The Economics of Conflicts: Natural Resources and The Dynamics of Conflicts in Post-Colonial West African Sub-Region

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Abstract:

Of all the sub-regions in Africa, the West Africa sub-region has become very notorious concerning conflict over natural resources. This has become rather endemic with virtually all the states making up the sub-region involved. Although the spate of conflicts has reduced somewhat over the years, especially with the interventionist policy of ECOWAS, however, the conflicts have presented us with domestic, regional as well as international dimensions. While it is crucial to understand the impact which these different trajectories have on the nature, dimensions, direction and dynamics of conflicts in West Africa, it is critical also to understand the role played by natural resources in both escalating and resolving conflicts in this area. While we are aware that, as at anywhere else in the world, these conflicts in the sub-region may be multidimensional and complex in nature, they nevertheless stem from socioeconomic, psychological, and political conditions internal to the respective nations. However, the paper argues that while the internal dimension can always be resolved among contenders, it become probably and takes longer time because of the external dimension which globalization has introduced. Thus, not only has globalization engendered new forms of conflict but it has also made certain that its resolution may not be possible and what we may be at best a reprieve.

Keywords: *Conflicts, Dynamics, Globalization, Natural Resources, Sub-Region, West Africa*
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1. Introduction

In view of the prevailing situation in the world today, it is possible to argue that conflict is endemic to human relationships and societies. As Zartman (1991) has observed, conflict occurs during interactions among people; "an unavoidable concomitant of choices and decisions and an expression of the basic fact of human interdependence". In the same vein, Coser (1956) has equally concurred that conflict occurs when two or more people engage in a struggle over values and claims to

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status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate the rivals. Coser (1956) had further explained that conflict emerges whenever one party perceives that one or more valued goals or means of achieving these valued goals are threatened or hindered by another party or parties or by their activities. These perceived threats occur especially if both parties are seeking to expand into the same physical sphere or field of influence or activity. In consonant with this, Stagner (1995) has observed that the occurrence of aggressive behaviour always suggests the existence of frustration which always leads to some form of conflict. Thus, by conflict is meant "a situation in which actors uses conflict behavior against each other to attain incompatible goals and/or to express their hostility" (Bartos and Wehr, 2002).

Scholars have approached the issue of conflict and political violence from their peculiar worldviews and paradigms. For instance, scholars from the Realist School view human interaction as taking place within a power arena, with the possession of power, which is a scarce resource, engendering frustration in the one who does not possess or is denied it. From this viewpoint, it may be possible to consider conflict as a social necessity and an inevitable aspect of the healthy functioning of all societies. Scholars from the Class Perspective Approach or the Radical School treat conflict and violence as inevitable part of politics, seeing violence as a positive force and propellant of change. These scholarly predispositions notwithstanding, perhaps until recently with the 'Arab Awakening' or 'Arab Spring', the most troubled and conflict prone sub-region in the African continent had been the West Africa sub-region. The sub-region has been viewed as the most conflict-ridden in the world, highly notorious for its instability, crises of all sorts and incessant warfare. This reputation is acquired through the imbroglio that have engulfed Mali and Burkina Faso, Senegal and Mauritania, the bloody conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, and Senegal, conflict involving the governments of Mali and Niger and former Touareg rebels, Niger Delta and lately the Boko-Haram as well as the Fulani Herdsmen issue in Nigeria. The conflicts have presented us with domestic, regional as well as international dimensions. While it is crucial to understand the impact which these different trajectories have on the nature, dimensions, direction and dynamics of conflicts in West Africa, it is critical also to understand the role played by natural resources in both escalating and resolving conflicts in this area. While we are aware that, as at anywhere else in the world, these conflicts in the sub-region may be multidimensional and complex in nature, they nevertheless stem from socioeconomic, psychological, and political conditions internal to the respective nations. In an increasingly interdependent world, no conflict can truly be confined to the national boundaries of a single country; no conflict can escape the influence of realities and dynamics of the immediate sub-regional and wider international environments in which it unfolds. However, the discovery and presence of abundance deposits of natural resources in the West African sub-region and their emergence as sources of conflicts should be seen as one of the trajectory effects of globalization in the sub-region.

