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## **New Battles in Africa – Oil Revenue Management as a Source of Intrastate Conflicts**

### ABSTRACT

The paper uses Galtung's conflict (ABC) triangle model that explains creation of conflict formations and Collier and Hoeffler concept of "greed and grievance", which analyzes the main reasons for outbreaks of civil wars in order to demonstrate how the unequal distribution of oil revenues in African countries and social divisions created in this way may induce violent intrastate conflicts. A theoretical framework is then applied on the case study of Sudan where conditions above mention are widely present and where conflict may occur in the near future.

*Key words:* Conflict (ABC) triangle, greed and grievance, resource abundance, resource wars, intrastate wars, Sudan.

### **Introduction**

Energy resources such as oil, natural gas and coal have become the most valuable commodity at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In that context, Africa's resources, widespread and mostly untapped, represent the treasure yet to be found. The abundance of resources provides new opportunities for the development of African states, but it can also lead to uneven income distribution between the political/economic elites and the rest of the population as well as to the creation of wide gaps between "the electricity have and electricity have-nots."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas Friedman, *Hot, Flat, and Crowded. Why We Need a Green Revolution — and How It Can Renew America*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, New York, 2008, p. 27.

The end of the Cold War has “lifted the lid off”<sup>3</sup> and released new types of conflicts which were suppressed during the fifty years of ideological struggle. According to the study of Sarkees and Wayman,<sup>4</sup> since the end of the Cold War (1990) there have been 77 wars around the world. Out of that number 32 wars took place in Africa with only one not being an intrastate war.<sup>5</sup> A more detailed observation shows that 20 wars occurred in the countries which possess high amounts of natural resources and more than one half of that number comprises the countries with vast amounts of energy reserves (Sudan, Nigeria, Angola and Somalia). The conclusion which can be drawn is that almost all conflicts in Africa in the last twenty years were internal (civil) conflicts and that one third of them occurred in oil rich countries. However, little research<sup>6</sup> has addressed this connection. Thus, this paper seeks to correlate the unequal distribution of energy incomes, and social divisions created in this way and intrastate wars *via* the theoretical conflict triangle model introduced by Galtung.<sup>7</sup> In doing so, the paper determines whether energy resources will be the main cause of internal conflicts in Africa in the future and to predict the consequences of these “resource wars.”<sup>8</sup>

The paper will consist of two parts. Section 1 provides theoretical background for energy resources-intrastate wars by using Galtung’s model of conflict (ABC) triangle. Section 2 applies this framework on the case study of Sudan.

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, “Greed and Grievance in Civil War”, *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper*, Washington, 2000, p. 10, Internet, <http://ssrn.com/abstract=630727> [Accessed 7 August 2010]

<sup>4</sup> Meredith Reid Sarkees and Frank Wayman, *Resort to War: 1816-2007*, CQ Press, New York, 2010, Internet, [http://www.correlatesofwar.org/COW2%20Data/WarData\\_NEW/WarList\\_NEW.pdf](http://www.correlatesofwar.org/COW2%20Data/WarData_NEW/WarList_NEW.pdf) [Accessed 9 August 2010]

<sup>5</sup> “Intrastate wars are wars that are fought within state borders between a government and non-government forces (civil war)... In order to be classified as a civil war, the central government should be actively involved in military action with effective resistance for both sides, and there should be at least 1000 battle related deaths during the civil war. In order to constitute effective resistance, both sides must have been initially organized for violent conflict, or the weaker side must be able to inflict upon the stronger opponents at least five percent of the number of fatalities it sustains.”, *Ibid*, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> See Abiodun Alao, *Natural Resources and Conflict in Africa*, University of Rochester Press, Rochester, 2007, and Ibrahim Elbadawi and Nicholas Sambanis, “Why Are There so Many Civil Wars in Africa? Understanding and Preventing Violent Conflict”, *Journal of African Economies*, vol. 9, no. 3, 2009, pp. 244-269.

<sup>7</sup> Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization*, PRIO, Oslo, 1996.

<sup>8</sup> Michael T. Klare, *Resources War: The New Landscape of Global Conflict*, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 2002.

