

between global overview pieces and articles focusing on specific countries, as well as a balance between Africa, Asia, and Latin America. We also made a special effort to assemble the key references on this topic and to provide information about what they include and how readers can access them. We sincerely hope that our readers find this information useful and that it contributes to more effective efforts to reduce armed conflict in forested regions and the environmental and social impacts of those conflicts that do occur. Hopefully it can also contribute to more effective forestry and conservation initiatives in post-conflict situations.

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### **STRUGGLES OVER RESOURCE WEALTH AND CONFLICT\***

*By Michael Renner*

Abundant natural resources—such as oil, minerals, metals, diamonds and other gemstones, timber, and agricultural commodities including drug crops—have fueled a large number of violent conflicts. Resource exploitation played a role in about a quarter of the roughly 50 wars and armed conflicts of recent years. More than 5 million people were killed in resource-related conflicts during the 1990s. Close to 6 million fled to neighboring countries, and anywhere from 11–15 million people were displaced inside their own countries.<sup>1</sup>

The money derived from often illicit resource exploitation in war zones has secured an ample supply of arms for various armed factions and has served to enrich a handful of people—warlords, corrupt government officials, and unscrupulous corporate leaders. But for the vast majority of the population in affected countries, these conflicts have brought a torrent of arms trafficking, human rights violations, humanitarian disasters, and environmental destruction. Ample endowments of coveted resources have helped push these countries to the bottom of most measures of human development.<sup>2</sup>

In places like Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Colombia, and Sudan, the pillaging of resources allowed violent conflicts to continue that were initially driven by grievances or secessionist and ideological struggles. Revenues from

resource exploitation replaced the support that was extended to governments and rebel groups by superpower patrons but largely evaporated with the end of the cold war.<sup>3</sup>

Elsewhere, such as in Sierra Leone or the Democratic Republic of the Congo, predatory groups initiated violence not necessarily to gain control of government, but rather as a means of seizing control of a prized resource—typically one of the few tickets to wealth and power in poorer societies. They are aided by the massive proliferation and easy availability of small arms and light weapons.<sup>4</sup>

Commercial resource extraction can also be a source of conflict where the economic benefits accrue only to a small domestic elite and multinational companies, while the local population shoulders an array of social, health, and environmental burdens. This is particularly the case in countries that lack democratic governance, are corrupt, and are characterized by extreme divides among rich and poor and ethnic tensions. The result has been protests and even violent conflict in places like Colombia, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea's Bougainville island, and Indonesia's Aceh province.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, tensions and disputes arise as major consumers of natural resources jockey for access and control. The history of oil in particular is one of multi-hued foreign meddling, including support for dictatorships and military interventions, of which the invasion and occupation of Iraq is but the latest chapter. The United States, Russia, and China are backing competing pipeline plans for Caspian resources. Likewise, in their struggle for access to Siberian oil, China and Japan are pushing mutually exclusive export routes. Some

observers have begun to speak of a new “great game”—the term by which the 19<sup>th</sup> century British-Russian imperial rivalry was known. In Africa, France and the United States and France are maneuvering for influence by deepening military ties with undemocratic regimes in Algeria, Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville, and Angola. China is seeking a greater role for its oil companies, particularly in Sudan, and working to increase its political clout in Africa and the Middle East. And the United States is getting ever more deeply involved in Colombia's civil war, in part to secure the flow of oil against rebel attacks on export pipelines.<sup>6</sup>

From Pakistan to Central Asia to the Caucasus, and from the eastern Mediterranean to the Horn of Africa, a dense network of U.S. military facilities has emerged since 2001—with many bases established in the name of the “war on terror.” Both the Clinton and Bush administrations have deepened U.S. involvement in Colombia's civil war, in part to secure the flow of oil by protecting an export pipeline against rebel attacks.<sup>7</sup>

Overly dependent on natural resources, resource-rich countries often fail to diversify their economies, stimulate innovation, or invest adequately in critical social areas or public infrastructure. Resource royalties help political leaders maintain power, even in the absence of popular legitimacy—by funding a system of patronage and by beefing up an internal security apparatus able to suppress challenges to their power.<sup>8</sup>

A number of conflicts—in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Angola—have finally come to an end, but others burn on. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, foreign

forces that invaded in 1998 have withdrawn, yet fighting among various domestic armed factions continues, and elaborate illegal networks and proxy forces have been set up that continue to exploit natural resources.<sup>9</sup>

The enormous expansion of global trade and financial networks has made access to key markets relatively easy for warring groups. They have had little difficulty in establishing international smuggling networks and sidestepping international embargoes, given a degree of complicity among certain companies and often lax customs controls in importing nations.<sup>10</sup>