The rest of the study is divided into four sections. First is the felt need that the context of discussion should be briefly analysed hence a brief geo-historical background of the sub-region. This is followed by an analysis of the types, nature and dimesnions of conflict within the sub-region. The next section investigates the nexus between natural resources and the dynamics of conflict and finally, the concluding section of the study.

2.   Geo-historical Background of West Africa

The sub-region made up of 16 states and nearly 250 million people, about 30% of the total population of whole continent, can be referred to as a microcosm of Africa. This characterization is further reinforced by the fact that the sub-region reflects all the sociopolitical, economic diversities and all the challenges readily associated with the entire continent. Being the most populous sub-region, it is not surprising that all the convulsions, political, social, cultural and economic upheavals found elsewhere in the continent are made more intense in this populous part of the continent. Virtually all the present postcolonial challenges faced by states in West Africa, be it political, social, cultural and economic, can be traced to their status as former colonial states. However, under pressure, sometimes diplomatic or violent, from anti-colonial nationalist movements, the colonial states was forcibly removed from the colonialists and handed over to a national elite class. The national elite class therefore inherited an alien, repressive and exploitative colonial state which in its present postcolonial state is now faced with the task of forging national unity out of multiethnic, multilingual and multi-religious peoples who by tradition have never lived together as a single entity but forced to become nation-states through hastily drawn boundaries and territories. In addition, the national elites are saddled with the responsibility of developing the infrastructure of a modern state where none had existed.

3.   Literature Review & Discussion

This mission of forging development and national unity is expected to be carried out in an environment characterized by the Cold War of which African states were made to act as proxies (Agara, 2009) and insidious interference from former colonial powers through the mechanics of "crypto-imperialism" (Agara, 2004). The national elites already fractionized and polarized along the fault-lines of ethnicity, region of origin, religion and identity politics are now caught up in the contradiction between carrying out a genuine national project which served as the basis for the initial struggle for independence by the anti-colonial movements and the strong inclination by the elites to use the former colonial state as a means of empowering and enriching themselves. In order words, the repressive and exploitative tendencies of former colonial powers are replicated and continued under the indigenous national elites. Identity politics soon becomes a permanent fault-line in the national life of most West African states.

As the postcolonial state develops, there ensues a mad and uncontrollable penchant for enrichment and aggrandizement among the elites and this led to the jettison of the democratic values bequeathed at independence to the state and its replacement by authoritarian and repressive single party regimes (Agara and Olarinmoye, 2009). The acquisition and control of political power in postcolonial state provides an avenue for the looting of the treasury and this soon led to the last bastion of the national sovereignty to enter into the looting frenzy. In virtually every country in the sub-region, the military has made incursion into the political arena thereby ushering in an era of militarized political culture across the sub-region. It was not until the early 1990s with democracy becoming globalised that a new political reality began to take shape in West Africa. With democracy becoming globalised and the reconfiguration of the world as a global village amenable for pillaging by western powers, new challenges and crises have become engendered in the West African sub-region.

Natural Resources and the Dynamics of Conflicts
Considerable scholarly attention has been turned to the issue of natural resources as engendering conflict in Africa (Alao, 2007; Cilliers and Christian, 2000; Hirsh, 2007; Hodges, 2003 and Keen, 1998). Of all the sub-regions in Africa, the West Africa sub-region has become very notorious concerning conflict over natural resources. However, as pointed out earlier, there is no conflict without its internal and external dimensions.

The Internal Dimension
Among the most prominent internal dimensions to conflict in West Africa is first, the distinctive nature of the postcolonial state with its disjoint from the aspirations and welfare of the people which the state is expected to ensure. This disjoint has made the postcolonial state alien to the people with no organic link to their aspirations and the people have grown not to expect anything from it. Agbese and Kieh (2007) have succinctly captured this mood when they stated that; The typical African state is noted more as a repressive, brutal, corrupt and inefficient entity than as a mechanism for the promotion of the collective well-being of its citizens. Consequently, the modern state remains largely irrelevant to the needs, interests and aspirations of the people. A telling evidence of the vote of no confidence in the African state is the fact that even the African leader who serve as the custodians of the state have little faith in its ability to cater to their well-being.

