A Decade of Oil Discovery in Ghana: Implications for Politics and Democracy

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Abstract

Ghana discovered oil in June 2007 and commenced production in December 2010 under a peaceful democratic political order that is being hailed by all across the world as a beacon of hope. Based on a desktop review, this paper examines how oil affects politics and democratic development in Ghana. It argues that even though there are efforts to protect Ghana from the 'oil curse' or potential adverse socio-economic effects of oil production, conscious efforts have not been made to check the possible impact of oil production on the nation's democratic gains. Consequently, oil production has resulted in tendencies that undermine democratic development, including politics of resource-patronage; high spending on social services such as infrastructure; high borrowing that increases national debt; and high corruption and perception of corruption and security threats. The paper concludes with some theoretical and policy implications of the findings for oil-producing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Keywords:
Oil and gas; resource curse; politics; democracy; Ghana

Introduction

Oil and natural gas are valuable commodities in high demand, but the income derived from their exports is not always a blessing. Over the years, studies on the use of oil income have made frequent use of phrases such as 'the Dutch Disease', 'the commodity curse', 'the devil's excrement' and 'resource curse' (Shelley 2005). In 2007, Ghana, a country located on the Western coast of Africa, discovered oil and gas in commercial quantities, 60 kilometres offshore of the country's Western Region (Darkwah, 2013; Obeng-Odoom, 2015a, 2015b; Oteng-Ababio, 2016). The government and the citizens were optimistic that Ghana would benefit from the newly found oil (Cavnar, 2008; McCaskie, 2008; Debrah and Graham, 2015).

June 2020 marked thirteen years of oil discovery and nine and half years since production began. There have been extensive studies on Ghana's oil and gas industry (Ablo, 2012, 2015; Ablo and Overå, 2015; Ackah et al., 2016, 2018, 2020; Debrah and Graham, 2015; Graham et al., 2016, 2019; Gyampo, 2011, 2014; Gyampo et al., 2011; Obeng-Odoom, 2013a, 2014a, 2014b; Ovadia

and Graham, Forthcoming; Panford, 2017). For instance, Obeng-Odoom (2013a) examined how windfall and wipe outs are distributed within the urban economy of Sekondi-Takoradi, the specific institutional makeup in which they are rooted, and how oil has affected the socio-economic development of the oil-city. Also, Eduful and Hooper (2015) explored the urban impacts of oil exploitation on the city of Sekondi-Takoradi, arguing that oil production has created oil-led gentrification in the city. Further, Oteng-Ababio's (2016) study investigates how oil production off-shore of Sekondi-Takoradi is creating complex processes of accumulation, contradiction, and displacement in a low-income community. While some of these researchers examined the theoretical debates of the resource curse in Ghana's relatively infant oil and gas industry (Acosta and Heuty 2009; Gyampo 2011; Okpanachi and Andrews 2012; Kopinski, Polus, and Tycholiz 2013; Ayelazuno 2014; Obeng-Odoom 2015a), others have explored how to avoid the oil curse in Ghana (Tuokuu and Kuusaana, 2015).

Admittedly, the challenging impact of oil and gas on Ghana's development is not only a Ghanaian predicament but a situation stemming from "globalized assemblages" (Siakwah, 2018a: 68) of interactions between and among several actors and institutions. Studies by Siakwah (2017c, 2017a, 2017b, 2018b, 2018a) has been extensive on Ghana's oil industry from the 'globalized assemblages' view and its impact on the oil and gas sector. He argues that the effect of oil on "Ghana's agriculture, industry and employment creation" is accustomed and influenced by the interactions between and amongst state, institutions, structures, and politics at the local, regional and national level (Siakwah, 2018a: 462). Though these studies have provided insights into the development of the oil industry in Ghana, there appears to be inadequate attention to how the discovery and subsequent production of oil affect politics and democratic development in Ghana. Consequently, this paper sought to bridge these critical knowledge gaps and to answer the following question: how has the discovery and production of oil affected Ghana's political and democratic development?

The paper is organized as follows: following the introduction, the paper proceeds with a discussion of the theoretical approach to the study in section 2. This is followed by section 3, which provides a discussion of the implications of oil on Ghana's democracy. After that, section 4 presents the threat of oil to Ghana's democratic development. We conclude the paper in section 5 by proposing a series of recommendations for Ghana to avoid the oil curse and lessons for new oil-producing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Theoretical approach

The 'resource curse'

The resource curse literature is now well-documented, as systematically accumulated evidence has suggested that developing countries with a high dependence on natural resources suffer more from adverse macroeconomic and macro-political effects than their resource-poor counterparts (Auty, 1993, 2000, 2001, 2007; Karl, 1997; Ross, 2012; Tuokuu and Kuusaana, 2015). The resource curse theory has three main components. Firstly, the influx of resource revenues can bring about what is called the 'Dutch Disease', a situation in which a country's currency exchange rate increases, leading to a reduction in the export of agricultural and manufacturing goods. Although some scholars and practitioners have suggested that resource wealth does not necessarily lead to lower economic growth, it sometimes attracts and draws capital, labour, and entrepreneurial interest away, thereby stifling development (Ploeg, 2011).

