Natural Resource Monopolies, Power Consolidation and Regime Longevity in Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon

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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.

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Chapter One: Introduction

As developing countries around the world continue to suffer from a lack of consistent economic growth, free and fair democracies and engaged, successful populations, scholars continue to debate how best to assist these states. In the economic field, states rich in natural resources but still struggling to develop have gained the attention of scholars over the past three decades. These states, suffering from what is known as the resource curse, have failed to harness natural resources into sustained economic growth and development, instead often experiencing economic decline. Scholars in the political science field extended the resource curse hypothesis and developed the notion of the political resource curse. These scholars argue that states rich in natural resources not only suffer from a lack of steady economic development, but also tend to suffer from an increased risk of corrupt and oppressive authoritarianism. As we will see in the next chapter, extensive literature exists around the consensus that resource-rich developing states are more prone to economic downturn, oppressive authoritarianism and corruption than their resource-poor neighbours. This dissertation will focus on the cases of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea to assess how their authoritarian leaders have exploited their states' natural resource revenues in order to consolidate power and achieve regime longevity. The selection of these two case studies will be thoroughly explained in the methodology chapter.

Resource-rich states in Africa in particular have been widely cited as case studies which demonstrate the political and resource curses due to the continent's concentration of developing states and its status as home to some of the largest natural resource reserves in the world. Angola and Nigeria have taken centre stage in existing literature on the resource curse as states with immense oil and gas reserves.

Similarly, the largest and most obvious examples of the political and resource curses in other regions have dominated existing literature. Venezuela, home to the world's largest oil reserves, has been cited extensively as an example of the resource curse in Latin America. Current literature's limited focus on the most obvious case studies has led to equally narrow recommendations and international attention paid to addressing the political and resource curses and accompanying corrupt authoritarian regimes. Existing literature's recommendations on how best to escape or overcome the curse have largely centred around addressing violent conflict and making the government a better steward of resource wealth. The recommendation to focus on addressing violent conflict is appropriate for states such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Angola, both well-known examples of the political and resource curses. Since gaining independence in 1960, the DRC has been home to three official Congolese Wars and consistent violent civil conflict (Bobineau & Gieg, 2016). Much of the violence has been driven by rebel groups seeking control of the country's coltan caches, or groups acting out in defiance of the government's failure to appropriately distribute resource revenue. International political and judicial organizations including the United Nations and International Criminal Court have long worked to quell the state's ongoing violence and hold rebel leaders accountable (Musila, 2009). On Africa's west coast, Sierra Leone and Angola are home to sizeable reserves of "conflict diamonds," as they have come to be known because of the violent conflict their presence so often sparks (Ross, 2001: 340). An entire international certification scheme, the Kimberly Process, was engineered to deter demand for diamonds from these conflict-plagued areas, and thus deter conflict itself.

While addressing the sustained conflict which has been present in the DRC, Angola and Sierra Leone is sensible, this recommendation is far less relevant to the less well-known cases of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea which will be the focus of this dissertation. Unlike its neighbours, Cameroon has largely avoided widespread civil conflict since gaining independence. The country has been home to a drawn-out conflict in its minority Anglophone region since 2017, however this conflict has been relatively concentrated in the state's Northeast and Southwest regions (Rupiya, 2020: 105). The conflict's origins in language and education reform disputes further distance it from the civil wars spurred by control of natural resources and subsequent revenue which have occurred in other resource-rich African states. In neighbouring Equatorial Guinea, the most organized violence the state has seen since gaining independence and ousting its first president in the 1970s occurred during a failed coup attempt in 2004 (Rupiya, 2020: 107). The existing academic and policy prescription to address the political resource curse by first putting an end to violent conflict thus seems rather inapplicable to the comparatively peaceful cases of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea.

A second prominent recommendation from existing literature, to make governments better stewards and allocators of resource wealth, is perhaps realistic for states whose governments are not innately intertwined with the state's resource sector. This is the case for several well-known cases of the resource curse. Nigeria, for example, is one of Africa's largest oil producers and has seen thirteen presidential administrations come to power and oversee the state's oil industry since gaining independence in 1963 (Mlambo, 2022: 4). Likewise, Sierra Leone, despite its ongoing history of resource-spurred conflict, has proven able to share power among political parties, having six different administrations, and heads of the state's Petroleum Directorate, since declaring independence in 1971 (Mlambo, 2022: 6). International organizations such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) have utilized this degree of separation between the states' political apparatuses and petroleum industries to push reform initiatives aimed at increasing transparency (Mlambo, 2022). In Nigeria, the IMF and World Bank have worked extensively to implement the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), which established a global standard for good governance in oil, gas and mineral industries (IMF, 2007: 47). Nigeria was selected as a pilot country by the IMF for testing and evaluation of the EITI verification process, and by 2007 was producing regular reports on oil revenue collection and distribution (IMF, 2007: 47). The country also established a regional revenue-sharing agreement which mandated that 13 percent of oil revenue be returned to its oil-producing regions, although successful implementation of the agreement has yet to be verified (IMF, 2007: 33). Successive Nigerian administrations have continued to follow the EITI's requirements and, although systemic problems persist in the state's oil and gas industry, a government effort to increase transparency and promote more equitable revenue allocation has been demonstrated. This administrative effort has been carried out by the state's Minister of Petroleum Resources, a government position which heads the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (Nwuke, 2021: 1). Six different individuals have held the position since it was created in the 1990s, and have served under five different presidents (Nwuke, 2021: 1). In Angola, following the multi-decade rule of former President Dos Santos which was marred by corruption involving the state's oil sector, the country has made a noticeable effort to reverse its previous practices and increase transparency. Beginning in 2018, current Angolan President Joao Lourenco removed the head of the state's oil industry appointed by Dos Santos and directed an investigation be launched by the government Anti-Corruption Prevention and Control Office into millions in oil revenue which went missing under Dos Santos' administration

(Eisenhammer, 2018: 1).

The recommendation to make governments better stewards of resource wealth, however, is far less applicable to Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea. The current regimes in both states have been in power since their respective petroleum booms, if not since the discovery of oil itself, and have grown intertwined with the state oil industry. The presidents of both states have relied on sustained oil revenue to stay in power and entrench their regimes, appointing loyal politicians and even family members to head their state's oil industry in order to do so. Independence between Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea's governments and petroleum industries has therefore often been difficult to identify. As a result, Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea's state-owned oil companies have yet to be the targets of international reform initiatives. Cameroon has demonstrated some desire to participate in the EITI, and has produced several reports on the country's oil revenue collection and allocation (IMF, 2007: 47). However, this limited progress has largely been received as disingenuous due to Adolphe Moudiki's continued leadership over the state's oil production. Moudiki, who has held his post since 1993, is a close associate of president Paul Biya (Bouopda, 2006: 238). Although oil reserves were first discovered off the coast of Cameroon in the late 1970s, it was not until the mid 1980s, after Biya had assumed the presidency, that the country's oil production and revenue skyrocketed (Bouopda, 2006). With Biya and Moudiki still in power today, Cameroon's closely intertwined government and oil industry have been led by nearly the same faces since the genesis of the industry itself. In Equatorial Guinea, president Teodoro Obiang rose to power seventeen years before the discovery of oil reserves in 1996 (Rupiya, 2020: 103). Since then, several subcontracting agencies have been in charge of staffing the state's oil industry and signing contracts with transnational mining corporations (Rupiya, 2020: 103). According to a 2006 report published by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, of the six subcontracting agencies which control access to Equatorial Guinea's oil reserves, five were owned by Obiang's relatives, including one by his son who also serves as the country's Mining and Energy Secretary of State (HRW, 2009: 15). The sixth company was owned by Obiang's Director General of Presidential Security (HRW, 2009: 15). Given this level of conflicting interests and political nepotism, it seems unlikely that encouragement by international bodies to become better stewards of their oil resources and revenues would inspire a change in the leaders of Cameroon or Equatorial Guinea. The intrinsically intertwined nature of both states' regimes and oil sectors, which have propped each other up for decades, leaves little room for transparency and accountability initiatives to succeed.

Despite this lack of widespread applicability, because the above two recommendations are appropriate for the most well-known cases of the political and resource curses, they have long remained the global communities' chief proposals. International organizations including the United Nations, World Bank and International Monetary Fund have simultaneously prioritized aid and development initiatives to the most well-known cases while individual states have followed the recommendations of such organizations. For six consecutive years from 2010 until 2016, Nigeria and the DRC were among the top ten recipients of bilateral international aid (OECD, 2018: 2). During that period, the DRC received 5.9 percent of total bilateral international aid to Africa while Nigeria received 4.5 percent (OECD, 2018: 7). The two less well-known case studies of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea, received 1.3 and 0.0 percent during the same six-year period, respectively (OECD, 2018: 7). As of 2022, Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea also received lower levels of Special Drawing Rights (SDR) from the International Monetary Fund than more well-known examples of the political and resource curses. In December 2022, Equatorial Guinea had 76.54 million SDR in loans from the IMF, while Cameroon had borrowed 966 million SDR (IMF.org, 2022). Simultaneously, the DRC had received 1142.2 million, Angola had 3213.4 million and Nigeria had 3755.37 million (IMF.org, 2022).

