



Oil and Global Insecurity: Lessons from Asia, Latin America and African Oil Producing Countries

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ABSTRACT

This paper critically digs into history to examine the role oil played in generating war among nations. It also examines conflicts and agitations within nations as well as regime-change in the global system with their attendant consequences on global security. The discovery of oil as a major source of energy for the running of military and civilian complexes the world over, has been a blessing and a curse. Oil as a commodity has contributed in no small measure to growth and development as it helps in turning the wheels necessary for industrialization. However, the search for oil over the years by nations of the world has engendered conflicts and full-fledged wars within and among nations due to antagonistic encounter of interests. Asian and African oil producing countries are the worst hit, as established powers sponsor proxy wars, change unfriendly regimes in the name of accessing abundant oil resources with all the security implications these portend. Within the oil producing states, agitations and rebellion are commonplace in oil producing regions. The governing elites see oil revenue as opportunity for primitive accumulation leaving the people in oil producing regions in extreme poverty and deprivation in the midst of abundant wealth. The frustration and agony of the people find expression in violence and counter violence by the state reducing the oil regions to theaters of conflicts and security crises. The paper however, concluded

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and recommended that; oil search by the established and emerging powers should be carried out within the confines of the law. Oil producing states deserve to be respected by the international community to utilize their resources for the development of their people. There must not be interference in their internal affairs. Again, the governing elites should develop strategies for equitably distributing oil wealth among the various stake holders within the oil producing states so as to nib rebellion in the bud for the sake of international peace and security.

Keywords: Oil politics; oil wars and conflicts; regime change; international peace; security.

1. INTRODUCTION

It was Perry Anderson who posited that blood may be thicker than water, but oil is thicker than both [1]. This aphorism captures and explains the strategic importance of oil resources in global system, because oil is key to economic growth and industrialization which generates employment and empowers the populace everywhere in the world. Furthermore, oil may be what the former Venezuelan oil minister, Juan Pablo Perez Alfonzo, perceptively described as the 'devil's excrement', but it continues to define the context and pattern of global accumulation in a manner that is unprecedented in scale and intensity [2]. Since 9/11 2001, established and emerging powers such as the United States of America (U.S.A), Britain, France, China, India and Brazil have been locked in what has been described as the 'new scramble' to gain access to, and secure a firm footing in oil-producing African countries. The transnational character and impacts of oil, and its links to the energy security interests of established and emerging powers and their multinational or state oil companies, cannot be over-emphasized [2]. Therefore, the struggle to acquire and access oil resources is shrouded in politics.

However, since the 1930's, oil wars have been raging and these continue without any hope of ending in the nearest future. Again, oil search and the struggle to have unfettered access to oil resources have brought down different regimes across the world. Mohammed Mossadeqh, the Iranian Prime Minister was removed because of oil politics in 1953 [3]. Furthermore, Abdulkarim Qasim was eliminated in 1963 by the conspiracy of the West because he nationalized standard oil in Iraq. In Chile, Salvador Allende was in part, a victim of oil politics which brought down his government. In Iraq, Saddam Hussain was killed in 2006 by the Western powers claiming that Saddam possessed weapons of mass destruction. However, the ostensible reason was to eliminate Saddam so that the Western countries can access oil resources in Iraq whose

reserves are well over 112 billion barrels. In 2011, President Gaddafi in Libya was eliminated by the NATO alliance because he was said to have used oil money to accumulate gold and silver worth billions of dollars, and wanted to use same to challenge the hegemony of the IMF and World Bank by establishing their equivalent in Africa where loans can be accessed without conditionalities [4].

In Africa, for 27 years, Civil War raged in Angola because of oil. Today, Cabinda region where bulk of Angola's oil is produced is an abode of oil rebels, who feel marginalized and excluded thereby, seeking for independence from the central government [5]. In Nigeria, since 1957 when oil was discovered in commercial quantity in the Niger Delta region, the region has never being at ease. The enormous oil revenues generated over the years by the government were squandered, mismanaged and misappropriated by greedy political elites which make it impossible for oil wealth to impact positively on the lives of the people. This has generated tension and conflicts in the region due to deep seated frustration and general underdevelopment [6]. In South-Sudan, the youngest nation in Africa, oil is at the heart of the conflicts among the different ethnic groups. Therefore, oil has generated insecurity and instability within the global system and same is challenging peace and development because of the desire of the established and emerging powers to access it, given its importance in national security and development.

2. CONCEPTUALIZING OIL POLITICS

Oil politics is the exercise of political control over oil resources, their extraction, and the income from oil exports; the vagaries of oil market forces and the political attempt to govern them as well as the complex roles of oil in international, regional and domestic conflicts. Thus, oil politics attempts to understand the role of oil in political conflict as well as issues such as international oil governance, 'resource curse', oil rent, producer

cartels which include the role of Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the future of oil in the context of climate change, and the part oil has played in civil war and terrorism [7].

Furthermore, oil politics has also been viewed as the interplay of forces within and without the oil state frontiers in the process of oil wealth accumulation. Thus, the politics of oil manifests at the level of oil production as it is associated with the intrigues and high level secrecy that play out in oil producing countries between the Multinational Oil Corporations (MNOCs) and oil producing states. Thus, what gives birth to this secrecy is the simple fact that, oil as a source of power is central to development everywhere in the world; therefore, oil exerts a lot of influence by defining the object of power and dialectically been a source of wealth, poverty, unity, intense competition and conflict [8].