Over the past five years or so, awareness of the close links between resource extraction, human development, and armed conflict has grown rapidly. Campaigns by civil society groups, investigative reports by UN expert panels, and greater media interest have shed light on these connections, making it at least a bitslightly more difficult for “conflict resources” to be sold on world markets. To discourage illicit deals, revenue flows associated with resource extraction need to become more transparent, but governments, companies, and financial institutions often still shirk their responsibilities.<sup>11</sup>

Commodity-tracking regimes are equally important. In the diamond industry, national certification schemes and a standardized global certification scheme—the so-called Kimberley Process —have been established. But the resulting set of rules still suffers due to the lack of independent monitoring and too much reliance on voluntary measures. Efforts are also under way by the European Union to establish a certification system for its tropical timber

imports—up to half of which are connected to armed conflict or organised crime.<sup>12</sup>

Natural resources will continue to fuel deadly conflicts as long as consumer societies import materials with little regard for their origin or the conditions under which they were produced. Some civil society groups have sought to increase consumer awareness and to compel companies to do business more ethically through investigative reports and by “naming and shaming” specific corporations. For instance, consumer electronics companies were pressured to scrutinize their supplies of coltan, a key ingredient of circuit boards, and to ask processing firms to stop purchasing illegally mined coltan.<sup>13</sup>

Promoting democratization, justice, and greater respect for human rights are key tasks, along with efforts to reduce the impunity with which some governments and rebel groups engage in extreme violence. Another challenge is to facilitate the diversification of the economy away from a strong dependence on primary commodities to a broader mix of activities. A more diversified economy, greater investments in human development, and empowering local communities to be strong guardians of the natural resource base would lessen the likelihood that commodities become pawns in a struggle among ruthless contenders for wealth and power.

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\* A slightly different version of this text was published under the same title in Worldwatch Institute, *State of the World 2005* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005), pp. 96-97.

<sup>1</sup> Quarter share of all conflicts is from Michael Renner, *The Anatomy of Resource Wars*, Worldwatch Paper 162 (Washington, D.C.: Worldwatch Institute, October 2002), p. 6. Number of deaths estimated from data in Milton Leitenberg, *Deaths in Wars and Conflicts Between 1945 and 2000* (College Park MD: Center for International and Security Studies, University of Maryland, May 2001). Refugee numbers derived from UN High Commissioner for Refugees, at [www.unhcr.ch](http://www.unhcr.ch); number of internally displaced persons derived from U.S. Committee for Refugees, at [www.refugees.org](http://www.refugees.org), both viewed 25 August 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Renner, op. cit. note 1. In Angola, for instance, some \$4.2 billion in state oil revenue disappeared in 1997-2002, a sum roughly equal to the entire sum the government spent on all social programs during the same period. Human Rights Watch, *Some Transparency, No Accountability: The Use of Oil Revenue in Angola and its Impact on Human Rights* (New York, January 2004). *Human development indicators from U.N. Development Programme, Human Development Report 2004* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Renner, op. cit. note 1, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Weapons proliferation from Small Arms Survey, *Small Arms Survey 2004* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), and from Michael Renner, *Small Arms, Big Impact: The Next Challenge of Disarmament*, Worldwatch Paper 137 (Washington, DC: Worldwatch Institute, October 1997).

<sup>5</sup> Renner, op. cit. note 1, pp. 35-47.

<sup>6</sup> Michael T. Klare, *Resource Wars: The New Landscape of Global Conflict* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001); Michael Renner, "Post-Saddam Iraq: Linchpin of a New Oil Order,"

*Foreign Policy in Focus*, January 2003. Caspian from Lutz Klevevan, "Oil and the New 'Great Game'," *The Nation*, 16 February 2004, pp. 12-13. China-Japan struggle from Ayako Doi, "Asian Enmities. China and Japan Revert to Hostility, And Hope for Reconciliation Fades," *Washington Post*, 29 August 2004, and from James Brooke, "The Asian Battle for Russia's Oil and Gas," *New York Times*, 3 January 2004. [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A40260-2004Aug27.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A40260-2004Aug27.html)