Secondly, some scholars argue that the inflow of resource revenues can weaken good governance and the quality of institutions (Auty 1993; Sachs and Warner 1999). These authors contend that several of these resource-rich states' governments depend on revenues from the extractive sector while neglecting other critical industries. Some focus their energy on political competition, using these resources as rent and patronage to capture political power by paying off political supporters in order to remain in power instead of using the revenue for improving the quality of institutions and the people (Auty, 2007; Robinson et al., 2014). Besides, research has revealed that resource-rich states tend to suffer from higher levels of corruption than non-resource rich countries (see Ross 2001; Tuokuu and Kuusaana 2015). There is also evidence of an inverse relationship between mineral resources and democratic accountability (see, for example, Ross 2001; Aslaksen 2010; Tsui 2011; Andersen and Ross 2014). Furthermore, other scholars have suggested that resource wealth helps autocratic leaders and regimes to consolidate their hold on power (Petermann et al., 2007; Kolstad and Søreide, 2009; Andersen and Aslaksen, 2013; Cuaresma et al., 2011; Ahmadov, 2014; Wright et al., 2015). Examples abound on the African continent including Teodoro Obiang Nguema's Equatorial Guinea which is considered a textbook example of the so-called resource curse country, where vast natural resource wealth has led to rapacious corruption, decimated governance, and chronic underdevelopment (Diamond and Mosbacher, 2013).

Thirdly, some scholars have suggested that resource wealth breeds conflict and leaves little room for corporations, arguing that the presence of resource wealth in a region or country increases the chances of armed conflicts (Collier and Hoeffler, 1998; Humphreys, 2005). A common example is Nigeria where oil and gas discovery caused conflict and authoritarian rule (Sachs and Warner 1995; Collier and Hoeffler 1998; Ross 2001; Idemudia 2012; Rosser 2006; Obi and Rustad 2011; Obi 2010a, 2010b, 2014). Moreover, the discovery of oil has failed to bring about sustainable development in some other countries like Angola, Sudan, Gabon, Sierra Leone and Liberia (Sachs and Warner, 1995, 1997, 2001; Lujala, 2010; Yates, 2012; Ross, 2014).

The resource curse thesis has been criticized by some scholars, policymakers, and practitioners. While some scholars suggest that the effects are beneficial, especially with regard to economic growth (Brunnschweiler, 2008; Alexeev and Conrad, 2009; Cavalcanti et al., 2011; Haber and Menaldo, 2011), others argue that resource curse effects depend on many possibilities including the nature of governance (notably, democratic regimes are significantly less prone to such effects) and the resource type (Boschini et al., 2007; Bhattacharyya and Hodler, 2010; Ross, 2014). Haber and Menaldo (2011) contend that oil resources confer a "resource blessing" rather than a curse. For instance, Norway and Canada are often mentioned as model countries. These countries have escaped the curse of possessing resources due mainly to better governance regimes or already existing economic diversification policy measures (Mehlum et al., 2006; Robinson et al., 2014).

Additionally, from a critical political economy point of view, the so-called 'resource curse' approach has been deemed "uncritical, ahistorical and reductionist". It focuses on "internal political and economic factors," and by so doing it leaves out "the long durée of capitalist exploitations" and its negative externalities (Ayelazuno, 2014: 66). Using Ghana as a case study, Ayelazuno (2014) elucidates why when a critical political economy approach (PEA) is used it is obvious that the threat of a potential 'resource cure' in Ghana is due to the endless exploitation of natural resources by global capitalists who depend on the "export of low-value raw material" (ibid). This perspective unveils the global political economy undercurrents of the resource curse discussion in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The paper is also mindful of the recent discussion on the continent with regard to 'Africa rising' which is coupled with on-going oil exploration and production across the continent (Graham and Ovadia, 2019). Due to these exploration and production happenings in several countries in Africa, there is a sense of optimism on the continent. This sense of 'Africa rising' has catalysed a significant surge of excitement about the development opportunities which could be obtained from the abundance of natural resources in Africa. This was reiterated by the renowned Africa Progress Panel (APP) in its Africa Progress Report 2013 (Africa Progress Panel, 2013).

Several scholars remain optimistic that natural resource could serve as the basis for developmentalism in Africa. Many African states' interventions in the energy sector have been in two principal forms: first, through the use of local content policies (LCPs) and laws (i.e. legal framework and regimes) to facilitate an expansion of local participation in the sector (Ovadia, 2016b); and second, using resource nationalism as a tool for development, which is done through renegotiation of previously enacted laws for national interest and enactment of new laws to increase states' participation and interest in the sector (Andrews and Nwapi, 2018: 49; Saunders, 2019). For example, in the case of resource nationalism in Zambia's copper mines, Caramento (2019) argues, first of all, that 'mandatory' local content policies (LCPs) are needed to solve the impact of economic liberalisation and privatisation on Zambian mines, and secondly, that a developmental state is required to implement LCPs to deal with international development agencies' recommendations. More specifically, in the oil and gas sector of Africa, Ovadia (2016b) argues for 'Petro-developmentalism' in sub-Saharan Africa. In his view, local content policies (LCPs) in the oil and gas sector of states in the Gulf of Guinea could serve as a panacea for developmentalism.

The case of Botswana (diamonds) is the appropriate example of a resource-rich country which has escaped the curse. The reason is that Botswana has stable and well-functioning state institutions, with relatively decentralised government structures at the time of the boom (Gyampo, 2011). Therefore, the manifestation of resource curse effects or their absence arguably reflects a relatively unique and complex set of circumstances including the type of natural resources, the structure of the domestic economy, and the political and corporate governance regimes in place (Smith, 2007; Ross, 2014). Simply put, resource curse scholars argue that states endowed with natural resources tend to be autocratic and inhospitable for democracy; to make elections a do-or-die affair/zero-sum game; to generate political and civil conflict, etc. Using the resource curse thesis as its theoretical framework, this study sought to examine how Ghana's oil wealth has affected politics and democratic government, a decade after oil discovery.