As evidenced above, existing research and subsequent policy recommendations have concentrated on the most obvious examples of the political and resource curses around the world and particularly in Africa. In turn, international financial and aid organizations have focused more of their efforts on these well-known and conflict-plagued examples of the resource curse. As a result, there exists a gap in academic and policy literature and international attention afforded to less well-known cases, including Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea. As the world's companies and population become increasingly socially conscious, and international bodies advance humanitarian objectives such as the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, it is vital that smaller, less-written-about countries are not overlooked. Recognizing that a focus of scholarship on particular humanitarian and development hardships often prompts international action, this dissertation aims to address the gap in existing literature by examining the cases of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea. This thesis will serve as an initial step toward rounding out current scholarship on the political and resource curses, and accompanying corrupt authoritarian regimes, hopefully resulting in more widely applicable scholarship and policy. The case studies of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea in particular will hopefully create a space within resource curse and authoritarianism literature for further discussion of smaller-state examples and those with deeply entrenched regimes in control of natural resources. Academic and institutional attention to this thesis would advance the author's goals of expanding the scope of current political and resource curse literature and prompting increased international attention to less well-known case studies of the political and resource curses.

This thesis will continue as follows: Chapter two will provide a review of existing literature on the political and resource curses as well as on the systems of institutionalized corruption which so often define accompanying authoritarian regimes. This chapter will lay out the primary consensuses and debates which exist in current literature, and the gap which has resulted from the narrow selection of cases studies in existing academic works. How this dissertation will address that gap in scholarship will be explained. Chapter three will focus on methodology. An explanation of the use of case studies as a qualitative research method, and the particular selection of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea as case studies, will be provided. Chapter four will provide a consolidated history of Cameroon, from colonialism to present day, including Paul Biya's ascension to the presidency and subsequent legislative and executive elections. This chapter will feature an in-depth examination of the corrupt financial dealings of the Biya regime, his control over the state's oil industry and his use of oil revenues to consolidate power and achieve regime longevity. Chapter five will focus on the history of Equatorial Guinea as well as a comprehensive study of Teodoro Obiang's regime, patrominialist system, and exploitation of the state's oil industry for personal and familial gain. Chapter six will conclude this thesis, reiterating the author's main points of analysis and offering insight into the future of the topic.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Economists have often been credited as the first scholars to have written about the resource curse - the negative relationship between an abundance of, particularly extractive, natural resources, and economic growth and development. Hossein Mahdavy's (1970) work on the economic history of Iran as a rentier state is widely regarded as the first modern mention of the so-called resource curse. Scholarship about the relationship between natural resources and economic growth gained popularity throughout the second half of the 20th century. Numerous empirical studies utilizing different data sets continued to find evidence "on the poor growth experience[s] of resource-rich countries in the post-[W]orld-[W]ar II period" (Sachs & Warner, 2001: 827-28). Later studies about the post-war period found that "the curse of natural resources [was] a demonstrable fact, *even after controlling for trends in commodity prices*" (Sachs & Warner, 2001: 828; italics in original). As this consensus grew, political scientists and scholars of international relations took note. Academics from these disciplines expanded on the work of economists throughout the 1990s and came up with the notion of the *political* resource curse. Scholars noted that just as states with an abundance of natural resources suffered from lower economic growth, so too did they have higher rates of authoritarian regimes. In 1991, Samuel Huntington (1991) popularized the notion of the political resource curse, that natural resource caches could negatively affect the political trajectory of a state in addition to their economic future. Huntington (1991) concluded in his study of the effects of oil reserves on states' levels of democracy that, as resource revenues accrued to the state and lowered the need for taxation, the government's need to appeal to the public and the public's demands for representation also decreased, paving the way for a non-democratic regime to emerge. In the following decades, scholarship continued to examine the political and resource curses, with more than 2,300 scientific papers mentioning the 'resource curse' written in 2015 alone (Papyrakis & Pellegrini, 2016: 175). Simultaneously, increased academic attention was paid to the authoritarian regimes which so often accompanied resource-rich states. Scholarship into the systems of corruption utilized by authoritarian rulers in order to consolidate and entrench their power has continually expanded since the 1990s. The increased academic attention paid to such topics was mirrored by global initiatives aimed at influencing policy around reporting and transparency requirements of natural resource revenues and the regimes which controlled them (Papyrakis & Pellegrini, 2016: 175). While such extensive research and global policy efforts have yet to offer a solution, they have reached four primary consensuses about the relationship between natural resource caches and economic decline, violent conflict, authoritarianism and corruption.

First, scholars are largely in agreement on Mahdavy's original idea that natural resource caches diminish a state's economic growth. Many studies have offered empirical evidence that countries with an abundance of natural resources have suffered slower economic growth than resource-poor countries. Sachs and Warner (2001) studied economic growth and natural resource abundance by measuring exports of natural resources as a percentage of a state's GDP from 1970-1989. Their results showed that "none of the countries with extremely abundant natural resources in 1970 grew rapidly for the next 20 years," with only three minor exceptions (Sachs & Warner, 2001: 829). Likewise, a 2003 World Bank study examined the economic performance of states with substantial mining sectors in the 1990s.

The study found that states with medium (6-15 percent of all exports), large (15-50 percent of all exports) and very large (over 50 percent of all exports) mining sectors collectively “saw their GDP per capita fall 1.15 percent a year- a drop over the course of the decade of almost 11 percent” (World Bank, 2003; Ross, 2002: 20).

Second, scholars have similarly reached broad agreement on the common-sense notion that the presence of, particularly lootable, natural resources increases the likelihood of conflict. Known as the ‘conflict trap,’ this consensus holds that resource-rich states are more likely to suffer violent civil conflicts than states which are resource-poor, and that violent conflict is often concentrated in extractive regions (Ross, 2002; Roy 2018; Collier & Hoeffler, 1998). Using a logit model to predict the likelihood of civil war onset in resource-rich states, Collier and Hoeffler (2004) found that “the effect of primary commodity exports on conflict risk [was] both highly significant and considerable. At peak danger (primary commodity exports being 33% of GDP), the risk of civil war is about 22%, while a country with no such exports has a risk of only 1%” (580). These consensuses about the relationship between natural resource endowments and economic decline and violent conflict are prominent in existing literature and therefore must be mentioned in a comprehensive literature review. However, because they do not pertain directly to my research question, they will not be discussed further in this thesis. The two subsequent consensuses will be explored in greater detail as they speak more directly to my research question.

Third, academic consensus exists that states with natural resource endowments are more likely to have authoritarian regimes than democratic governments. Ross (2001) produced some of the most influential research results on this hypothesis. Using “pooled time-series cross-national data from 113 states between 1971 and 1997,” Ross studied the effect of extensive oil reserves on particular states’ likelihood of democratic governance (Ross, 2001: 325). He found “that the antidemocratic properties of oil” were substantial, with “a single standard deviation rise in the Oil variable [producing] a .49 drop in the 0-10 democracy index over the five-year period” (Ross, 2001: 342). States which are heavily reliant on oil exports, such as Angola and Nigeria, Ross found, “would lose 1.5 points on the democracy scale due to its oil wealth alone” (Ross, 2001: 342). In 2004, Jensen and Wantchekon built on Ross’ conclusions to examine the “negative correlation between the presence of a sizeable natural resource sector and the level of democracy in Africa” (816). The authors argue there is robust empirical evidence “that resource abundance not only is an important determinant of democratic transition but also partially determines the success of democratic consolidation in Africa” (Jensen & Wantchekon, 2004: 816). They point to the resource-poor states of Benin, Mali and Madagascar as the only examples of successful post-Cold War democratic reforms on the African continent (Jensen & Wantchekon, 2004).[1] This extension of the political resource curse hypothesis, that natural resource wealth not only increases the likelihood of authoritarianism over democracy, but simultaneously decreases the chances of a democratic transition, is echoed in other scholarship. Impactful studies by Wantchekon (2000) and Clark, Poast and Wiens (2014) reinforce Jensen and Wantchekon’s findings. Clark, Poast and Wiens’ 2014 work utilized “a dynamic logit model using data from 166 countries, covering the period from 1816 to 2006” and found that “an increase in resource dependence decreases an autocracy’s likelihood of being democratic over both the short and long term” (783). Although a few studies (Haber & Menaldo, 2011; Brooks & Kurtz, 2016) dispute the negative correlation between resource abundance and democratic governance, these challenges are largely grounded in critiques of research design. Since the 1990s, the academic consensus regarding the political resource curse has remained intact.

Finally, a second common-sense conclusion has been drawn from research on the political resource curse: authoritarian regimes funded by resource revenues have engaged in high levels of oppression, human rights abuses and corruption. The hypothesis that, “in the presence of natural resource rents, leaders lower the burden of taxation on citizens in order to reduce the demand for democratic accountability,” has emerged in many academic works (McGuirk, 2011: 285; McFerson, 2009). DeMeritt and Young (2013) draw the conclusion that authoritarian regimes not forced to rely on tax revenue from the citizenry because of the presence of natural resource rents are more likely to engage in repression and “use indiscriminate violations of personal integrity rights as a policy tool” (99). Sungi (2016) examined human rights abuses in the extractive regions of Nigeria and Tanzania, both states which enjoy high oil and gas revenues. Both Tanzania’s Mtwara and Lindi regions, as well as Nigeria’s Ogoni land, home to the largest oil fields in each state, were found to have been the sites of extreme violence and human rights abuses (Sungi, 2016: 125). Many scholars have attributed the prevalence of such abuses to the corrupt relationship between authoritarian regimes in resource rich states and transnational extractive corporations. In Nigeria for instance, Shell operates the largest oil field in the country, located in the Ogoni region, and has worked closely with the state’s authoritarian and military regimes to reap record profits with little to no care paid to the local population (Sungi, 2016: 126).

