

# Natural Resources Conflict

## Management Processes and Strategies in Africa

### INTRODUCTION

Environmental degradation in forms such as desertification, resource depletion and demographic pressure exacerbates tensions and instability. Systemically, pollution, population growth and climate change are not in the distant future, they are occurring now and hitting the poorest and most vulnerable hardest.<sup>1</sup>

The above statement by the former secretary general of the United Nations (UN), Kofi Annan, saliently captures natural resources variables that define and cumulatively make up much of the natural resources conflict phenomenon. Natural resources have perhaps played a major role in defining much of Africa's public arena, including power politics, resource distribution and gerrymandering strategies<sup>2</sup> in much of Africa's public administration domain. They have also motivated and fuelled armed conflicts in Africa and this has proven to be a hurdle in effective statecraft, while in times of full-scale conflict it has been a hindrance to peace processes from the negotiation stage all the way through to the mediation stage and post-conflict reconstruction or peacemaking stages.

Natural resources can also be connected to the acquisition, use, and proliferation of small arms and light weapons, a situation that has exploited the negative opportunities provided by globalisation. In this case, natural resources have provided a parallel political economy for fuelling wars and conflicts.<sup>3</sup> This is true of the illegal exploitation of diamonds in Sierra Leone and the use of the profits from illicit diamond sales to procure small arms and light weapons and thus sustain the conflict across the border in Liberia's civil war. Environmental crimes have therefore essentially taken place in geopolitical spaces where the state's legitimacy as the supreme authority is challenged. These problems characterise the 'wars of a third kind', as Mary Kaldor calls them.<sup>4</sup>

Against the grain of widespread assumptions that most wars/conflicts of the 1990s onwards are merely 'civil wars' resulting from ethnic tensions is a new understanding of new wars that sees natural resources as a dominant variable. The new conceptualisation is of their ability to sustain political economies in which a range of new militaries – the decaying remnants of state armies and paramilitary groups (often financed by governments) – all need parallel sources of revenue to execute wars. Illegal resource mining and trade to finance the buying or maintenance of arms supplies therefore become a preferred option. Indeed, an abundance of a resource base combined with the existence of already active hostilities to some extent explains the causes of resource conflicts.<sup>5</sup>

From another perspective, climate change, which is a major independent variable in the whole debate on natural resources conflicts in Africa, is another burden on the continent. It expands the purviews of environmental security, threatens the very basis of national security and escalates social conflicts. However, it is important to note that the phenomenon of natural resources conflict is extremely complex and, just like any social conflict debate, a mono-causal link of natural resources conflicts to climate change would not provide the basis for either a thorough conflict analysis or a proper understanding of natural resources conflict management and peace management.

This paper treats natural resources conflicts as an intrinsic part of larger social conflicts and seeks to provide a link between natural resources and social conflicts, situate the debate within the nexus between natural resources management and conflict management, and argue for the use of a multi-actor approach in dealing with natural resources conflicts in the context of conflict management and peace management in the conflict cycle. Towards this end, practical examples of including natural resources conflict management strategies in successful diplomatic initiatives will be given, with the first being the role of natural resources in one of the most long-standing conflict systems in Africa – that in

the Great Lakes region and particularly the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which is the conflict epicentre of the region.

The second and third examples of the role of natural resources in conflict management processes will be an assessment of the environmental conflict management roles of two sub-regional regimes<sup>6</sup> mandated to deal with conflicts in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes conflict systems, namely the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)<sup>7</sup> and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (IC/GLR), respectively.<sup>8</sup> These three practical examples will seek to reassess the conflict management strategies and processes in the region with the aim of adopting a natural resources conflict management orientation in the quest for regional peace and security.

For the purposes of contextualising the thesis of this paper, it is important to understand the complex maze of conflicts in Africa, the ambivalent significance of natural resources, their management and distribution, and their effect on social relations.

## THE LINK BETWEEN NATURAL RESOURCES AND SOCIAL CONFLICTS IN AFRICA

Natural resources are an important component in understanding the nature of conflict in Africa because of their effect on such conflict. Arguably, natural resources are embedded in an environment, geographic, geopolitical and interdependent space where actions by one individual or group may generate effects far beyond specific localities or even national jurisdictions. This is particularly true of shared trans-boundary resources as the term is widely understood. A good example of this is provided by the issues surrounding the Mau Forest complex in Kenya.<sup>9</sup>

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From a risk analysis perspective, a latent (soon to be overt) social tussle could be observed at an early stage between Kenya and Tanzania over the Mara River basin.<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that because the Mara River

has its source in the Mau Forest complex, it is in essence also a trans-boundary basin shared between Kenya and Tanzania, and is also part of the larger Nile basin, which is shared by nine countries, namely Egypt, Ethiopia, Sudan, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda and the DRC. Due to the loss of Mau Forest cover, unsustainable agricultural expansion and intensification (including irrigation) and human population growth, socio-cultural and socioeconomic actors in the Mara River basin increasingly face inadequate access to water. Apart from the water security vulnerabilities are threats related to loss of virgin forest cover in the upper parts of the catchment area and along rivers, environmental crimes related to water pollution, and high levels of water use by industries and urban settlements. These problems have provided serious environmental security problems, e.g. decreasing water supplies, competition for and conflicts over the available water, inappropriate and poorly planned land use, and ineffective water resource management systems in the two countries, to name only a few.<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that natural resources and their utilisation have complex ecological realities and processes. This in turn has an effect on the direct consumers of the environment and a brief discussion of these scientific complexities and the need for contextualising them in the natural resources debate is of the essence.