Oil curse and democracy

Democracy is variously defined. The most popular of all the definitions is the one given by President Abraham Lincoln of the United States of America, that democracy means "government of the people, for the people, and by the people." Before Ghana's discovery of oil in 2007 and subsequent production in 2010, the country was already widely celebrated as a success story of democratisation and enduring democracy in Africa. Nonetheless, one of the insights of the resource curse theory, specifically Karl's (1999) 'petro-state', warns of severe threats to the oil-rich state itself and democratisation and democracy. As noted in the previous section, it is in this light that this paper set out to interrogate the implications oil discovery/production has on Ghana's enduring democracy. Ross's (2001) regression analysis in his research 'Does Oil Hinder Democracy,' suggests that both oil and other mineral wealth are linked to anti-democratic trends in government meaning resource wealth and democracy cannot co-exist. This harmful influence of oil, in his view, is not limited to the Middle East but has made democratization harder in countries like Malaysia, Mexico, and Nigeria as well as in oil-rich states of Central Asia (Shelley, 2005). Ross' findings revealed three tentative supports for the link between oil and authoritarianism. The first is a rentier effect, through which the government uses low tax rate and high spending to dampen pressure for democracy. The second is a repression effect, in which the government builds up her internal security forces to ward off democratic pressure. The third is a modernization effect, in which the failure of the population to move into industrial and service jobs renders them less likely to push for democracy (Ross, 2001). Furthermore, Ross suggests that oil helps empower incumbents regardless of whether the country is authoritarian or democratic (Ross 2012, 2014).

Several other researchers have put forth similar, although slightly different arguments. For example, a study of 46 African countries revealed that irrespective of the existing political regime, governments' dependence on mineral and metal exports makes them more authoritarian due to incumbency advantage and executive discretion over the allocation of resource rents (Jensen and Wantchekon, 2004). However, oil may be seen as hindering democracy in some contexts but being a 'blessing' in others. Numerous oil-rich states in Africa and Latin America, arguably, have sustained democracy (Smith, 2004; Smith, and Kraus, 2005). Dunning (2008) takes this argument further and shows that oil wealth may be a blessing depending on the level of private income inequality. He supports his argument using cross-regional evidence, firmly grounded in an in-depth analysis of Latin American cases.

The African predicament regarding oil production has been paradoxical due to the tragedy of corruption, civil war, and poverty (Patey 2007). Part of the cause of this quandary is the failure on the part of the government and the political elite in "getting the politics right" (Obi, 2007). For instance, oil provides about 40% of Nigeria's GDP, 70% of federal government income, and 92% of its foreign exchange earnings (Obi, 2007; Tuokuu and Kuusaana 2015). Similarly, about 70% of Sudan's total export revenue comes from oil exports. Although in both 2006 and 2007, there was a rapid increase in oil production with high oil prices and large inflows of foreign direct investment that amplified Sudan's economy and steadied its GDP growth to over 10%, the country entered into civil war just a year later. It is believed that disputes over how the oil should be managed and who or which regions should be its beneficiaries triggered the war (Nyuyonge and Keitumetse, 2013).

The impact of oil wealth on democracies is extremely uncertain. Some studies report that oil has pro-democratic effects in democracies, either by making the governments more stable (and hence less likely to become autocratic) or by improving their democratic scores (Smith, 2004; Dunning, 2008; Tsui, 2011). Consequently, Smith (2004) argues that oil might be better characterized as "pro-regime stability" than 'anti-democratic', as it helps both autocracies and democracies survive.

Nonetheless, research finds no evidence that oil helps stabilize democratic regimes (Ulfelder, 2007; Wiens et al., 2014; Caselli and Tesei, 2016) or rulers (Andersen and Aslaksen, 2013). Some scholars have suggested that the effect of oil on democratic stability is conditional and may stabilize democracies that are wealthy with strong institutions (Jensen and Wantchekon, 2004; Ross, 2012). In this regard, Gyampo (2011) argues that oil may be beneficial to countries with clear and transparent rules regarding revenue allocation between state and central governments, and where the parliamentary system allows for a more inclusive and transparent revenue-allocation process. Subsequently, new evidence and insights from (Ross, 2014) regarding this issue have emerged from subnational studies in democracies and semi-democracies, with Ross arguing that oil windfalls tend to lengthen the terms in office of elected local officials.

It is important to mention that many of these aforementioned studies on oil and democracies support the orthodox resource curse approach (ORCA) as argued by Ayelazuno (2014), making them ahistorical, uncritical and reductionists. As a result, they sometimes belittle or ignore the role of the West and its multinational corporations (hereafter, MNCs) in the extraction of natural resources in places like DRC (former Zaire) when Mobutu Sese Seko was head of state— a situation whereby these corporations facilitated and sustained the looting of the state and the hoarding away of the wealth in the West (ibid). There are several cases where multinational corporations have been involved in resource extraction in war-torn countries such as Angola, DR Congo, Sudan (Patey, 2014), and with corrupt authoritarian countries such as Libya, Gabon, Chad, and Equatorial Guinea (Reno, 1995, 2000).