Shell could not have achieved the success it has, according to Harshe (2003), without the "repressive apparatus of… Nigeria's military regimes" (114). "Under [Nigeria's] military dictatorships… the alliance between western oil firms including Chevron, Mobil, Shell, Elf Aquitaine and Italian AGIP and the Nigerian government was pressed into service to exploit oil resources ruthlessly. In fact, the western oil firms operated in partnership with the government-owned Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation," which supplied 80 percent of the state's revenue and made successive military regimes and their "corrupt officialdom" fortunes (Harshe, 2003: 114). This corrupt relationship between authoritarian regimes and multinational extractive companies, and the oppression and human rights violations it has led to, has garnered widespread academic consensus.

Under the umbrella of research which has examined the relationship between natural resources, authoritarianism and corruption, extensive literature on the particular system of (neo)patrimonialism has emerged. Bratton and van de Walle (2012), drawing from Max Weber's original definition of patrimonialism, define the system as one in which the right to rule "is ascribed to a person rather than to an office, despite the existence of a written constitution" (62). In neopatrimonialist regimes, "one individual, often a president for life, dominates the state apparatus and stands above its laws. Relationships of loyalty and dependence pervade a formal political and administrative system, and officials occupy bureaucratic positions less to perform public service, their ostensible purpose, than to acquire personal wealth and status" (Bratton & van de Walle, 2012: 62). Existing literature has also linked neopatrimonialism to regime entrenchment, although not explicitly in the contexts of resource-rich states as this dissertation will do in the following chapters. Bratton and van de Walle (2012) note that, in neopatrimonialist regimes, the presidential "strongman" and his inner circle use the "modern state administration… for systemic patronage and clientelist practices in order to maintain political" control (62). The personalized nature of politics in neopatrimonialist states and the power accrued by top national and local politicians by virtue of the president often results in regime entrenchment, and in Africa in particular has resulted in the continent's history of big man rulers.

Despite six decades of "ostensibly competitive and pluralistic politics" since the independence movements of the 1960s, the phenomenon has emerged in Africa of rulers "circumventing … new constitutional rules such as presidential term limits to remain in power" (Dulani & Tengatenga, 2019: 276). These big-man rulers have uniquely exploited personalist and neopatrimonialist political systems in order to take advantage of fledgling democracies for personal gain. Dulani and Tengatenga (2019) define big man rulers as the heads of personalized regimes in which “presidents wield and exercise substantial power and are generally less restrained by formalized systems of rule” (278). In big-man regimes, “political institutionalization largely emanates not from the legally sanctioned institutions of law- whether constitutional or civic- but on the personal wishes and whims of those who happen to hold the reins of power” (Dulani & Tengatenga, 2019: 276). These rulers “are often portrayed as irreplaceable cogs in the governance of their countries” and as such “remain in their positions for long periods of time,” resulting in “a level of permanence in the nature and type of political leadership” (Dulani & Tengatenga, 2019: 176, 278). Between 1990 and 2014, of the 103 presidential elections in Africa which saw an incumbent seeking re-election, incumbents won 88, or 85%, of the contests (Dulani & Tengatenga, 2019: 277). As of 2019, nine African presidents had been in power for more than fourteen years, six of which, including the leaders of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea, had held their positions for over thirty years (Dulani & Tengatenga, 2019: 276). Existing literature has provided the argument for viewing neopatrimonialism as a system conducive to big man rulers achieving regime longevity. In the coming chapters, this dissertation will discuss the understudied question of how neopatrimonialism was used by the leaders of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea to exploit natural resource wealth in order to consolidate their power entrench their regimes.

As noted by Bratton and van de Walle (2012), clientelism is another form of institutionalized corruption, alongside neopatrimonialism, which is often present in personalist and big-man regimes. Roninger (2004) defined clientelism an “asymmetric but mutually beneficial [relationship] of power and exchange, a …quid pro quo between individuals or groups of unequal standing” which involves “mediated and selective access to resources and markets from which others are normally excluded” (353-54). Access to state resources and markets “is conditioned on subordination, compliance or dependence” on those in positions of power (Roninger, 2004: 354). In personalized and big-man regimes, as we will see in the cases of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea, presidents and their inner circles wield complete control of state resources and “place themselves [and] their supporters in positions from which they can divert resources and services in their favor” (Roninger, 2004: 354). Clients, or those dependent on such resources, “are expected to return their benefactors’ help, politically and otherwise, by working for them at election times or boosting their patron’s prestige and reputation” (Roninger, 2004: 354). Political clientelism in particular expects clients to return the favours of those in power through votes and public election campaigning. Many big-man rulers in

Africa, unrestricted by democratic standards of electoral integrity, have found “a useful strategy for winning elections and building political support through the selective release of public funds to supporting politicians and associates” (Roninger, 2004: 354). In addition to the selective distribution of state funds, including resource revenues, many rulers of clientelist systems arbitrarily distribute lucrative civil service jobs as favours to be paid back.

Robinson and Verdier (2013) argue that the arbitrary distribution of government and civil service jobs is particularly appealing for clientelist rulers because “a job is selective and reversible, and thus ties the continued utility of a voter to the political success of a particular politician” (260). Chubb (1982) and Weiner (1967) studied political clientelist networks in southern Italy and India, respectively, and found that membership in and closeness to the ruling party became “a means of obtaining jobs for friends and relatives and gaining access to the many services and material benefits which government” can bestow (Weiner, 1967: 34). Helpful in understanding the cases of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea is Robinson and Verdier’s (2013) conclusion that, “at low income levels, the political allegiance of clients is cheaper to buy with employment offers, and this makes clientelistic redistribution more attractive as a way of gaining support” (263). The authors also find that economies “dominated by natural resources and historically non-contingent international aid,” as is the case in many African states, have increased clientelist practices (Robinson & Verdier, 2013: 264). Robinson and Verdier’s (2013) analysis that clientelism is particularly prevalent in Africa is also useful in this thesis, and fits with the existing consensus that “modernization and development destroy clientelism” (263). The pervasiveness of clientelist practices in Africa has also been tied to the high stakes of political power on the continent, where political rule has historically been accompanied by great personal wealth and largely uncontested power, while the loss of such power has often been violent and sometimes fatal (Williams Jr., 2011: 636; Esteban, 2009: 667-685). As the consequences of losing such absolute power increase, so too has the desire of African rulers to cling to power by any means necessary. Big-man rulers in Africa have often turned to clientelism in the form of public sector employment as a way to consolidate and prolong their rule.

While broad agreement has been reached on the above negative correlations to an abundance of natural resources, and the prevalence of patronage systems and big-man rulers in Africa, scholars continue to engage in three primary debates. As research into the political resource curse became more popular post-1990s, academics began delving deeper into not only what the presence of natural resource caches meant for states, but also what conditions and policies could mitigate the negative effects which had been discovered to accompany such resources.

First, some scholars have suggested that states experience the political and resource curses differently depending on the type of natural resources with which they are endowed. Auty (2001) first differentiated "between 'point' and 'diffuse' resources where point rents [were] associated with staples that require relatively capital-intensive extraction methods implying concentrated ownership" (120; Lay & Omar Mahmoud, 2004: 10). Point resources are usually mined resources, but also include "cash crops that are immediately processed, such as sugar cane" (Lay & Omar Mahmoud, 2004: 10). Diffuse resources, on the other hand, include rice, maize and many tree crops. Auty (2001) posited that revenue from diffuse resources was able to be "more widely dispersed among the population, [because] they [did] not require a comparable capital input," and thus states with diffuse resources were less negatively affected by the resource curse than point resource-rich states (122; Lay & Omar Mahmoud, 2004: 10). Lay and Omar Mahmoud (2004) expanded on Auty's work and found that the need for further processing of a natural resource played a role in whether or not resource wealth would help or harm a state's economy. They found that fuels, non-processed minerals and metals, crude minerals and non-ferrous metals hampered economic growth in line with the resource curse hypothesis (Lay & Omar Mahmoud, 2004: 20). However, they detected "growth-enhancing effects" in processed minerals and coal (Lay & Omar Mahmoud, 2004: 20). S. Mansoob Murshed (2004) similarly built upon Auty (2001) point and diffuse resource designations. Murshed (2004) studied the effects of large point and diffuse resource endowments on the quality of state institutions and democracy and compared the results to those in manufacturing economies. He found that "point-source or mineral/coffee-cocoa economies are the worst in terms of the impact of endowments on institutions and democracy" and that diffuse economies are only slightly better (Murshed, 2004: 26). Murshed (2004) further concluded that economies built on manufacturing and the export of manufactured goods promoted "better institutions and democracy," and experienced superior economic growth, than states financially reliant on resource exports (26). Thus, there is ongoing debate whether states wealthy in diffuse resources can escape the resource curse, or if only manufacturing states not economically dependent on resources, diffuse or point, are immune from the curse.

Second, for states rich in natural resources, many ways to avoid the resource curse have been suggested. Scholars have long debated whether prudent fiscal measures and government policies enacted by strong institutions were necessary to combat the curse, or if, in the absence of such institutions, private ownership would be sufficient to avoid economic downturn. Stevens (2005) studied a large number of states considered to be affected by the resource curse and four key outliers: Botswana, Chile, Indonesia and Malaysia. He identified several commonalities between the four states seemingly able to beat the curse (Stevens, 2005: 13). Although he acknowledges that there is no one-size-fits-all prescription, Stevens (2005) found that, to some degree, all four exception states insulated their economies from the influx of resource revenues (14). This was enabled by the ability of these states to sufficiently diversify their economies "to overcome revenue volatility" (Stevens, 2005: 14). The governments in all four exception states also intervened in the resource industry to ensure the development of "market mechanisms with a bias to an export orientation" (Stevens, 2005: 14). Each intervention was "directed at the promotion and encouragement of the private sector, which resulted in strong levels of private investment," trade openness and competition (Stevens, 2005: 14). Finally, Stevens (2005) identified a push to promote rural sectors present in all four states which had avoided the curse (14).