Scientifically, as is the case with the example of the Mara River basin, the linked biophysical or ecological processes in a specific environment have cumulative, long-term ramifications like erosion, pollution, or loss of plant and animal habitats. The nature of the problem may not, however, be readily apparent, because ecological relationships are often poorly understood. This negative ecological processes therefore takes a considerable time to manifest themselves, and this has consequently affected environmental management, policymaking, and legal and diplomatic/conflict management processes. This often provides the latent and underlying link between natural resources and changes to an area's susceptibility to conflict. The situation is further compounded by other mediating factors like climate change variables, and this has had an effect on the extent and frequency of environmental crimes, the stability and security of the environmental base, and the extent and complexity of environmental diplomacy and political agendas. These all affect the modus operandi of policy processes and policy-making both in terms of natural resources management and environmental conflict management.

The question therefore arises of how the environmental security agenda has been affected by these realities and how it has defined or opened up a debate around the effects of natural resources conflict management issues, including conflicts over the resource base, on the resource management policy space, in particular the

extent to which contemporary environmental security issues are incorporated into this space.

## EXAMPLES OF THE SECURITISATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

A further elaboration of the policy implications and operationalisation of the above realities can be seen in contemporary environmental security discourses and developments of the kind mentioned above. Natural resource conflict management, environmental diplomacy and environmental crime policy issues became the subject of debates after the end of the Cold War, when statesmen, academics and policymakers alike talked about global change questions like the sustainable development of the Global South, population challenges, democratisation and the internationalisation of human rights, and the looming global environmental crisis.

When the Rio Summit of 1992 was convened, environmental, development and conflict management policy considerations were put at the top of the international agenda. This meeting was a landmark in the history of environmental diplomacy when for the first time the environment was treated as a major policy issue in domestic and international affairs.

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Unfortunately, however, and following the precedent set by this process, environmental diplomacy and international resource management policy deliberations have taken on a procedural form resulting in a proliferation of agreements that seek to remedy threats to the environment and threats connected to international peace and security as a result of resource conflicts. Few of those agreements have translated into meaningful change, however. National interest and strategic diplomatic manoeuvrings have characterised environmental diplomacy or natural resources conflict management processes. The environmental agenda has been decelerated by this politicking and the threat to its sustainability has, if anything, increased as a result.

There seems in all this to be a lack of appreciation of the fact that natural resources conflicts and general

environmental dangers are global in scale and trans-boundary in nature, and affect all people everywhere. Part of the problem is the slow pace of environmental change, which in turn affects the distribution of natural resources. For example, annual variations in global climatic change are relatively small, and are therefore easily overshadowed by more dramatic and seemingly more important challenges. This is where climate change imposes an additional burden on an African polity already grappling with huge problems that are simply added to by policy processes to curb climate change.

A factor that arguably presents the greatest set of difficulties to environmental diplomats, policymakers and practitioners is that threats to the environment are characterised by a high degree of empirical uncertainty. Often the perceived threats and vulnerabilities are theoretical and remote and the evidence can appear incomplete or contradictory. It is extremely difficult to measure, much less predict, long-term vulnerabilities. For example, assessing the extent of species extinction (which is singled out as a major issue in environmental crime and has been a major precipitant of social conflicts and tussles) is complicated by the fact that most species have not yet even been identified, particularly in Africa.

As a result of such dynamics, policymakers and political decision makers have little choice but to place the environmental agenda on the cost-benefit analysis scale, sieving out the genuinely critical 'environmental concerns' and 'qualified environmental crimes or contentions' from among the wide range of issues placed on the agenda. This shows the complex nature of natural resources conflict and its management and indicates that a mono-causal analysis will not serve the exercise. Thus, variables like climate change are components of an already fluid contestation of the thinning natural resource base that can be attributed to many other factors.<sup>12</sup>

## UNDERLYING CONFLICTS AND ATTRIBUTION OF RESOURCE SCARCITY OR STRESS

The above argument goes to the heart of underlying conflicts that can be observed in conflict cycles.<sup>13</sup> Apart from the complex environmental conflict management agenda as experienced by policy practitioners are the hidden attributes of natural resources that act as latent causes of conflicts. An important aspect worth considering in the natural resources conflict management debate is the strategic analysis of the scarcity, abundance and management/mismanagement of resources as a cause of conflict. This should also be extended to latent or implicit conflicts, i.e. those that are not immediately apparent to the communities experiencing them but which manifest themselves over time and often more drastically than

immediate, overt conflict. In such conflicts, communities or social cultural resources<sup>14</sup> are affected by a process of environmental degradation that they do not immediately recognise, even although they might be aware of degradation, or that they are unable to associate with the activity of specific social agents.

The environmental conflict is thus only made explicit when communities establish an immediate logical connection between environmental degradation and the activities of specific social agents.<sup>15</sup> This is a situation within social conflict theory whereby the roles of certain actors provide visible and public evidence of latent situations that, if not dealt with, would eventually lead to overt contestation of access to meagre resources. This role is effectively taken by sub-regional organisations or third party actors whose mandate is conflict management, e.g. regimes like the IC/GLR and IGAD, whose role is partly to help member states and contesting protagonists to recognise the hidden conflicts that need to be nipped in the bud before maturing into an overt conflict cycle. This role is discussed later in this paper.