## 1. Conflict as a Destroyer

Conflicts are integral part of our lives. Every day we are faced with challenges i.e. choices which can be at some point transformed into the conflicts. They are usually defined as “dispute of two persons, or actors pursuing the same scarce goal.”<sup>9</sup> From this definition we can see that all conflicts have something in common and that there is contradiction (both actors want the same) between the actors involved. If the contradiction is not severe, then potentially something positive can emerge from it and in that case we are talking about creative conflicts. On the other hand, if conflicts are “highly solution-resistant”<sup>10</sup> then the probability for violent behavior becomes very likely. For the purpose of this paper only violent conflicts will be analyzed.

As Galtung states, conflict is a complex process which consists of more than pure physical violence. In the author’s opinion, every conflict has three parts (i.e. corners which can be joined in one triangle) equally important and influencing the creation of conflict. First corner of his “theoretical triangle” is corner A, i.e. attitudes. If the attitudes of two actors are compatible there is no real danger of conflict but if they (attitudes) are very opposing than there is potential for violent conflict. The second corner is made out of the actors’ behavior (B). The same as in the case of attitudes there can be the constructive but the destructive behavior as well. Finally, Galtung identifies the third part, corner C, which is comprised out of contradictions. Contradiction is the content or substance of the conflict; it is what all the parties want. Since it is impossible for all the parties to obtain the whole content for themselves violent behavior and contradictory attitudes must occur.

According to Galtung conflict can begin and end in each of the corners. Contradiction can create opposite attitudes (non-present between two actors until their attempt to obtain the content) which can then lead to violent behavior. Also, conflicting attitudes can create contradiction (non-present up to that moment) which can consequently induce violent behavior. The same goes for behavior as a starting point. The author recognizes eight possible scenarios depending on the starting point. The results of all eight developments are the same, i.e. the creation of conflict, with the only difference in the order of influence of points A, B, and C.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization*, op. cit., p. 71.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

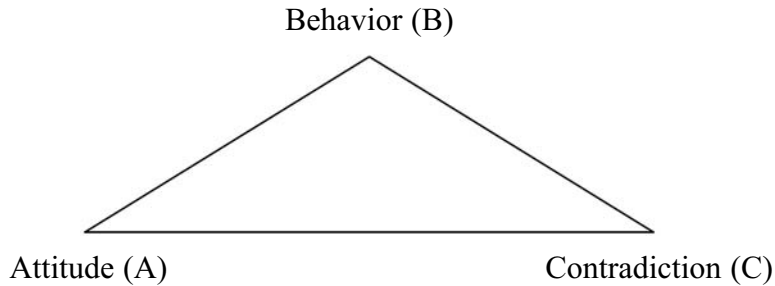


Figure 1. ABC Triangle

The ABC triangle can be applied not only to personal conflicts but also to states (who are actors as well) or to entities inside a state. The only precondition for the application of the ABC triangle is the existence of all three i.e. A, B, and C points in the case in question. If we tried to apply this theoretical framework to intrastate conflicts we would firstly need to find all three points.

In their study Collier and Hoeffler tried to identify the causes of civil wars. The model which they produced is often called “Greed and Grievance model.”<sup>12</sup> Using statistical methods, the authors showed that greed of conflict parties is one of the main reasons for the outbreaks of intrastate wars. The authors went even further and compared rebellions with organized crime groups with the only difference in terms of scale and casualties.<sup>13</sup> Since greed can be interpreted as a form of behavior (the effects of greed can be observed, felt, and identified), we will recognize greed as point B of our triangle.

In addition to greed, grievance is seen by Collier and Hoeffler as the second main cause of civil wars. The authors observe that grievance can derive from many manifestations such as inter-ethnic or religious hatred, political exclusion, and most often economic inequality. According to their findings, these injustices (if measurable) can initiate the creation of irreconcilable attitudes of the oppressed and the ruling majority, which can later be transformed into aggressive behavior. According to the authors, greed and grievance usually go hand in hand but that does not necessarily mean that grievance by itself cannot fuel the conflict. These findings are sufficient enough for us to consider grievance as the attitude (A) suitable for our theoretical framework.