Pegg (2006), drawing from reports by the World Bank, similarly studied the ability of sound policy decisions in resource-rich states to result in avoidance of the resource curse. Using the Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline as a case study, Pegg (2006) examined the World Bank's extensive policy interventions in the project, calling it "the World Bank's most significant attempt yet to … transform the equation from one of resource extraction + bad governance = poverty exacerbation to one of resource extraction + good governance = poverty reduction" (1). Pegg (2006) concluded, however that the World Bank's efforts at policy intervention to ensure good governance largely failed to advance poverty reduction (3). He cites numerous reports by the pipeline's official monitoring bodies which found that the project had "been a 'two-speed' process where construction activities directed towards oil production proceed[ed] ahead of schedule while institutional capacity-building projects [were] consistently delayed" (Pegg, 2006: 11). This in large part was due to weaknesses in Chad's revenue management system which was supposed to ensure transparent handling of oil revenues and their allocation to development projects (Pegg, 2006: 6-7). These weaknesses are an example of Weinthal and Luong's (2006) conclusion that much of the current literature and efforts to avoid the resource curse assume the presence of strong governments and institutions. Weinthal and Luong (2006) reason that previously suggested ways to avoid the resource curse "have largely failed because making the state a better 'manager' of its mineral wealth requires institutions that promote transparency, accountability, and oversight- that is, institutions that are widely absent in developing countries" (42). In an effort to address the absence of strong institutions, Weinthal and Luong (2006) suggest private domestic ownership as a way to avoid the resource curse. They argue that, "by taking resource rents out of the state's direct control, privatization to domestic owners simultaneously fosters the conditions under which governments have an incentive to build strong fiscal and regulatory institutions and creates a new set of societal actors with the potential to demand these institutions" (Weinthal & Luong, 2006: 43). While private owners benefit from control of the state's resources and are thus incentivized "to bring state actors to the bargaining table," the state, because it does not control the resource industry, "is more likely to invest in institution building that enables it to extract revenue from private owners, regulate the private sector, and generate other sources of revenue" (Weinthal & Luong, 2006: 43). Debate remains if private owners, international financial institutions or state governments are best suited to enact the policies and construct the institutions necessary to avoid the resource curse.

Third, in addition to debating about how to avoid the curse, scholars, in the economic field in particular, have also sparred over recommendations on how to solve the curse in states already suffering economic downturn. International attention was paid to the idea that decreasing demand for natural resources would in turn positively change the ways they were supplied. One of the most prominent suggestions was originally intertwined with environmental movements and reasoned that a coordinated local, national and global effort was necessary to change "the global demand structure for fossil fuel energy" (Roll, 2010: 211). Environmental activists who favoured sustainable energy pushed the notion that a global turn away from profitable fossil fuels would eliminate or reduce the root cause of the oil-related resource curse (Roll, 2010: 211). Nicholas Shaxson (2007) suggested combating the resource curse by addressing "tax havens and capital flight out of resource-rich poor countries" (212). He argued that "closing down tax havens for those billions of US-Dollars stolen by [authoritarian leaders] and their successors would stop the massive capital flight into private accounts covered by bank secrecy" (Shaxson, 2007: 212). On the domestic level, scholars have attempted to solve the resource curse by combating corruption and increasing transparency. Rosenblum and Maples (2009) suggested that all contracts between oil and gas companies and governments be made public. To address the lack of equitable distribution of resource revenues, other scholars argued for the establishment of resource-related tax and revenue systems more favourable to states than to oil and gas companies and, more radically, the “direct distribution of natural resource revenues to citizens in combination with improved taxation” (Sturmer & Buchholz, 2009; Roll, 2010: 215). Despite the large body of literature which exists on the subject of trying to solve the resource curse, it appears that debate in both the economic and political fields is set to continue.

As evidenced above, existing literature on the political resource curse and accompanying systems of corruption has yielded four main consensuses and three primary debates. Literature has utilized cross-country empirical research and case studies to corroborate and expand on the existing consensuses and debates. While the amount of research dedicated to these topics has been considerable, the selection of case studies remains rather narrow. Existing literature which utilized case studies to analyse the political resource curse and parallel corrupt regimes has largely focused on the most obvious examples in Africa, Southeast Asia and Latin America.

Political resource curse literature first gained international attention during the interwar period in Latin America, when many regional economies suffered due to a global fall in commodity prices (Sachs & Warner, 2001: 828). Since then, the region has continued to develop oil and gas infrastructure but has largely failed to transfer its successes into economic growth and development experienced by its population. Venezuela is perhaps the best-known example of the resource curse in Latin America and is home to the largest oil reserves in the world. Although the country had a history of populist government under Hugo Chavez, the election of Nicolas Maduro in 2013, and his re-election in 2018 amidst contested circumstances, has worried many about the country’s trajectory toward an increase in authoritarianism (Rossi, 2011: 14). Maduro, and his predecessor, prioritized the success of the state’s nationalized oil industry, which accounts for “over 95% of Venezuela’s exports, 50% of government revenues and 30% of GDP directly” (Rossi, 2011: 14). Such prioritization came at the cost of many of the state’s other industries (Rossi, 2011). As of 2021, the country was in the midst of a humanitarian crisis, with roughly “77 percent of Venezuela’s 28 million residents liv[ing] in extreme poverty, the highest rate in Latin America” (Cheatham et al., 2021: 1). Similar crises have occurred in nearby Peru and Bolivia after government prioritization of silver and hydrocarbon sectors, respectively. Bolivia, which is home to the region’s second largest oil reserves just behind those of Venezuela, has a history of shaky democracy with six different presidents elected in the first six years of the 21st century (Andrade & Morales, 2007: 68). While the state exports sizeable amounts of hydrocarbons and minerals, two-thirds of its population are estimated to live in poverty (Andrade & Morales, 2007: 16). High political instability and corruption, coupled with weak institutions and a segmented society, have also made the country largely reliant on foreign investment and international aid (Andrade & Morales, 2007). As the keepers of the region's largest oil and gas reserves, Venezuela and Bolivia have taken centre stage in literature on the political resource curse and accompanying corrupt authoritarian regimes in Latin America.

As Southeast Asia developed throughout the 2000s and 2010s following the Asian economic crisis, extensive oil and gas infrastructure was expected to take root in the region, leading many to hypothesize about the potential for the resource curse to emerge in numerous Southeast Asian states (Sovacool, 2010). A consensus has yet to be reached that the resource curse has indeed befallen the region as of the early 2020s, but many economists and political scientists have sounded the alarm. The region exhibits many of the usual precursors to the curse, including its status as the presumed future gas capitol of the world (Sovacool, 2010: 227). The International Energy Agency "anticipates the need to invest trillions of dollars in electricity and energy supply in Southeast Asia by 2030," and others expect the region to "become 'the Persian Gulf of Gas' and be responsible for one-quarter of the world's gas production" by 2030 (Sovacool, 2010: 227; International Energy Agency, 2008; Tan, 2008). Simultaneously, Southeast Asia has a documented history of corruption and poor governance. A World Bank study found that "large-scale infrastructure projects in Southeast Asia, because of their capital intensive nature, practically invite corruption" (Sovacool, 2010: 227). The study noted that "an average firm working in Asia expects to lose 11 per cent of its budget for infrastructure projects on bribes" (Sovacool, 2010: 11; Kenny, 2007). Scholars agree that, particularly in the Southeast Asian states with the largest oil and gas reserves, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand, "investments in oil and gas infrastructure will only accelerate resource depletion and increase corruption" (Sovacool, 2010: 227-228). Extensive literature has thus been devoted to analysing Southeast Asia's prospects of escaping the resource curse and prescribing solutions for the region to harness its resource revenues transparently and allocate them appropriately.

While cases in Southeast Asia and Latin America have garnered increased academic attention in the last twenty years, African states have made up by far the largest share of case studies in political resource curse literature. This is in large part due to the high concentration of natural resource deposits on the continent, many of them still untapped, and the prevalence of under-developed and authoritarian states (Mlambo, 2022). Within the continent, however, selection of political resource curse case studies has continued to suffer from lack of variation. Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria, among the largest oil and coltan producers in Africa, have become poster cases for the political and resource curses (Henri, 2019). Angola is among the richest African states in terms of natural resources, largely due to its chief export, oil (Barros, 2012: 3). Simultaneously, however, there is extensive "evidence … that the country's wealth does not reach the general population" as Angola continues to suffer from high rates of poverty, corruption and oppression at the hands of a neopatrimonialist regime (Barros, 2012: 3). A similar picture has been painted by research into chronic underdevelopment in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Matti (2010), among others, found that "a political tradition of patrimonialism and corruption based on large inflows of easily corruptible resource rents was established in the Mobutu period," leading to ongoing conflict and widespread poverty (401).[2] Research into these cases is exhaustive, as existing literature has examined every social, economic and political dimension of the resource curse in these states and prescribed countless recommendations for growth. These cases have also routinely been compared to the notable exceptions on the continent, Botswana and to a lesser extent Ghana, in hopes of drawing inspiration from the successes of the later to apply to the former (Henri, 2019: 3). The unique concentration of natural resource caches and developing authoritarian states, in addition to the ability to compare resource curse case studies to their neighbours who seemingly escaped the curse, has resulted in Africa taking centre stage in existing literature on the resource curse. Despite this, narrow case selection within the continent has left a gap in existing literature.