It is also important to note the relevance of research or fact finding in terms of natural resources management, as well as ecological analysis or research and its widespread dissemination, which can help establish this connection. This may also consequently shed a more realistic light on the causes of conflict, as well as act as catalysts for social learning about how to manage resources and conflicts.

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Another reason why natural resources play a leading role in social conflicts has to do with social contexts and power relations within the public sphere. Natural resources are also embedded in a shared social space where complex and unequal relations are established among a wide range of social actors, e.g. in the case of the production of primary products, agro-export producers and farmers, small-scale farmers, ethnic minorities, government agencies and others. As in other fields with political dimensions, those actors with the greatest access to power are able to control and influence decisions regarding natural resources in their favour.<sup>16</sup> A relevant

view of the importance of natural resources to the broader concerns of society is captured by the words of Kenyan jurists:

In grappling with our socio-economic cultural problems and the complex relationship between the environment and good governance, we must not ignore the linkages between landlessness, land tenure, cultural practices and habits, land titles, land use, and natural resources management, which must be at the heart of policy options.<sup>17</sup>

It is also important to note that natural resources are subject to increasing demand and that they are unequally distributed. Such a situation is better explained normatively by the peace research/neo-Malthusian debate on resource conflicts, which gives a multi-disciplinary and multi-causal explanation of why resource conflicts occur. Named after the English demographer Thomas Robert Malthus,<sup>18</sup> it uses the 'scarcity' variable to explain the role of natural resources in conflict. The neo-Malthusian school of thought argues that rapid population growth, environmental degradation, resource depletion and unequal resource access combine to exacerbate poverty and income inequality in many of the world's least-developed countries. These deprivations are easily translated into grievances, increasing the risks of rebellion and social conflict.<sup>19</sup>

Internal disputes can arise from local environmental degradation, e.g. the introduction of an effluent-releasing factory in a human settlement area that affects waterways and air quality. Equally, ethnic clashes can occur when population migration increases demand for scarce resources like land for cultivation. This is the case in agrarian economies like those in eastern Africa, where land is exploited via tenure systems and where there is a large cultural identification with ancestral/tribal land. Environmental change may involve land and water degradation, over-exploitation, the illegal exploitation of wildlife and aquatic resources, extensive land clearing or drainage, or climate change.

These increasing demands in turn have multiple social and economic dimensions, including population growth, changing consumption patterns, trade liberalisation, rural enterprise development, and changes in technology and land use. Natural resource scarcity may also result from the unequal distribution of resources among individuals and social groups or ambiguities in the definition of rights to common property resources. As Homer-Dixon and Blitt note,<sup>20</sup> the effects of environmental scarcity such as constrained economic production, migration, social segmentation and disrupted institutions can, either singly or in combination, produce or exacerbate conflict among groups.

As Lederach further asserts, in a conflict setting – and in society more generally, for that matter – there are constituents or individuals who directly experience and are affected by armed confrontations over natural resources. Such people use natural resources symbolically, and this is a reality peacemakers and natural resources management experts should acknowledge. Land, forests and waterways are not just material resources people compete over, but also form the basis of a particular way of life (farmer, rancher, fisher, logger, etc.), an ethnic identity, and a set of gender and age roles. These symbolic dimensions of natural resources lend themselves to ideological, social and political struggles that have enormous practical significance for the management of natural resources and the process of conflict management.<sup>21</sup>

Because of the many dimensions of natural resources management, specific natural resources conflicts usually have multiple causes, some proximate, others underlying or contributory. A pluralistic approach that recognises the multiple perspectives of stakeholders and the simultaneous effects of diverse causes of natural resources conflicts is needed to understand the initial situation and identify strategies for promoting change and effective conflict management.

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## **BRINGING BACK POLITICS TO NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

The field of diplomacy and policy administration as it is widely understood has been evolving and is becoming more technical as global economic, political and informational systems become more complex. As such, the politics of diplomacy/conflict resolution now calls for a system of multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder environmental conflict management and environmental diplomacy that has increasingly become a major variable of genuine negotiation, mediation and post-conflict reconstruction processes. The fact that the distribution of natural resources has become subject to control politics<sup>22</sup> basically means that diplomatic processes must in the scheme of things contain a large component of natural resources conflict management. The over-emphasis on

power-sharing formulas in peace processes, security dividends and other aspects generally viewed as ones of ‘high politics’ places these processes on the negative side of the war–peace continuum and the actual underlying concerns of conflicts are not adequately addressed.

The practice of different actors in dealing with natural resources conflicts will capture this in context in the examples that follow. The discussion will make the basic point that the role of multiple actors represents a possible point of entry for reconceptualising conflict management processes.

## **RECONCEPTUALISING CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: THE ROLE OF MULTIPLE ACTORS**

### **Example 1: Coltan blood and tears – The missing link in the DRC’s peace processes**

Picture the scene: a well-coordinated diplomatic gathering of heads of states of the Great Lakes region, together with their respective delegations, conducting their business in one of the region’s most affluent venues, The Windsor, in Nairobi. At the same time and in the same geopolitical space, on 7 November 2008 thousands of frightened civilians flee skirmishes near a refugee protection zone in eastern DRC. This comes as renewed clashes between rebels and government troops add urgency to a positive outcome of peace talks to end the DRC conflict. Meanwhile, the one key player (at the time) absent from the diplomatic discussions, ‘General’ Laurent Nkunda, scoffs at the IC/GLR–United Nations summit held in Nairobi. To cite his exact words, the Nairobi Process ‘is only a regional summit, it doesn’t have any impact on our demands’.<sup>23</sup>

In a conflict and region where peace agreements and ceasefires are notorious for being short-lived, it is apparent that there is a missing link in the negotiation processes and agreements that come from these negotiations. The DRC’s lack of peace has been defined by two dominant variables that unfortunately have not been properly weighed and dealt with in conflict management exercises. The first is the most apparent bone of contention in the DRC, namely the equitable and political distribution of the vast natural resources in the country.

