not a component of national security, what is it? If we take the view that at its essence, 'security' is concerned with threats to acquired values, we can build a framework to identify the theoretical underpinnings of energy security (Wolfers, 1951: 484; see also Buzan, et al., 1998: Ch 2). At their core, most conceptions of security are centred on a 'referent object': that is, an object of value that is to be made 'secure'. Traditionally the state has been presented as the referent object, and the chief threats to this valued object are aggression from another state, or internal conflict.

Presumably, a conception of energy security would have global energy supplies as its referent object (be it oil, gas, nuclear power or renewable fuels), with energy's value stemming from its necessity to a modern domestic economy, alongside its enormous significance in the international market and geopolitical arena. Thus, the sudden disruption or protracted unavailability of energy would constitute the principal threat to this referent object.

However, understanding energy security through the prism of referent objects and threats is complicated by the large number of referent objects, including the various states with their own accounts of what energy security means to them, and the diverse threats to different sources of energy. This could imply that energy security will remain an essentially contested concept, with no consensus on what threats exist, let alone what threats matter to different actors. Contested terminology is by no means unusual in discussions of security, though this may inherent to energy security. As Chester writes:

"The meaning of energy security differs over the short, medium and long term because the probability, likelihood and consequences of different risks or threats to supply will vary over time. Thus we will never reach an end-state of energy security as such." (2010: 893).

As new risks to the continued supply and safe delivery of energy resources emerge, and existing threats are exacerbated or diminished by changing geopolitics, we can expect conceptions of energy security to change with these emerging and receding threats. More concretely, concerns over Iran blocking the Straits of Hormuz or Venezuelan oil workers going on strike may evaporate, whilst environmental change from the consumption of oil, or competition between China and the US over increasingly scarce energy resources, may be elevated from vague, existential threats to serious short-term challenges.
If we understand energy security as being the *unending pursuit of stable global energy production, supply and consumption structures, free from changing threats to different actors*, we are perhaps edging closer to the essence of the term. Such a conception draws out the theoretical underpinnings of the concept, whilst retaining the practical mentality of energy security. Having outlined the energy security nexus, and explored the concept of energy security, we now are now in a position to consider the African dimension to energy security.

### 1.3. The African dimension to energy security: threats and opportunities

The emphasis on continually changing threats to energy structures over the short, medium and long-terms provides us with a framework within which we can locate the Africa's place in the energy security nexus. Such a framework distinguishes between the changing temporal threats to global energy structures we outlined earlier, and considers the extent to which African energy either resolves these threats, or exacerbates them. First, though, it would be helpful to provide a brief overview of Africa's emerging role in the global energy market.

In the global energy market, Africa's primary role lies above all in the production of oil. The majority of African oil (excluding the socially and geopolitically distinct North African region) is extracted from West Africa, especially from the Gulf of Guinea. This area includes the leading producer - Nigeria - along with Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, and further south along the West African coastline, Congo-Brazzaville and Angola. To the north-east of Africa, Sudan and Chad are also significant producers. Africa as a whole produced 12% of all oil extracted in 2009, with sub-Saharan Africa accounting for approximately 7% of this total (*BP Statistical Review of World Energy* ¹, 2010: 8-9). The majority of sub-Saharan Africa's oil comes from three countries: Nigeria with 2.6% of global oil production, followed by Angola with 2.3%, and Sudan at 0.6%.

African oil is valued in part for its low-sulphur composition, which is highly prized in the global oil market (Volman, 2009). This speeds up the refining process, where crude oil is turned into consumer products, such as petroleum. Africa has a limited infrastructural capacity for refining oil, meaning that most of Africa's oil is exported to other regions to undergo this process. With regards to exports, North America receives the majority of

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¹ Hereafter *BP*, 2010
Africa's oil, with Europe and south-east Asia some way behind (BP, 2010: 20-21). Alongside oil, sub-Saharan Africa also exports natural gas, although this accounts for less than 1.5% of global production and only around 3% of total reserves (ibid: 23-25).

Turning our attention to the framework we outlined earlier, we can now relate Africa to the short-term threats to global energy structures, and the extent to which African oil causes or resolves these threats. Previously, there has been only limited investment in African energy exploration compared to regions such as the Middle East. Widespread conflict, political instability and geographical challenges have deterred investment in Africa (Hueper, 2005: 241). This has begun to change as new discoveries of oil reserves have been made, and Africa's share of the global oil output has steadily increased past its previous peak in the early 1970s, and jumping noticeably from 2003 onwards.

The potential for conflict in Africa's oil producing regions has not diminished, however. Out of the eight leading oil producers in sub-Saharan Africa, five have experienced intrastate conflict in recent years (Nigeria, Sudan, Angola, Chad, and Congo-Brazzaville), whilst Cameroon has fought with neighbouring Nigeria over the oil-rich Bakassi region, and has an internal secessionist movement of its own (Ross, 2004; BBC News, 14th August 2006). Gabon, meanwhile, has in the past experienced significant social unrest following the impact of low oil prices on its domestic economy (BBC News, 11th October 2004). Only Equatorial Guinea, with its autocratic government, has largely escaped such internal strife.

The instability of African oil producing countries affects both the short-term supply of oil, as well as the medium-term preference for market stability. Sudden disruptions - often caused by attacks on pipelines and other crucial infrastructure - occur regularly in the Niger Delta. Here, insurgent groups have been able to reduce Nigeria's oil output significantly through continued attacks on infrastructure, and from stealing oil directly from pipelines for sale on both licit and illicit markets, in a process known as 'bunkering' (Ukiwo, 2007: 588). Nigeria's oil output has declined from 2499 thousand barrels per day in 2005, to 2061 thousand barrels per day in 2009 (BP, 2010: 8), a decline in large part attributable to militant attacks.

Such attacks are having direct repercussions on the global energy market. Following attacks in 2008 by militants on an off-shore platform and a pipeline in the Delta, 340,000 barrels of crude oil were removed from Nigeria's output. This ensured oil prices remained high at a time when the announcement of increased Saudi Arabian production was expected to lower prices.
(The Economist, 28th June 2008), and confirming earlier fears that troubles in Nigeria could threaten the stability of the global energy market (Yergin, 2006: 70).

In Africa, there is also an overlap between the medium and long-term threats to energy security. Klare and Volman (2006) present the increasing pressures on dwindling supplies of global oil, alongside the desire to escape from dependence on the volatile Middle East, as the principal motivations behind the renewed interest in African oil. In this argument, African oil reserves help to prolong the eventual depletion of global oil, which takes place in the context of an anticipated 'scramble' for African oil between Western powers and China. However, it is more likely the case that this interest is related to the central goal of most energy security strategies: diversity.