However, two factors explain the secrecy and high level intrigues in oil production. First, is the partnership between the petro-state and the MNOCs, and the fact that most of the oil producing states are basically collectors of oil-rents but lack the technical knowhow to monitor and supervise oil production [8]. Hence, the oil states rely on the MNOCs to determine the revenue accruing from oil production. This arrangement gives ample space for the government to be short-changed in this close system of operations. This is the case in many oil producing countries such as Nigeria, Angola, Gabon etc. Therefore, as the MNOCs are solely responsible for oil production processes, the actual volume of production has always been shrouded in secrecy.

Similarly, oil politics can also be understood from the perspective of the contradictions oil engenders in petroleum dependent state like Nigeria. Thus, oil politics is the complex relation that exists in petro-state between the government, the MNOCs and oil producing communities which generate serious security concerns [9]. This relation is aimed at accumulation of oil wealth by the stakeholders; a phenomenon Watts called the 'Oil complex'. The oil producing communities depend on looting oil through oil theft (bunkering). The militia groups who are armed in most cases by local politicians in collaboration with highly corrupt military officials make fortunes from oil theft, while the government officials appropriate oil wealth through corruption. To this end, bunkering and

looting of oil is one major way of financing the operation of the rebels or militants in oil producing states. This situation generates a lot of security challenges for the oil producing state as the distribution of oil wealth under the control of ruling elites has further exacerbated the problem. Therefore, violent crises have arisen from this practice [9].

Given the underdevelopment, poverty and misery ravaging oil producing communities and the perception of marginalization, oil producing regions always want to send a message to the government and to attract the attention of the world on their plight. This captures the situation in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria where oil is produced. This is also the situation in Cabinda region in Angola where majority of the people live in abject poverty despite oil wealth. It is the perception of marginalization that is making the people to press for independence from the central government in Angola. The rebellion in Cabinda has created a very serious security challenges in the region owing to the disruptions of oil production in the region. In Nigeria, the people of the Niger Delta too feel marginalized and cheated by the central government that accumulates oil wealth which sustains the economy. It is within this context that the militancy in the oil rich Niger Delta is situated [10].

However, oil politics has caused revolution in history. The Iranian revolution in 1978-9 started from the oil fields in Abadan region when the oil workers refused to export oil unless Shah leaves Iran. Within one week, Iran's production fell by half. Sensing that their interest and those of the West could so easily be shaken, the U.S pressured Shah to leave to ensure the flow of oil in the international market. Thus, oil weapons have overtime been deployed by nations to settle scores. The 1973 Arab-Israeli war for example provided the political catalyst for OPEC oil embargo of U.S and Holland. It is within the same context that we understand oil price maneuvers between Iran and Saudi Arabia [11].

Historically, oil politics emerged in the 20th century as one of the most critical dimensions shaping domestic and global life. Scholars maintained that little did the oil prospectors in Titusville, Pennsylvania, know in 1859 that they had struck upon a commodity that would prove central over the next 150-plus years in affecting issues of global poverty and economic growth, war and peace, terrorism, democracy, global

power politics, global climate change, the rise of new great powers and the decline of actors that used or pursue oil unintelligently. All of these constitute the politics of oil, a commodity that, perhaps like no other, has shaped global life and is likely to do so for the foreseeable future [12].

3. THE FUNDAMENTALS OF THEORY

This paper adopted the theory of realism to explain global oil politics and the security crises the struggle to access oil generates. Realism theory emerged after the World war 11 as a response to idealism, which holds the view that policy makers should refrain from immoral and illegal actions in world affairs. Idealists advocated for the establishment of world organizations like the United Nations, World Trade Organization, etc where nations would interact, which reduce the long term potential for international conflicts.

However, realism as a theory of international politics, postulated that states exist within an anarchic international system in which they are ultimately dependent on their own capabilities or power to further their national interests, and that the state's interests provide the spring of action [13]. According to realists, the most important national interest is the survival of the state, including its people, political system, the preservation of the culture and economy, and territorial integrity. It emphasizes the constraints on politics that result from human kind's egoistic nature and the absence of a central authority above the state [14].

Furthermore, realists contended that, as long as the world is divided into nation-states in an anarchic setting, national interest will remain the essence of international politics. Therefore, in an international system composed of sovereign states, the survival of both the states and the system depend on the intelligent pursuit of national interests and the accurate calculation of national power [15]. Realists further stressed that the struggle for power is part of human nature and takes essentially two forms: collaboration and competition. Collaboration occurs when parties find that their interests coincide (e.g. when they form alliance or coalitions designed to maximize their collective power usually against an adversary. However, rivalry, competition and conflict result from the clash of national interests, which is the characteristic of the anarchic system. Accommodation between states is possible through skillful political leadership which

includes the prioritizing of national goals in order to limit conflict with other states [16].

Therefore, it is within the broad context of the postulations of realism that we can situate the behavior of state in the struggle to access oil resources no matter whose ox is gored, which is challenging international peace and security.