The second variable is that of the regional politicisation of civic activities, which all peace attempts have unfortunately emphasised: from the various negotiation processes to the peacekeeping mandate architecture of MONUC (the United Nations Mission in the DRC). The politics of natural resources management in the DRC has indeed been a missing link in the diplomacy of conflict management in the country. This may explain the often-intermittent reconstitution of the different

ethnic control politics and militarisation, primarily as this pertains to the governance of North and South Kivu. These two provinces are a buffer zone between the DRC and Rwanda and both governments have an interest in continued instability there. Partly as a result of this, and partly for local reasons, the two provinces are populated with opposing ethnic militias that fight intermittently, with or without the assistance of the Congolese and Rwandan armed forces. The observed skirmishes between the Mai-Mai and Nkunda's loyalists were perhaps the most visible of this resource-fuelled contestation in some of the resource-richest parts of the DRC.

It should be noted that the different inchoate peace processes that do little for environmental conflict management have actually had a negative centrifugal effect. It seems that these agreements – as is apparent from the short-lived Goma Peace Agreement of January 2008 – legitimise positions taken by various recognised official players in the DRC conflict. As a result, the interests of non-recognised players are not catered for.

The absence of Nkunda and his loyalists, who purport to be fighting for the freedom of his Tutsi clansmen, from the Nairobi Peace Process or in any pre-shuttle diplomacy exercises is yet another diplomatic blunder that does not address the real issues. Nkunda's military excursions, it should be noted, were conducted and are still being conducted by different armed groups in the coltan-rich North Kivu area.<sup>24</sup> Given the large geographical area of the DRC and the fact that this area is far from the DRC capital, Kinshasa, government presence here has been weak. The question therefore is how the international community deals with these areas that have alternative authorities of control and, secondly, how to clothe peace processes with effective natural resources management mechanisms that provide equitable resource dividends to all internal players in the conflict.

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The peace processes and exercises in the DRC should establish an equitable system for the sharing of resources through a rights-based diplomatic process. As such, resource dividends should be determined by a process whereby rightful actors in the conflict are given legitimate access to the resources and their governance by their commitment to the cause of human security and

human rights. This means that environmental conflict management in the DRC's peace process should work in terms of a diplomacy of human rights in which the genuine underlying issues of the conflict in the country are critically addressed.

With this in mind, the regional ethnicisation of DRC politics can be effectively handled by existing processes, namely the IC/GLR process and the currently mandated diplomatic efforts of former Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa and former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo as African Union (AU) and UN plenipotentiaries for the Great Lakes conflict negotiations. Therefore, the politics of coltan and related minerals in the DRC should constitute the genuine ingredients of peace processes for the country and not the procedural conference diplomacy exercises that do not recognise the urgency of the situation and the finesse required in a consolidated negotiation and mediation process.

Two further examples that focus on practising natural resource conflict management in multilateral contexts are provided by the activities of the IC/GLR and IGAD.

## Examples 2 and 3: IC/GLR and IGAD multilateral conflict management roles

### *The IC/GLR and regional concert diplomacy*

A multilateral framework in the diplomacy of conflict management has also been a major route to natural resources conflict management. This paper posits that natural resources are an international public good, and the internationalisation of environmental dividends determines much of what constitutes environmental security, covering areas like shared natural resources, contested zones across borders and other security predicaments closely connected to resource contestations, or what are referred to as 'wars of a third kind' by Mary Kaldor.<sup>25</sup>

A classic case of multi-stakeholder diplomacy used to tackle environmental conflict management is captured by the African initiative under the IC/GLR process.

Initially it is important to understand what the IC/GLR is. It stemmed from the conflicts and tragedies in the region, especially the genocide in Rwanda and the situation in the DRC, which constituted a threat to international peace and security. In 2000 the UN Security Council, through its resolutions 1291 and 1304, called for an international conference on peace, security, democracy and development in the Great Lakes region. Later that year such a conference was established with its joint UN–AU Secretariat in Nairobi, Kenya. The 11 core countries are Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, DRC, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. There are also co-

opted countries: Botswana, Egypt, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe.

In addition to this, in November 2004 the 11 heads of state and government of the IC/GLR member countries unanimously adopted the Dar es Salaam Declaration on Peace, Security and Development in the Great Lakes Region in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. In this declaration they declared their collective determination to transform the Great Lakes region into a space of sustainable peace and security, political and social stability, and shared growth and development for all its states and peoples.<sup>26</sup>

In December 2006 the heads of state and government convened again in Nairobi and signed a pact on security, stability and development. This pact incorporates the Dar es Salaam Declaration's programmes of action and protocols.<sup>27</sup> One of these protocols currently being implemented that is of particular relevance to this paper is the Protocol against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources (Article 9 of the pact).

Of relevance to this study is the pact's initial recognition of the central role of the governance of natural resources in statecraft and consequent conflict management processes. The pact recognises in its preamble the need for a multi-sectoral cooperation approach for the sole benefit of the peoples of the region. This restatement of such an approach has been a positive trend in IC/GLR's summitry diplomacy and other deliberative diplomatic and conflict management activities.