Whilst Africa as a whole provides 12% of global oil production - compared to the largest producing region, the Middle East, at 30% - current statistics hide the fact that the Middle East keeps far more of its oil away from consumers than it otherwise could if it were to produce at full capacity. If Western states designed energy security strategies around staving off the worst effects of a global oil decline, presumably a good first place to look would be a region which had high proven oil reserves instead of high production, from which importers could rely upon at least during the early stages of a decline. Africa would not make for a sensible first choice under these criteria. The Middle East contains by far the largest share of proven oil reserves, with 56.6% of the world's oil, compared to Africa's 9.6% of proven reserves, around half of which are in sub-Saharan Africa (BP, 2010: 6-8).

However, it should be noted that Africa's share of total proven reserves has increased from 5.9% in 1989, to its present figure of 9.6%, largely because of new investment in oil exploration. Simultaneously, the global share of Middle Eastern reserves has declined from 65.7% in 1989 to 56.6% in 2010 (ibid). Whilst this might suggest that Africa could continue to increase its share, it is important to recognise that despite the decline in the Middle East's share of proven reserves, the total quantity of its oil reserves has actually increased from 661 thousand million barrels in 1989 to 754.2 today. This compares with Africa's present quantity of 127.7 thousand million barrels. Even under the most optimistic scenarios, Africa will have only a fifth of the reserves already found in the Middle East (Hueper, 2005: 242-43). The Middle East still remains the single largest region of oil reserves, by an enormous margin.
It appears then, that the renewed Western interest in African oil is most likely a response to the medium-term challenges of diversity, rather than the long-term threat of scarcity.

Bringing these findings together, we are now able to locate Africa's place in the energy security nexus. Understanding energy security as the unending pursuit of stable global energy structures, free from changing threats to different states, we can characterise Africa as being an imperfect answer to these threats, at least from the perspective of the West. With regards to short-term threats, Africa brings many challenges. As a politically unstable region, with internal conflicts in most oil producing states, the physical dangers to oil infrastructure and personnel are unusually high. This also affects the medium-term preference for market stability. Despite these challenges Africa can assist Western countries by providing an additional source of medium-term oil diversity. What it can't do is reduce dependence on the Middle East over the long-term.

We now move on to consider in more depth the principal threats that Africa poses to energy security, namely the physical threats to oil infrastructure, and the political instability that threatens the continued, unhindered delivery of oil to consumers. In order to understand why Africa is associated with these threats, we need to explore the complex relationship between oil and sub-state conflict in Africa.

2. What role does oil play in African sub-state conflicts?

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the principal role of Africa in the energy security nexus lies in the production of oil. However, almost all leading African oil-producing countries have experienced intrastate conflict in recent years. Investigating this relationship is necessary to understanding what effects energy security may be having for African conflict. To begin, we consider theories of resources wars, looking to distinguish oil from other resources. Noting methodological problems with existing studies, we next look towards the examples of Sudan and Angola to provide clearer insights into this relationship. This chapter will argue that no 'iron law' exists between oil and sub-state conflict, and that conflicts involving oil may be influenced be others factors. However, oil may play a role in reigniting pre-existing issues or conflict.
2.1. **Resources and conflict**

Resources appear to play an important role in post-Cold War conflicts, from alluvial diamonds in Sierra Leone, narcotics in Colombia, to oil in Angola. In their influential analyses of late twentieth-century warfare, Mary Kaldor (1999) and Paul Collier (2000) both assert that the interaction between resources and war is crucial to understanding contemporary conflict.

For Kaldor, armed groups who previously relied on the support of the Cold War superpowers have adjusted to the new geopolitical environment by pursuing self-financing strategies to meet their objectives (1999: 5-11). Collier, however, argues that wealth generated from the 'looting' of natural resources persuades otherwise reluctant men to join rebellions (2000: 93-4, 100-1). The enticing prospect of self-enrichment allows for the collective-action problems that impede rebel mobilisation to be overcome, in what has become known as the "Greed not Grievance" thesis. An often acrimonious debate has ensued, but little consensus on the relationship between conflict and resources has emerged (cf. Cramer, 2006; Keen, 2008).

If we are to attain a firm understanding of the linkages between energy security and African conflict, we must attempt to identify the place of natural resources in contemporary conflict, and find a way of distinguishing oil from different resources.

Le Billon approaches the relationship between resources and war by firstly drawing a distinction between two different types of resources: *point* and *diffuse* (2005a: 32-5). *Point* resources are "spatially concentrated in small areas, and include mainly resources that can be exploited by capital-intensive extractive industries, such as deep-shaft mining or oil exploitation" (Le Billon, 2005b: 8). Oil, kimberlite diamonds, and valuable minerals such as iron and coltan would fall under this category. *Diffuse* resources, unlike point resources, are spread over vast areas, and are less capital-intensive to extract. Alluvial diamonds, timber and agricultural products (including narcotics) are examples of diffuse resources, and do not generally require the presence of sophisticated industrial infrastructure to exploit.

Diffuse resources are usually harder to control for governments and therefore more susceptible to theft by rebels, but each resource differs depending on their physical nature and the particular global market it finds itself in. Physically small and light, alluvial diamonds are easy to extract and smuggle, and until recent international regulation, could be sold onwards to the international diamond market. Given its greater size, timber is far less conspicuous,
smuggling depends on porous borders and/or the complicity of officials, businesses and rebels (Le Billon, 2005a: 33-4). Unlike diffuse resources, point resources such as oil tend to be less valuable in small amounts, needing to be transported in large quantities to be profitable. A stable infrastructure is thus required for both extraction and sale of these commodities, the financial benefits of which typically favours governments over insurgents (ibid; Kaldor, et al. 2007: 13-14)

The second stage in Le Billon's framework concerns the location of resources, which can be either proximate or distant. Proximate resources are located close to a country's capital city, and are thus more likely to be competently defended by the government. Distant resources, meanwhile, are located in the political and economic peripheries of a state, where the state's authority may be limited or contested. Le Billon argues that the type and location of a resource together interact to determine the implications a particular resource has for conflict (2005a: 36).

This interaction between resource type and location generates different trajectories for conflict. Diffuse resources distant to the capital tend to sustain 'warlordism', where rebels will mass in border regions to exploit resources there. The Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone, for instance, was able to fund their conflict through establishing such enclaves in rural areas, and ruthlessly administering alluvial diamond extraction within it (Keen, 2008: 32). However, diffuse resources close to the capital typically lead to riots or unrest, generated by class or ethnicity issues. Inequitable relations between peasants and landowners over agricultural issues typically trigger these uprisings.