The leadership failure of faith in the state they administered to cater for their very own well-being have led to the increasing spates of corrupt enrichment, stealing and conversion of government properties into personal use, travelling overseas for medical care, sending their children to other countries for their education and so on. Second is the fact of the failure of governance on the part of the more or less democratically elected officials of the state apparatus. The argument here is that even with the abandonment of the repressive policies that characterised the earlier years of independence for the institutionalisation of democracy, the output of

governance has shown similar failures as before. By failure of governance is meant mal-governance that has inundated the sub-region with repressive, inefficient leadership, exclusionary policies and the failure of the leadership to anticipate and adequately address conflict situation before it blossom into actual conflict. In effect, political tensions and subsequently, conflicts are often the result of mal-governance which deprived some people of their political and social rights and access to power. More pitifully is that most of the leaders have an ostrich-mentality. An ostrich thinks that by hiding its head in the sand, the rest of its body will be hidden and therefore not visible to predators. This has its concrete manifestation in the failure of the leaders to appreciate the likely price of their exclusionary policies. As Copson (1994) has put this; African leaders rather, mistakenly believed that they could undermine opportunities for participation without encountering significant opposition from within societies they governed. It turned out, however, that many states were far weaker than their leaders realised, and that in many societies there were sources of opposition with a strong indigenous base. These included factions with a political ethnic, or clan origin regionally based opposition forces, religious movements and local leaders and strongmen.

Third and deriving from above is this illusion of invisibility of the leaders which manifest in the form in which policies are made "with little or no attempt at consultation with the affected groups and no genuine effort to accommodate the interests or obtain their consent" (Copson, 1994). In a potentially conflict prone environment which the sub-region presents and with the existence of many fault-lines which have polarised the state along ethnic, religious and regional lines, the sub-region readily becomes the locus of conflict. Fourth is the generally nondemocratic attitudinal disposition of leaders to conflict which is to meet it with more violence and repression as the only way to curb the violence. In most cases where this is adopted as an option, it only succeeds in exacerbating the conflict instead of resolving it. This has always characterised the Nigerian government's attitude to conflict, especially, the wanton reprisal destruction by Obasanjo's government of Odi and many other villages in the Niger Delta and Jonathan Goodluck's government reaction to the agitation against removal of fuel subsidy. Reflecting on this, Copson (1994) has suggested that "more prudent governments would have taken care to build consensus among the key elements of the society before launching major policy initiatives, and they would have sought to avoid shocking abuses of power that would have alienate them from those key elements."A fifth dimension is the militarisation of the political culture through the incursion of the military into civil governance. The military incursion into politics is by its very act an act of violence which then seeps into every fabrics of the society. As N'Diaye (2005) has noted elsewhere; However, welcome and even salutary it may seem sometimes, the intervention of the military in the political arena invariably brings about an array of uncertainties and dangers. Not only is the potential for deep divisions within the military a very likely outcome with a chain of coups and counter-coups, but the potential for violence as the preferred means to solve contradiction increases sharply.

Finally, it is the fact that conflict occurs in an environment of scarcity, widespread oppression and poverty, deteriorating economic situation and growing inequalities. This is ironic of the sub-region which is deemed as one of the most richly endowed in natural resources and therefore has the potential to provide decent living conditions for its entire people.

The International Dimension: Globalisation
Before going into the discourse of the dynamics of globalisation and how it has not only contributed to the nature and introduced new dimensions to the conflict in Africa but also escalated it, there is need to contextualise what we mean by natural resources. By this, we align ourselves with Alao's (2007) definition and his classification. He defined natural resources as "all non-artificial products situated on or beneath the soil which can be extracted, harvested or used and whose extraction, harvest or usage generates income or serve other functional purpose in benefiting mankind." Alao further went on to argue that natural resources of West Africa can be categorised into five; land and agricultural products, solid mineral, oil, water and water resources and animal stock. The dominant preoccupation of the region is agriculture both for export and local consumption and for grazing the animal stock. Produce derived from agriculture include cocoa (of which Ghana, Nigeria and Cote d'Ivoire are notably), rubber (of which Liberia is the world's largest producer), and timber (of which Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria and other coastal countries are notably). These commodities are exported to Europe and many multinational companies from Europe are based in these countries to maximise the opportunities created for exploitation of these commodities.