4. THE REALITIES OF GLOBAL OIL SEARCH AND CONTROL

It is generally agreed that oil is a very important resource in the entire world today and also the largest resource for man's demand for energy. Nations of the world rely on oil greatly for security and national survival because oil resources promote industrialization necessary for development. Oil search and control by many nations around the world is aimed at enhancing energy, for the optimal running of civilian and military industrial complexes. Therefore, the strategic importance of oil in global political economy cannot be over-emphasized. This explains why nations of the world welcome oil discovery with high hopes and optimism because oil production has the potentials of liberating oil economies from the shackles of underdevelopment to affluence if the proceeds are properly managed [17].

However, global search for oil has generated, and is still generating wars among nations and agitations within nations. For instance, the U.S, roams about the entire world, establishing military bases in some oil rich areas in order to have control of world oil resources, and also resorts to wars and many underground activities such as overthrowing regimes around the world just for this purpose. It is within this context that we can situate the removal of Mohammed Mossadeqh, the Iranian Prime Minister as far back in 1953 by the Central Intelligence Agency, CIA [3].

Furthermore, in the wake of 9/11 2001 terrorists attack on the U.S, the U.S again overthrew Saddam Hussain and Mullah Mohammed Omar in Iraq and Afghanistan respectively in the name of 'war against terrorism', but the real motive was for the U.S to be in control of oil in Iraq and to secure more access to oil abundant resources in the Gulf of Persia. The Iraqi-Iranian and Saudi Arabian/Kuwait axis constitute locations for some of the largest deposits of oil-wells in the whole world [18]. Therefore, the U.S went to war in Afghanistan in order to prevent Al-Qaeda and

Taliban from blocking oil route that connects the region to the oil rich Caspian Sea which is believed to have over 200 billion barrels of oil [19]. This explains U.S interest in Afghan crisis, and not the entrenchment of democracy as claimed by the propaganda of the world powers.

Additionally, the 27-year Civil War that ended in 2002 in Angola was said to be a proxy war by the world powers over oil. The CIA was deeply involved in the war by shipping massive quantities of arms and ammunition, making cash payments to Holden Roberto of Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola (FNLA) and Jonas Savimbi (União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola: UNITA rebel leader), hiring of mercenaries in Europe and the U.S., and supervising of logistical operations on the ground, both in Congo (DR) and Angola [3]. The war ended in 2002 with the death of Savimbi. Oil has brought a lot of unease in Angola as elsewhere including "sit tight syndrome" by leaders of these states.

Therefore, in Africa, most especially oil producing Sub-Saharan countries, oil has not engendered development, but endangered it. Oil has become almost a curse, generating conflicts, crisis and underdevelopment. Angola for instance, produces 1.6 million barrels per day (mbpd) but the revenue has little or no impact on the lives of the people as the country remains poor, as a result of corruption which made a third of the population relies on subsistence agriculture. Corruption and mismanagement remain particularly in the oil sector, which accounts for over 50 per cent of Gross Domestic Products (GDP), over 90 per cent of export revenue, and over 80 per cent of government revenue. Cabinda region where 70 per cent of Angola's oil is produced remains underdeveloped, with separatist groups demanding independence because oil wealth is not equally shared [5].

However, the Nigerian situation is worst. Since the discovery of oil in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria, the region has never been at ease. One would have thought that the discovery of oil will equally spur rapid transformation of the Niger Delta and by extension, the Nigerian state by opening up new vistas and to reposition the country on the path of sustainable growth and development thereby, engendering peace and stability in the polity. These dreams had turned into nightmares as the realities on ground suggest otherwise despite the huge oil wealth. The high hopes and optimism for the

transformation of the Niger Delta and the Nigerian state from the proceeds of oil soon evaporated paving the way for despair and skepticism because the Nigerian state fell short of expectations in meeting the yearnings and aspirations of the people due to corruption that characterized oil politics in Nigeria [20].

The Niger Delta crisis rooted in the region is of critical importance to Nigeria political economy. As the nation's treasure base, the Niger Delta provides over 80 percent of government revenues, 95 percent of export receipt, 90 percent of foreign exchange earnings. Also, the bulk of Nigeria's bio-diversity and some of her best human resources are derived from the Niger Delta. The region is ranked sixth world largest producer and exporter of crude oil globally, top in the production of timber, pineapple and fish [21]. Therefore, the Niger Delta people believe that they are short-changed, marginalized and are suffering from excruciating neglect and underdevelopment perpetrated by certain groups in the polity who control political power and oil wealth at the center of a very skewed and flawed federal system which continues to work against their yearnings and aspirations.

The people believe that the oil resources extracted from the region is not used in the development of the region, but it is transferred to other parts of the federation for socio-economic development while the Niger Delta region lies in ruins, as the indigenous population are wallowing in the vortex of poverty, unemployment, ignorance and disease in the midst of abundance as the federal government continues to device extra-legal ways to marginalize the oil producing communities [22]. Also, that their fate is furthered entrenched by their minority status in a federal arrangement which continues to work against the interest of minority ethnic groups especially those in the Niger Delta [23].