Africa has also taken centre stage in existing scholarship on corrupt, entrenched authoritarian regimes. As previously mentioned, a significant collection of literature exists on Africa's big-man ruler phenomenon. Works exploring how politicians have achieved such extreme regime longevity as to be considered a big-man rulers, chiefly by Dulani and Tengatenga (2019), have focused on the phenomenon as a whole across the African continent to draw conclusions about the conditions which enabled such regime longevity. Existing literature on entrenched African regimes has largely failed to utilize case studies and when it has, like political resource curse literature, it has focused on the largest, most well-known examples. This has created a gap in existing literature around the entrenched regimes of Paul Biya in Cameroon and Teodoro Obiang in Equatorial Guinea.

A similar gap exists in literature about these regimes' use of institutionalized systems of corruption. A large collection of scholarship exists on neopatrimonialist rule in Africa, led by Bratton and van de Walle (2012). Likewise, Jackson and Rosberg (1984) published an influential work on the prevalence of personalist rule in Africa, while Roninger (2004) and Robinson and Verdier (2013) advanced the academic understanding of clientelist political systems across the continent. As has been the case in works on the big-man ruler phenomenon, existing literature on systems of institutionalized corruption has focused more on the prevalence of the systems themselves across the African continent, and the factors which enabled such prevalence, than on individual cases. Even less attention has been paid to the cases of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea. These works have, in their attempts to draw conclusions about personalist, clientelist and neopatrimonialist rule in Africa as a whole and about the systems of corruption themselves, largely stayed away from the use of in-depth case studies. This has resulted in a broad understanding of the above-mentioned systems of corruption, and their historic and continued presence in Africa, while leaving largely unexplored the use of such systems by particular regimes.

The prevalence of research on the most obvious examples and outliers of the political resource curse, and the lack of in-depth case studies on systems of corruption in Africa, has left a gap in existing scholarship. While states like Angola and Nigeria make up the largest shares of Africa's oil exports, many smaller states also contribute to the continent's vast oil wealth. The Gulf of Guinea, relatively recently, discovered off-shore oil reserves and has subsequently increased oil production along Africa's western coast. Nigeria and Angola, which discovered oil reserves in the 1950s, have longer histories as oil-rich states than Cameroon or Equatorial Guinea, where oil was discovered in the late 1970s and 90s respectively. In addition to their smaller geographic size when compared to well-known cases of the resource curse such as Nigeria and Angola, Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea also have smaller oil reserves and contribute less to the continent's total petroleum exports. When Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea have appeared in scholarship, existing literature has tended to focus solely on the presence of natural resources within their borders *or* their big-man rulers, which are among the longest-lasting on the continent, *or* their history of authoritarianism. There exists an obvious gap regarding the interactions among all three variables- oil, entrenched big man rulers and authoritarianism- in 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 exactly 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.

Chapter Three: Methodology

A qualitative research methodology was chosen to address my research question because of the abundance of relevant quantitative data sets and the depth of study permitted by qualitative methodology. Previous scholars have provided the fields of economics and international relations with an abundance of invaluable quantitative data sets. The under-researched gap within existing literature which this thesis aims to address stems not from a lack of available data, but rather from a lack of application of data to my research question. The gap in existing literature which I hope to address is largely due to a narrow selection of case studies and lack of expansion on existing consensuses on the political and resource curses. Since scholarship on the topic began to increase in the 1990s, academic and policy works have continued to focus on the most obvious examples of the political and resource curses and the most well-known correlations to an abundance of natural resources, most notably conflict, authoritarianism and economic decline. This dissertation's goal is to address the gap which resulted from such narrow previous discussions of the political resource curse by comprehensively studying the curse and current authoritarian regimes in the under-researched cases of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea. A qualitative research methodology permits such an in-depth study of these two cases by allowing research into all of the possible factors, and the contexts in which they occurred, which informed Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea's experience of the political resource curse. This is in contrast to quantitative research, which would have built an understanding of the states' experiences from empirical information, with the risk of ignoring the contexts in which the data occurred.

Case studies in particular encourage in-depth examination of how the political, economic, social and geographic histories of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea contributed to their experiences of the political resource curse. Case study methodology allows me to dig deeply into the histories of each state and their meaningful political and economic events, such as the discovery of oil reserves, elimination of constitutional term limits, establishment of patrimonialism systems and economic dependence on natural resource exports, and the contexts in which these events occurred. Such a broad selection of research interests would be difficult to facilitate in quantitative research design. Comprehensively understanding the historical contexts of each state will facilitate thorough analysis as to how these states' authoritarian leaders consolidated their power and achieved regime longevity. The employment of case studies also allowed me to exclusively focus the scope of my research to the under-researched cases of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea, as opposed to the cross-national data sets often utilized in quantitative research into the political resource curse. Additional methods of qualitative research were considered, including process tracing and discourse analysis. Process tracing is most useful in examining causal links behind historic events. My research question, however, focuses not on the causes of the political resource curse in Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea, but rather the application of resource wealth to the efforts of these states' authoritarian leaders to consolidate power and entrench their regimes. Similarly, discourse analysis was not selected due to the historically unspoken nature of much of the oppressive and power-consolidation tactics utilized by the authoritarian leaders I will examine. Many times, if not most, the consolidation of power by authoritarian regimes is done behind closed doors, through unspoken actions or through deception, in which case spoken words do not match reality. Examining the political and economic histories of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea as case studies permits a comprehensive study of the public *and,* to the extent possible, private actions of both authoritarian leaders and a thorough examination of how these leaders harnessed their states' resource abundance to achieve power consolidation and regime longevity.

Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea as particular case studies were selected because of the documented presence of oil reserves, persistent economic hardship and corrupt authoritarian regimes in both states. These smaller Gulf of Guinea states were also chosen due to their status as comparatively under-researched examples of the political and resource curses in the world and on the African continent. Two case studies were chosen instead of one to illustrate the comparable yet different ways in which the similarly-situated leaders of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea monopolized their states' oil industries to achieve regime longevity and consolidate power. Paul Biya of Cameroon has relied largely on political control and clientelism in regional government, achieved through extreme corruption of oil revenues, to stay in power. In Equatorial Guinea, Teodoro Obiang achieved consolidation and longevity through the establishment of a neopatrimonialist state and military apparatus. More comprehensive and recent histories of each state will be discussed in the following chapters.

The methods utilized by Biya and Obiang, and their networks, to harness their respective country's lucrative oil industries in order to consolidate their power and achieve regime longevity will be examined through consideration of academic and institutional journals and databases. As mentioned in the literature review, a considerable amount of scholarship exists on the political and resource curses and accompanying authoritarian regimes, as does quantitative analysis on both topics. Existing journal articles by academics and organizations such as the United Nations, World Bank and Transparency International will be referenced to paint a well-rounded picture of the state of political, economic and social affairs in Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea. These organizations, as well as quantitative scholars, have also published countless datasets on each states' economic and political trends, human rights status, corruption ratings and petroleum production and exportation. Data and analysis will be drawn from annual country reports on Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea published by institutions including the United Nations, Freedom House and Human Rights Watch. These long-trusted organizations have international networks and on-the-ground personnel in order to produce accurate and many times first-hand information on the status of affairs in numerous states including Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea. The majority of academic journal articles cited will be gathered from online library databases and were published by internationally-known journals including The Journal of Development Studies, Journal of Third World Studies, the International Crisis Group and Oxford Journals. Each journal article cited in this thesis has been peer-reviewed and has passed robustness checks to be included in scholarship databases such as JStor and Taylor & Francis. Authors from around the world, including African natives, Western scholars and anthropologists who worked in Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea, will be cited to provide a well-rounded collection of analysis to inform the research question. Scholarship in both states' native languages of Spanish and French will also be consulted.

Limitations

The set time-line and word count for this thesis pose obvious limitations. A detailed writing schedule has been approved by the author and advisor for this project in order to mitigate time constraints. Deadlines for each chapter have been set to discourage writing over the word limit.

An additional limitation of this project will be the ability of the author to understand and utilize published resources from Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea, where the official languages are French and Spanish, respectively. Although the author is a native-English speaker, this language barrier will be mitigated in part by the author's ability read Spanish fluently. International organizations including the United Nations, Freedom House and the World Bank also often publish reports in English, in addition to the states' native language(s), which makes for greater ease of access.

Chapter Four: Cameroon

Colonial History & Independence

Portuguese sailors were the first Europeans to reach present-day Cameroon around 1520 (Ruppel & Ruppel-Schlichting, 2018: 58). German explorers followed suit in the mid-1800s, and by 1884, Cameroon was among the first German colonies (Ruppel & Ruppel-Schlichting, 2018: 59). After Germany's defeat in World War I, the colony of Cameroon was among its concessions mandated in the Treaty of Versailles (Ruppel & Ruppel-Schlichting, 2018: 63). The territory was divided in two, half given to the French and the other half to the British (Ruppel & Ruppel-Schlichting, 2018: 64). It is this original early 1900s territorial divide between Britain and France which is responsible for the ongoing conflict between present-day Cameroon's Anglophone and Francophone regions. The French territory then became the Protectorate of Cameroun (Ruppel & Ruppel-Schlichting, 2018: 64). The British territory was again divided in two as the northern region joined Nigerian territories and the south became the Cameroons Province (Ruppel & Ruppel-Schlichting, 2018: 64). In 1946, when the League of Nations was dissolved, both British and French Cameroons became trust territories of the United Nations (Ruppel & Ruppel-Schlichting, 2018: 64). French Cameroon gained independence in 1960, and elected Ahmadou Ahidjo as the President of the Republic of Cameroon (ICG, 2010: 31). Ahidjo and Anglophone Cameroon leader John Foncha "agree[d] to a union of both Cameroons on a federal basis, should the Southern Cameroons vote for re-unification" in an upcoming plebiscite (ICG, 2010, p. 31). The following year, in 1961, the UN organized a plebiscite in which English-speaking Cameroonians were to choose to "reunify with Francophone Cameroon or become part of newly independent Nigeria" (ICG, 2010: 31). Northern Anglophone Cameroonians voted to join Nigeria, while the Southern Anglophone region chose to join the independent Republic of Cameroon (ICG, 2010: 32). Ahidjo and Foncha met at the July 1961 Foumban Constitutional Conference to agree on a new federal system (ICG, 2010: 32). The Republic of Cameroon's Federal Constitution was approved by the country's parliament in September 1961 (ICG, 2010: 32).