Notable in terms of solid mineral are gold (found in commercial quantity in Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Mali) and diamond (in Ghana, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Liberia and Sierra Leone). Again, the main actors involved in the exploitations of these minerals are multinational companies such as De Beers, private prospectors and very important are the Lebanese whose business interest is crucial in appreciating the complexities of conflicts over these resources. Perhaps the major resource apart from diamond and gold that have brought international attention to West Africa is oil which can be found in commercial quantities in Ghana and Nigeria being the continent's largest producer. As in the case of gold and diamond, oil prospecting and exploitation have brought an array of external actors including Shell, Chevron, militant groups into the resource-producing countries thereby heightening tension and conflict in these countries. Of equal importance are water and the resources derived from it. Some of the rivers including Niger, Benue, Volta, Senegal, Mano and Lake Chad are among the longest and richest in terms of resources in the world. For instance, Lake Chad provides the largest areas of wetland in the Sahelian region. These rivers provide all year round fishing and other marine resources which have brought international fishing trawlers into conflict with local fishermen. A resource most profound in generating conflict because of its economic, spiritual and social significance is land, especially as it

relates to pastoral. Arable land is limited in West Africa but its importance stems from its transhumance nature and usage. Many pastoral people in the region do their work without regard to international boundaries and this has led to territorial lines shifting and conflict over space. In Nigeria, the indiscriminate movement by the Fulani herdsmen have become a source of violent conflicts leading to deaths, pillaging and sacking of villages by these marauding herdsmen many of which are from neighbouring countries such as Niger. As Ghosh (2001) puts it, this modern version of globalization "is an attempt to willy-nilly integrate the less developed countries into the framework of world capitalism, to make them more dependent and to subject them to unequal competition. Because it is through this process that these countries can be exploited and substantial amount of surplus can be extracted from them". Globalisation has made more porous the borders of the dependent nations while making their own selectively open through high standardization of consumer goods, standards that render finished products and goods from the dependent nations as inferior and therefore unable to compete with similar goods from the western nations (Agara et al, 2011). Therefore, to compete or survive within the capitalist world market dependent postcolonial nations as in West Africa, have had to revert back to their traditional role as suppliers of raw materials and natural resources. Hence the extractive sector of the dependent nations becomes the most highly attractive, developed and most modern sector of the economy while the manufacturing sector becomes less develop and in most cases virtually inexistent.

The importance of Africa and in particular West Africa, as a primary producer of raw material has made such natural resources of paramount importance and the struggle for control of the sources and land from where they are extracted of utmost importance. The need to have a monopoly and hegemonic control of the raw materials has created a struggle between those who have them and those who covet them. Thus, resource control is a major cause of conflict between individuals and groups within political systems and between nations. As Khotari (1979) had put it, "the control and use of natural resources lie at the heart of the deepening crisis in the world today". Tied to the need and urge to control the sources of raw materials is greed and the primordial need for acquisition, a tendency enhanced by capitalism. Globalization, with its doctrine of a global village and cross-border movement of goods, peoples and ideas has become a sinister framework for reorganizing the economies of African nations along the dictate of Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) which, in turn, has impoverished African nations and peoples to the point that African nations are now experiencing "multiplicity of transitions occurring simultaneously at several and in some cases mutually contradictory levels" (Aina, 1997). Most African nations find it almost impossible to manage and cope with the multiplicity of social changes taking placing simultaneously as a result of globalization and this, as Rodrik (1997) has noted, has triggered off "distributional conflicts" with the result that most are now facing what Longhorne (2002) has called the "collapsed state" syndrome.