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The Protocol against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources seeks to put in place regional rules and mechanisms for combating the illegal exploitation of natural resources, which constitute a violation of states' right of permanent sovereignty over the natural resources in their territories and represent a serious source of insecurity, instability, tension and conflicts. This binding and legal protocol re-emphasises the important

role of good governance in natural resources management. It also resonates well with the resource question in the member states of the IC/GLR, all of which have had natural resources contestation and conflict situations in their political histories.

It should be noted that this enabling environment of addressing natural resources contestation has generally not been fully utilised by the IC/GLR member states, especially in their conflict management efforts. Recognising the politics of natural resources in conflicts in the region allows the underlying causes of such conflicts to be properly identified, and environmental conflict management should therefore be a dominant tool in all mediation and facilitative processes by member states as part of the intermediary role of the IC/GLR.

This paper also treats natural resources conflict management as an important stage in providing positive momentum to both mediation and post-conflict reconstruction efforts. The Protocol against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources takes cognisance of the role of national and international legal contexts that address impunity regarding the 'Environmental Crimes of illegal exploitation of natural resources by natural persons and other entities'.<sup>28</sup> This will give peace processes legitimacy in their attempts to put in place equitable mechanisms and options for sharing contested resources in a conflict. Their implementation through diplomacy should make clear to contravening states and entities the consequences of the illegal exploitation of natural resources as widely defined, thus providing the context for environmental conflict management and the politics of natural resources conflict management.

The IC/GLR processes' summitry and multi-sectoral diplomacy has initiated the designing of a certification manual for monitoring and verifying natural resources exploitation.<sup>29</sup> The IC/GLR's initial pre-negotiation processes before the adoption of the protocols, where different actors provided expert input to draw up the substance of the nine protocols, gave legitimacy to the IC/GLR process. Through thematic working groups,<sup>30</sup> natural resources management experts provided to the diplomatic stewards of the process the much-needed conceptual and substantive links permitting the establishment of natural resources conflict management rules and thus contributed to the special nature of Article 9.

### *IGAD: linking conflict management and natural resources management*

Those attempting to establish peace in East Africa, the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes conflict systems cannot ignore the changing nature of natural resource

management. Indeed, it is imperative that the natural resources management regimes in the region form a large component of conflict management, given the political-economic security predicament in these regions.

These areas have experienced widespread resource contestations, with oil causing the protracted conflict in Sudan, coltan and other precious metals being contested in the DRC, and cattle rustling causing problems in the Horn that affect pastoralists communities in Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and Sudan. This is coupled with the process of natural resources depletion brought about by climate change, which has increasingly become an additional factor in the already protracted contestations over scarce resources in the region. The region has experienced persistent economic crises, which to a large extent have their roots in severely degraded natural resources and the environment. This, exacerbated by recurrent droughts and other natural and human-made disasters, results in perpetual poverty and under-development, which in turn accelerates the degradation of natural resources and the environment, thereby forming a vicious cycle. From time immemorial the IGAD region has been characterised by massive population movements, pushed by inter-group conflict and pulled by the search for better pastures and water resources, among other things.

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A significant proportion of the people in the region are pastoralists – the greatest number being in Sudan. In Ethiopia, about 10–12 per cent of the total population is pastoralist, while the figure for Djibouti is about 20 per cent, and 33 per cent and 70 per cent for Eritrea and Somalia, respectively.<sup>31</sup> Pastoralism in the region occurs predominantly in arid and semi-arid lands where pastoralists are able to exploit land and conditions that normally cannot support rain-fed agriculture, often practising transhumance to do so.<sup>32</sup> These areas have traditionally been considered as almost ‘waste lands’, yet in a country such as Kenya two-thirds of the livestock population is found there. Also, gum arabic, aloe vera and a host of minerals are known to exist in these arid areas. However, the resources of these parts of the IGAD

region are not adequately inventoried, nor is there a clear understanding of the environmental consequences of and conflicts associated with pastoralism.

IGAD, which is a regional conflict management regime,<sup>33</sup> has to accept that its conflict management and natural resources management regimes have to complement each other, in due cognisance of the fact that these fields have become thoroughly interlinked, together making up the sum total of human security.

### *Policy shifts to natural resources conflict management*

It is with the above realities in mind that the policy environment for natural resources management has evolved dramatically in recent decades. There are no more ‘resource frontiers’. In effect, virtually every change in land use and tenure and land adjudication systems, new developments of whatever kind, or any expansion of any resource utilisation now involves conflict.<sup>34</sup> This conflict can be both objective and subjective and may be characterised in the future by legal property tussles or outbreaks of violence. Natural resource use also continues to be an aggravating factor in armed conflicts around the world, and even in cases where the true sources of the conflict may extend beyond disputed resources, resource conflicts ultimately become the most visible and symbolic causes of the dispute.<sup>35</sup> This is true of the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes conflict systems, and IGAD needs to accept this as a key part of its peacemaking efforts.

The question therefore becomes one of how IGAD utilises its diplomatic capacity and role as the regional conflict management regime to reconceptualise its natural resources management mandate. The answer may ultimately lie in the utilisation of other sub-regional arrangements that deal with natural resources management issues, coupled with these arrangements’ peace and security architecture connection. Lying within the same geopolitical area is the East African Community (EAC) arrangements and protocols that address these municipal and trans-boundary realities of resources, their use, and their effect on the environmental security of communities both within and outside national boundaries.