Post-Independence & the Discovery of Oil

Cameroon's federal structure, in which multiparty politics thrived in both the Anglophone and Francophone regions, was in place for over a decade (ICG, 2010: 32). During this time, Ahidjo remained in control of the Francophone, Eastern, region while multiple Prime Ministers succeeded Foncha in the Western, Anglophone, region (ICG, 2010: 32). In 1966, the four main political parties in the Republic of Cameroon fused together to become the Cameroon National Union (CNU) and a single-party state was created (Ngwane, 2014: 104). The CNU, under Party President Ahidjo, continued to consolidate power in the following years (ICG, 2010). In 1972, a constitutional referendum replaced Cameroon's federal structure with the establishment of a unitary state governed by Ahidjo (ICG, 2010: 32). The 1972 referendum also abolished the post of Prime Minister, gutting the Anglophone region's chief representative in government (ICG, 2010: 32). Three years later, however, the post was restored and Paul Biya was appointed as Prime Minister under President Ahidjo (ICG, 2010: 32). In 1977 oil reserves were discovered off the coast of Cameroon and commercial petroleum production followed in the coming years (Gauthier & Zeufack, 2009: 4). Spurred by this oil boom, Cameroon's annual GDP growth averaged 9.4 percent between 1977 and 1986, compared to an average 5.4 percent prior to 1979 (Gauthier & Zeufack, 2009: 4).

Paul Biya Assumes the Presidency and Control of Cameroon's Oil Industry

In November 1982, twenty-two years after Ahidjo was elected the first President of the independent Republic of Cameroon, he abruptly fell ill and resigned the presidency, leaving his constitutional successor Paul Biya to take over (ICG, 2010: 32). With Ahidjo remaining active in the country's politics as president of the CNU, the transfer of power appeared to go smoothly and was hailed by some as a model for sub-Saharan Africa (ICG, 2010: 10). In the summer of 1983, however, Biya challenged Ahidjo's assertion that, as head of the CNU, he had the power of appointment to party positions (ICG, 2010: 10). This was the first of many overt actions by Biya which clearly showed

Cameroon trending toward a more authoritarian state under his regime. Biya continued to consolidate power solely around the office of the president, restructuring the government to remove several Ahidjo-loyalists and "replacing them with people more beholden to himself" (ICG, 2010: 10). Ahidjo responded with a two-months-long attack of Biya on French international radio (ICG, 2010: 10). In August 1983, Biya announced he had uncovered a plot to unseat him instigated by Ahidjo and publicly prosecuted the former president and his co-conspirators (ICG, 2010: 11). The same year, Biya convened an emergency party congress and was unanimously elected the new CNU president (ICG, 2010: 11).

Simultaneously, Cameroon's fledgling oil industry was taking off. Oil as a percentage of the country's annual GDP first rose to double digits in 1982, the year Biya became president, and continued to increase over the coming years (Inack et al., 1990: 22). Oil as a percentage of Cameroon's annual exports reached double digits in 1981, the last year of Ahidjo's rule, and likewise grew under Biya (Inack et al., 1990: 21). Petroleum made up only 1.4 percent of Cameroonian exports in 1978 compared to 42.1 percent in 1981 and 67.8 percent in 1984 after Biya assumed the presidency (Inack et al., 1990: 34). Cameroon's oil output and revenues peaked in 1985 and 1986, as the hydrocarbons industry remained considerably more lucrative under Biya than under Ahidjo (Inack et al., 1990: 35). Even after its peak, oil accounted for 65.4 percent of Cameroon's exports in the late 1980s (Inack et al., 1990: 34). Paul Biya was thus by and large the primary beneficiary of Cameroon's oil industry which only started to constitute a substantial portion of the state's GDP and exports in the last year of Ahidjo's presidency.

It will become evident throughout this chapter the extent to which Biya has exploited the state's oil wealth and subsequently compounded the corrupt and authoritarian status-quo established by his predecessor. President Ahidjo oversaw Cameroon's transition from a resource-poor African state to one with immense untapped oil reserves. Initial production and exportation of Cameroon's oil began under the Ahidjo regime, as did the establishment of a foundational authoritarian regime in which Ahidjo consolidated power at the expense of Cameroon's Anglophone regions. As mentioned above, large-scale production and exportation of Cameroonian oil, however, did not peak until the mid-1980s under the Biya regime. The subsequent sections of this chapter will clearly illustrate that Biya, during the first decade of his presidency in which Cameroon's oil revenues peaked, exploited the state's oil profits to establish a much more lucrative and institutionally corrupt authoritarian system than was able to be constructed by his predecessor. The clientelist system established by Biya which consolidated his power and entrenched his regime was a direct result of Cameroon's influx of oil revenues during the formative years of his regime. The particular methods by which Biya exploited Cameroon's wealth to construct a clientelist system, consolidate power and achieve regime longevity are outlined and evidenced below.

Single-Party Politics & Economic Decline

Biya claimed victory in the non-competitive 1984 presidential election with more than 99 percent of the vote (ICG, 2010: 10). Although the election was officially open to multiple candidates, Biya effectively "blocked the candidature of any potential rivals" (ICG, 2010: 11). This strategy of Biya's, to outwardly support "the gradual creation of a more open and democratic system, but within a reformed single party," made evident his status as a "pure product of the [authoritarian] Ahidjo system" (ICG, 2010: 11). Not only was Biya following in the footsteps of his authoritarian predecessor, but he was entrenching corrupt authoritarianism into the social politic of Cameroon in a way made possible only by large amounts of state oil revenue unavailable to Ahidjo. Immediately after winning the 1984 election, Biya eliminated the position of Prime Minister and continued to consolidate his power in the country's CNU-controlled government over the following six years (ICG, 2010: 32). Between 1985 and 1990, activists attempted to create two new political parties, the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) and the Social Democratic Front (SDF) (ICG, 2010: 32). The parties' organizers were arrested and six activists killed as the Biya regime responded by orchestrating anti-democracy protests in Yaoundé (ICG, 2010: 32). SDF, founded by John Fru Ndi, of the Northwest Anglophone Province, "became a nationwide movement for democratic change" (ICG, 2010: 12). As democratic pressure mounted, Biya was pushed into repealing anti-subversion laws and formally authorizing multi-party democracy in December 1990 (ICG, 2010: 32). Despite the administration's formal authorization, there were no signs of actual democratic transition, leading to strikes and protests across the country. Democratic protestors were particularly critical of Biya's refusal to hold a "sovereign national conference to debate new political arrangements," a conference similar to those which had led to serious curtailing of presidential power in several neighbouring Francophone countries (ICG, 2010: 12). A meeting to discuss transitioning to democratic rule did not take place until late 1991, after "opposition parties and civil society groups organized a general strike and a 'ghost towns' movement intended to shut down the economy and put pressure on the government" (ICG, 2010: 12).

Government mismanagement not only led to public uprisings, but simultaneously contributed to a decline in oil-driven economic growth. As the SDF inspired anti-government protests continued across the country, Cameroon's period of economic prosperity spurred by the discovery of oil subsided. Government mismanagement, coupled with a drop in international commodity and oil prices, ultimately resulted in a "severe economic crisis" (Gauthier & Zeufack, 2009: 4). Throughout the first years of the 1990s, the goal of democratic activists' "ghost towns" movement was advanced by the continued economic crisis, which saw GDP contract by 5 percent on average, and a combined 27 percent, between the late 1980s and early 1990s (Gauthier & Zeufack, 2009: 4). By 1993, per capita income in Cameroon was half of its 1986 level, despite efforts by the IMF and World Bank to engage the reluctant Biya administration in structural adjustment programs (Gauthier & Zeufack, 2009: 4). In 1994 the crisis culminated with the fifty percent devaluation of the Communauté Financière Africaine (CFA) franc (Gauthier & Zeufack, 2009: 4).

Transition to a "Multi-Party" State

Cameroon's first multi-party legislative elections occurred on March 1, 1992, and were boycotted by the majority of Biya opponents after their requests for additional time to prepare were denied (ICG, 2010: 13). Biya was again elected president that October, but by a narrow margin (ICG, 2010: 13). Riots erupted after international election observers reported "serious flaws" in the electoral process and John Fru Ndi declared himself the legitimate winner (ICG, 2010: 13). Biya declared emergency rule in the Anglophone Northwest Province and ordered a military crackdown to dispel rioters (ICG, 2010: 13). Two years later, the Second All Anglophone Conference declared its goal of federalism for the southern region of Cameroon and its intent to secede should Biya's regime not participate in constitutional talks (ICG, 2010: 32). In 1996, the Cameroonian constitution was altered to create regional chambers and a second legislative chamber, the Senate, in part made up of representatives from the southern Anglophone region (ICG, 2010: 14). The following year, Biya was re-elected president with 92 percent of the vote and his party, the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), formerly the CNU, swept the legislative elections, winning 109 of 180 seats (ICG, 2010: 34). The SDF, supported by southern, English-speaking Cameroonians, won 43 seats (ICG, 2010: 34). After gaining more seats than anticipated by the Biya administration, SDF and other democratic parties became the target of the regime's authoritarian powers. In order to "push the opposition back to small ethno-regional enclaves in the 2002 elections," Biya's regime harassed independent media, selectively distributed state resources, namely oil revenue, and manipulated the electoral process (ICG, 2010: 14). Biya was elected the president of Cameroon for the fourth time in 2004, receiving 75 percent of the vote (ICG, 2010: 34). In 2007, Biya's party continued to dominate legislative elections and again won the vast majority of seats, followed by the SDF, which won 16 (ICG, 2010: 34). In 2008, riots broke out in response to Biya's plan to abolish Cameroon's presidential term limit, a measure which passed the CPDM-led parliament in April 2008 (ICG, 2010: 34). Cameroon's population in 2008 totalled nearly 20 million before rising to more than 27 million in 2023 (WorldBank.org, 2023).