Aside these, the people of the region believe that the MNOCs have no positive aspirations for the region as reflected in the MNOCs failure to fulfill their promises to host communities which are ravaged by grinding poverty, underdevelopment and environmental degradation resulting from ruthless exploitation and destruction of the natural environment upon which the inhabitants of the region depend for their livelihoods and sustenance [24]. These feelings of exclusion precipitated the emergence of oil insurgents vandalizing oil facilities, carrying out illegal oil bunkering and kidnapping oil expatriates and

thereby, sabotaging Nigeria's oil revenue which constitutes a serious security threats to the Nigerian state. Militants' activities pose major threats to human security in the region and by implication, the Nigerian state. Therefore, oil and environmental conflicts in the Niger Delta are rooted in the inequitable social relations that undergird the production, and distribution of profits from oil and its adverse impact on the fragile ecosystem of the Niger Delta. It involves the Nigerian state and oil companies on one side, and the Niger Delta people on the other [25].

It can be submitted that Nigeria has been courting danger for the past 30-50 years. Like most nations, we have had our Civil War, and we've survived it. We have reconciled our citizens. Yet there remains a danger that can threaten the very existence of our country. The danger is the time bomb that is Niger Delta [26].

4.1 Global Oil Politics and International Security: Looking to the Past to Inform the Future

It is truism that humanity depends on oil. Since humanity is so depended on oil, many conflicts and wars have broken out over its production and consumption. These wars among others include the Chaco war between Bolivia and Paraguay (1932-1935), Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), Gulf war (1990-1991), the 2003 so-called war on terror in Iraq and Afghanistan [27]. The list is simply endless as even today, many oil producing states are not at ease because of oil. The reason is not far-fetched. Oil is the life blood of modern society and is central to the contemporary global political economy through its relationship to growth, statehood, militarism and geopolitics. Thus, in oil production, state intervention by the host countries is aimed at balancing on the one hand, the need to attract foreign firms and capital to engage in these activities, while on the other securing the rents generated [28].

However, oil producers use oil resources as political weapons to influence foreign policies and international politics. Thus, oil and politics have always gone together for a simple reason; oil has become an indispensable commodity without which the world as we know it today would not function [29]. Countries that produce oil have learnt how to use it as a weapon and who says weapon, says politics. The power of oil

as a political weapon became evident during the 1973 Arab-Israeli conflict that became known as 'The October War' in the Arab world and the 'Yom Kippur War in Israel'. Hoping to sway Western sentiments in favour of Arabs, oil producing countries such as Saudi Arabia, the Gulf Sheikdoms agreed to reduce their output. Naturally, less oil in the international market meant higher prices at the pump. The Arab embargo forced Western governments to enact strict measures in order to safeguard oil reserves. What the 1973 oil embargo did accomplish was to demonstrate the potential oil had as a weapon. The outcome changed much in modern history of oil politics as it forced the West to become less dependent on Arab oil, and Americans and international oil companies began looking elsewhere to supplement Arab oil [29].

Furthermore, international oil politics has engendered security challenges in Sudan and South-Sudan. Sudan has been demanding exceptionally high "transit fees" to the tune of about 32-36 dollars per barrel compared to the common rate of 1 dollar per barrel. This had engendered serious conflict given the fact that Sudan confiscated South-Sudan's oil exports, a significant source of funds. It is a fact that South-Sudan is desperate to sell its oil in order to kick-start its economy; Sudan on the other hand, resents the loss of oil revenue it used to control when the country was united, and appears no less determined to keep as much of the South-Sudan's oil money as it can for itself. This is simply because the only pipeline capable of transporting South-Sudan's oil to the international market remains in the hands of the Northerners. Till today the situation remains explosive with the two countries ready to deploy their military to the borders [30].

Similarly, oil search by many nations around the world has triggered territorial expansionism with all the security implication this portends. The situation in South China Sea is dicey. Accordingly, the South China Sea is thought to harbour large deposits of oil and natural gas, and all the countries that encircle it, including China and the Philippine want to exploit these reserves. Manila claims a 200-nautical miles 'exclusive economic zone' stretching into the South China Sea from its western shores, an area it calls the west Philippine Sea; claiming the many small island that dot the South China Sea (Including Scarborough Shoal) [30]. However, Beijing has asserted sovereignty over the entire region, including waters claimed by Manila; and has

announced plans to drill the area. Despite years of talks, no solution has yet been found to the dispute and further clashes are likely. It can be said therefore, that the world has bifurcated between energy surplus and energy deficit states, with the former deriving enormous political and economic advantages from their privilege condition and the latter struggling mightily to escape their sub-ordinate position. Now, the bifurcation is looking more like a chasm. In such a global environment, friction and conflict over oil and gas resources is likely to increase. Therefore, the seeds of energy conflicts and wars sprouting in so many places simultaneously suggest that we are entering a new period in which key state actors will be more inclined to employ force, or the threat of force to gain control over valuable deposits of oil and natural gas [30].

However, the desperation by nations to access oil can be explained within the context of the fact that the energy equation is changing ominously as the challenge of fueling the planet grows more difficult. Many of the giant oil and gas fields that quenched the world's energy thirst in years past are being depleted at a rapid pace. The new fields being brought on line to take their place on average are smaller and harder to exploit. Many of the promising new sources of energy like Brazil 'Pre-salt' petroleum reserves deep beneath the Atlantic Ocean, Canada *Tar sands*, and America *Shale gas*...require the utilization of sophisticated and costly technologies. Even though global energy supplies continue to grow, they are doing so at a slower pace than in the past and are continually falling short of demand. All these add to upward pressure on prices, causing anxiety among countries lacking adequate domestic resources. This also explains America's long term drive to remain the dominant power in the Persian Gulf that culminated in the Gulf war of 1990-91 and its inevitable sequel, the 2003 invasion of Iraq [30].