Now when we have points A and B we still have to determine whether we can find an appropriate point C which will represent the contradiction applicable to greed and grievance as the other two corners of the ABC triangle.

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<sup>12</sup> Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, “Greed and Grievance in Civil War”, op.cit., p. 26.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

Many studies, such as Le Billon's, have assessed natural resources as crucial "in shaping the patterns of conflicts and violence"<sup>14</sup> in the post-Cold War world. In the study on the importance of the resources *vis-à-vis* the types of conflicts Le Billon argues that while resources can be a valuable development instrument, they can also be the source of vulnerability which can lead to political instability, lack of economic development, territorial disputes and finally violent conflicts. The author also differentiates between "resource caused conflicts" which do not cause territorial changes and conflicts whose result is the secession of a part of the territory (the author gives the example of the Sudan). The study of Elbadawi and Sambanis<sup>15</sup> on conflicts in Africa confirms Le Billon's finding by using an empirical model. Their study has shown that conflicts in Africa are not caused by ethnic or language differences but by high poverty, resource (energy) products and failed political institutions.<sup>16</sup> Taking this into account, it is clear that energy resources can be an appropriate point C of our model.

Now, when we have all three points (A-grievance, B-greed, and C-natural resources) our theoretical model can be constructed. We assume that all three points are highly interdependent. The existence of one corner can cause the creation of the other two, which can then lead to the formation of a violent conflict. The starting point of the model is a contradiction due to the uneven distribution of oil revenues which creates grievance of those who do not benefit from the whole distribution process and greed manifested by all parties involved (government and insurgents). The direct result is a violent conflict between those who are in possession of resources and the ones who would like to obtain them. Our position is that these conditions are mostly present in Africa and that the theoretical model can be applicable especially on this continent. In order to prove that we will use the case study of Sudan.

## **2. Case Study: Sudan**

Sudan gained independence in 1956 and from the beginning of its existence the state has been divided into two regions, northern and southern, with very different conditions present in both of them. The divisions are twofold. The

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<sup>14</sup> Philippe Le Billon, "The Geopolitical Economy of Resource Wars", in: Le Billon Philippe (ed), *The Geopolitics of Resource Wars, Resource Dependence, Governance and Violence*, Frank Cass, New York, 2005, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Elbadawi Ibrahim and Sambanis Nicholas, "Why Are There so Many Civil Wars in Africa? Understanding and Preventing Violent Conflict", *Journal of African Economies*, vol. 9, no. 3, 2009, pp. 244-69.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2, 10.

Arabs live in the north live Arabs and their religion is Islam, while African live in the south and they are predominantly Christians and to a smaller extent animist. Since Sudan gained independence, the north has been far more economically developed although the Arab population (living in the north) does not have an overall majority (40 percent compared with 30 percent of Africans in the south) and does not possess any resources in comparison with the south whose oil reserves are one of the largest proved reserves in Africa.<sup>17</sup> Also, according to Gadir, Elbadawi, and El-Batahani,<sup>18</sup> the most prominent political parties in Sudan originated from religious orders from the north and possessed more than 75 percent of the parliamentary seats, making political bargaining processes for the south impossible. We argue that the existence of these discriminatory conditions created the attitude of grievance in the south due to the economic disparity between the two regions<sup>19</sup> and the question of political participation of the south in Sudan. The grievance created in this way can be considered an attitude appropriate for the theoretical framework, which we apply in the case of Sudan.

The economic and social marginalization of the south provided a volatile context for the beginning of the first civil war (1955-1972) between the federal government in the north and the insurgents from the south called Anyanya who demanded political and economic autonomy. The conflict had its focus on fundamental differences since the southern Sudanese resent the overall hegemony of the north. The substantial marginalization of the south created a belief that a rebellion has almost no opportunity cost for the southerners.<sup>20</sup>

The war had lasted for seventeen years when the agreement on autonomy of the south was reached in 1972. Unfortunately “the conditions of conflict in

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<sup>17</sup> Abiodun Alao, *Natural Resources and Conflict in Africa*, op. cit., p. 164, and Michael T. Klare, *Rising Powers Shrinking Planet, The New Geopolitics of Energy*, Metropolitan Books, New York, 2008, p. 152.