Point resources, meanwhile, can incite or intensify conflict when situated in peripheral regions, or lead to attempted coups by rebels when located close to the capital. In peripheral regions, oil and other point resources are difficult to steal, though the infrastructures they require can be subject to attacks or extortion. For example, Marxist rebels in Colombia have successfully extracted 'protection' money from oil companies in exchange for (often broken) agreements not to attack pipelines, whilst paramilitary groups have been known to sell oil siphoned from pipelines (Dunning and Wirpsa, 2005: 88-91).

In certain cases point resources can also lead to separatist conflict, when the discovery of resources interacts with historical grievances within a peripheral region, and may prompt a bid for independence. In proximate areas, a point resource such as oil is closely associated
with coup attempts, since rebels in these areas will face difficulties looting or attacking heavily-guarded infrastructures, and may gamble on a coup to score decisive control of the state (Le Billon, 2005a: 37-40).

However, Fearon and Laitin (2003: 81, 85-7) argue that rather than rendering a country prone to coups, oil dependence is likely to increase the risk of conflict by weakening a state's ability to combat insurgencies. According to this argument, oil affects the capacity and nature of the state, because a state that depends upon oil for its revenues typically has less of a need to raise money from taxation. This means that oil-producing states do not need to establish competent bureaucracies, which leads to generally weaker state apparatus that are incapable of dealing with insurgencies, and a diminished capacity to engage with and attend to the needs of its population.

Rather than such a system provoking conflict through unaddressed grievances, however, the authors suggest that such an oil-dependent state can constitute a 'prize' for insurgents seeking to enrich themselves or the group they identify with. The weak state is unable to outright eliminate this insurgency, allowing conflict to persist. Alternatively, the presence of minerals and resources in specific areas of the state's territory may "reward control of a small enclave with huge profits" by insurgents, introducing a profiteering dynamic to conflict (ibid: 87).

Meanwhile, Ross (2004) argues oil is most associated with separatist conflict. This is because oil extraction is a capital-intensive process, bringing few employment benefits to an unskilled local population. If oil is discovered in a region at the periphery of a state's economic or political interests, this marginalised region may see greater benefits to secession than to continued deprivation, with oil revenues expected to form the economic basis of the separatist state. Conversely, if extraction of a resource is labour-intensive (rather than capital-intensive) then there will be a greater benefit to the local population, who can gain employment by extracting resources such as alluvial diamonds or timber, and thus a diminished likelihood of secession (ibid: 342-4).

Why, then, is the relationship between oil and conflict so contentious? Ross explains the impasse by drawing attention to the methodological problems that accompany econometric approaches to the study of conflict (ibid: 347-8). Econometric analysis, as used by Collier, Fearon and Laitin, Ross and others, has increasingly become the standard method for theorising about the relationship between resources and conflict. However, different...
econometric studies use distinct understandings and definitions of conflict, which often distort this relationship.

Conflict is notoriously difficult to define, and most econometric analyses employ datasets using the "casualty threshold" or "battle death criterion" to work around these definitional problems (Cramer, 2006: 59-61). Unlike studies that undertake a challenging philosophical consideration of what constitutes 'war' and 'peace' (e.g. Duffield, 2001: 13-15; Keen, 2008: Ch. 1), the criterions used in the econometric approach are statistical in nature. Hence, the number of deaths attributable to hostilities is typically used as an indicator for the presence of conflict. From here, an arbitrary threshold is imposed to denote an actual instance of conflict. The 'Correlates of War' database, for example, will only classify an event as a conflict if at least 1,000 battle deaths occur in a single year, whilst the 'Uppsala' database sets the death threshold at the much lower rate of 25 per year (Cramer, 2006: 59).

Aside from a paucity of reliable data on war casualties, different definitions alter the number of deaths required for a condition of conflict to be recognised as present. The main econometric studies of conflict use varying casualty criteria to define conflict, with statistics drawn from different datasets. Such differences can affect the relationship between resources and conflict:

"Imagine, for example, that natural resources tend to have a strong effect on large conflicts but no influence on small ones; and further, that one dataset uses narrow coding rules that classify only large conflicts as 'civil wars', while another uses broader rules that also classify both large and small conflagrations as civil wars. In this case, natural resources might be significantly associated with civil wars in the first dataset but not the second, even though both datasets apply their coding rules faithfully and consistently." (Ross, 2004: 347)

The problem of distinguishing between the beginning and end of a conflict is also important (ibid). As will be discussed later, the case of Angola with its three distinct phases of conflict is particularly problematic in this regard. Since deaths attributable to conflict occurred throughout its lengthy civil war, datasets with a low threshold of annual battle deaths could represent the Angolan civil war as one long war, rather than three separate (albeit related) conflicts. Given that resources played a different role in each phase, with oil and diamonds
exerting a pronounced impact only in the third phase from 1992 to 2002, this can heavily distort the relationship between resources and conflict by suggesting that the Angolan conflict stems from the country's reliance on primary commodities such as oil, ignoring the varying ways resources intersected with ongoing conflict.

If the principal methodology underpinning the study of resource-based conflicts is likely to yield such inconclusive and contestable results, it would be preferable to utilise alternative approaches which can verify these findings, or provide a greater degree of specificity to the relationship between oil and conflict. To do so, we will consider two widely cited examples of resource-based conflict - Sudan and Angola - and employ a qualitative approach that considers the history, political culture and role of resources in these wars.

2.2. Oil as a cause of conflict: Sudan

Playing host to a number of destructive conflicts, the large country of Sudan has a complex political history involving tensions between various non-Muslim groups in the southern and western regions, and the northern Sudanese government based in Khartoum.

Since independence from British and Egyptian colonial rule in 1956, political and economic power has been concentrated in the largely Muslim north of the country. Following a military coup in 1958, the north imposed Islamic ideals throughout the country's education system, and suppressed other forms of religious expression. This attempt at 'Islamization', combined with the economic neglect and political marginalization of the south led to first Sudanese civil war of 1962-72, in which the Christian and animist south attempted to secede from Sudan (cf. Johnson, 2003: Ch. 3).