Economic Decline and Prioritization of the State's Oil Industry

Cameroon's economic hardships followed the Biya administration into the 2000s. A slight increase in economic growth spurred by increased timber exports did not last long and growth between 2001 and 2007 fell below the 4.5 percent achieved in the last five years of the 20th century (Gauthier & Zeufack, 2009: 5). In 2003, as part of his administration's focus on expansion of the state's oil industry, Biya attended the inauguration of the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline, a project co-funded by ExxonMobil and the World Bank. The pipeline's royalties, taxes and customs duties were estimated to triple the national budgets of Cameroon and Chad by 2007 (Sawyer & Gomez, 2012: 206). The project would produce an estimated 917 million barrels of oil from Chadian reserves, which would travel through a 1070-kilometer-long pipeline, most of which would be located in Cameroon (Sawyer & Gomez, 2012: 205). Both the governments of Chad and Cameroon "aligned themselves with ExxonMobil and the World Bank in order to receive income" from the project (Sawyer & Gomez, 2012: 208). The World Bank promised the pipeline would be accompanied by transparency initiatives and requirements that a portion of all proceeds went to poverty reduction efforts in the communities surrounding the project (Sawyer & Gomez, 2012: 206). Its efforts seemed promising in 1999 and 2000, before construction was complete, when ExxonMobil and World Bank officials met with community members in both states to hear concerns about environmental degradation, public health risks, human rights abuses and continued poverty (Sawyer & Gomez, 2012: 208). Once construction was completed and the project was officially inaugurated in 2003, however, "neither government felt bound by the commitments they had made, such as use of oil revenues for poverty programmes" or the protection of indigenous peoples in communities affected by pipeline construction (Sawyer & Gomez, 2012: 226). Samuel Nguiffo, the head of a Cameroonian NGO focused on advocating for environmental rights and those of the country's indigenous population, was assaulted in his office the night before he was scheduled to speak in Washington D.C. in opposition to the project (Sawyer & Gomez, 2012: 215). Problems persisted as pipeline production continued and it became clear that ExxonMobil and the World Bank had focused their attention on completion of the project rather than the implementation of promised initiatives (Sawyer & Gomez, 2012: 218). As of 2006, "the regional development plan announced by the World Bank before approving the project in 2000 [had] yet to be put in place" (Sawyer & Gomez, 2012: 218). In 2007, after twenty-five years under Biya and four years after the opening of the pipeline, Cameroon was poorer than it was in 1985 (Gauthier & Zeufack, 2009: 1).

The Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline as a single project is demonstrative of the Biya regime's prioritization of Cameroon's oil industry as a whole, which generated the profits necessary for Biya to maintain his co-option of politics and civil servants described in subsequent sections. Without considerable oil revenue, Biya would have been unable to continue purchasing the loyalty of politicians and civil servants, including in the state's military and police forces, who in return for exorbitant salary increases and bribes passed legislation, ensured his parliamentary majority and oppressed opposition leaders in order to consolidate Biya's hold on power and entrench his regime.

Biya's Power Consolidation and Regime Longevity

Co-Option of Local Politics and Development

Co-optation of local politics throughout Cameroon is one of the primary ways through which the CPDM and Biya regime have consolidated power. The CPDM "operates by trading employment opportunities, public contracts and state largesse for support from local elites" while selectively distributing state resources, namely oil revenue, and civil service appointments to loyal regional ministers (ICG, 2010: 16). This purchasing of loyalty, made possible only by Biya's unilateral control of oil revenue, has resulted in a state bureaucracy in which “ministers and those in charge of public service and public enterprises routinely pilfer without restraint the public funds under their management” and see an appointment to a management position as, above all, an opportunity to enrich themselves (Pigeaud, 2011: 139). Cameroon’s top civil servants became among the wealthiest individuals in the country (Pigeaud, 2011: 140). Biya’s regime “promotes a confusion of the ruling party and the state in order to make opposition to the CPDM tantamount to subversion” and requires civil servants see themselves as “serving both the party and the state” (ICG, 2010: 16). Since the early 1990s onset of the country’s so-called democratization process, all ministers suspected to be sympathetic to parties other than the CPDM have been systematically purged and replaced by those loyal to Biya with little consideration to their qualifications (Konings, 2004: 360). Because their status and employment depends on total loyalty, ministers openly show their allegiance to the CPDM and engage in activities promoting and protecting the regime rather than serving their constituencies (Konings, 2004: 360). “Senior servants are regularly granted permission and put out on mission at state expense, to go out on campaigns for the CPDM” (Konings, 2004: 362). Since Biya’s assumption of power in the early 1980s, co-option of traditional chiefs has become central to his regime’s longevity, including the employment of chiefs as state “auxiliaries” (ICG, 2010: 17). Since 1982, chiefs and ministers have routinely been drawn into political disputes on the side of the CPDM, discrediting “both individual chiefs and the [traditional] institution of chieftaincy in the eyes of many” (ICG, 2010: 17). This has resulted in a decline of their status as trusted resolvers of conflicts, such as land disputes, as their credibility has been corrupted through the CDPM’s political manipulation (ICG, 2010: 17). Selective and conditional resource distribution extends past local political figures and civil servants to the citizenry, where “poverty makes allegiance to the party a necessity for survival” (ICG, 2010: 16).

Corruption of state resources extends past CPDM officials to President Biya himself. All contracts over 50 million CFA francs in Cameroon must be signed off on by the president (Konings, 2004: 365). Contractors, in order to settle their bills in Cameroon, must also agree to provide the government treasurer with at least 30 percent of the contract’s face value (Konings, 2004: 365). Bills are inflated to an average of four times the actual cost and contracts are often awarded to elite and “untouchable ‘business politicians’” (Konings, 2004: 366). Half-finished buildings and roads are scattered across the country as a result of shady business practices in which payments are secured by the government prior to completion of the contract; contractors often run out of money paying bribes before they can complete the project (Konings, 2004: 366). From the citizenry and local chiefs to federal parliamentarians and the development industry, Biya's unilateral control and conditional distribution of Cameroon's oil revenue has clearly co-opted state politics at every level and consolidated and entrenched Biya's power.

Co-Option of the Judiciary

Cameroon's judiciary has not escaped the state's widespread corruption, and has over time been co-opted into Biya and the CPDM's patronage and clientelist systems (Konings, 2004). Biya built upon the practice of his predecessor in ordering members of the judiciary to play key roles on local vote-counting commissions, compensating their work with "'hush money' in the form of hefty salary increases and exorbitant allowances" (Konings, 2004: 367). Members of the judiciary thus joined government employees in becoming civil servants with a stake in the survival of Biya's regime (Konings, 2004). For the citizenry, the state's quasi-political judiciary has resulted in justice being "rendered according to the size of a person's purse" (Konings, 2004: 367). If accused persons can afford to bribe legal department officials, the case against them rarely makes it to court (Konings, 2004: 367). In civil cases, the amount of damages to be paid is a direct result of the size of the bribe to the judge, and judges have been "known to withhold their signatures to judgements for several months until a promised bribe is paid" (Konings, 2004: 367). Biya and the CPDM's co-option of Cameroon's judiciary has resulted not only in the rule of law being overtaken by the power of money, but has served to consolidate the regime and party's power. As members of the judiciary became reliant on salaries inflated by bribes, raises and allowances, so too did they become reliant on the Biya regime and its system of institutionalized corruption. Such co-option of the judiciary by the Biya regime was made possible strictly because of the regime's total control and discretion over oil revenues which funded payments to individuals in exchange for continued loyalty.

Undemocratic Elections

Cameroon's 1991 tripartite conference was the substantive beginning of the country's "democratization" process after which multi-party elections would be held. In order to weaken opposition leaders and parties which gained legality from the conference, and to create confusion among voters, Biya used oil revenues to finance the creation of fake parties, resulting in a total of 253 legal political parties over the coming years (Pigeaud, 2011: 81). Following the conference, a new revised constitution establishing Cameroon as a multi-party state and laying out electoral laws was passed by a majority of the CPDM-controlled National Assembly (Pigeaud, 2011:81). The constitution established a National Elections Monitor as an "independent" electoral commission, to be chaired by prominent CPDM member Enoch Kwayeb (Pigeaud, 2011: 81). The organization of Cameroonian elections was to be the responsibility of the Ministry of Territorial Administration (MINAT), which was likewise headed by a prominent member of the ruling party (Konings, 2004: 368). "As a result, the conduct and supervision of elections [was] inseparable from the highly politicized system of [the] territorial administration, whose administrators [were] totally loyal and subservient to the President of the Republic and [held] office at his pleasure" (Konings, 2004: 368). Each multi-party election in Cameroon has been "preceded by massive transfers, promotions and reallocation of officials at MINAT aimed at ensuring that only minions willing to carry out the political instructions issued to them are placed in strategic positions" (Konings, 2004: 368). Seventeen years after the creation of Cameroon's National Elections Monitor, international pressure prompted Biya to establish a new electoral commission, ELECAM (Pigeaud, 2011: 82). However, all twelve members comprising ELECAM were "full members or sympathizers of the" CPDM (Pigeaud, 2011: 82). Thus, Biya's increased power consolidation and regime longevity in election after election was made possible in large part by the use of oil revenue to found hundreds of fake political parties and purchase continued loyalty from civil servants on Cameroon's electoral commissions.