<sup>6</sup> Julio Godoy, "U.S. and France Begin a Great Game in Africa," [allAfrica.com](http://allAfrica.com), 11 August 2004, [allafrica.com/stories/printable/200408110821.html](http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200408110821.html); Eric Schmitt, "Pentagon Seeking New Access Pacts for African Bases," *New York Times*, 5 July 2003; Felix Onua, "Nigeria and United States Agree on Military Exercises in Oil Delta," Reuters, 13 August 2004. China from Gerald Butt, "Thirst for Crude Pulling China Into Sudan," *The Daily Star* (Beirut, Lebanon), 17 August 2004, [www.dailystar.com.lb/printable.asp?art\\_ID=7398&cat\\_ID=3](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/printable.asp?art_ID=7398&cat_ID=3). Colombia from Alexandra Guáqueta, "The Colombian Conflict: Political and Economic Dimensions," in Karen Ballentine and Jake Sherman, eds., *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict. Beyond Greed and Grievance* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), pp. 73-106.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Renner, "Oil and Blood: The Way to Take Over the World," *World Watch*, January/February 2003, p. 21; Lutz Klevevan, "Oil and the New 'Great Game'," *The Nation*, 16 February 2004, pp. 12-13; Seth Mydans, "Georgia and its Two Big Brothers," *New York Times*, 28 November 2003. Colombia from Alexandra Guáqueta, "The Colombian Conflict: Political and Economic Dimensions," in Karen Ballentine and Jake Sherman, eds., *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict. Beyond Greed and Grievance* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), pp. 73-106.

<sup>8</sup> Jeffrey D. Sachs and Andrew M. Warner, "Natural Resource Abundance and Economic Growth," *Development Discussion Paper No. 517a* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Institute for International Development, 1995); Michael Ross, *Extractive Sectors and the Poor* (Boston: Oxfam America, October 2001), pp. 5, 7-9; William

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<sup>9</sup> Ongoing fighting from Marc Lacey, "War Is Still a Way of Life for Congo Rebels," *New York Times*, 21 November 2002, and from Finbarr O'Reilly, "Rush for Natural Resources Still Fuels War in Congo," Reuters, 10 August 2004; illegal networks from United Nations Security Council, "Final Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo" (New York: 16 October 2002).

<sup>10</sup> Renner, op. cit. note 1.

<sup>11</sup> Transparency codes and other efforts are discussed exhaustively in Ian Bannon and Paul Collier, eds., *Natural Resources and Violent Conflict: Options and Actions* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2003).

<sup>12</sup> Bannon and Collier, op. cit. note 11. Ian Smillie, *Conflict Diamonds: Unfinished Business* (Ottawa, ON, Canada: International Development Research Centre, 27 May 2002); U.S. Government Accounting Office, Critical Issues Remain in Deterring Conflict Diamond Trade (Washington, DC: June 2002), pp. 17–21. Robin Pomeroy, "E.U. Bids to Cut Down Worldwide Illegal Timber Trade," *Reuters*, 21 May 2003; Jeremy Smith, "E.U. Aims to Stem Illegal Rainforest Timber Trade," *Reuters*, 14 October 2003.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, the Campaign to Eliminate Conflict Diamonds in Washington, D.C., at [www.phrusa.org/campaigns/sierra\\_leone/conflict\\_diamonds.html](http://www.phrusa.org/campaigns/sierra_leone/conflict_diamonds.html), Fatal Transactions Campaign in Amsterdam at [www.niza.nl/fataltransactions/partner.html](http://www.niza.nl/fataltransactions/partner.html), Global Witness in London at [www.globalwitness.org](http://www.globalwitness.org), Christian Aid in London at [www.christian-aid.org.uk](http://www.christian-aid.org.uk), and Project Underground in Berkeley, California at [www.moles.org](http://www.moles.org).

### VIOLENT ENVIRONMENTS: A SUMMARY

By Nancy Peluso and Michael Watts

*Violent Environments* both provides a critique of the standard narrative of relationships between violence, resources, and environment put forth by writers in the field of environmental security and suggests alternative ways of understanding these connections. In the introduction to the book, Nancy Peluso and Michael Watts define violence as a site-specific phenomenon rooted in local histories and social relations, yet connected to larger networks of power relations and processes of material transformation. The volume's contributors—an interdisciplinary collection of anthropologists, geographers, sociologists, and historians—draw on rich bodies of literature not normally included in many policy, political science, or economics-driven debates over environment and security—namely, political ecology, agrarian studies, STS-studies, and the anthropology of violence. In contrast to more standard approaches, these contributions are not intended to merely identify the "environmental triggers" of violent conflicts; nor do the writers start from a presumed "resource scarcity." Rather, *Violent Environments* accounts for ways that specific resource environments (such as agricultural lands, tropical forests, or oil reserves), environmental processes (deforestation, conservation, or resource abundance), and cultural politics are constituted by, and in part constitute, the political economy of access to and control over resources.