Nevertheless, oil war in the Persian Gulf can be explained from the perspective of the struggle to control the rentier space which generated security concerns [17]. The fallout of 9/11 2001 terrorist attacks, especially the US-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq practically compounds the weakening of the rentier spaces and internal security of many Middle-Eastern and Sahel-North African oil producing states by intensifying the conflict between the Pro-US rentier regimes and the anti-Western Islamist groups. Similarly, the war on terror accentuates the regionalization and

internationalization of the rentier space in the Middle-East and the Sahel-North Africa by making the beleaguered pro-American regimes increasingly dependent on the USA and the West for defence, economic and technological aid in return for greater surrendering of oil sovereignty. Thus, the brutal secularization of the Middle-East and Africa as a result of oil reserves by the US-led administration since the 2000s has culminated into the creation and expansion of multiple security alliances for countries within these regions under the direct supervision of three of Pentagon's Unified Combatants Commands - European Command (EUCOM), Pacific Command and Central Command (which also runs the war in Iraq and Afghanistan) - is sufficiently strategic from the stand point of gaining greater supra-national control over the aligning rentier regimes and their energy resources[17].

However, in Nigeria, oil conflicts have been defined by the high stakes involved in controlling power at any cost, by the tensions in the country's fiscal federalism between hegemonic federal elites that dominate the control of oil rents derived from oil production in the Niger Delta (by oil multinationals) and the ethnic minorities of the Niger Delta who are marginalized in the distribution of those rents. Of significance is the collective desire of Niger Delta people to win back the control of their resources – the most politically significant being oil and land – and their local affairs. However, such high-stake oil politics is underpinned by competing class and factional interests that also allow for expedient and fluid alliances within which erstwhile enemies become partners or vice versa, while the people remain largely alienated or victimized, manipulated by the various contending forces. Perhaps most relevant are the ways in which the high stakes involved have fed into a vicious cycle of exploitation, protest, repression, resistance, militarization and the descent into a volatile mix of insurgent violence and criminality [18].

Therefore, oil was responsible for the Nigerian Civil War between 1967-1970, the coups and counter coups in the political history of Nigeria. Oil is responsible for the agitation for the state and local government creation in Nigeria, which has made the struggle for political power, a do or die affair among the political class [31]. Again, oil has engendered rent-seeking and subverted development in Nigeria by the ruling and governing elites who reduced the Nigerian state to a theater of accumulation for selfish interests.

In all this, the Niger Delta region where oil is produced suffers environmental degradation, poverty, unemployment and misery because oil has not been a spring board for development in Nigeria [19,32]. It is a fact that the emergence of oil in Nigeria's political economy in the 70's and the revenue generated from oil production have brought a lot of fortunes to Nigeria that if properly managed and utilized, would have made Nigeria to have an edge over her contemporaries in Africa and beyond. These fortunes have been squandered and what is left is grinding poverty, unemployment, insecurity and misery by a greater majority and general underdevelopment despite huge oil wealth. What the oil wealth has achieved is a far cry from the revenue generated since oil was discovered, thereby generating conflicts in the region where oil is produced [33].

Therefore, conflicts and intrigues over valuable energy supplies have been features of international landscape for a long time. What we are seeing now is a whole cluster of oil-related clashes stretching across the globe, involving a dozen or so countries, with more popping up all the time. From Atlantic to Pacific, from the South China Sea to the Caspian Sea, from Argentina to the Philippines, to the Persian Gulf, down to Sudan, Nigeria and Angola are conflicts...all tied to energy supplies which threaten global peace and security [30]. All these conflicts have one thing in common: the conviction of the ruling elites around the world, that possession of energy assets especially oil and gas deposits is essential to prop up national wealth, power and prestige. This is hardly a new phenomenon, as early in the last century, Winston Churchill was perhaps the first prominent leader to appreciate the strategic importance of oil. As First Lord of the Admiralty, he converted British warships from coal to oil and nationalized the Anglo-Persian oil company, the forerunner of British Petroleum [30].

4.2 Oil Wars and Regime Change in History: Implication for International Security

4.2.1 The chaco war 1932-1935

As early as 1932, oil war was already raging between two of the poorest South American countries, Bolivia and Paraguay, both having previously lost territory to neighbours in the 19th century wars. The oil war was fought over the Northern part of the Gran Chaco region of South America which was thought to be rich in oil. The

origin of the war is commonly attributed in Latin America to a conflict between the oil companies Royal Dutch Shell backing Paraguay and Standard oil supporting Bolivia. The war raged up until 1935 [34].