Following a peace agreement in 1972, the south was granted semi-autonomy within Sudan, albeit with a number of limitations. Shortly after, oil was discovered in the southern regions. In 1981, the northern government attempted to redraw the borders between the two regions, placing the oil reserves within the north, before disbanding the southern government (Prunier and Gisselquist, 2003: 116). Following this, southern soldiers mutinied against Khartoum in May 1983, and, with Ethiopian support, formed the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) the following month. The second round of conflict began, claiming approximately two million lives until its conclusion in 2005.
Whilst the Sudanese conflict is currently suspended in an uneasy ceasefire pending the results of an independence referendum in the south, disputes over the potential borders demarcating Sudan from a newly independent south are stalled (*BBC News*, 29th July, 2010). This is due to the presence of lucrative oil fields in the current border area, which the government in Khartoum is eager to retain, and a prospective southern Sudanese state would wish to acquire. It appears, then, that the conflict in Sudan is an example of oil causing war, rather than intensifying it. Moreover, oil also encouraged separatist sentiment amongst the SPLA, in line with the arguments of Ross (2004) and Le Billon (2005). However, whilst oil is undoubtedly an important factor in the Sudanese conflict, we can add greater specificity to our understanding of the relationship between oil and conflict by considering two features of the war in Sudan which suggest a more specific place for this resource in the complex conflict.

Firstly, as well as being the source of most of Sudan's oil, the south's other main asset is water from the River Nile. Being largely arid, the north of Sudan requires Nile waters for irrigation purposes, and to maintain good relations with neighbouring Egypt, with whom Sudan is involved in a quota-system to share the Nile waters. The north thus has a further interest in controlling the south, since much of the White Nile branch of the river passes through it (Johnson, 2003: 47-48). The arid north of Sudan is likely to draw increasing amounts of Nile water to irrigate crops for its fast-growing population (Klare, 2002: 155-6), and an independent state of South Sudan could jeopardise these plans were it to embark on irrigation schemes of its own, or use the threat of decreased water output to the north as political leverage. Insofar as the Sudanese war is a conflict driven over issues of resource ownership, oil is not the only the resource Khartoum considers integral to the future of northern Sudan.

Secondly, we must recognise that the causal relationship between oil and conflict is more nuanced in Sudan. The simple discovery of oil in southern Sudan would not on its own necessarily lead to conflict. The presence of a valuable resource such as oil does alter the political dynamics in Sudan, making a bid for independence more feasible for southern secessionists, and more undesirable for northern elites.

However, any explanation of these dynamics has to consider why southern groups wish to secede in the first place. In the case of Sudan, the secessionist sentiment in the south is the result of pre-existing issues with only a limited relationship to natural resources, and is more

Thus we can infer, at least from the case of Sudan, that oil may cause conflict, but only in a context of pre-existing conflict and political tension, and may sit alongside other issues. We now turn our attention to the war in Angola, in which oil has played a somewhat different role.

2.3. Oil as an intensifier of conflict: Angola

Alongside the Sudanese conflict, the Angolan civil war is an example of a lengthy conflict associated with oil. The conflict unfolded in three phases, which cumulatively destroyed much of Angola's infrastructure, and took the lives of approximately one million people.

In the first phase, a liberation struggle between the Portuguese colonial government and various anti-colonial insurgencies, including the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the rival National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), raged from 1961 until independence in 1975.

The rivalry between the MPLA and UNITA laid the seeds for the second round of conflict from 1975 to 1991, which became enmeshed in global and regional confrontations of the time. Renewed conflict followed independence, with the ostensibly socialist MPLA establishing a one-party state in Angola, backed by the Soviet Union and 50,000 Cuban soldiers. However, the ideologically pragmatic UNITA opposed MPLA rule, receiving support from the United States to bring down the Soviet client state, and from apartheid South Africa attempting to prevent effective opposition to its interests from forming in the region.

UNITA was following a trend established during the first phase of the conflict, when it allied with the Portuguese colonial regime it was apparently fighting. This trend, in which the pursuit of political power was prioritised above any ideological consistency, drove the third phase of the conflict that followed the end of the Cold War, and subsequent peace-process (Malaquias, 2007). This phase, which occurred once UNITA took up arms against the governing MPLA following its defeat in the 1992 elections, became strongly associated with
oil and diamonds up until its conclusion in 2002, when UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi was killed by government forces.

The role of oil in the Angolan conflict is complex and contestable. Cramer (2006: 150-1, 160) argues that oil did not play a direct role in causing the war, and only became important to the trajectory of the conflict in its third stage. This is because oil revenues formed just a small part of Angola's diversified economy and comprised only a limited percentage of the state's budget during the 1950s and 1960s. It was only with the decline of manufacturing during the conflict, alongside the discovery of significant off-shore deposits in the 1990s, that oil assumed a prominent role in the Angolan economy.

If oil did not play a direct role in \textit{causing} the conflict in Angola, did it therefore serve to \textit{intensify} it? The revenues from oil production did allow the MPLA government to 'stay in the game', by permitting the state to purchase armaments throughout the third phase of the conflict (Cramer, 2006: 158). This is because of the well-understood value of oil to international companies and actors. The prospect of further discoveries of off-shore oil deposits in the early 1990s allowed the heavily indebted government to secure loans with which to purchase arms, and thus continue fighting. So a government that would otherwise have had few avenues to continue financing the conflict was now able to do so, thanks largely to Angola's fortuitous location atop vast reserves of a vital commodity.

We should be cautious when suggesting that oil can also play an intensifying role in African conflict, owing to some idiosyncrasies of the Angolan conflict. Firstly, the Angolan conflict was tied up with the wider Cold War confrontation, with the Soviet Union providing military support to the MPLA against UNITA and their Western backers. Oil only became an important means of arms procurement once the Cold War subsided, and Soviet support was withdrawn from the MPLA, forcing the government to become self-reliant in financing its war against UNITA (Le Billon, 2007: 113). Thus, a country with a significant oil-producing capacity does not necessarily need to use its reserves to purchase weapons, provided alternative sources of revenue and support are found.

Secondly, the majority of Angolan oil is extracted off-shore, particularly around the enclave of Cabinda. Separated from the rest of Angola by a small strip of the DRC, Cabinda is Angola's principle source of oil, and hosts an ongoing separatist movement of its own. Throughout the conflict, Cabinda and other coastal areas were controlled by MPLA forces.
UNITA, being largely confined to the hinterland of Angola, was not in a position to attack these off-shore installations, and were thus unable to deny the government important oil revenues. As Le Billon notes, "[h]ad Angola's oil reserves laid onshore, in areas vulnerable to fighting, it is highly unlikely the war would have gone for so long" (2007: 108). Therefore, if a resource is out of reach for one belligerent in a conflict, this may affect how war develops.

