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The Challenges and Relevance of Natural and Anthropogenic Resources in International Relations

By

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Abstract : *This study examined the nexus between the challenges and relevance of natural and anthropogenic resources in international relations. Thus, resources are material and non-material things that gives man satisfaction, while international relations is the process of interaction with members of a group regarding these resources as they affect member nations. This study was essentially a library research. Qualitative method was therefore employed in the analysis and presentation of the information collected. Results from this study revealed that the survival and the ultimate success of any nation depends on an acceptable control of resources and functions among member nations, so that efficiency in the use of scarce resources is encouraged, while reducing inequality in the treatment of individuals and among different states. This study therefore recommends that the overriding resource and political interest should be the interest of the State. Thus, it is, indeed, all about justice, all about social inclusion and all about giving every citizen and nation, her due right at all times.*

Keywords: Challenges, Impacts, International Cooperation, Relevance and Resource Regulation

1.1 Introduction

Natural resources are **resources** that exist without actions of humankind. This includes all valued characteristics such as magnetic, gravitational, electrical properties and forces, etc. On **Earth** it includes **sunlight, atmosphere, water, land** (includes all minerals) along with all **vegetation, crops** and animal life that naturally subsists upon or within the previously identified characteristics and substances (*Oxford Dictionaries, 2014*).

Juliao in (2019) work on the location and distribution of natural resources, observed that **the** computer you are using, the electricity, the glass of the windows, the walls, even your clothes all contain elements from a natural resource. **Natural resources** are raw materials that exist naturally on the planet and were formed without requiring any human action. All life forms, including humans, depend on natural resources to survive.



Figure 1.1. The Earth, our Source of Natural Resources

Source: Juliao (2019) work on the location and distribution of natural resources

Natural resources are commonly divided into two groups:

- **Renewable resources** are consistently available (like sunlight, water, and wind) or those that can be replaced in a relatively short time (like plants and animals). However, without proper care, these resources often degrade much faster than they recover, thus becoming non-renewable. There is a risk we might run out of drinkable water or even breathable air.
- **Non-renewable resources** can't be replaced easily and it would take millions of years for the Earth to form them again. This group includes fossil fuels (coal, oil, and gas), minerals (like clay, metals, and precious stones), and soils (Juliao, 2019).

Location and Distribution of Natural Resources

Not all areas of the world have the same natural resources. Some regions may enjoy fertile soils or plenty of vegetation while others have abundant precious stones. This uneven distribution has led to trade. One area can buy a resource scarce to them that is abundant somewhere else.

Sometimes, the location of resources is a matter of conflict, as one group tries to take ownership of a given resource already under the control of someone else.

- The distribution of fertile soils is a determinant for agriculture. Worldwide, the best soils are located in the southern part of Russia, in the South American pampas, and in the American prairies in the US. These regions are home to intensive agricultural activities.

Regions of Southeast Asia, southern China, South America, and Sub-Saharan Africa also have productive soils (Juliao, 2019).

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Since 2008, energy and food markets—those most fundamental to human existence—have remained in turmoil. Resource scarcity has had a much bigger global impact in recent years than has been predicted, with ongoing volatility a sign that the world is only part-way through navigating a treacherous transition in the way it uses resources. Scarcity, and perceptions of scarcity, increase political risks, while geopolitical turmoil exacerbates shortages and complicates the search for solutions.

Thus, the architecture for coordinating multilateral responses to these dynamics has fallen short, raising questions about the effective international management of these issues. Politics impede here too, as the major powers must negotiate political and security trade-offs to cooperate on the design of more robust international regimes and mechanisms for resource security and the provision of global public goods (David, Steven, Emily O'Brien, and Bruce D. Jones (2014).