The discovery of oil in the Andean Foothills sparked speculations that the Chaco might prove a rich source of petroleum, and foreign oil companies were involved in the exploration [35]. However, it is still uncertain if the war would have been caused solely by the interests of these companies, and not by aims of Argentina to import oil from the Chaco. It was the bloodiest military conflict fought during the 20th century as the war costs both nations dearly [36]. Bolivia lost between 56,000-65,000 dead, comprising 2 per cent of its population, while Paraguay lost about 36,000 dead comprising 3 per cent of its population [27]. Over the succeeding 77 years, no commercial amounts of oil or gas were discovered in the portion of Chaco awarded to Paraguay, until 26th November 2012, when Paraguayan President Federico Franco announced the discovery of oil reserves in the area of the Pirity river. According to Franco, *"these oil fields will make Paraguay an oil-producing nation by mid 2013. The President claimed that "in the name of the 30,000 Paraguayan who died in the war" the Chaco will become the richest oil bearing region in South America. Oil and gas resources extend also from the Villa Montes area and the portion of the Chaco awarded to Bolivia northward along the foothills of the Andes. Today, these fields give Bolivia the 2nd largest resources of natural gas in South America after Venezuela [27].*

4.2.2 Control over oil production as a catalyst of the nigerian civil war 1967-1970

The Nigerian Civil War commonly known as the Biafra war (6 July, 1967-15 January 1970) was a war fought between the government of Nigeria and the secessionist state of Biafra. Biafra represented the national aspirations of the Igbo people, whose leadership felt they could no longer co-exist with the Northern-dominated federal government. The conflict resulted from political, economic, ethnic, cultural and religious tensions which preceded Britain's formal decolonization of Nigeria from 1960 to 1963. The immediate causes of the war included military coup and counter coup of 1966, and persecution of Igbos living in Northern Nigeria. However, control over the lucrative oil production in

the Niger Delta played a vital strategic role [31].

During what is always known as the Nigerian Civil War, the Igbos of the Southeastern Nigeria attempted to secede from the national federation in response to alleged political marginalization. In the few years prior to the announcement of an independent Biafra, it was clear that the majority of Nigeria's oil resources were in the Eastern region, and this was perhaps the galvanizing force behind the secessionist move. <https://nigerdeltapolitics.wordpress.com/2012/01/11-the-earliest-oil-war>.

Under distributor scheme at that time, the majority of oil revenues were going to the Northern-dominated federal government. In an independent Biafra, Igbos would have formed a 7 million strong majority over the 4 million non-Igbo's in the area, thus raising its revenues from the 14 per cent it was receiving to 67 per cent after secession. The federal government of Nigeria realized that Biafra independence would have cut its national oil production in half and consequently, President Yakubu Gowon came down fiercely on secessionist movement, leading to death of almost a million Igbo's (largely due to starvation caused by food embargoes).

Therefore, control over petroleum in the Niger Delta was a paramount military objective during the war [37]. In a bid to control the oil in the Eastern region, the federal government placed a shipping embargo on the territory. This embargo did not involve oil tankers. The leadership of Biafra wrote Shell-BP demanding royalties for the oil that was being explored in their region. After much deliberation, Shell-BP decided to pay Biafra the sum of 250,000 pounds. The news of this payment reached the federal government which immediately extended the shipping embargo to oil tankers. The Nigerian government also made it clear to Shell-BP that it expected the company to pay all outstanding oil royalty immediately. With the stalling on payment for Biafra, the Nigerian government asked Shell-BP to stop operations in Biafra and took over from the company. Internationally, Britain was interested in protecting the investments of Shell-BP in Nigeria. Britain was also at that time desperate to keep Nigerian oil flowing in order to mitigate the impact of its domestic oil shortfalls caused by the Middle East Six Day War. Supporting a 'One Nigeria' was considered its safest bet in order to achieve the above objectives [37].

4.2.3 The struggle for Iraqi oil by the western powers: a key factor in Iraq's instability

Since the end of the 2nd World War, there were wars that were fought over oil. The United States of America (USA) went to war in 1990/91 against Saddam Hussein to liberate tiny Kuwait from Iraq after Saddam's forces declared Kuwait as its 19th Province and occupied it [29]. Thus, one might even trace the events of 9/11 2001 and Osama Bin Laden's hatred of America for nearly unconditional support given by the United States of America (USA) to the House of Saud to the historic meeting in Great Bitter Lake - in the Suez Canal between Roosevelt and Bin Saud. Finally, it is interesting to note that the two Presidents who took America into wars in the Middle East over oil - President George Bush and his son George W. Bush - both had connections to oil money [29].

The territory of Iraq contains over 112 billion barrels of proven reserves-oil that has been definitively discovered and is expected to be economically producible. In addition, since Iraq is the least explored of the oil-rich countries, there have been numerous claims of huge undiscovered reserves there as well-oil thought to exist, and expected to become economically recoverable-to the tune of hundreds and billions of barrels. However, there are still contradictory reports on the quantum of oil reserves in Iraq which range from 200 bbl to 300 bbl. If this is true, this would mean that Iraq has roughly a quarter of the world's oil. It is within this context that we can understand the wars and political instability in Iraq, with the Western countries causing a lot of crises and havoc to have control of the country's oil. www.brookings.edu/research/how-much-oil-does-Iraq-have.

Therefore, between 1932 and 1948, the roots for the current wars in Iraq were planted. The Mosul-Haifa oil pipeline (also known as Mediterranean Pipeline) was a crude oil pipeline from the oil fields in Kirkuk, located in Northern Iraq, through Jordan to Haifa (now on the territory of Israel). The pipeline was operational in 1935-1948. The pipeline and the Haifa refineries were considered strategically important by British government, and indeed provided much of the fuel needs of British and America forces in the Mediterranean during the 2nd World War. The pipeline was a target of attacks by Arab gangs during the great Arab Revolt, and as a result, one of the objectives of a Joint British-Jewish Special Night

Squad. The Arab-Israeli war of 1948 ended the official operation of the pipeline when Iraqi government refused to pump any oil through it. This created tension in the region because of the fuel need of Israel and Western allies, hence the desire for a subservient government in Iraq [38].