This distributional conflict occasioned by globalization and triggered off by poverty, deprivation, social and political tensions have led to increased attempts by individuals and groups acting as ethnic to seek greater access to economic resources. As Alli (2005) has noted, this struggle for access to economic resources; "have led to many social upheavals…conflicts between the people and the government and sometimes between the different ethnic groups fighting for political positions or influence, a critical instrument and platform for accumulation in Africa". The fact that these resources are there, the fact that globalization has made paramount and of utmost importance these resources by making African nations to revert to being primary producers, the fact that government cannot extract them in peace and the fact that they have become issues of controversy and struggle between ethnic groups and the state has thrown the states into economic shock. The economic regime promoted by globalization has polarized the world at the micro level and citizens at the macro level by promoting and accentuating the gap between the poor and the rich with a high risk of civil war and conflict due to unemployment and higher opportunity for accumulation by whoever can gain access to these resources.

However, natural resources have not only engendered conflict, but wherever such conflicts have taken place, it has also explained the escalation and prolongation of such conflicts with not only the rebels, ethnic but even the governments using the natural resources to advance their respective causes and thereby making it difficult to arrive at a speedy and sometimes lasting resolution.

Types, Nature and Forms of Conflicts in Africa
Within the West African sub-region, the struggle to have a hegemonic control of the natural resources available has convoluted the sub-region with various strife, struggles, conflicts and wars, with such conflict taking many dimensions and shapes and directed against diverse elements in the society. These terms are actually used by scholars to identify different aspects of the same conflict.

States against States
Violence initiated by a state against another state usually takes the form of a conventional war, two opposing regular armies confronting each other. Strategists have differentiated between regular and irregular wars (Gray, 2007). The history of the world societies is replete of violence of this type. In violence of this type between states a plethora of means have been used to prosecute such wars and this had led to more and more mechanisation of war, what Gray (2007) had called "the technical development of armies, air forces and navies." Wars between states have led to the manufacturing and hence proliferation of not only small arms but also weapons of mass destruction. However, violence between states have not always been through regular conventional wars, other lower levels of violence such as limited air strikes, command raids, or even assassination of enemy agents have been employed. However, in all instances of violence between states, these acts are characterised by being organised and planned and they reflect the capability of large bureaucracies.

Holsti (1991) has identified 177 wars and major armed interventions between states between 1648 and 1989. Eriksson and Wallensteen (2004) have added to the list from 1989. Among the issues identified as causing the spates of violence that the world has witnessed from 1648 to 2003 were territorial disputes which had become the single most common reason since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. Second are the wars of decolonisation following the aftermath of the Second World War. Third are wars related to economic issues, involving commercial navigation, access to resources, colonial competition and protection of commercial interests. Finally are those wars fought as a result of differences in ideas and ideology. This type of conflict and violence became prominent after the Second World War. Other forms of conflict which are not discussed here are the diplomatic ones such as blockades, economic sanctions, trade embargoes and freezing of a nation's and its' nationals' foreign accounts. This type of conflict is not that common in Africa although events that may lead to such have occurred such as the struggle over Bakkassi Peninsula between Nigeria and Cameroon.

States against Citizens

The manifestation of violence by the state against its citizens can be at two levels. The first is through the overt legal process by which the state enforces its laws and ensures its citizens' compliance with them. By this the state is merely asserting its internal sovereignty and power over its citizens. The power of the state in this regard includes statutory processes for sanctioning and punishing erring citizens who may infringe on any of the laws. The second means of exercising violence against the citizen is through the clandestine use of illegal violence designed to intimidate and terrorise citizens with the intention of preventing them from opposing the government and disobeying or contravening the state's laws. Two ways have been used by states to perpetrate this kind of violence. The first is by enacting draconian laws aimed at subjecting and conditioning the citizens psychologically and physically to succumb and cajole them. The second way is by physically annihilating or assassinating opposition through the use of special security forces. For instance, "death squads" were created and manned by members of the security forces. In Nigeria, under Babaginda's rule and later under Abacha, citizens' assassination through bomb parcels and other means were not uncommon.