In essence, the impact of oil on democracy is relative to the institutions available in the state. Where institutions are strong, oil strengthens democracies; where these institutions are weak, oil will most likely hinder democracy, with consequences for democratic consolidation. Some scholars have also raised concerns about the antithetical relationship between natural resource (oil) economies and corruption (Collier, 2010; Humphreys et al., 2007). Many of these economies often found in developing countries experience poor growth and weak institutions (Brunnschweiler, 2008). The countries are sometimes ruled by dictators, and even where elections are held, they are often flawed, with vote-rigging by the incumbent governments (Lowi, 2009; Ross, 2012). Also, less accountability by the political elites seems to undermine the use of natural resources to promote development.

Nonetheless, it must be mentioned that in some cases the institutional weaknesses are a result of neo-liberal policies championed by the Bretton Woods institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank which call for limited state intervention. For example, Mkandawire (2001) questions assertion about the weakness of African state institutions and the capacity of the African state to become a developmental state by pointing to the post-colonial developmental experience of Africa and saying that most of the states were doing well before they were limited by the structural adjustment programmes (SAP) of the IMF and World Bank. After more than three decades of implementing these neo-liberal policies which are anchored on free-market, Ghana remains an exporter of raw commodities. Several MNCs companies are involved in the exploitation of mineral resources such as gold, diamond, bauxite and oil, which has led to an extractive sector enclave that is reinforcing Ghana's "colonial trade economy"; one in which the country mainly produces and exports raw material to the capitalist countries and imports high valued finished products from the West (Amin, 1972).

Implications of oil on Ghana's democratic development since 2007

This section of the paper discusses how Ghana's discovery of oil in 2007 and subsequent production in 2010 contributes to the country's democratic development.

Oil and democratic development in Ghana

From the day oil was discovered in Ghana up until the present, things have not been the same. The euphoria and expectations have been high, and so have the uncertainties (Cavnar, 2008; McCaskie, 2008; Gyampo, 2011; Gyampo et al., 2011). It is as a result of these mixed feelings or expectations that oil continues to be at the centre of Ghanaian politics and democratic development. Knowing that oil booms have negatively affected democracies based on the experiences of many African countries (Diamond and Mosbacher, 2013), the government of Ghana and other critical stakeholders put in place the necessary policy measures to avoid an oil curse. Consequently, a national debate began almost immediately about what it might mean for Ghana to possess oil. For instance, in 2008, the government organised a series of fora to gain insights from decades of experience from countries like Norway, Britain, Trinidad and Tobago, and Nigeria, among others, that have utilised their oil wealth to improve their respective economies. At the core of the discussion was the role high-quality institutions can play to help avoid the resource curse (Debrah and Graham, 2015).

In 2011, the Petroleum Commission Act 2011 (ACT 821) was drawn up to "promote local content and local participation in petroleum activities as stipulated by the Petroleum Exploration and Production Act 1984 (PNDCL 84) and other applicable laws and regulations to strengthen national development" (section 3f, Act 821) (Obeng-Odoom, 2016: 9). However, it was not until November 2013 that this effort matured into the required law called the Petroleum (Local Content and Local Participation) Regulations, of 2013, LI 2204. The government collaborated with the Jubilee Partners and a consortium of international oil companies (IOCs) to establish an Enterprise Development Centre (EDC) in Takoradi to enhance the capacity of indigenous Ghanaian firms and promote their participation in the oil and gas industry (Ablo, 2015). The implication is that once the local people are directly involved in the production of oil, it contributes to participatory democracy.

Also, local content in the oil and gas sector has led to employment creation. For instance, the IOCs such as ENI have always involved Ghanaians at all strategic levels of development, which has led to the creation of jobs (The B&FT online, 2016). The Petroleum Commission (PC) reported that the total number of people employed in the upstream sector is estimated at 6,929, with the Ghanaian employees numbering 5,589, or 80%, and expatriates accounting for 1,340, or 20% (Amoako-Tuffour et al., 2015). Indigenous Ghanaian registered companies are said to have employed approximately 1,973 people. Further, indirect and secondary employment is about six times the direct employment in the sector (Amoako-Tuffour et al., 2015). Despite these achievements in the development of local content in Ghana's oil and gas sector, Ovadia (2016) suggests that Ghana's local content law has little provision to discourage locals from acting as fronts for foreign oil companies and minor regulations that encourage job creation over indigenous ownership. In his view, Ghana's local content law does not require local businesses in joint ventures to own any of the capital equipment and does not tackle the problem of local businesses importing goods manufactured from overseas (Ovadia, 2016a). The implication is that local ownership of businesses in the sector is not deeply entrenched, which is inconsistent with the principles of democracy.

Furthermore, the oil sector contributes to the infrastructural development of Ghana. Humphreys, Sachs, and Soros (2007), and Collier, Hoeffler, and Rohner (2009) have strongly argued that to escape the resource curse, low-income countries should use natural-resource revenues to increase public investment by spending them on public assets (e.g., human capital and physical infrastructure) with a high social rate of return (Arezki et al., 2011). Humphreys et al. (2007) opine that developing public infrastructure like roads, ports, power, communications, education, and health care services will raise the productivity of private capital and induce greater private investment. This effect can offset the negative impact of exchange rate appreciation on the non-resource tradable sector (Arezki et al., 2011).

If it is the case that oil revenues have helped in many developmental programs, especially in the construction of roads, voices have begun to rise in the country, such as that of Anthony Akoto Osei[1], who pointed out in 2015 that oil money had not done enough in terms of providing educational infrastructure. Similarly, for Dr Steve Manteaw, Chairman of the Civil Society Platform on Oil and Gas (CSPOG), it is difficult to say whether or not oil has contributed significantly to the development of infrastructure because based on the reports issued by the Public Interest and Accountability Committee (PIAC), Ghana is spreading itself too thin in terms of how it spends the oil revenue (see Osse, 2016). This was quite the picture at the time of the NDC-led government. Since the NPP took over power in January 2017, a considerable amount of money flowing from the oil revenues has been invested in education, with the president declaring in 2018 that GHS 453 million (US $78 million)[2] of the country's oil revenue would fund the much-debated Free Senior High School program, a decision touted as the most equitable and transparent use of the oil revenue (Myjoyonline.com, 2018).