Applying the examples of Sudan and Angola to our second research question, we can draw some conclusions about the effects oil has for African sub-state conflict. In his study of African insurgencies, Clapham establishes a typology of guerrilla movements. This distinguishes between anti-colonial liberation movements; separatist insurrections seeking to secede from the state; reform insurrections challenging state practices, though not seeking to dissolve state itself; and profiteering warlord insurrections (Clapham, 1998: 6-8). In the examples of Angola and Sudan, we can detect a separatist insurgency in Sudan, and a blend of movements throughout Angola’s war, from liberation movements in the first phase, to reform and warlord insurrections in the second and third stages. Throughout this conflict, a separatist insurgency persisted in the Cabinda enclave.

Given this diversity, we should not readily associate oil with any one particular form of conflict. We can, however, see two patterns amongst these diverse conflicts in Angola and Sudan. Firstly, oil can reignite or interact with pre-existing tensions. In the Sudanese conflict, oil incited pre-existing secessionist sentiment in the south, derived from the first stage of conflict with the northern government. Whilst the Angolan war did not arise because of disputes over oil, it later became a means of financing the pre-existing conflict between the MPLA government and the opportunistic UNITA.

Secondly, oil may be one of amongst several factors in a conflict. The Sudanese government seeks not only the south’s oil, but also to impose Islamic values on its population, and secure the water flow of the Nile. In Angola, Cold War and regional factors shaped the trajectory of the conflict, as did the ingrained rivalry between UNITA and the MPLA.

In sum, there is no fixed relationship, or 'iron law', between oil and conflict. Instead, we can understand that oil and conflict operate within the fluid dynamics of contemporary war, interacting with a variety of other factors and motivations, and rekindling pre-existing tensions. As we move on to consider the Niger Delta conflict and its relationship to energy security, we would do well to keep these findings in mind, as we consider how the pursuit of
energy security by Western powers can alter these conflict dynamics.

3. How, if at all, is the Niger Delta conflict driven by the pursuit of energy security?

Having determined Africa's place in the energy security nexus, and identified some patterns in the relationship between oil and African conflict, we are now in a position to apply our findings to the case of the Nigeria's troubled oil producing region, the Niger Delta. We begin by outlining the conflict in the Delta, before considering the argument that Western energy security strategies are instrumental in driving this conflict. We then test this claim by investigating the alleged links between the pursuit of energy 'diversification' and the subsequent 'militarisation' of energy security and the conflict in the Delta. This chapter argues that a relationship between energy security and the Niger Delta crisis does exist, though this is the product of the unintended consequences and institutional limitations on the part of Western energy security strategies.

3.1. The conflict in the Niger Delta

Some knowledge of the history of the Niger Delta, and its place in the complex politics of Nigeria, is vital to understanding the present conflict. Achieving independence from British colonial rule in 1960, the vast country of Nigeria is Africa's most populous nations, and its largest oil producing region. Less glamorously, the country is notorious for endemic corruption, frequent military coups, and conflict between the various groups that comprise the nation.

In 1958, shortly before independence, oil was discovered in the south-eastern Delta region. Oil extracted from these coastal swamplands was to become the principle source of revenue for the Nigerian state by the 1970s, sweeping aside the largely agricultural economy that preceded it (Omeje, 2006: 214-17).

Whilst the Nigerian state has fluctuated from a flawed democratic system to military government repeatedly over the years, the central antagonism of Nigeria has long been competition for power by ethnic groups, who have acted under the belief that "access to power at the national level was to be derived from holding power at the regional level" (Falola and Heaton, 2008: 159). The three dominant groups, the Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani, reside in the east, west and north of the country respectively. A variety of smaller
groups exist throughout Nigeria (including the Delta), typically in the political periphery of the country. Cutting across this regional ethnic pattern is a religious division between the mainly Muslim north, and Christian south. Behind this division lay fears that either the Muslim north or Christian south would come to 'dominate' over the other (ibid: 165).

Fears of 'domination' helped drive the electoral manipulation and subsequent military coups of 1966, leading to the Nigerian civil war of 1967-70. On July 29th, 1966 the northern military officer Yakubu Gowon was installed as the Nigerian head of state. This coup, followed by the massacre of Igbo's by northern soldiers, prompted elites in the eastern Igbo region to secede from Nigeria, and establish the Republic of Biafra (ibid: 174-5).

The attempt by Biafra to secede, taking with it the oil-producing Niger Delta, was ultimately unsuccessful. However, the war raised the profile of the Delta from a peripheral area, to one central to Nigeria's future. Most of the minority groups of the Delta, including the Ijaw, Ogoni and Efik, eventually supported the Nigerian government over Biafra, whilst Britain and France backed Nigeria and Biafra respectively (Ibeanu and Luckham, 2007: 60-3).

The resolution of the civil war enabled the military regime to reassert itself over the east of the country, increasing oil production in the now pacified Delta. Following the Arab oil embargo of 1973, Nigeria enlarged its share of the global oil market, as Western states scrambled to diversify from Middle Eastern oil. At this point, oil became closely entwined with the Nigerian state, and presently accounts for around 80% of its revenues. However, widespread corruption, political turmoil and economic decline since the 1980s have meant that ordinary Nigerians have seen few benefits from their country's prominence in the oil market (Watts, 2007: 641).

A variety of grievances related to Nigeria's oil production have been advanced by the numerous rebel movements in the Delta. Certain themes are recurrent in rebel discourses, notably the environmental damage caused by oil extraction; the political 'marginalization' of minority ethnic groups in the Delta; and the economic exploitation of the region by the corrupt and repressive state. Of these rebel groups, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) has achieved special significance in recent years, overcoming the previous ethnic basis for rebel movements in the Delta by advancing an agenda which seeks to unite the regions' disparate groups (CFR, 2007).
The Delta conflict has been devastating for Nigeria's federal government, and raised significant concerns amongst Western importers of Nigerian oil. At the turn of the millennium, rebels dramatically increased attacks on critical oil infrastructure. Militants have at times reduced output by over 900,000 barrels per day, through a combination of attacks on off-shore and on-shore oil facilities, the theft of oil, and the abduction of oil workers (Watts, 2007: 639). The Nigerian government, heavily reliant on oil for its revenues, is believed to have lost approximately $4.4 billion dollars per annum since 2004, and substantially increased its counter-insurgency activities in the Delta in 2008 (ICG, 2009: 3).