With the observation that the political will for global cooperation is rather weak in major countries, a spiral of more resource-related risks, dangers, and conflicts seems likely, as does the emergence of regional niches for the better management of individual resources. The challenges for any form of sustainable resource management on a global scale thus should not be underestimated. What is new – and what will be stressed throughout this paper – is the interconnectivity between critical resource shortages and two other challenges:

Bleischwitz, Bahn-Walkowiak, Ekardt, Feldt, Fuhr (2012) noted the environmental challenge to cope with impacts from using resources along their lifecycle. According to the International Resource Panel (UNEP 2010), environmental impacts such as the greenhouse gas emissions generated from using mass metals and agricultural goods are as high as those generated from the use of fossil fuels, which causes global temperatures to rise. Other materials such as critical metals, which are used in much smaller quantities, have recently been put on the research

agenda. With other words: Climate change, land use, water shortages, and other critical ecosystems interconnect with the use of natural resources worldwide.

The socio-political challenge to cope with human rights, poverty, and freedom internationally. While impacts of mining on human rights have been under scrutiny for quite some time, the larger context of livelihoods and equity has yet to be addressed: People fight for access to – and affordable prices for – water and food, whose shortages result, inter alia, from the overuse of resources and the subsequent environmental impacts. A recent survey involving researchers worldwide shows that they consider this topic a high priority (UNEP 2012). That is to say, global approaches addressing a fair distribution of natural resources and strategies to benefit the poor are at stake (Bleischwitz, Bahn-Walkowiak, Ekardt, Feldt, Fuhr, 2012).

1.3. Aim and Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study was to examine the challenges and relevance of natural and anthropogenic resources in international relations.

The objectives were to;

- i. identify the challenges of resources in international relations
- ii. assess the relevance of natural and anthropogenic resources
- iii. examine how best, the resources can be managed to ensure the sustainable international relations of nations.

1.4. Conceptualization and Literature Review

The Marxist Political Theory is applied to this study. The reason has been that, the approach scientifically studied the societal resources in its totality and takes into consideration, the inter-connection of resources and politics, class conflict and the organic relationship between the sub-structure (resources) and the super-structure (politics). Political economy of resources control is concerned with the social laws of production and distribution (Lange, 1974:7). The Marxist political resources approach is a holistic, historical orientation, which is used for the analysis of social formations and their contradicting relationships. It mainly focuses on the economic laws which govern the production and distribution of resources benefits among individuals and groups at different stages of development of society (Iwarimie, 1991:50). Put

differently, the approach is seen as the window to understand the laws that govern the political and resource life of the society. It explains the relationship between what man produce and how he benefits from the surplus resources produced or available. The approach shows, how the various parts of the society are used as instruments of the ruling class political domination, and as mechanism of oppression of the subject class in terms of resource distribution.

USDA (2018) stated that every resource is something people can use to satisfy their needs-anything from ground water and grasses to musical compositions. Thus, there must be a person or group of persons, perhaps the community as a whole, who plan to use the resource. We must have learned how to use it for example; uranium, ore became a resource only when we developed the know-how.

Resources are not static. They change as people, needs, and know-how change. The rich farmlands of California meant nothing to the Digger Indians; they were not a resource until the white man came USDA (2018). Ogundele (2006) stated that resources are physically part of that segment of the physical environment that has a present of potential use for the survival and physical well-being of man, to be developed through the application of technological knowledge. The availability of human uses of these available resources for sustainable development is the chief criterion of resources and if properly managed; can provide a regular production or flow for an indefinitely long period of time. Thus, the world is abundantly blessed with various land resources of both renewable and non-renewable components.

Swafford (2020) Natural **resources** are useful raw materials that we get from the Earth. They occur naturally, which means that humans cannot make natural resources. Instead, we use and modify natural resources in ways that are beneficial to us. The materials used in human-made objects are natural resources. Some examples of natural resources and the ways we can use them are:

Natural Resource	Products or Services
Air	Wind energy, tires
Animals	Foods (milk, cheese, steak, bacon) and clothing (wool sweaters, silk shirts, leather belts)
Coal	Electricity
Minerals	Coins, wire, steel, aluminum cans, jewelry
Natural gas	Electricity, heating
Oil	Electricity, fuel for cars and airplanes, plastic
Plants	Wood, paper, cotton clothing, fruits, vegetables
Sunlight	Solar power, photosynthesis
Water	Hydroelectric energy, drinking, cleaning

Man-Made Resources. When humans use natural things to make something new that provides utility and value to our lives, it is called **human-made resources**. For instance, when we use metals, wood, cement, sand, and solar energy to make buildings, machinery, vehicles, bridges, roads, etc. they become **man-made resources** (Retrieved from <https://www.toppr.com/guides/geography/resources/types-of-resources>, May, 2020).