In 1958, a deadly revolution popularly known as 'Ramadan Revolution' brought in Abdulkarim Qasim to power in Iraq. Ramadan revolution was considered to be water shed in Iraqi politics not just because of its obvious political implication (e.g the abolition of monarchy, republicanism, and paving the way for Ba'athist rule, but also because of its domestic reforms. Despite its shortcomings, Qasim rule helped to implement a number of positive domestic changes that benefited Iraqi society [38].

In September 1960, Qasim demanded that the Anglo America-owned Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC), share 20 per cent of the ownership and 55 per cent of the profits with the Iraqi government which the IPC rejected. In response to the IPC rejection of the proposal, Qasim issued a public law 80, which would have taken away 99.5 per cent of IPC's ownership and establish an Iraqi National Oil Company to oversee the export of Iraqi oil. British and the U.S officials demanded that President John F. Kennedy administration place pressure on the Qasim regime. This was the basis which made CIA to support Ba'ath Party which plotted Qasim's removal and execution on February 8, 1963. Therefore, Qasim was killed for his desire to nationalize Iraqi's Petroleum Company and for sympathizing with communists in Iraq [38].

Furthermore, oil in Iraq has provided the basis for the West to overthrow and killed Saddam Hussain under the pretext that Saddam possessed weapons of mass destruction. This was the allegation put forward by President George W. Bush of the U.S and Prime Minister Tony Blair in 2002 which was proven to the contrary. However, the West is bent on controlling the vast oil resources in Iraq. It is important to note that even before the Gulf war 1990-91, it was difficult to assess what still lay beneath the Iraq sands. Most of the geological data about Iraq's reserves was gathered before the nationalization of the Iraq petroleum company in 1972. From then on, data on Iraq's oil reserves was closely guarded by Saddam's regime, which limited the ability of the international community to conduct an external audit. Therefore, over the last six years, Iraq has

claimed that its reserves have remained constant, despite the fact that it produced close to a billion barrels per year through the oil-for-food programme and its various smuggling operations via Syria, Jordan, Turkey and the Persian Gulf. www.brookings.edu/research/how-much-oil-does-irag-have.

In Iran, the U.S used the CIA to bring down Mossadeqh. It is truism that the U.S carried out a regime change in Iran in 1953...which led to the radicalization of the country in the first place. Specifically, the CIA admitted that the U.S overthrew Mohammed Mossadeqh, a democratically elected Prime Minister. (He was overthrown because he nationalized Iran's oil which had previously been controlled by BP and other Western oil companies) [3]. As part of the action, the CIA admitted that it hired Iranians to pose as communists and stage bombings in Iran in order to turn the country against the Prime Minister. If the U.S had not overthrown the moderate Iranian government, the fundamentalist Mullahs would have never taken over (www.nytimes.com/library/world/Mideast/041600-Iran-cia-index.html).

4.2.4 Oil curse in syria and libya: a lesson for sub-saharan oil producing african countries

The war in Syria-like Iraq is largely about oil and gas. Syria controls one of the largest conventional hydrocarbon resources in the eastern Mediterranean. Syria is said to possess 2.5 billion barrels of crude oil as of January 2013, which makes it the largest proven reserve of crude oil in the eastern Mediterranean. Syria also has oil shale resources with estimated reserves that range as high as 50 billion tons, according to Syrian government source in 2010. Moreover, Syria is a key chess piece in pipeline wars. Syria is an integral part of the proposed 1, 200 km Arab gas Pipeline. (www.ibtimes.com/syria-oil-gas-little-known-facts-syrias-energy-resources-russia-help-1402405).

The history of Western intervention in Syria is similar to that of Iraq. The CIA backed a right-wing coup in 1949 to have a puppet as the President. The reason was that in 1945, the Arabian America Oil Company (ARAMCO) announced plans to construct the Trans-Arabian Pipeline TAPLINE from Saudi Arabia to the Mediterranean. With U.S help, the ARAMCO secured rights of way from Lebanon, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. The Syrian right of way was stalled

in the parliament. In other words, Syria was the sole hold out for the lucrative oil pipeline. Based on this, the CIA engineered a coup replacing Shukri-Al-Quwatli with the handpicked dictator, Husni al-Za'im. Al-Za'im barely had time to dissolve parliament and approve the America pipeline before his countrymen deposed him four months into his regime [39].

Furthermore, in 1957 the West again planned a regime change in Syria. The British Prime Minister Harold Mcmillan and President Dwight Eisenhower approved a CIA-M16 plan to stage a fake border incidents as an excuse for an invasion by Syrian's pro-Western neighbours, and eliminate the most influential triumvirate in Damascus...more importantly, Syria also had control of one of the main oil arteries of Middle East, the pipeline which connected pro-Western Iraq's oil fields to Turkey. The report said that once the necessary degree of fear had been created, frontier incidents and border clashes would be staged to provide a pretext for Iraq and Jordanian military intervention. Syria had to be made to appear as a sponsor of plots, sabotage and violence directed against neighbouring governments. The report further said CIA should use its capability in both psychological and action fields to augment tension. That meant that operations in Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon, taking the form of sabotage, national conspiracies and various strong-arms activities to be blamed on Damascus leading to arming of political factions with paramilitary or other actionist capabilities within Syria. Then the CIA and M16 would instigate internal uprisings, for instance, by the Druze (a Shia Muslim sect) in the South, help to free political prisoners held in the Mezze prison, and stir up the Muslim Brotherhood in Damascus [40].