<sup>18</sup> Ali Abder Gadir, Ibrahim Elbadawi, and Atta El-Batahani, “Sudan’s Civil War: Why Has It Prevailed for So Long”, in: Paul Collier and Nicholas Sambanis (eds), *Understanding Civil War*, The World Bank, Washington DC, 2005, pp. 193-221.

<sup>19</sup> In his study Hassan Ali demonstrates how disparities increased in Sudan in the period of almost fifty years (1956-2003). The author shows that the poverty ratio (per head) in Sudan was 60% in 1953, 73% in 1980 (when the oil production started), and 78% in 2003. In the case of the Gini coefficient, which measures the inequality of a distribution, Hassan Ali notices increase from 40 in 1953, to 45 in 1980, and finally to 47 in 2003. These data suggest that Sudan is deeply a polarized society and that the cleavages are increasing rather than decreasing. Mohamed Hisham Hassan Ali, “An Analysis of Growth and Inequality in Sudan: Cointegration and Causality Evidence (1956-2003)”, 2008, Internet, <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1144446> [Accessed 7 August 2010]

<sup>20</sup> Ali Abder Gadir, Ibrahim Elbadawi, and Atta El-Batahani, “Sudan’s Civil War: Why Has It Prevailed for So Long”, p. 198.

Sudan with its self-reinforcing tendencies outweighed the power of peace agreements.”<sup>21</sup> The roots of the conflict such as political exclusion, economic backwardness and religious marginalization remained despite the provisions on the reintegration of the South, stipulated in the peace accord. The lack of concrete progress led to the creation of another insurgent movement in the south called the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM), which started the second civil war (1983-2005), this time not for autonomy but rather for independence.

The difference between the two civil wars was the discovery of oil in the south of Sudan. This discovery created “greed fever” both on the side of the central government and on the insurgent side. In attempt to obtain as much oil as possible the federal government from Khartoum changed the administrative map of the country with a sole purpose of putting oil reserves under the northern section of the country. Moreover, the government decided to place oil refineries not in the south but rather in the north of the country, in that way depriving the south of its right to development.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, the SPLM saw in the oil revenues an opportunity to completely separate the south from the rest of the country, without any profits going to the capital Khartoum. The author describes this situation as “a struggle over the ownership of oil reserves”<sup>23</sup> between the government and rebels who were at the same time fighting for oil and challenging the government’s legitimacy. While the exclusion of the south during the independence process created the attitude of grievance in this part of the country, the discovery of oil stimulated greed, both in the north and in the south. Since this kind of behavior was present on both sides, it can be identified as point B in our theoretical model.

What about the contradiction in our “Sudanese conflict triangle”? The second Sudanese Civil War (1983-2005) ended in 2005 when the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed by the representatives of the federal government and SPLA, ending a two decade long war. “According to provisions of the CPA, at the end of the interim period southerners would hold a referendum to decide their political future as either an independent or subordinate southern Sudan.”<sup>24</sup> Although the Khartoum government did not have any major objections to the referendum held earlier this year, when 99 per cent of the population from the south voted for independence, the question of oil

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<sup>21</sup> Benjamin R. Maitre, “What Sustains ‘Internal Wars’? The Dynamics of Violent Conflict and State Weakness in Sudan”, *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2009, p. 53.

<sup>22</sup> Abiodun Alao, *Natural Resources and Conflict in Africa*, op.cit., p. 164.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>24</sup> Benjamin R. Maitre, “What Sustains ‘Internal Wars’? The Dynamics of Violent Conflict and State Weakness in Sudan”, p. 57.