A case in point is the EAC protocol that seeks to manage shared trans-boundary resources. Tapping into such arrangements would to a large extent allow the mapping out of an effective natural resources conflict management mechanism for IGAD and its member states. This is a case of concert development diplomacy whereby the different regional regimes cooperate to achieve the common goal of enhancing human security through effective conflict management practices that focus on natural resources management. There is also need for a coordinated development mechanism, e.g.



with the previously discussed IC/GLR process and its protocol dealing with the illegal exploitation of natural resources. This role of being a collaborator in a common natural resources conflict management system for the region is legitimate for IGAD because it is the only explicitly mandated inter-governmental organisation managing the complex conflict systems of the region and their interrelated political, economic and ecological problems. This would also ensure the rationalisation of multi-sectoral concerns that define the conflicts of this very volatile region. In essence, this was what IGAD was originally conceptualised to deal with.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to the important and intricate variables provided by these case study analyses, a significant element that policy has to deal with in the natural resources conflict and management continuum is the fact that organised armed groups who are actors in the contestation have multiple sources of financing and shift from one to another as they are needed. Other factors to be considered are conflict economies that are determined by resort to environmental crimes like poaching and other drivers of conflict, and policy and diplomatic processes have to take into account these alternative conflict-sustaining variables.<sup>37</sup>

## CONCLUSION

It is with the above images of multi-sectoral and multi-actor approaches in mind that conflict management regimes should take into account the dynamics, intricacies and problems of natural resources conflicts. Dealing with the equitable management of natural resources will without doubt go a long way in both the conflict management stages of peace processes and statecraft and in their translation into peace management. Sub-regional diplomatic regimes have to therefore redefine their conflict management strategies in terms of a stronger recognition of natural resources management as a powerful negotiation, mediation and post-conflict reconstruction variable.

The same applies to the need for diplomatic actors to recognise protagonists whose claims may be legitimate and may assert legitimate demands at the negotiation table, as is the case with Laurent Nkunda's control of natural resources in the DRC in the form of coltan and other variables that escalate conflict and reduce mediation and peace momentum.

It is also important to note that in mapping out social conflicts in Africa more generally, it is essential to look at the multi-causal elements of any conflict. Variables affecting social contestations like climate change escalate an already volatile situation and this should feed in as an important part of the general architecture of the natural resources conflict management system as a whole,

together with all the other considerations highlighted in this paper. It is also important to note that the natural resources debate and its effects on policy is a complex phenomenon and that neither resource abundance nor scarcity need necessarily be a criterion for conflict.<sup>38</sup> Thus, what matters, as this paper posits, is not simply whether natural resources are present, but how they are actually managed both in the conception of statecraft in periods of peace and in the conflict management processes in situations of conflict.

## NOTES

- 1 Kofi Annan's views can be found in the *Progress report of the secretary general on the prevention of armed conflict*, agenda item 12, 16th Session of the General Assembly, A/60/891, 2006, <http://www.ipu.org/SPLZ-e/unga06/conflict.pdf> (accessed 25 June 2009).
- 2 *Gerrymandering* is the deliberate rearrangement of the geographical boundaries of districts or local geopolitical spaces to influence the outcomes of elections.
- 3 In much conflict research, and especially so in terms of the political economy of conflict, there is growing attention to natural resources. A great deal of work has also been done on individual commodities such as oil, diamonds, drugs, coltan and timber. In multilateral diplomacy, the issue of conflict goods gained prominence through the various reports by the UN Security Council sanctions monitoring mechanism; see Philippe le Billon, The political economy of war: Natural resources and armed conflict, *Political Geography* 20 (2001), 561–584; Achim Wennmann, The political economy of conflict financing: A comprehensive approach beyond natural resources, *Global Governance* 13(3) (July–Sep. 2007), 427–444; Michael Ross, What do we know about natural resources and civil war? *Journal of Peace Research* 41(3) (2004), 337–356.
- 4 Mary Kaldor, *New and old wars: organized violence in a global era*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999.
- 5 *Ibid.* It should be noted that in the period 2008–2009, 78 conflicts could be observed in sub-Saharan Africa, most of which centred on resources. Whereas 2007 had seen a de-escalation of conflict in Africa, the number of highly violent conflicts rose once more from 9 to 12 in 2008. Three of these were wars: those in Chad, which involved skirmishes between various rebel groups; Sudan, particularly the conflict in Darfur; and Somalia, with the activities of the Union of Islamic Courts and Al-Shabaab. The latter two had already been classified as wars in 2007 and 2006. As the severe crises were situated in Mali, Nigeria, Southern Sudan, the DRC, Burundi and Kenya, and additional crises were situated in Niger, the Central African Republic and Ethiopia (which was also involved with the war in Somalia), a zone of interrelated conflicts and conflict systems was distinguishable, constituting a 'constellation of crises' ranging from the Gulf of Guinea, across Central Africa and the Great Lakes conflict system, to the Horn of Africa conflict system. See Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, *Conflict Barometer 2008: 17th annual conflict analysis*, Heidelberg: Department of Political Science, University of Heidelberg, 2008, 25–44, <http://www.KONFLIKTBAROMETER.de> (accessed 8 September 2009).