After almost a decade of oil production, Ghana's oil and gas sector has generated a total amount of $5.07 billion (Ouroilmoney.org, 2019). This revenue came from the sale of crude, corporate income tax (CIT), surface rentals (SR), royalties, and revenues from gas sales and return on investments from Ghana Petroleum Funds (GFS). This is considered good news since revenues from the oil and gas sector serve as an additional source of income for Ghana's economic development.

Oil's threats to Ghana's democratic development

Despite the potential and benefits that oil production brings to the Ghanaian political economy, it also poses many threats and challenges to the country's democratic development. We argue in this section of the paper that some of the symptoms identified by resource scholars as characteristics or elements associated with the theory are beginning to manifest in the Ghanaian polity and politics.

Politics of resource patronage

The advent of oil and gas in Ghana has led to a "politics of resource patronage". For instance, there were numerous reports that during the 2008 campaign the opposition NDC's running mate John D. Mahama promised to use 10% of the oil revenue to develop the Western Region (Ghanaweb, 2010; Statesman, 2010; Giles Mohan, Asante, and Abdulai 2018). As a result, after the NDC won the election, the chiefs of the Western Region sent a petition to Parliament arguing that the oil was

1 Anthony Akoto is Ghana's Minister for monitoring and evaluation and the MP for the Old Tafo constituency
2 Exchange rate as of September 23 2020 is 1 US$ is 5.80 GHS

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discovered in their region; hence, they wanted the government to allocate 10% of the revenues from the oil and gas sector to take care of their socio-economic development needs. Over the years, the chiefs and people of the Western Region have been very consistent with their demands. The potential threat here is that if these demands are not met and the youth in the region resort to the use of force or ammunition to control the oil resource, as it happened in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria (Obi, 2010a, 2010b), there will be devastating consequences for Ghana.

To deal with the developmental challenges facing the Western Region, during the 2012 electioneering campaign the then opposition NPP promised the people that they would develop services and institutions in the region if voted into office. They further promised an "Accelerated Oil Capacity Development Program" with the goal of training Ghanaians in high job-creating sectors, including fabrications and installations, manufacturing of equipment and construction of oil and gas infrastructure (*The Chronicle*, 2012). Although they did not win the 2012 elections, they subsequently won the 2016 elections. However, four years down the line, most of these promises are yet to be fulfilled. This could be a threat to democratic development because not fulfilling one's political promises to the people will lead to mistrust and misunderstanding.

Additionally, the politics of patronage in Ghana frequently delivers state institutions into the hands of the "political favourites" or party sponsors, supporters and sympathisers who may not be proficient managers. For example, during the NPP's regime from 2001 to 2008, all major state institutions were led by NPP loyalists. The situation was not different when NDC took over the reign of governance from 2009 to 2016. Similarly, when the NPP returned to power in 2017, they replaced all NDC supporters in these institutions, including the oil and gas sector, with their followers. Indeed, worries about the politicisation of state-owned enterprises in charge of oil revenue management date back to 2012 when Gyimah-Boadi and Prempeh (2012) pointed out how GNPC, typical of Ghana's state-owned enterprises, was run by influential insiders from the NDC and their allies. The threat is that this political patronage system weakens democratic institutions and generates corruption and lack of transparency, which adversely affects resource governance in the country (Annan and Edu-Afful, 2015).

Oil has also led to higher spending on social services and infrastructure development to secure electoral victory

In some oil-dependent countries, taxes that serve as a social contract between the citizens and the state are replaced with oil rents. In many cases, the government reduces taxes so that the citizens will not hold them accountable, hence detaching itself from the citizens (McGuirk, 2013). Although some scholars have proposed direct distribution of oil cash to the ordinary citizenry in Ghana to enhance the accountability of government to the citizenry (Moss, 2010; Moss and Young, 2009), taxes remain high. The Ghanaian political elites have rather resorted to higher social and expenditure spending since oil production began in December 2010. *Table 1* shows that generally, the Ghanaian government tends to spend more during election years; for example, in 2016 the Mahama led NDC spent GHS 51,125,042,600 (US$ 8.81 billion) and for 2020, the Akuffo Addo government has a budget of GHS 85,952,000,000 (US$ 14.82 billion).[3]

3 Exchange rate as of September 23 2020 is 1 US$ is 5.80 GHS

Ghana typically operates a multiparty democratic system of government, with two political parties (the NPP and NDC) dominating since the dawn of the 4th Republic in 1992. Elections in Ghana are a winner-takes-all or a zero-sum game; therefore, politicians invest in winning elections at all cost. The 1992 constitution confers a lot of powers on the president (a hybrid - US presidential system and UK Westminster parliamentary system) because he/she appoints every major stakeholder in government, the speaker of parliament, supreme court judges, the chief justice, the head of the military and police services, the directors of various boards of all state institutions, among others (Ayelazuno 2019; Gyampo and Graham 2014, 2017). As a result, the political elites, in seeking political power, promise the electorate that they will provide them with social services and infrastructural development if given the nod. When substantial oil revenue started trickling into the Ghanaian economy from 2010, the government spent a considerable amount of it on infrastructural development and social services to satisfy the campaign promises they had made to the people. As of May 2020, Ghana has earned US$ 5,737,690,574.99 from the oil and gas sector as shown in *Table 2* (Source: Ouroilmoney.org, 2020).