Having outlined the conflict, we now turn our attention to an emerging body of literature which argues that the pursuit of energy security is having direct affects on the Niger Delta conflict, alongside other conflicts in the global South.

3.2. Energy security and the Niger Delta
The pursuit of energy security may steer the Niger Delta conflict in various ways. This is the position taken by several writers, who argue that energy security has become 'militarized', with adverse effects on intrastate conflict in Africa and other parts of the world (Klare, 2004, 2009; Barnes, 2005; Stokes, 2007).

Foremost amongst these authors is Michael Klare, who argues that a number of factors are compelling Western governments to diversify their sources of energy imports towards regions such as Africa. First, the prospect of "peak oil" necessitates that Western countries acquire a stake in as many oil fields as possible throughout the world, to ensure their economies continue to function in the event of a decline. Second, this decline is exacerbated by growing energy demand from Asia, and the anticipated competition between the West and emerging Asian economies over dwindling oil reserves reinforces the need to acquire new oil fields. Finally, the decline of existing oil field output in stable Western countries such as the US has led to a 'shift in the centre of gravity' of global oil production, initially to the Middle East. However, instability here has pushed the West towards alternative regions, such as Central Asia, Latin America, and Africa (Klare, 2009: 40-44).

As the West has sought to diversify its oil imports to alternative oil-producing regions, unexpected problems have emerged. A rise in the frequency of attacks on oil pipelines, the abduction of oil workers, and political instability throughout these regions has prompted
anxiety amongst Western governments, and resulted in the 'militarization' of energy security. This 'militarization' process comprises three elements:

"infrastructure and asset protection, or the physical protection of refineries, pipelines, loading facilities, and sealines of communications; regime protection, or military support for governments that facilitate the export of their country's oil reserves to foreign markets; and access assurance, or military moves intended to ensure uninterrupted access to key oil-producing regions" (ibid: 47)

The dual pursuit of energy 'diversification' and 'militarization' have led some to believe that behind the rhetoric of 'good governance', 'transparency' and 'democratisation', the West is pursuing a Realpolitik agenda. This agenda is designed to procure African oil by supporting repressive governments to stamp out insurgency, prioritising energy security above the welfare of civilians in oil-producing countries (de Oliveira, 2007: 271-74, 305-6).

It is argued that these aspects of energy security - the initial pursuit of 'diversification' and the subsequent 'militarization' - are having direct consequences for the Niger Delta conflict. The push to diversify towards alternative regions has profoundly affected the nature of the state in these fragile areas. Nigeria has become the archetypal 'rentier state', in which oil revenues, or 'rents', have not led to further economic development or opportunities for the poor, but have instead found themselves in the bank accounts of the political and military elite. This inequitable situation has not been resolved by the earlier peaceful protests of the impoverished residents of the Delta, who have been forced to take up arms against the state, and "[t]he result has been a growing cycle of violence, with harsh government repression only spurring greater armed resistance" (Klare, 2009: 45). In this argument, 'diversification' helped create the conditions that caused the Delta conflict.

This feeds into the 'militarization' process of energy security that is alleged to be underway. As outlined earlier, militants in the Delta have attacked critical energy infrastructure and abducted oil personnel. These are the primary weapons against the oil-dependent Nigerian state, designed to direct attention to their grievances, and force a settlement with the federal government to the advantage of the Delta population. Stokes (2007: 259-61) and Klare (2009: 50-1) argue that in response to these attacks, Western governments (especially America) have
been providing arms to the Nigerian government to pursue a counter-insurgency campaign against Delta rebels, perpetuating the conflict and increasing human-rights abuses.

Furthermore, the US Department of Defence established Africa Command (AFRICOM) in 2008, to sit alongside its existing regional commands, such as Central Command in the Middle East (CENTCOM) and Pacific Command in Asia (PACOM). As well as signifying the increasing importance of Africa to America, AFRICOM is accused of being a crucial component of a military network to facilitate these arms shipments to African governments, and part of a strategy for establishing an infrastructure of military bases that will allow for US troops to be stationed on the continent to protect oil interests, and combat terrorism (ibid: 50; Volman, 2010: 44-6).

However, before we understand the Niger Delta conflict as being exclusively the product of Western energy security strategies, it is important to scrutinise the arguments being advanced. We begin by investigating whether the Western diversification strategy is truly responsible for the conflict, before considering the effects that the 'militarization' of energy security has for the Niger Delta.

3.3. Has the pursuit of energy 'diversification' caused the Niger Delta conflict?

The argument that energy diversification is instrumental in causing the Niger Delta conflict by creating a 'rentier state' has parallels with a number of other studies. Omeje (2006) pursues a similar line of enquiry, in which the Nigerian state, enriched by oil revenues (or 'rents') is accused of exploiting legal loopholes and public policy to maintain the political status quo. This allows government elites to enrich themselves through corrupt practices, and maintain alliances with oil companies who assist in these practices.

However, in our studies of the conflicts in Sudan and Angola, we noted that oil was typically one factor amongst many that drive conflict, and that oil tended to interact with pre-existing issues. The 'rentier state' argument represents an essentially mono-causal account of the Delta conflict, in which oil revenues breed corruption and autocratic government. If we are to scrutinise whether energy 'diversification' is responsible for the conflict, we would do well to consider alternative explanations of the conflict.
The combination of pollution and social deprivation is, for some, primarily responsible for causing the violence in the Niger Delta. Jike contends that "[w]ith the discovery of oil, all other economic activities including agricultural pursuits became peripheral and subservient to oil exploration activities" (2004: 689). According to this argument, oil extraction has been prioritised above the livelihoods of the Delta population, with meagre compensation given for the catastrophic effects pollution is having for living standards.

There is little doubt that oil extraction has had devastating effects on the ecology of the Delta. Between 1976 and 1996 there were 4,835 oil spills in the region, leaking approximately two and half million barrels of crude into the region (Idemudia and Ite, 2006: 399-400). These spills pollute the limited arable land in the Delta, which would otherwise be used for subsistence farming. This land is reduced further when oil companies build pipelines and refineries upon it, whilst spills into the waters of the region have led to a decline in fish stocks, another source of subsistence in the impoverished region.

The inadequate response to pollution by oil companies and the Nigerian Federal Government, alongside the effects generated by this pollution, such as the loss of agricultural employment, and the migration by youth seeking jobs to overcrowded urban slums, all contribute to a situation in which "[t]he objective condition of social deprivation provides a ready milieu for youth violence, activism and rebelliousness" (Jike, 2004: 694).

