

Abstract

Existing literature has thoroughly examined the political and resource curses as phenomena and in the context of well-known case studies. Considerable scholarship has also been devoted to the study of big-man authoritarian leaders and systems of institutionalized corruption around the world. There exists a gap in literature, however, regarding the interactions among natural resource wealth, big-man authoritarian leaders and corruption, especially in less well-known case studies including Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea. This thesis will address that gap, explore the causal connections among the three variables, and put forth a comprehensive study of how the authoritarian leaders of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea use corruption to exploit their resource monopolies in order to consolidate power and achieve regime longevity. A conclusion will be offered following an in-depth study of the political, social and economic histories of each state and their oil industries, in addition to the specific systems of corruption through which their leaders have consolidated the wealth necessary to concentrate power and entrench their regimes. The importance of scholarship about and policy attention toward less well-known cases of the political resource curse in states ruled by authoritarian big-men, and how this thesis will hopefully drive such research, will also be explained.