Table 3 shows the percentage of oil money spent by the various regimes (NDC and NPP) from 2011 to 2018. While NDC (2011-2016) spent over 64% of the oil money annually on infrastructure such as roads, the NPP spent over 64% of oil money annually on social service delivery, particularly in the education and health sectors.

Table 1: Ghana's Total Revenue and Grant, Total Expenditure and Net Lending (2008-2020) in Ghana Cedis

Year	Total Revenue & Grants (Ghs)	Total Exp. & Net Lending (Ghs)
2008 (Election Year)	**5,623,176,945**	**8,012,345,793**
2009	6,775,165,325	8,248,244,976
2010	8,810,856,711	11532209320
2011	12,851,560,193	13,379,984,417
2012 (Election Year)	**16,668,413,845**	**20,589,731,401**
2013	19,471,552,146	27,463,039,403
2014	24,745,460,166	31,962,206,271
2015	32,040,407,836	38,589,912,790
2016(Election Year)	**33,678,172,530**	**51,125,042,600**
2017	41,497,894,313	51,985,948,597
2018	47,636,732,967	58,196,960,205
2019	52,974,137,931	67,670,899,561
2020-Budget (Election Year)	**67,071,000,000**	**85,952,000,000**

Table 2: Total Amount of Revenues Obtained from Ghana's Oil and Gas Sector in US dollars from 2011-2019)

Year	Amount of Revenue to Ghana (US$)
2011	444,124,724.00
2012	541,623,740.00
2013	846,767,185.00
2014	978,017,692.70
2015	396,172,910.00
2016	247,175,395.00
2017	540,411,436.04
2018	977,124,930.13
2019	766,272,562.12
Total [4]	**5,484,114,892.12**

4 (NB: Total as of May 2020= US$ 5,737,690,574.99 (Source: Ouroilmoney.org, 2020)

Table 3: Percentage of oil money spent on social services and infrastructural development

Year/ Political Party	Percentage spent on infrastructure	Percentage spent on social services
2011/NDC	76.5%- Roads 11.5%- Expenditure and Amortization of loans for oil and gas infrastructure **Total = 88%**	0.4% -Capacity building in oil and gas
2012/NDC	45%- Roads and other infrastructure 19% - Expenditure and Amortization of loans for oil and gas infrastructure **Total = 64%**	22%- Capacity building in oil and gas
2013/NDC	68.42%- Roads and other infrastructure 25.4% - Expenditure and Amortization of loans for oil and gas infrastructure **Total = 93.82%**	3.71%- Capacity building in oil and gas
2014/NDC	39.26%- Roads and other infrastructure 29.68% Expenditure and Amortization of loans for oil and gas infrastructure **Total = 68.94%**	0%- Capacity building in oil and gas
2015/NDC	42.99%- Roads and other infrastructure 39.07% Expenditure and Amortization of loans for oil and gas infrastructure **Total = 82.06%**	12.64%- Capacity building in oil and gas
2016/NDC	64.11%- Roads and other infrastructure 0%- Expenditure and Amortization of loans for oil and gas infrastructure **Total = 64.11%**	26.69%- Capacity building in oil and gas
Year/Political party	**Percentage spent on infrastructure** (i.e. Road, Rail and other critical Infrastructure Development)	**Percentage spent on social services** (i.e. Physical infrastructure and service delivery in health and education)
2017/NPP	12%- Road, Rail and other critical Infrastructure Development	61%- Education 3.0%- Heath **Total: 64%**
2018/NPP	23%- Road, Rail and other critical Infrastructure Development	69%- Education 2.0%- Heath **Total: 71%**

During the 2012 and 2016 general elections, the NDC campaign was based on the massive infrastructural development they claimed to have built in many sectors of the economy. The NDC spent on some social services, including capacity building in the oil and gas sector, as well as the educational sector. Other social services which were implemented in the education sector by the NDC include capitation grant, provision of school uniforms, and increase in the school feeding program. This led to an increase in the state's expenditure in those sectors. Obeng-Odoom (2015a) showed that public expenditure on education was 9.1% of GDP in 2007 and 10.1% in 2008. In 2013, 23.8% of the total budget was allotted to education (Obeng-Odoom, 2015a). On the other hand, the NPP had promised the citizens before the 2012 and 2016 elections that they were going to invest heavily in the educational sector by introducing Free Senior High School education. As shown on the table above, the NPP government spent 61% of Ghana's oil money in 2017 and 69% in 2018 on education, with a chunk of the 69% going into Free SHS (Myjoyonline.com, 2018).

It appears the government is sometimes bound to spend more on social services even where resources are limited, since the political elites' hold on power seems to be intrinsically linked with provision of material resources to their clientele base (Siakwah, 2017b). This is evident in *Table 1*. On the other hand, with a huge infrastructural deficit across the country, the government is morally obliged to spend on roads, poverty reduction programs and payment of public sector wages which all increase the national debt. For example, the implementation of the Single Spine Salary Structure (SSSS) since 2010 increased Ghana's wage bill to 70% of tax revenue in 2014 (Siakwah, 2017b).

Oil-induced borrowing and general borrowing in anticipation that future oil money will be used to pay the debt.