Citizens against Citizens

Apart from petty crimes, the major manifestation of this type of violence is vigilante violence and ethnic or tribal conflicts. Although over 80% of conflicts experienced in the world today are located within Asia and Africa, the nature of the violence has always been that of ethnic conflict. The vigilante type emerged primarily because of the inability of the police to control crime and these vigilante groups, at least in Nigeria, later metamorphosed into armed vanguards of their different ethnic groups. However, the most popular form of citizens' violence against citizens takes the form of ethnic violence. In Nigeria, for instance, this ethnic conflict has been further complicated by religious motivated violence thereby making the divide between

ethnic conflict and religious violence difficult to delineate. Many reasons can be adduced for the eruption of ethnic conflicts. Prominent among these reasons are group loyalty and identity, feelings of marginalisation and alienation, struggle for access to state power and hence political accommodation, control of group's destiny and resource control. The Minorities at Risk Project reports that from 1998-2000, 117 countries (about 2/3) were home to substantial ethnic groups that were politically active. In almost half of these states, ethnic groups constituted more than one-quarter of the total population. A total of about 284 groups are actively engaged in one form of violent struggle or the other while 103 groups are participating in sporadic violence against other groups (Russett et al 2006). The Rwandan genocide is history's current tragic illustration of the extreme brutality of unchecked ethnic conflict. Many instances of Nigeria's religious riots have also acquired the characteristics of this type of insurgency (Albert, 2004, Ukanah, 2011).

Citizens against States
This is a form of citizens' expression of discontent against state's policies or its leadership and it may be either organised or spontaneous having neither clear political goals nor organised leadership. In its organised form, this type of violence falls under the category of insurgency aimed at overthrowing the government. Conflicts of this nature occur within states but also contain within it the possibility of provoking conflicts between and across states. For instance, the success of the French Revolution brought fear to other monarchs in Europe and their resentment eventually led to France declaring war against Austria in 1792. In Nigeria, the citizens' resentment of the state of the nation led to the Biafra War from May 1967 to January 1970. However, in many cases the insurgents have an option of types or means of insurgence to prosecute their conflicts or wars. Within the plethora available and to choose from are;

Revolution

More than any other term, revolution has been associated with violence to achieve political means and ends. However, there are two dimensions to its usage. The first connotes it as a strategy of insurgency (means) and the second connotation is as a social or political outcome (ends). Conceptually precise definition of revolution is problematic but nevertheless, its understanding embodies "a deep-seated change, reflected invariably by alterations in the political fabric of society, often consummated through violence and ultimately accompanied by the production of ideology" (Leiden and Schmitt, 1968). As Majola (1988) has put it, "a change or development that takes place within one and the same socio-economic formation is called evolution or reform". Usually, this kind of social reform or transformation occurs when "the powers-that-be resort to eliminate current contradictions in the social economic life of a country (or to create the impression of trying to resolve them)" (Yermakova and Ratnikov, 1986). Thus, social reform implies attempt at improving the social and economic life of a country but this attempt is not underpinned by a radical change in either the class character of the society or the

ownership of the means of production or in the class composition of those who wield state power. In contrast, social revolution refers to a radical change or transformation in "all the principal spheres of social life, such as the economy and politics…The principal issue as well as the main feature of (social) revolution consists in the transfer of state power from one class to another which is more progressive and advanced" (Yermakova and Ratnikov 1986). The startling difference between a social reform and revolution can be located in the fact that while a social reform comes as a result of intra-class struggle, a social revolution is the end result of internal contradictions between antagonistic classes, that is, inter-class struggle. This is to say that no matter the scope, nature or comprehensiveness of a reform, it fails or falls short of a revolution if it does not smash the existing status-quo and replace it with a better one while at the same time resolving the issue of class antagonism and contradiction. However, as the Feierabends (1966) have noted, the presence of violence (or class struggle) in a community does not of itself mean that a revolution becomes necessarily imminent, but it does suggests that when eventually a revolution takes place, it will be accompanied by much violence.