Human-made resources, also known as capital **resources**, are material riches **created** by **humans** that can be used to create more wealth. Examples include money, factories, roads, and technology. Natural **resources** are raw materials and land (Retrieved from <https://www.toppr.com/guides/geography/resources/types-of-resources>, May, 2020).

In another development, Mehta (2017) observed that resources in international relations – the politics of access, use and control of resources as well as contested knowledge claims around these, has leapt up the global development agenda in recent years. Climate change, ‘planetary

boundaries', humanity's survival and role in the Anthropogenity and the green economy have all animated discussions around sustainability, inequality and security.

1.5. Methodology

This work is basically an evaluative study as the subject under review is a contemporary issue. Descriptive – analytical approach method of data collection was adopted. Data and literatures for this work were obtained from the analysis of the views, comments and opinions in books, articles in journals, magazines, and newspapers, internet materials, as well as speeches and addresses in seminars, conferences, workshops and meetings. It was essentially a library research. Qualitative method was therefore employed in the analysis and presentation of the information collected.

1.7. Results and Discussions

Resource and International Relations

The politics of access, use and control of resources as well as contested knowledge claims around these – has leapt up the global development agenda in recent years. Climate change, 'planetary boundaries', humanity's survival and role in the Anthropogenic and the green economy have all animated discussions around sustainability, inequality and security.



Mehta (2017) believed accelerating sustainability needs to go beyond current 'think global, act global' thinking, which emphasizes the need for large-scale responses to resource challenges and the uncertainties brought by global environmental change. These macro solutions risk ignoring gender dimensions, livelihoods and politics concerning resource use, consumption and production. There is a need to understand these growing uncertain dynamics in terms of what they mean for local people's resilience and ability to cope and to tease out sustainable pathways to development and growth that do not compromise poor people's rights and interests.

Another set of challenges of utmost concern, is how local resource users are being subjected to new sets of exclusions and dispossessions, such as those relating to the recent proliferation of land, water and green grabs which have increased inequalities and local insecurities. Making sense of the complex challenges around resource politics means engaging critically with questions of environmental and social justice and what these mean in diverse contexts. It also requires bringing together learning's, perspectives and approaches from different academic disciplines and societal sectors that otherwise rarely connect. Only then can we unmask the many pathways that exist to strengthen sustainability, equality and security. (Mehta,2017).

What is Human Resources and International Relations?

As it's widely accepted that people are the most important asset of any thriving organisation, the effective management of human resources (HR) is naturally central to any sound business strategy. This has led to an increase in human resource management (HRM) jobs across the globe.

Human Resource managers are tasked with providing clear direction and guidance for those working in an organisation, and are responsible for helping to generate a positive and encouraging working environment.

Core Human Resource Managers functions include the hiring and development of employees - through training, incentives and benefits, and performance evaluation - administrative services, mediating in disputes and communicating with staff at all levels (Higginbotham, 2018).

CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF RESOURCES AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Mukund (2016) identified and examined a global view on the causes and effects of resources and politics

Political scientists and economists argued that oil, mineral and gas wealth is distinct from other types of wealth because of its large upfront costs, long production timeline, site-specific nature, scale (sometimes referred to as large rents), price and production volatility, non-renewable nature, and the secrecy of the industry. Below are some of the leading observations and theories about how these special characteristics of natural resource revenues create additional challenges for countries:

International Democracy: Natural resource wealth, particularly oil wealth, has made it more likely for Nations to become or remain authoritarian for many years. The explanation for this lies in taxation. In general, political scientists find-out that governments are more responsive to their citizens and are more likely to transition to democracy when government spending is reliant on citizen taxation. When countries collect large revenues from natural resources, they are less dependent on levying taxes on citizens, and thus citizens feel less invested in the national budget. Politicians and government officials are also less directly tied to citizen requests or demands. Furthermore, when resource revenues

are secret, citizens do not have a clear sense of whether the resource revenues are being spent well or not. Those who outline this theory suggest that the tendency toward authoritarianism can be mitigated by increasing transparency of revenues and strengthening the links between government and citizens through citizen participation in budgeting or direct distribution of wealth e.g., cash transfers **(Mukund, 2016)**.

Conflict: Natural resources can, and often do, provoke and sustain internal and external conflicts as different groups fight for control of the resources or use natural resources to finance their fighting. Since 1990, oil-producing countries have been twice as likely to have a civil war compared with non-oil-producing countries. Political scientists point to examples of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Niger Delta, Iraq, Libya and Angola to illustrate this tendency. Petro-aggression, the tendency of oil-rich states to instigate or be targets of international conflict, has been observed in some cases, such as with Iraq's invasion of Iran and Kuwait, but researchers debate whether the data supports the conclusion that resource-rich countries do this at a greater rate than non-resource-rich countries **(Mukund, 2016)**

Inefficient spending and borrowing: The amount that governments collect in resource revenues can change drastically

from year to year because of changes in commodities prices and production. Several studies have shown that it is very difficult to effectively spend fluctuating and unpredictable revenues.

Governments often get trapped in boom-bust cycles where they spend on legacy projects, such as airports and monuments, when revenues are rising and then must make painful cuts when revenues decline. Resource-rich governments have a tendency to over-spend on government salaries, inefficient fuel subsidies and large monuments and to under-spend on health, education and other social services. In addition, governments often over-borrow because they have improved credit-worthiness when revenues are high. This type of behavior led to debt crises when revenues declined in Mexico, Nigeria and Venezuela in the 1980s. The private sector can be similarly impacted, as it can over-invest in boom times and then experience widespread bankruptcy during busts (**Mukund, 2016**).

Weaker institutional development: Some researchers argued that institutions are weaker in resource-rich countries because it is easy for elites to capture or take large sums of cash. The theory suggests that large single-point sources of revenue, such as an oil project, can be managed outside the normal budget process and are relatively easily captured by powerful elites. Examples of tools used to capture revenues include sovereign wealth funds,

national oil companies and contractors for extractive operations. As such, elites in natural resource-rich countries are less likely to invest in productive enterprises, such as job-creating manufacturing industries, and instead pursue rent-seeking, that is, fight for control of these resources. In some cases, politicians or government officials have also purposefully dismantled societal checks or created new regulations to get access to these resources or to provide access to friends or family, a process nicknamed rent-seizing. Some argue that elite focus on rent-seeking and rent-seizing promotes corruption and is damaging to institutional development. In turn, the theory suggests that countries with elite rent-seekers and rent-seizers tend to have weaker institutions and lower levels of public service delivery. The data behind this theory is hotly debated, but there are well-documented examples in Afghanistan, Sierra Leone and Tunisia (**Mukund, 2016**).

Social and environmental problems: The point-source nature of extractive industries often creates challenges when trying to balance the needs of the people and environments that surround the mining area. Sharing and compensating for resources such as land, water and the minerals can create conflict between the extraction companies and the communities. In addition, extraction projects often attract large influxes of people, whether or not

additional employment is actually available. This can cause stress on economic, social and cultural relations. Environmental issues include a host of problems, such as dust from mining, scarring of the landscape, noise from process operation, contamination of hydric sources (from waste rock and tailing disposal), massive use of water in the extractive process, gas flaring (causing health problems and wasteful CO₂ emissions) and seismic disturbances. In addition, many of the political and economic problems outlined above constitute or can result in the violation of human rights. The contract between the government and the extraction company could address these issues and clarify whose responsibility it is to manage these impacts (Mukund, 2016, Cited in https://lms-sdsn-new-infra.edcastcloud.com/asset-v1:sdsnedu+2379nr+february-2016+type@asset+block/Reader_Resource-Curse.pdf)

(a)Issues in Resources and International Relations: A Critical Analysis

The survival and the ultimate success of any nation depends on an acceptable control of resources and functions among the three political levels of government so that efficiency in the use of scarce resources is encouraged, while reducing inequality in the treatment of individuals and among different states(Lambert, 2006).