- 6 For the purposes of this paper, regimes are treated as implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area of international affairs or relations. Sub-regional regimes are therefore more specialised arrangements that pertain to well-defined organisational structures, activities, resources and geographical areas and often involve only a sub-set of the members of the international community; see Stephen D Krasner (ed), *International regimes*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983; John Gerard Ruggie, International responses to technology: concepts and trends, *International Organization* 29(3) (1975), 557–583.
- 7 IGAD was created in 1996 to supersede the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD), which was founded in 1986. The recurring and severe droughts and other natural disasters between 1974 and 1984 caused widespread famine, ecological degradation and economic hardship in the eastern African region, prompting the formation of IGADD. The protracted conflicts in the region and its history of conflict cumulatively led to the refocussing of IGAD to generally specialise in conflict management, but also to cover development concerns affecting the wider region. IGAD's member states are Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Sudan and Somalia. Eritrea pulled out because of disagreements over the Somali conflict. For more on IGAD, see <http://www.igad.org/> (accessed 21 April 2009).
- 8 The IC/GLR is a regional regime that was established by African states to address the peace and development issues of the Great Lakes conflict system and to some extent the repercussions of the Horn of Africa's security issues (for more details, see the discussion in the paper itself). The IC/GLR evolved into a secretariat that facilitates mediation talks in the region and has currently been focusing on the DRC crises. A synthesis of the historical context of the IC/GLR can be viewed at [http://www.icglr.org/F\\_END/about.asp](http://www.icglr.org/F_END/about.asp) (accessed 20 April 2009).
- 9 The Mau Forest complex covers over 290 000 hectares and represents the largest remaining nearly continuous block of indigenous mountain forest in East Africa. It is Kenya's major source of water and is situated approximately 250 km from Nairobi and borders Kericho to the west, Nakuru to the north and Narok to the south. It should also be noted that water from the Mau Forest serves more than four million people inhabiting more than 578 locations in Kenya and several locations in northern Tanzania; see Mark Agutu, Revealed: big names given Mau forest land, *Daily Nation*, 2 April 2009; Ogiek Welfare Council, Mau Forest complex on the spotlight: Ogiek opposition to the forest excision, 24 August 2008, <http://www.ogiek.org/.../MAUFOREST-COMPLEX-ON-THE-SPOTLIGHT.doc> (accessed 12 September 2009).
- 10 The Mara River basin can be divided into four distinct physical localities, based on the location of the river. The upper catchment comprises two sections: the forested Mau escarpment and an area containing large-scale agricultural farms, some of which are irrigated by water from the Mara River. The river then runs through the open savannah grassland protected by the Maasai Mara National Reserve on the Kenyan side and the Serengeti National Park on the Tanzanian side. The fourth section is the flood plains located in Tanzania, where the Mara River discharges into Lake Victoria. High human and livestock population densities and subsistence agriculture characterise this section.
- 11 See Annabell Waititu, Global warming and conflicts over water in eastern Africa, in Alliance Sud, *Conference on Water and Conflicts*, Berne, 6 March 2009, <http://www.alliancesud.ch/it/politica/acqua/downloads/conflicti-aw.pdf> (accessed 9 September 2009).
- 12 See Philip Mwanika, EAPCCO, environmental crime and challenges of environmental diplomacy, *ISS Today*, 19 March 2008, [http://www.iss.co.za/static/templates/tmpl\\_html.php?node\\_id=3127&slink\\_id=5690&slink\\_type=128&link\\_id+40](http://www.iss.co.za/static/templates/tmpl_html.php?node_id=3127&slink_id=5690&slink_type=128&link_id+40).
- 13 The conflict cycle phenomenon in itself defines the attribution of conflict. According to this notion, conflicts tend to be described as cyclical in terms of their intensity levels, escalating from (relative) stability and peace into crisis and war, and thereafter de-escalating into relative peace. An additional phase, 'durable peace', is often added, in which a conflict is considered resolved and the reoccurring pattern of the conflict has been stopped. Dealing with the latter situation is classically referred to as 'peace management'; see Christopher Mitchell, Problem-solving exercises and theories of conflict resolution, in Dennis Sandole and Hugo van der Merwe (eds), *Conflict resolution, theory and practice: integration and application*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993, 78–94; LP Niklas Swanstrom and S Mikael Weissmann, *Conflict, conflict prevention, conflict management and beyond: a conceptual exploration*, Washington, DC: Central Asia Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program, 2005, 9–10.
- 14 Lederach sees people as social cultural resources, and in conflict settings such people should be seen as resources for rather than recipients of peace-building activities. Connected to this is the notion that peace building should also draw on existing cultural resources; see John Paul Lederach, *Building peace: sustainable reconciliation in divided societies*, Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1998, 87–99.
- 15 See H Ascerlad, *Environment and democracy*, Rio de Janeiro: Instituto Brasileiro de Analisis Sociais e Economicas, 1992, 35.
- 16 See R Peet and M Watts, *Liberation ecologies: environment, development and social movements*, London: Routledge, 1996.
- 17 These are the words of Justices Richard Kuloba and Samwel Oguk, Kenyan High Court judges, in *Francis Kimei and 9 others vs. The Honourable Attorney General and 3 others* (HCCA 238/99 of 1999), Nairobi: Government Printer, 1999.
- 18 1766–1834.
- 19 Colin H Kahl, *States, scarcity and civil strife in the developing world*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- 20 See T Homer-Dixon and J Blitt, *Ecoviolence: links among environment, population, and security*, Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998, 8.
- 21 J Chevalier and D Buckles, *A land without gods: process theory, mal-development and the Mexican Nahuas*, London: Zed Books, 1995.
- 22 See Michael Renner, The anatomy of resource wars, WorldWatch paper no. 162, Washington, DC: WorldWatch Institute, 2002.
- 23 Aljazeera.net, Kenya hosts DRC Congo crisis talks, 7 November 2008, <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/africa/2008/11/20081176425241309.html>.