Terrorism

According to Lenin, the purpose of terrorism is to terrorise. It is the only way a small country or people can hope to take on a great nation and have any chance of winning. Terror therefore, becomes a "symbolic act designed to influence political behaviour by extra-normal means, entailing the use or threat of violence" (Thornton, 1964). The general contention about terrorism as a weapon of the weak (Crozier 1960) has now become contentious with the emergence of the phenomena of state terrorism and state-sponsored terrorism. Russett et al (2006) have attempted to make a distinction amongst the traditional (what they refer to as "dissident") form of terrorism, state (what they refer to as "establishment") terrorism and state-sponsored terrorism. According to them, state terrorism is the use of terror by the state; "against their own populations to gain or increase control through fear. Tactics (used in this case) include expulsion or exile, failure to protect some citizens from the crimes of others (as in state-tolerated vigilante groups), arbitrary arrest, beatings, kidnappings (disappearances), torture and murder", while state-sponsored terrorism means; "...international terrorist activity conducted by states or, more often, the support of terrorist groups through the provision of arms, training, safe haven, or financial backing."

The emergence and increasing instances of religious-motivated terrorism has equally made it necessary to differentiate between it and its political counterpart. Although both employ the use of violence, they differ in certain important respects that make it important to delineate between them. For a terrorist action to qualify as being politically motivated, it must "challenge the state but affect no private rights of innocent parties" (Kittrie, 1981). On the other hand, religious motivated terrorism differs from other acts of terrorism primarily because (1) while political terrorism attempts to find a resolution within the life times of the perpetrators, religious

terrorism outlives their participants. This is predicated on the belief that the rewards of those involved in this cause are trans-temporal and the time limit of their struggle is eternity. (2) Targets of religious terrorism are not chosen for their military values but rather they are chosen for the sole purpose of making an impact on public consciousness both by its brutality and suddenness. (3) The constant recourse to a 'god' to justify their action has the power of 'satanising' the enemies while making the perpetrators of religious terrorism 'godly'. As Juergensmeyer (2004) had noted, this is a kind of "perverse performance of power meant to ennoble the perpetrators' views of the world while drawing viewers into their notions of cosmic war". The effect of this, as he had also noted, is "not so much that religion has become politicised but that politics has become religionised. Through enduring absolutism, worldly struggles have been lifted into the high proscenium of sacred battles." (4) Finally, the end result of religious terrorism is that it impacts a sense of redemption and dignity on the perpetrators. It is at this level that religious terrorism acquires a personal willingness on the part of the perpetrators who often times are men who feel alienated and marginalised from public life.

From whichever perspective (whether religious or political) we look at it, terrorism as a strategy of insurgence, involves three basic components: the perpetrator(s), the victim(s) and the target(s) of the violence (Badey, 2007). The perpetrators are seen as fanatics, disaffected groups or minorities who employed terrorism as a tool to oppose the rule and the oppression of an established and militarily superior power (Nicholson, 2003). The victims are seen as innocent people who have no part or are directly involved in the struggle and the struggle or target may or may not be strictly political in nature. A glaring thing about terrorism is that it involves acts of violence. Violence or the threat of violence is endemic to terrorism.

4. Conclusions

This paper has concerned itself with interrogating the role which natural resources have played in initiating, intensifying, prolonging and in some cases in resolving conflicts in West Africa, a region that has acquired the unsavoury characteristic as the most conflict prone region of the world. The paper has being at pains to explain that these resources have been there from antiquity, the people have learned to live with it and manage it and it has never been the source of dispute until lately. This raises the question; Why now? The answer we have tried to locate at the foot of globalisation whose attempts have being to make Africa and other dependent states revert back to their traditional role as producers of raw materials thereby throwing up the economic and strategic importance of these resources. The end result of this is that ethnics that have lived peacefully together before now argue for the control of these resources thereby engendering struggle for its control and monopoly. It is on this basis that natural resources have come to the centre of

affairs in West Africa and the conflicts associated with them have been some of the most profound in the sub-region.

The way out? Countries in this region devised ways to overcome some of the major problems we have highlighted above as internal and international dimensions of the conflict. The regional organisation, ECOWAS must assist in the management of cross-borders resources and bear the burden of advising countries on how best to develop policies to cater for natural resources management. The increasing interests in the affairs of the region and its natural resources by foreign interests may necessitate that borders should be closed and monitored. A look at the examples of the Asian Tigers and their development tactics may be necessary now leading to more South-South collaboration than South-North where the South is made to feel obligated and inferior instead of a partner in progress.

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