The discovery of oil in resource-rich economies sometimes leads to oil-induced borrowing and increase in public debt. These countries usually have a higher expectation of constant wealth, which is often not sustainable due to oil price volatilities (Cust and Mihalyi, 2017; Cust and Poelhekke, 2015; Siakwah, 2017b). There are reports that Ghana's current debt crisis is a result of the expectations of oil wealth which fuelled the government to go on a borrowing spree since 2011. For example, the issuance of Eurobonds have become the order of the day since the country discovered oil, and government officials often cite oil as a key reason for optimism in their investor presentations and prospectuses (Adam and Mihalyi, 2017).

Ghana's debt continues to increase from US$19 billion in 2012 to US$25.6 billion in 2016, to US$ 38.9 billion at the end of March 2019 (Dzawu, 2019). This increase in 2019 is up 16% from March 2018 and the highest since March 2015. As a percentage of gross domestic product, debt rose to 58% in the month compared to 50% in March 2018 (Dzawu, 2019). More than half of Ghana's debt since oil production in 2011 is from external loans, although the government borrows from domestic sources as well. *Figure 1* shows Ghana's borrowing since 2010. It projects that by 2020, Ghana's Debt to GDP is expected to reach 63.80% according to Trading Economics global macro models (Tradingeconomics.com, 2020).

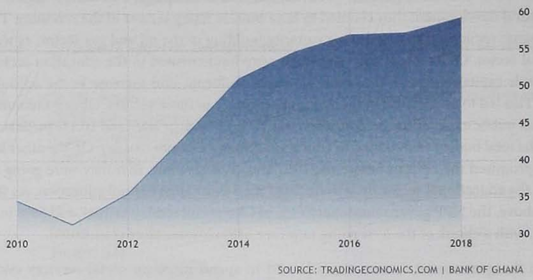

Figure 1: Ghana's Debt to GDP from 2010 to 2018 (In billion USD)

Oil and corruption

The natural resource curse literature suggests that natural resources such as oil often lead to corruption and rent-seeking in developing economies (Andersen and Aslaksen, 2013; Aslaksen, 2010; Tsui, 2011). Scholars argue that natural resources create 'rents', and political elites compete for their control. In other words, natural resource (oil) wealth provides incentives for some regimes, both authoritarian and democratic, to stay in power at any cost—by bribing voters, supporting patronage-based and unproductive investments, encouraging a shift from productive entrepreneurial activity to unproductive rent-seeking, weakening institutions, and resisting efforts to further accountability, transparency, and modernization. Corruption inflicts fiscal burdens on the economy through the misappropriation of state resources that could otherwise be used productively, saved or invested.

There has been an increase in perceptions of corruption since oil was discovered in 2007. The Afrobarometer Survey conducted in 2014 by the Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD) showed that public perceptions of corruption had significantly increased. According to the 2014 survey, three quarters (75%) of respondents said corruption had increased over the previous year (Afrobarometer. org, 2014). As a result, most Ghanaians have little trust in public institutions such as the police, local government, the Ghana Revenue Authority, parliament, the presidency, courts of law, the opposition and the electoral commission. More so, accusations of corruption are prevalent in Ghana's oil sector because contracts are awarded based on an "open door" approach instead of a "competitive bidding" approach (ACEP, 2013). This has led to fronting for oil contracts.

An example is Kosmos, E. O. Group and ExxonMobil (during NPP's regime under J.A Kufuor) and AGM (during the NDC regime under Mills-Mahama). In 2004, the NPP under Kufuor's government approved an oil block license to the E.O. Group, a Ghanaian diaspora owned company that was alleged to have a close relationship with President Kufuor. Not too long after taking office, the NDC probed the terms of the Kosmos deal, focusing on the E.O. Group's 3.5% share in the Jubilee Field, the bulk of which it sold to Kosmos Energy. The NDC argued that E.O. had used its connection with President J. A. Kufuor to obtain the license on the cheap (Public Agenda, 2011).

This case has been well documented by several scholars who describe it as a "quick and dirty deal" (Mohan et al., 2018; Mohan and Asante, 2015; Phillips et al., 2016).

On the other hand, when NDC took over, it was also blamed for setting up frontmen in the issuance of block licenses. For instance, a contract between AGM, GNPC, and ExploreCo was queried by the African Centre for Energy Policy (ACEP), a civil society organization within Ghana's energy sector. ACEP (2013) argued that:

> The Agreement with the AGM Petroleum stinks badly and must not be allowed to pass without serious parliamentary scrutiny. The circumstances leading to this Agreement cannot pass the deal as genuinely seeking Ghana's interest. We know for instance that the South Deep Water Tano was held by Aker Asa, a Norwegian company with extensive upstream experience, which was terminated by Government. Ophir Energy, another company with upstream experience, also applied for this block with a Ghanaian company, withdrew its application and reapplied alone only to end up with a farm-in Agreement in the Offshore Accra Contract Area. We now have the entry of AGM Petroleum Ghana Limited, incorporated in Ghana on Monday 21st May 2012, an unknown company in the global oil and gas industry and with no upstream experience.