Political explanations have also been developed to understand the Delta conflict, which bind issues of ethnic exclusion, social deprivation and state repression closely with the origins of the conflict. Despite the majority of Nigeria's oil being extracted in the Delta, the population has seen their share of oil-revenues decline from 50% in 1975 to 0% in 1982, before increasing to 13% in 2001. Persistent social problems within the region, such as high unemployment, a lack of access to education, and the economic problems that have occurred in areas of the Delta where oil company activity has depleted oil reserves, have cumulatively generated a sense of 'relative deprivation' amongst the population (Idemudia and Ite, 2006: 401-2). People travelling from the Delta to the developed cities of Nigeria, such as Abuja or Lagos, will often report of the comparatively high living standards in these areas, reinforcing this sentiment (ibid).
Furthermore, groups protesting these conditions have faced harsh repression from the military. Under the military government of General Abacha in the 1990s, Ogoni leader Ken Saro-Wiwa and seven others were executed following their protests on environmental degradation from oil production, setting a precedent for military solutions to political problems that lasted throughout the decade (Falola and Heaton, 2008: 230-33).

This feeds into a discourse of 'marginalisation', in which insurgents argue the Delta region is being exploited by the dominant Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani groups of Nigeria. The inability of the state to engage with these social problems without resorting to repression, combined with policies that "appeared to be aimed at serving the interests of regime members", has compelled minority groups to employ violent means to secure improved living standards, alongside a greater degree political and economic autonomy for the Niger Delta (Ukiwo, 2007: 691).

Surveying the various explanations of the Niger Delta conflict, we are confronted by a problem: all appear to offer a plausible account of the conflict, or at least some crucial dimension of it. Idemudia and Ite explain that:

"Even though the conflict in the region has gone through a trajectory, which demonstrates that different factors at different times [have] accentuated the conflict, it is difficult (if not impossible), to demonstrate in practice that one factor is more responsible than another and therefore the explanatory variable for the conflict" (2006: 392)

Idemudia and Ite stress that this complex situation can only be understood by considering its economic, political and environmental dimensions in tandem with one another. They argue that the root causes of the conflict lie in the exclusionary political *and* economic structures of Nigeria, which created the conditions for conflict to occur. Meanwhile, the environmental degradation of oil extraction and the perception of 'relative deprivation' amongst Delta groups acted as proximate and trigger causes for the conflict (ibid: 393-401). This is a more convincing framework through which to understand the Delta crisis than the explanations which view the economic, environmental and political factors in more or less isolation from one another.
How, then, does the pursuit of energy 'diversification' strategies affect this conflict? If we understand that the Niger Delta conflict as being the product of the complex interactions between political, economic and environmental dimensions, we can understand the pursuit of energy security has had an indirect role in causing the conflict, by permeating through the structural, proximate and trigger causes. However, this was likely an unintended consequence. As in the cases of Sudan and Angola, oil built upon pre-existing issues, involving a post-colonial state structure that could not accommodate minority groups. Therefore, whilst the pursuit of energy 'diversification' was one factor that caused the conflict, it also interacted with a variety of political and economic factors that enabled the conflict to come into being.

3.4. Does the 'militarization' of energy security drive conflict in the Niger Delta?
If the pursuit of energy 'diversification' had only an indirect role in causing the Niger Delta conflict, does the current 'militarization' of energy security play a more substantive function in driving the conflict? As outlined earlier, a number of scholars have argued a Realpolitik agenda is being pursued, in which Africa has attained strategic importance to the West (and particularly America). The establishment of AFRICOM is alleged to deepen and facilitate this agenda. To determine whether the 'militarization' of energy security perpetuates conflict in the Delta, we consider two questions: firstly, how successful is this Realpolitik agenda at meeting its goals; and secondly, what consequences for the Niger Delta conflict does this have? We consider these in turn.

Defending the AFRICOM project, the former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for African Affairs Theresa Whelan argues that AFRICOM does not represent an attempt to either militarize Africa, or secure US oil interests in Africa. Instead, the US is applying lessons learnt from contemporary experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan, which suggest military force alone will only resolve insecurity and instability on a temporary basis. Good governance and economic development are, according to Whelan, vital at realising lasting security in conflict-affected regions (2010: 36-7). Whilst acknowledging that the US does have oil interests in Africa, Whelan notes that the vast majority of US expenditure in Africa goes towards multi-billion dollar health and development programs (which are ostensibly associated with the AFRICOM project), compared with low-cost security
assistance programs, which amount to only a few hundred million dollars per year (ibid: 39-40). Thus, US strategy in Africa is geared towards meeting Africa's development needs as much as America's oil interests, and should not be characterised as Realpolitik agenda.

However, there are certain institutional constraints associated with AFRICOM, that undermine the notion that AFRICOM is as interested in "soft" socioeconomic issues as it is in the "hard" issues of security and strategy. Importantly, AFRICOM cannot realistically meet its multiple security and development ambitions at present. Since its formal establishment in October 2008, AFRICOM has encountered a number of problems that impair its operational performance, and constrict the scope of its remit. Of the various African countries identified as a potential site for the headquarters of the organisation (including Nigeria, Kenya and Djibouti, which has the only US military base on the continent), none have been willing to host the command (Volman, 2010: 56).

Currently residing in Stuttgart, Germany, AFRICOM has also experienced significant problems recruiting staff with the necessary expertise in dealing with African issues. Furthermore, under combined pressure from private aid agencies, the Department of State, and the government aid agency, USAID, the ambitious development and relief plans AFRICOM was supposed to undertake have been reigned in, leaving the organisation primarily concerned with its security assistance and strategy responsibilities (ibid: 57-9). The capacity of the command has also been blunted by budget reductions in 2009, whilst financial constraints and the lack of spare military capacity owing to ongoing US operations in Afghanistan and Iraq means that "no dedicated or new military units will be created for AFRICOM" (Keenan, 2010: 125-6).

In sum, if AFRICOM is the principle tool of a US Realpolitik agenda in Africa, we should understand it as being only partially constructed; contested by African nations as well as other institutions within the US government; and largely unable to carry out anything other than security functions, for which it receives little in the way of resources when compared with other regional commands.

The particular challenges of implementing the ambitious AFRICOM agenda feed directly into the consequences that the apparent 'militarization' of energy security is having for the Niger Delta. Instead of dedicating resources to the developmental goals envisaged in the planning stages of AFRICOM, security assistance and arms transfers have characterised the
organizations' engagements with Nigeria. Indeed, arms transfers to African countries have actually increased since AFRICOM was established, from $8.3 million of transfers in 2009 to $25.6 million in 2010, in a budget for AFRICOM that does not appear to be include money set aside for development projects. Nigeria has received arms shipments totalling $1.3 million, as well as receiving surplus speedboats from the US coastguard, and increased financing for counter-narcotics and military training (Volman, 2009; 2010: 59-63).