It is obvious that the present resource control mechanism is not only controversial, but also patently skewed in favour of the centre even when the centre has not shown better way of investing the huge allocations it gets from controlling our Nation. The problem becomes even more acute due to the political dimension the issue had assumed; with tempers flaring along geopolitical lines over perceived injustices in the way the country's resources is being controlled (Ekuri&Etim, 2017).

To our Northerners, resource control is a selfish agitation and demonstration of excessive greed on the part of the South-South governors. Whereas, to the Niger-Delta region, it is a just struggle for their natural right (**Beacheni, 2001**). It becomes more contentious and worrisome especially to the Niger-Deltans when one recalls that historically the North has benefited more from resource control and derivation formula since the inception to the embarrassment of other parts of the country. One would expect that since the North was favoured by the derivation formula before attention was ceded to oil, the agitation of the oil producing states should not elicit any discordant tunes in the country (Ibodje,2008:94).

The issue of resource control has however created a gulf of suspicion between the North and the South, hence, the continuous search for the best and acceptable formula for controlling resources in our federation. The declaration of May 29, 1999 as Democracy Day by the federal government became a turning point in resource control agitation in Nigeria owing to the fact that democracy permitted the freedom of expression, contrary to the repressive nature of military rule that bedeviled the country for decades. Consequently, the Niger-Delta States became more united in the struggle to control the wealth naturally situated in their lands (Kasim, 2000).

(b) Prospects of Resources and International Relations

By definition, resource control is “the way and manner the government’s revenue and democratic dividends are shared among the various tiers of government”-Kehindeetal (2013). From the works of Itse (1995) and Ike (2001), resource control refers to the power and rights of a community or state to generate income by way or means of taxation of human and non-human substances within a given environment. Such ‘powers’ and ‘rights ‘to initiate taxation process are however limited by law, especially in a federal system of government where the powers of the central government are superior to that of the subordinate and constituent states.

In such systems as ours, there are certain taxes which the constituent states do not have the legal right to collect. Such taxes are left for the central government, by law, to collect and coordinate. Nevertheless, in such systems, the ‘derivation principle’, according to Omojuwa (2001); and Dibua (2006), empowers constituent states and subordinate governments to obtain some benefits from the income generated to the state from their lands. This is practiced in most democracies while it is still yet to be practiced in some others.

The basic principle of resource regulation is the ability of a nation to exploit the natural resources of a state to the benefit of all (especially in a democratic state), such that every citizen, bonded by the state’s sovereignty and their allegiance to the state, has a benefit from the state’s

resource. Resources can be reposed in various places. They range from forest (farm lands) to open lands, air space, land depth resources (like oil and mineral resources), sea shores, waters etc. But for the sake of this study, we shall limit our focus to petroleum resource on the justification that it is the most pressing resource control issue in Nigeria. And crude oil has been identified as the major stay of the Nigerian economy in recent years, producing the largest percentage of the National revenue. Crude oil in accounts for up to 95% of export revenue and about 80% of government revenue” (Umeh, 2012).

From 1956 when oil was first discovered in Nigeria in Oloibiri in Rivers State, the government of Nigeria has consistently maintained its efforts in harnessing petroleum products the best it can. With over 55 years of experience in oil exploration, the Nigeria has got over 700 oil fields, 6400 oil wells, 1200 kilometres of pipelines, 10 export terminals, 22 petroleum storage depts., 280 flow stations, 10 gas plants, 4 refineries etc (Umeh, 2012).