Consequently, the political elites in both NPP and NDC are guilty of seeking their interests to the detriment of the subaltern class who continue to wallow in poverty without seeing the benefits from Ghana's relatively growing oil and gas sector (Mohan and Asante, 2015). Within a year of the NPP taking overpower from the NDC in January 2017, Ghana signed a contract with Exxon Mobil without an open competitive tendering. Exxon Mobil, the lead operator, holds an 80% interest in the Deepwater Cape Three Point offshore (DWCTP), while state-run GNPC holds 15% (Reuters, 2018). All these deals confirm the alleged secrecy within the oil and gas sector. Additionally, in 2019, a policy institute, IMANI Ghana, raised concerns that Ghana risked suffering revenue losses of about US$4.8 billion if the agreement with Aker Energy was not renegotiated as a matter of urgency. The Energy Minister, Mr. Amewu, also remarked, "It is curious how IMANI Ghana came by the conclusion that Ghana risks losing US$30 billion if the government does not negotiate a new petroleum agreement with Aker Energy There is no basis for a new petroleum agreement. This is because the work that was done by Aker Energy formed part of an appraisal program based on the existing petroleum agreement," (Graphic online, 2019).

In the mining sector, the situation is not different. Most of the contracts and operations in the sector are not transparent. There is no open or competitive bidding. In a recent study on the mining sector, Ayelazuno and Mawuko-Yevugah (2019: 243–245) argue that the government of Ghana adopts "strong-arm measures against artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) operators" in a sector which is mainly dominated by the poor subaltern. The government uses the military and the police to crack down on ASM for the destruction of the environment; however, the state handles with "kid gloves" the MNCs involved in large-scale mining (LSM).

Indeed, Artisanal Small-Scale Mining (ASM/galamsey) is plagued with many scandals of corruption. A group of illegal small-scale miners operating in Anwia in the Ellembelle District accused some NPP executives of failing to fulfil their promise to protect their mining activities after collecting huge sums of monies from them (GhanaWeb, 2020c). Expressing concerns on *Newsfile* about the challenges limiting President Akufo-Addo's fight against illegal mining, the Managing Editor of the

New Crusading Guide newspaper, Kweku Baako said the president must "get rid" of party elements if he wants to succeed: "If there is a continued party political involvement in any campaign to fight galamsey, it's not going to work. When you have a president, who dedicates and commits himself to that campaign and yet he's hugely challenged in terms of implementation; I'm saying the party elements, get them out; quickly" (GhanaWeb, 2020a). Moreover, there was a recent uproar about 500 excavators reported missing by Prof. Frimpong Boateng, the Minister for Environment, Science and Technology. Later, the member of parliament of Assin Central, Kennedy Agyapong, who is of the same political party as the minister, alleged that the minister was involved in the loss of the machines. Mr. Agyapong stated that Jojo Frimpong Boateng (the son of the minister), through Ekow Ewusi, took the excavators to use for their mining activities. (GhanaWeb, 2020b).

Security threats

We also identified that oil is beginning to pose a significant security threat to Ghana's democracy. For example, there were reported cases of conflicts and tensions between the chiefs and people of Ahanta and Nzema in the Western Region over the sale of land, youth unemployment and the ownership of the portion of the sea where the oil was discovered (Aning, 2010). Oil theft and sabotage are also posing security threats in the areas surrounding the oil fields (Osei-Tutu, 2012). In this regard, the government began taking the necessary measures to curb the potential threats. In March 2013, the Minister for the Interior, Kwesi Ahwoi, speaking at the official sod-cutting ceremony for the construction of administrative and academic blocks for the Marine Police Academy at Aiyinase, 287 km west of the national capital, Accra, vowed to step up protection of oil and gas exploration off Cape-Three-Points in the Western Region from piracy and other forms of maritime security threats. He further noted that a partnership between the security agencies would help clamp down on any threat posed by pirates to the oil and gas industry and ensure peace and harmony on the country's territorial waters (Global Times, 2013).

Conclusion and emerging issues

We have argued in this paper that given the resources that oil confers on people, particularly the elites in power, the clamour and competition for oil resources often lead to negative tendencies that affect democracy, such as the politics of resource-patronage, high social and infrastructural spending, high borrowing, high corruption or perception of it, and finally, security threats to neighbouring oil producing communities. These adverse effects confirm the position of scholars such as Kramon (2008) that oil wealth tends to undermine democracy by concentrating too much power in the executive, promoting corruption and patronage, and weakening the rule of law.

The study has revealed that although there has been an increase in transparency within the oil industry in Ghana, the same cannot be said of accountability. For instance, while the petroleum revenue management requires the Minister of Finance to publish the state of oil-funded projects annually, nothing happens if the minister fails to abide by these provisions. If not checked, such behaviour can be adopted in other sectors of the economy. Coupled with this is the minimal participation by citizens in the selection of priority areas for oil revenue investment. All these negative externalities within the oil sector in Ghana have implications for politics and democracy.

Theoretically, we can safely say that a decade after oil discovery, Ghana is getting closer to the oil curse syndrome as experienced by other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, the country's institutions need to be strengthened further to escape the oil curse hypothesis. We must make the following recommendations in a broader context so that lessons could be learned by the new oil-producing countries in the Sub-Saharan region including countries such as Senegal, Liberia and Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Togo, and Sao Tome and Principe in the Gulf of Guinea, and the Central African Republic, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya and Mozambique. We strongly recommend that the government supports civil society organisations through research grants that are awarded through competitive processes. This will enable them to produce policy documents to deal with the challenges confronting the oil industry, including governance issues. Accountability measures such as punishing officials who contradict the laws should be implemented, and all revenues accruing to the sector should be published. In addition, a proper needs assessment should be conducted to serve as the basis for the selection of priority areas for oil revenue expenditure. These measures need to be put in place to help the country escape the oil curse. Future research should focus on the impact of oil discovery and democratic consolidation in Sub-Saharan Africa using empirical methodologies. Such empirical studies would confirm or refute our findings. This will then create an avenue for a broader understanding of oil governance and democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa.

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