This suggests that the US is indeed committed to prioritising counter-insurgency operations above developmental goals. However, this does not necessarily mean that the US has an interest in perpetuating conflict in the Delta. Contrary to the suggestions of Klare (2009) and Stokes (2007), the US actually has an interest in facilitating a stable environment in the Niger Delta. If conflict were to end in the region, present anxieties about the insecurity of crucial oil infrastructure would begin to recede, and a costly engagement with the Nigerian security situation would be averted. However, as we have seen earlier, the Niger Delta crisis is the result of complex interactions between a number of causal factors, involving exclusionary political structures, an inequitable economic structure within Nigeria, and unaddressed grievances relating to social deprivation and environmental degradation. As Idemudia and Ite argue:

"...any genuine attempt at resolving the crisis must address the root causes of the conflict that arose from structural deficiencies, proximate and trigger causes that are due to systemic anomalies within the Nigerian society... addressing only one issue (e.g. political, social, economic or environmental) would not guarantee peace in the region" (2006: 402)

The problem with the current US approach is that it does not seek to address any one of these issues, choosing instead to reinforce the military capacity of the Nigerian state. We can thus understand counter-insurgency as a deficient approach to resolving the Niger Delta, actually working against the creation of conditions necessary to end hostilities.

Authors such as Klare and Stokes appear to be working from the belief that the 'militarization' of African energy issues is considered both necessary and desirable by the US. Similarly, there is arguably a latent assumption in such works which understands that internal conflicts are affected by external actors, who in most cases have the capacity to realise their agendas.
However, a more convincing account of the effects the pursuit of energy security is having on the Niger Delta conflict would recognise that the US strategy, being unable to implement the development aspects the US considers crucial to conflict stabilisation, is deficient under these terms. Instead, it is subject to the problems of unintended consequences, and the present limitations on the capacity, resources and institutional structures of AFRICOM.

In summary, it appears to be that - at least in the case of the Niger Delta - the pursuit of energy security does drive resource wars in certain ways. However, this is often an indirect process, and stems not from calculated strategy, but instead from limitations in institutional capacity, resources, and knowledge of pre-existing conflict in Africa.

Conclusions

This primary focus of this paper has been to untangle the complex interactions that may exist between the pursuit of energy security by Western governments, and resource-based conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa. To do so, we have combined a comprehensive analysis of energy security (including its aims, theoretical underpinnings, and relationship to Africa) with a rigorous critique of the relationship between oil and conflict in Africa, and brought these together in an attempt to explain the situation in the Niger Delta, to determine whether and how the pursuit of energy security is affecting this complex conflict.

We began by asking: "what is Africa's place in the energy security nexus?" Firstly, we considered what issues energy security was being marshalled to address, identifying a complex 'energy security nexus' in which short, medium and long-term threats to energy security interact. Delving deeper into the concept of energy security, we saw that the term should not be associated with 'national security', but should instead be understood as representing the unending pursuit of stable global energy production, supply and consumption structures, free from changing threats to different actors. Turning our attention to the African dimension to energy security, we see that whilst Africa brings new opportunities to energy security nexus by providing an additional source of diversity for Western consumers, it also presents new threats, due in large part to the political violence and instability that accompany African oil extraction.
As such, we next turned our attention to the relationship between oil and African conflict, to provide a theoretical and empirical basis for understanding how the pursuit of energy security affects this dynamic. To begin, we considered how the relationship between resources and conflict has been theorised by authors such as Le Billon, Ross and Fearon and Laitin. However, owing to the methodological issues within these studies, competing explanations of the relationship between oil and conflict were advanced.

Given these problems, we shifted from the quantitative approaches that have been used to understand the role of resources in war, to a qualitative study of two conflicts often associated with oil: Sudan and Angola. In these examples, we saw that oil does not play a fixed causal role in conflict, and can in fact be associated forms of insurgency. Nevertheless, several patterns emerged in the cases of Sudan and Angola. Firstly, oil typically builds on pre-existing tensions or conflicts. Secondly, oil is not usually the only factor that drives conflict.

Carrying these findings through to the final chapter, we sought to determine whether the pursuit of energy security by Western governments was driving the conflict in the Niger Delta.

Having outlined the situation in the Niger Delta, we introduced the arguments of the emerging body of literature that charges the West with pursuing energy security strategies that drive sub-state conflict.

Under these arguments, the pursuit of energy security in the form of 'diversification' and 'militarization' are charged with causing and driving conflict in the Niger Delta, respectively. Diversification introduced the Nigerian state to the benefits of oil wealth, which was sequestered from the impoverished residents of the Delta to private bank accounts. The failure of the Nigerian government to address this situation is largely responsible for the conflict. Meanwhile, the effects of this conflict on oil supplies has led to the militarization of energy security, and the subsequent supply of arms to the Nigerian state, and the establishment of AFRICOM to secure America's interests in the region.

Investigating the charge that energy diversification caused the Niger Delta conflict, we considered a variety of explanations for the crisis, arguing that the sheer number of plausible explanations favoured an integrated account of the conflict. Connecting the economic, political and environmental dimensions of the Niger Delta together reveals that the pursuit of energy diversification did play a role in facilitating the conflict. However, it did so by
interacting with a number of additional factors related to the exclusionary political and economic structures of the Nigerian state. As such, diversification was an indirect cause of the conflict.

Finally, we explored the argument that the 'militarization' of energy security was perpetuating the Delta conflict. Whilst it may be the case that Western countries, and especially the United States, are pursuing a Realpolitik agenda that 'militarizes' African energy issues through organizations such as AFRICOM, it is unlikely that perpetual conflict is the goal of such strategies. Instead, the US and other Western governments have a greater interest in bringing stability to the Delta. However, a variety of institutional constraints, notably limited expertise, competition with other government agencies, and financial constraints impairs the ability of the US to realise this stability. As such, financing the counter-insurgency of the Nigerian government represents not an attempt to perpetuate the Delta conflict, but rather a deficient approach to seeing its resolution.

In conclusion, whilst the pursuit of energy security by Western governments does play some role in driving the conflict in the Niger Delta, this is most likely the product of unintended consequences and institutional constraints, rather than a calculated attempt to encourage conflict.

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