As if that was not enough, again in 2009, the West again plotted a regime change in Syria because President Bashar al-Assad refused to sign a proposed agreement with Qatar that would run a pipeline from the latter's north field, contiguous with Iran's South pars field, through Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria and on to Turkey, with a view to supplying European markets-albeit crucially bypassing Russia. Assad's rationale was to protect the interests of Russia, his ally, which is Europe's top supplier of natural gas. Instead, the following year, Assad pursued negotiation for an alternative 10 billion dollars pipeline plan with Iran, across Iraq to Syria that would also potentially allow Iran to supply Europe

from its south pars field shared with Qatar. The memorandum of understanding (MOU) for the project was signed in July 2012-just as Syria's civil war was spreading to Damascus and Aleppo. Therefore, it would not be out of place to say that Syria will continue to experience regime change and insecurity and crisis, because of its location in routes critical to oil pipeline heading to eastern Mediterranean which is strategic to the Western world.

In Libya, not only did the U.S engage in direct military intervention against Gaddafi, but also armed Al-Quaeda so that they would help topple Gaddafi to ensure greater access to oil reserves. According to West Point's Combating Terrorism Centre's Centre, WPCTCC (2007), the Libyan city of Benghazi was one of Al Quaeda's main headquarters-and bases for sending Al-Quaeda into Iraq-prior to the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi.

(www.washingtonsblog.com/2016/01/Clinton-email-hints-oil-gold-behind-regime-change-libya.html). The U.S supported opposition which overthrew Libya's Gaddafi was largely comprised of Al-Quaeda terrorists. Oil reserves in Libya have made Gaddafi to accumulate a lot of gold and silver which threatened Western interests, given his anti-Western posture. It was reported that Gaddafi government holds 143 tons of gold and similar amount in silver. The Gold was accumulated prior to the rebellion that brought down Gaddafi and was intended to be used to establish a Pan-Africa currency based on the Libyan golden Dinar. This plan was designed to provide the Francophone African countries with alternative to French Franc. The gold and silver was valued at more than 7 billion dollar [4]. French intelligence officers discovered this plan shortly after the rebellion that overthrew Gaddafi began, and this was one of the factors that influenced President Nicolas Sarkozy's decision to commit France to the attack on Libya. These officers maintained that Sarkozy was driven by the following:

- A desire to gain a greater share of Libya oil production;
- Increase French influence in North Africa;
- Improve his (Nicolas Sarkozy) internal political situation in France;
- Provide the French military with an opportunity to reassert its position in the world;

- Address the concern of his advisors over Gaddafi's long term plan to supplant France as the dominant power in Francophone Africa; (www.washingtonsblog.com/2016/01/Ciinton-email-hints-oil-gold-behind-regime-change-libya.html).

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Oil as an important source of energy has generated conflicts in oil producing countries, be it Africa, the Persian Gulf and even Latin America. The search for oil by the highly industrialized countries of the world for the running of military and civilian complexes has been full of politics, intrigues, and manipulations to ensure that oil production continues. As far back as 1953, Mohammed Mossadeqh, the Iranian Prime Minister was consumed by oil politics. Again, the desire to access oil resources in Iraq has led to the assassination of the Prime Minister, Abdulkareem Qasim in 1963. The politics did not stop there as in 1979, Shah Palavi had to leave his position as Prime Minister of Iran because of his pro-Western posture, which made oil workers in Abadan region to suspend oil production. Saddam Hussain in Iraq was killed because of oil, even though the West presented a different explanation that Saddam possessed weapons of mass destruction. In 2011, President Gaddafi of Libya was killed by North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces so that the West would be in control of the abundant oil in Libya. Till today, Libya is not at ease. In Sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria, Angola and the newest nation in Africa, South-Sudan, have had their share of conflicts owing to oil politics. In Nigeria, the Niger Delta crisis is precipitated by the desire to control oil wealth, because oil is the fulcrum of accumulation in Nigeria, which is not used in the development of the region, but looted by politicians leaving the people in abject poverty, misery and disease. Civil war raged for 27 years in Angola because of oil. In South-Sudan, the struggle to control oil resources has caused a lot of security challenges between the Nuer and the Dinka ethnic groups. The two groups are struggling to occupy the Presidency in order to control and allocate oil wealth to their advantage.

Therefore, for the world to enjoy peace in the face of oil search there is a need for actors to pursue oil within the ambits of the law and respect the sovereignty of oil producing states no matter how little and weak these nations are. The

principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of these nations must be respected and the powerful nations must stay away from sponsoring proxy wars in these countries. The MNOCs operating in these countries must respect their host communities and carry out their corporate social responsibilities as enshrined in the Memorandum of Understanding. Above all, the governments, most especially in Sub-Saharan Africa oil producing countries like Nigeria, Angola, Gabon and South-Sudan must rise to the occasion and do the needful by equitably distributing oil wealth and ensure that oil producing regions and communities are not shortchanged. It is by so doing that the world would enjoy peace and stability despite oil search by nations of the world.

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Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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