



Beyond Conflict Minerals: The Broader Links Between Natural Resources and Peace and Security

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The links between the extraction of natural resources and conflict have a long and inglorious history dating back to the beginning of time. As a region rich in a host of valuable minerals and other natural resources, the southern African region is no exception. The race to acquire the diamond and gold fields of the region, for example, played a major part in its colonization, as well as its subsequent history. The legacies of this history, and some of the major players in that race, perhaps most notably Cecil Rhodes, remain the subject of considerable controversy today, with the 'Rhodes Must Fall' movement that erupted on the campus of South Africa's University of Cape Town in 2015, and spread to other universities in the country, being a case in point.

The extraction of natural resources and subsequent colonization process also helped shape the history of what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The Congo in the late nineteenth century fell under the control of Belgium's King Leopold II, who ruled the vast territory as his personal fiefdom. At a time when the world's thirst for rubber seemed insatiable, the extraction of this resource involved violent forced labour, and resulted in the deaths of millions of people and the maiming of many others. While it was the new-found utility of rubber for tyres for bicycles and cars in the West that fuelled this demand (and the devastation if wrought) at the time, in more recent years it has been the connection between minerals used in the electronics industry – including tin, tungsten, tantalum and gold (among others) – that has contributed to the prolonging of violent conflict in that country.

In Angola's long and devastating armed conflict, the government's control over the country's (predominantly offshore) oil fields help it stave off attacks from the Western-backed UNITA rebels, who were in turn sustained in part by their control over the diamond fields in the inland. Sometimes, the economics seemed to trump the politics and the ideology of the conflict (and perhaps even rational behaviour) in strange ways in this conflict. With US corporations running oil facilities controlled by the government in Angola at the time, Angolan government troops and their Cuban allies were tasked with protecting these installations against attacks from rebel troops backed by the US. The fact that the rebels still had access to the diamond fields after the end of the Cold

War meant that they were able to continue fighting, even in the absence of superpower support. It was not until 2002 that they were militarily defeated and the armed conflict finally came to an end.

With the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS), established with a view to prevent so-called 'conflict diamonds' from making their way onto the international rough diamond market, now in peril, and armed conflict ongoing in the mineral-rich DRC's eastern region, the question of the relationship between natural resources and organized armed conflict remains a pertinent one. But in considering natural resources not only in the context of the existence or absence of open hostilities, but also in terms of peace and security in a broader sense (including in countries and areas that are officially at peace), other questions demand answers. How important, for example, is peace and stability in attracting and maintaining foreign investment to enable the exploitation of natural resources, ostensibly for the benefit of all those involved? Another pertinent question might be related to the achievement of peaceful and sustainable coexistence between the corporations doing the extracting of the resources, and the local communities, some of whose member may end up being employed by those corporations, while others may be displaced.

Mining is an extremely capital-intensive activity. It is certainly true that labour-intensive alluvial (often illicit) mining for diamonds and other minerals in Angola, Zimbabwe and the DRC – often involving diggers armed with little more than a shovel and a bag in what may be exceptionally hazardous conditions – does make up a considerable portion of the mining industry in the region. This activity carries with it a host of concerns related to peace and security, and has been the focus of much academic attention. But the bulk of the mineral-related wealth of southern Africa is exploited through capital-intensive industrial mining. This can be seen in the offshore oilfields of Angola, in the copper and cobalt mines in the Copperbelt on both sides of the DRC-Zambia border; in the diamond mines in Botswana and Namibia; and platinum mines in South Africa, among many other examples. More recent discoveries of large reserves of natural gas in Mozambique will also have major economic implications for that country – perhaps along with implications in terms of peace and security).

Much of this exploitation is made possible through large amounts of foreign direct investment (FDI). Generally speaking, foreign corporations will be reluctant to commit to major long-term investments in countries that are in a state of conflict, are otherwise politically unstable, or any other state in which their ability to obtain returns on their investments will be potentially jeopardized. In this sense, it seems intuitive that there will be a positive relationship between FDI and political stability in any given country, but the reality is not necessarily that simple. The first article in this issue, 'Political stability and FDI in SADC: A love-hate relationship' by Yani Karavasilev, explores this question, using panel data econometric models.

The question of the relationship between mining corporations and the local

communities based in the areas in which they dig, is also an important one from the perspective of peace and security, even in relatively stable environments. Mining is potentially an exceptionally lucrative activity and expectations regarding the wealth that will be generated naturally tend to be high on the part of the mining corporations, the host government, and the local communities. The expectations of mining corporations are centred around profits, but these may be threatened by political instability and the volatility of international market prices. Host governments look forward to the benefits that the inflow of investment will bring, including taxes and royalties, increased employment opportunities and growth in support industries. But host governments in low-income countries are often vulnerable and weak in terms of their negotiating positions, resulting in the bulk of the mineral wealth leaving the country. Corruption also often bears a considerably portion of the responsibility for this outcome.

Local communities in areas marked for mining activities bear expectations in terms of employment opportunities, and improvements in public service delivery in a broader sense. But such expectations are frequently left unmet. As a capital-investment industry, mining does not necessarily generate large-scale employment, and much of the employment that it does bring about may require skills that people in the local communities do not possess, which therefore benefits 'outsiders' that are attracted to the site, rather than 'locals'. At the same time, local mining activities bring with them a host of negative impacts, including displacement and environment degradation. Such issues are discussed here (in a case study on mine in Zambia) in the article by Robby Kapesa, Jacob Mwitwa and D. C. Chikumbi, under the title 'Social conflict in the context of the development of new mining concessions in Zambia'. Even for those who are able to find employment, unfavourable conditions of employment may be a source of conflict between the corporations and their employees. A disastrous example of this was seen in Marikana, South Africa, in 2012, in which tens of striking mine workers were shot and killed by security forces.

The third article in this issue, 'South Africa's total strategy in the context of counterinsurgency (COIN) theory', by Burgert A. Senekal and Jan-ad Stremmet, marks a departure from the discussion on the exploitation of natural resources, but serves as an important contribution to our historical understanding of apartheid South Africa's strategy in the country and in the broader region. The authors compare counterinsurgency strategies and doctrines in South Africa to those employed (both past and present) by other powers and find little in the way of fundamental differences. They conclude that the ultimate failure of these strategies lay not with their utilization, but with the cause itself.

All three articles in this issue remind us that it is important to look to the past in attempting to understand the present, and to peer into the future. *Southern African Peace and Security Studies* continues to welcome articles that help to further our understanding of the region, and of issues associated with peace and security in general,

from both past and present perspectives.