revenues is not undisputed. The problem lies in the fact that the oil fields are in the heart of the contested area between the two parts of the country, or more precisely in the Abyei region where around one quarter of total oil reserves are located. This region is relatively a small piece of land between the north and the south of Sudan. Administratively, it is under the jurisdiction of the north, but the majority of the population is from the ethnic group of Dinka Ngok, which belongs to the south and that is why both, the federal government and the SPLA, are claiming the rights to this, oil rich region. According to the CPA, Abyei has a special administrative status and a distinctive revenue sharing formula where 50 per cent of all oil revenues goes to the federal government, 42 per cent to the south and the rest to different ethnic groups living in the region.<sup>25</sup> The problem was intensified when five years after the signing of the Peace Agreement the south did not receive a full share of its revenues from Khartoum. In addition to that, the CPA stipulated that a separate referendum should be held in the Abyei at the same time as the national one, but it was not conducted due to the dispute over the voting rights, which created more animosity on both sides, especially from the SPLA. It is because of the unknown future of this unstable part of the country where the possibility of a new violent conflict should not be excluded since Abyei's oil money (not territory itself) is one of the most fiercely contested issues between the two parties.<sup>26</sup>

The share of oil revenues in Abyei as well as in other oil rich regions is emerging as the key issue (contradiction) in the future north-south relations. Both parties are unwilling to reach a compromise (which would replace the one under the CPA after the independence of the south) when it comes to profit sharing<sup>27</sup> because it could cause a serious lack of funding in already poor state apparatuses (more than 50 per cent of state income in the north and staggering 90 per cent in the south come from oil revenues alone). In this situation (oil

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<sup>25</sup> Muna Abdalla, "Abyei Natural Resource Conflict", Institute for Security Studies, Addis Ababa, 2010, Internet, <http://www.issafrica.org/uploads/AbyeiSitRepJul2010.pdf> [Accessed 3 March 2011], p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> Sudan re-started to produce oil in the 1990s reaching 63,000 barrels per day in 1999 (bcd). The production increased over the years and reached 480,00 bcd in 2010. According to that, oil revenues considerably increased from \$61 million in 2000 up to the estimated \$1,600 million in 2010. According to the 2010 BP Statistical Review of World Energy Sudan has 6.7 billion barrels of proven oil reserves which makes 0.5 per cent of the total world reserves. It should be noted that numbers may be under-estimated by the Khartoum government due to its obligation to transfer a part of the revenues to the south government. For more details see "Fuelling Mistrust — The Need for Transparency in Sudan's Oil Industry", Global Witness, September 2009, Internet, [http://www.globalwitness.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/v12\\_final\\_sudan\\_fuelling\\_mistrust\\_lowres.pdf](http://www.globalwitness.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/v12_final_sudan_fuelling_mistrust_lowres.pdf).



*zero-sum* logic) it is very unlikely that any of the parties involved will step down from the claim to the bigger part oil revenues since oil is the only valuable commodity present in this poor and undeveloped country.

The present contradiction (both parties want the same content, i.e. oil revenues) could prove to be much more dangerous than any of the previous ones. The struggle over the claim to oil reserves, which are one of the largest in Africa and greed for its benefits (prevalent since the first oil findings in the 1970s, but much more excessive today) can revive grievances in the south, present since the First Civil War. A potential new conflict would be much more violent than any of the previous ones, since stakes are higher than ever before (both, the economic wealth and the creation of the state for the south). Another civil war would bring destabilization not only of the Sudanese state but to the whole region as well. The north-south confrontation could involve the neighboring as well as external countries that are interested in obtaining as much of the Sudanese oil resources as possible and a new battle for the African treasure could consequently begin.

### **Conclusion**

The paper shows how two theoretical concepts, Galtung's conflict triangle and Collier and Hoeffler "Greed and Grievance" can be used in predicting new possible causes of intrastate conflicts in Africa. They stipulate that the contradiction caused by the uneven distribution of the oil revenues can be connected with the attitudes of the parties involved (especially with the grievance by the ones who do not benefit) and their behavior (greed in obtaining more revenues) and may potentially induce violent conflict if all the factors are present at the same time. By using the case study of Sudan the paper demonstrate how these processes function together in reality since relations between the north and the south already incorporate attitudes and behavior of the actors necessary for the creation of the contradiction, which may manifest itself through violence.

The possible violent scenario that may break out over the control of oil revenues in Sudan is not the only one in Africa. Other oil rich countries, such as Nigeria and Angola are facing the identical problems (civil war legacy, extreme economic and social polarization, and uneven income distribution) and the pattern explained here may very likely appear in those states as well. Energy resources prove to be more a curse than a blessing for African countries.

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