- 24 According to Wikipedia, coltan is the industrial name for columbite–tantalite, a dull black metallic ore from which the elements niobium (formerly ‘columbium’) and tantalum are extracted. The niobium-dominant mineral is columbite, hence the ‘col’ half of the term. Tantalum is used to manufacture the electronic capacitors that are of increasing importance in the Information Age.
- 25 The phenomenon of ‘wars of a third kind’ is well captured by Kaldor, *New and old wars*.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region of 15 December 2006 can be accessed in the ‘Repository’ section of the official ICGLR webpage, [http://www.icglr.org/common/docs\\_repository/pactsecuritystabilitydevelopment.pdf](http://www.icglr.org/common/docs_repository/pactsecuritystabilitydevelopment.pdf) (accessed 20 April 2009).
- 28 IC/GLR Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region, article 9, <http://www.icglr.org/icglr-pacte.php> (accessed 20 August 2010).
- 29 The IC/GLR Secretariat was tasked on 3 April 2009 with setting up a regional certification mechanism for natural resources. On the same lines, it should be noted that on 2–3 April 2009 the first meeting of the Regional Initiative against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources was convened by the IC/GLR. This was an expert meeting that brought representatives of different sectors together to discuss the question of equitable management of such resources and alternative methods of settling resources contestation issues; see the ‘Press statement’ section of the IC/GLR website, [http://www.icglr.org/common/docs/docs\\_repository/press%20Release%2006%2004%2009%20NR.pdf](http://www.icglr.org/common/docs/docs_repository/press%20Release%2006%2004%2009%20NR.pdf) (accessed 20 April 2009).
- 30 The thematic working groups result from the diplomatic processes and documents/protocols produced in terms of the process. In December 2006 the Pact on Security, Stability and Development was signed. This pact includes protocols and programmes of action and is divided into the thematic concerns operationalised by thematic working groups. These are the Peace and Security Group, the Democracy and Good Governance Protocol and Group, the Economic Development and Regional Integration Group, and the group dealing with humanitarian and social issues. It should be noted that one of the thematic groups and members, the Partnership Africa–Canada (PAC), which is a non-governmental organisation dedicated to building sustainable human development in Africa, was tasked with assisting the IC/GLR in advising on drafting the protocols and projects related to the certification and movement of natural resources in the region. This was as a result of PAC’s experience in the Kimberley Process. PAC participated in the Dar es Salaam and Nairobi summits and ICG/LR working groups and is now working with the IC/GLR Secretariat (based in Bujumbura, Burundi) to help move forward the implementation of the projects dealing with certification and movement of natural resources in the Great Lakes region; see the PAC website for more on its activities with the IC/GLR, <http://www.pacweb.org/programs-natural-resources-e.php> (accessed 29 April 2009).
- 31 See IGAD, Environment and Natural Resources Strategy, April 2007, <http://www.igad.org/> (accessed 21 April 2009).
- 32 Many pastoralist communities, especially in the Horn of Africa, practise transhumance, i.e. in times of stress, livestock moves with herders in search of water and pasture, but the communities or families remain settled in permanent locations. Transhumance pastoralists usually depend somewhat less on their animals for food than do nomadic ones; see Osamba O Josiah, The sociology of insecurity: cattle rustling and banditry in north-western Kenya, *African Journal of Conflict Resolution* 2 (2000), 13; see also Oxfam, Climate change in Turkana: a way of life under threat (n.d.), <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/whatwedo/issues/climate/storyturkana.htm> (accessed March 2007).
- 33 See endnote 7, above.
- 34 See R Ayling and K Kelly, Dealing with conflicts: natural resources and dispute resolution, *Commonwealth Forestry Review* 76(3) (1997), 182–185.
- 35 See W Tungittiaplakorn, ‘Highland–lowland conflict over natural resources: a case of Mae Soi, Chiang Mai, Thailand’, *Journal of Society and Natural Resources* 8(2) (1995), 279–288.
- 36 See endnote 7, above.
- 37 See Wennmann, The political economy of conflict financing, 428.
- 38 For example, resource-abundant countries like Botswana, Norway and Australia and resource-scarce countries like post-Second World War Japan have developed without experiencing armed conflict. What is needed is a strategic natural resources management regime that deals effectively with potential conflicts over resources; see Christopher Cramer, Homo economicus goes to war: methodological individualism, rational choice and the political economy of war, *World Development* 11(11) (2002), 1847–1854.

## ABOUT THIS PAPER

Natural resources have played a major role in Africa's public arena, defining power politics, resource distribution and gerrymandering strategies in much of the public administration domain. They have also fuelled armed conflicts in Africa, which has proven to be a hurdle in effective statecraft, while being a hindrance to peace processes.

From another perspective, climate change can be viewed as an additional burden for the continent on top of its many other problems. It expands the purviews of environmental security, threatens the very basis of national security and escalates social conflicts. However, it is important to note that the phenomenon of natural resources conflict is quite intricate and a mono-causal link between natural resources conflicts and climate change would not provide the basis for either a thorough conflict analysis or a proper understanding of natural resources conflict management.

This paper seeks to provide a link between natural resources and social conflicts, situate the debate within the nexus between natural resources management and conflict management, and argue for the use of a multi-actor and multi-level approach in dealing with natural resources conflicts in the context of conflict management and peace building.

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