Ogundele and Jegede (2010) posited that, Government at all levels, individuals, Non-Governmental Organizations, Corporate organizations, planners and researchers should therefore find a way of bringing a lasting solution to the problems of the affected regions, so as to maximize the potentials of the resources and international relations.

From the foregoing, **Shebbs and Njoku (2016)**, identified three things about resource regulation

a. Territoriality

First, to exploit resources, a state has to have the power reposed in it by the people whose land the resource belongs. This implies that it is practically impossible to exploit and control resources in a land which the state does not have territorial right over. This is the major cause of most boundary conflicts where glitches ensue over the ownership of border lands and waters. Conflict of this nature could be interstate or inter-continental struggle for land ownership, for instance, the Bakassi peninsula struggle between Nigeria and Cameroon. Resources are residential within a state’s territory and wherever the resource is, determine who owns it.

b. Inexhaustibility

‘Resource control’ does not stop at the exploration and exploitation of handy and available resources because resources are inexhaustible. States’ and governments’ responsibility in resource control is not all about pulling gains from the large cache of resources which were discovered by previous regimes. Resource control extends to the ability and capacity of the government of the states to discover new resources that were initially undiscovered and explore them to the benefit of the state. Here, emphasis is laid on economic diversification; this implies

opening up more income streams for the country by discovering new resources within the state and exploiting them.

c. Intangibility

The third factor is that, when talking about resources, it should not be limited to tangible substances. It has been traditional for scholars to limit their view to tangible resources. That may not be complete. Views should be extended to intangible resources like values and services. Human beings possess abundant values and tactful potentials which, when effectively explored can be an economic value for the state.

Just as oil, for instance, is tapped out of the soil, and used by the government to make wealth for the state's benefit, so can human value. This value applies to the technical know-how and the intellectual substances of men. The government can employ the services of health professionals to address the problem of an up-surging health epidemic which may threaten the life of its citizens.

An administrator or social manager may be employed by the government and mobilised to analyse the social challenges of a particular people and come up with reasonable solutions. The government can deploy the military to areas threatened by terrorism. The police (with their tact and skills) can be mobilised by the state government to areas with high level of arm robbery attacks and theft.

From the above we can identify the values which can be obtained from human resources. These values are intangible resources such as health, welfare, security etc which the government is expected to distribute effectively. But, it is at the government's disposition to utilise and control human resources within the state for the benefit of the people (Shebbs and Njoku, 2016).

1.8. Recommendations

In-view of the findings in this work, the following recommendations were suggested;

Political solution within acceptable limit by all and sundry should be adopted in resource control measure which should create traction for what we need in resource control. A politically motivated democratic agenda is one which seeks to engender democratic dividends by promoting cooperate participation in governance and patriotism of the citizenry.

All traits of unitary system of government should be expunged and states should be given the degree of freedom and autonomy consistent with true federalism in resource control and political agitations.

Resource control measures should be substantiated, realistic and value-laden, contrary to the current situation.

The government should identify the pressing political agitations of the people and address them in the most democratic way that works for all and sundry, because it is the government's responsibility to enhance activities that will promote democratic responsibility in the polity. All controversial clauses in the constitution that result into conflict in terms of resource sharing should be politically redressed.

Uniform resource control measures across the nation Nigeria will solve the political agitation rather than restructuring. The agitators for resource control should continue to employ better conflict resolution mechanism and superior political argument instead of violence and armed struggle to demand for their legitimate rights.

An agreed percentage of royalty should be paid by the states to the central government, and all resource producing states should be allowed to participate in the exploitation and exploration of resources in their states.

1.9. Conclusion

There is no doubt that resource control is a major political issue in the world today and will continue to be so for a long time to come. The competing political interests must take into account not only what is good and fair for them but also what is good and fair for others, so as to achieve an enduring solution on the resource issue. Thus, it is, indeed, all about justice, all about social inclusion and all about giving every citizen his rightful due at all times.

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