Another strategy employed by Biya to weaken opposition parties and advance his own regime longevity has been the appointment of opposition leaders to government positions. This systematic co-option of opposition leaders occurs as they are offered top government appointments, complete with exorbitant salaries, raises and control of state resources, if they join the ruling party (Pigeaud, 2011: 61). This strategy has been successfully employed by Biya to silence numerous outspoken intellectuals and university professors including Joseph Owona, Maurice Kamto and Peter Agbor Tabi (Pigeaud, 2011: 170). Not only are opposition leaders appointed to lucrative government positions, but their support for regime-backed bills is also purchased using state oil revenue. Numerous bills including a controversial amendment to the 1972 constitution were reportedly only passed after "substantial sums had been paid to parliamentarians" (Konings, 2004: 370). Since the country's "democratization" in 1992, large amounts of state oil revenue have been spent buying off opposition leaders while allowing their largely unorganized parties to exist in order to maintain the façade of multipartyism (Konings, 2004: 370). Through complete control and corruption of state resources, most prominently oil revenue, Biya and the CPDM have been able to purchase the loyalty of multiple opposition leaders and parties, electoral commissions and ultimately the public by positioning the CPDM as the only party operating above the fray of the country's 252 other parties (Pigeaud, 2011: 81).

Entrenchment of the Biya Regime Through Exploitation of Oil Revenue

How has the Biya regime afforded to purchase the loyalty of civil servants, members of the judiciary and opposition leaders for the past four decades? The National Hydrocarbon Corporation (SNH) was founded in 1980 and has remained the governing body of Cameroon's oil industry under Biya (Gary & Karl, 2003: 63; Joel & Marius, 2019: 36). In order to ensure personal control over such an influential body, Biya directly appoints the SNH president while the rest of the board is appointed by Biya's General Secretary (Gary & Karl, 2003: 63). The SNH has served as a de facto bank account for the Biya regime, acting as a "holding company for [Cameroon's] participation in joint ventures" with international oil companies (Gauthier & Zeufack, 2009: 10). Cameroon's Minister of Energy and Water and Minister of Industry, Mines and Technological Development, also directly appointed by Biya, additionally wields power over the industry as he is "responsible for the issuance of mining titles for the extraction of oil" (Gauthier & Zeufack, 2009: 10). The SNH takes a 60 percent equity share in all oil activities (Gary & Karl, 2003: 63). "The oil revenues accruing to the government are hence quite high relative to other oil producing countries and amount [to] roughly between 67% and 70% of the value of oil exports" (Gauthier & Zeufack, 2009: 13). Instead of holding all revenue from the oil industry in the Compete d'Operations as per CFA franc zone rules, President Ahidjo, and now Biya, held a portion of Cameroon's revenue in U.S. dollars in foreign "escrow accounts" under the guise of keeping the funds away from potential corruption (Gary & Karl, 2003: 63). Adding to the lack of transparency in the state's oil industry and finances, not only were the accounts kept abroad, but "oil production was purposely underestimated and only the 2/3 attributed to SNH were considered for official export statistics, creating a fictitious negative trade balance" (Gauthier & Zeufack, 2009: 22; Joel & Marius, 2019: 36). Cameroon's population "was also repeatedly told that the country's oil reserves were very limited and would, at best, last a decade" which "helped reduce public expectations in the importance of the oil manna, along with the need for public scrutiny" (Gauthier & Zeufack, 2009: 31; Joel & Marius, 2019: 36). Discussion of the regime's foreign accounts or fiscal mismanagement "was taboo and could lead to imprisonment if not worse" (Gauthier & Zeufack, 2009: 23). It is from these secretive foreign accounts, controlled by Biya himself or loyalists directly appointed by Biya, that his regime has drawn to fund his clientelist network since 1982.

A 2009 study by the Revenue Watch Project based out of Oxford University estimated that "Cameroon may have captured a sizeable portion of its oil rent- around 67%. However, only about 46% of total oil revenues accruing to the government between 1977 and 2006… have been transferred to the" national budget, while the "remaining 54% are not properly accounted for" (Gauthier & Zeufack, 2009: 1). In 1984, two years after Biya assumed the presidency, the gap between oil revenue which accrued to the government and that accounted for in Cameroon's national budget totalled $400 million USD, and rose to $600 million USD in 2006 (Gauthier & Zeufack, 2009: 18). An examination of the cumulative difference between estimated oil revenues and official budgetary figures from the beginning of Cameroon's oil production until 2009 found that $10.7 billion USD, or 54 percent, of all oil rents in Cameroon have not been disclosed or transferred to the national budget (Gauthier & Zeufack, 2009: 19). The study concludes that Biya's "decision to 'save' Cameroon's oil revenues [in foreign "escrow" accounts] proves to have been sub-optimal given the lack of transparent and accountable framework to manage them and the poor governance record of the country" (Gauthier & Zeufack, 2009: 1; Gary & Karl, 2003: 63).

The 46 percent of state oil revenues which did appear in national budgets was subsequently used not for the benefit or advancement of the Cameroonian population, but to finance Biya's clientelist system which ensured his power consolidation and regime longevity. "Cameroon's oil revenues were not invested in physical, social or human infrastructure, but lavishly consumed" as disbursements "were at the sole discretion of the President" (Gauthier & Zeufack, 2009: 25-26). Consistent increases in salaries and scholarships for the country's civil servants and children of Biya loyalists made up the majority of Cameroon's annual fifteen percent expenditure increases in the years after Biya assumed the presidency (Gauthier & Zeufack, 2009: 26). In 1996 a World Bank report concluded, "Falling living standards and collapsing social services, since the oil boom started to wane, have sapped taxpayer discipline, just as flagrant corruption and rent-seeking activities feeding on the declining State have undermined social solidarity" (World Bank, 1996: 2). Thus, even in the years following Cameroon's oil boom as production, exports and revenue began to decline, the Biya regime continued to finance its clientelist system by exploiting remaining oil revenue.

While the government has incrementally increased transparency in Cameroon's oil sector, largely in response to international and donor pressure, Freedom House has ranked the country, which was "partly free" before the discovery of oil, as "non-free" since Biya assumed power (FreedomHouse.org, 2008). Seventy-nine percent of Cameroonian citizens reported having to pay bribes to government officials in 2007, more than any other African country surveyed by Transparency International (Transparency.org, 2007). Excitement about Cameroon's participation in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), thought to be an initial step towards increased transparency, was short-lived. Members of Cameroon's Ministry of Economy and Finance, which is responsible for the financing of the state's EITI committee, were given government raises until their salaries were more than twice the salary of a university professor and more than the country's per capita GDP (Gauthier & Zeufack, 2009: 40). "An even clearer demonstration of the symbolic nature of the country's commitment to reform is to look at the evolution of oil revenues not transferred to the budget during the… [recent] decades of donor supported adjustment programs" (Gauthier & Zeufack, 2009: 44). The first audit of SNH was conducted in 1991 as part of donor negotiations with Cameroon in hopes of improved management of the country's oil revenues (Gary & Karl, 2003: 63). In the following eight years, however, bolstered by the donor-supported economy, the amount of state oil revenues unaccounted for rose to $1.8 billion USD according to the Oxford University study (Gauthier & Zeufack, 2009: 45). Likewise, after EITI was launched in Cameroon in 2005, unaccounted for oil revenues reached their highest peak of $2.6 billion USD (Gary & Karl, 2003: 63; Gauthier & Zeufack, 2009: 23). Global financial accountability and transparency initiatives thus appear not only to have failed to reduce Cameroon's level of corruption in the oil industry, but unaccounted-for oil revenue actually increased parallel to donor involvement. It is evident that Cameroon's heavily-publicized involvement in and adoption of anti-corruption initiatives is for the reputational and political benefit of Biya and his administration rather than a sincere attempt to advance the country.

An un-released 1992 World Bank Country Strategy Paper on Cameroon summed up Biya's strategies of power consolidation best, writing, "In a tribalized and often corrupt administration, public policy is subverted to serve private interests and resources are wasted or diverted to private use. The administration is overly centralized and decision making authority too highly concentrated. There is a widespread lack of transparency and accountability" (World Bank, 1992: 9-10). With the SNH and its lucrative contracts squarely under his control, billions in unaccounted for profits held in foreign accounts and continued international donor support despite a resistance to increased transparency, Biya has consolidated power and achieved regime longevity through oil-funded co-option and corruption of democratic state apparatuses.

Chapter Five: Equatorial Guinea

Colonial History

As in neighbouring Cameroon, the Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive in present-day Equatorial Guinea in the late fifteenth century (Sundiata, 2018: 1). Nothing came of Portuguese plans to expand sugar production to Equatorial Guinea, and Portuguese explorers never conquered the island of Bioko off Equatorial Guinea's west coast (Sundiata, 2018: 1). The Spanish had more success, and claimed Bioko in 1778, with Spanish sovereignty being recognized in 1910 (Sundiata, 2018: 2; Fryer, 2000: 5). What is now Equatorial Guinea was then named Spanish Guinea by its conquerors (Sundiata, 2018: 2). The Guinean population lived under harsh Spanish rule for more than five decades (Sundiata, 2018: 2).

The first murmurings of a nationalist movement began in Equatorial Guinea in the late 1950s (Campos, 2003: 97). After Spain was admitted to the UN in 1955 amidst a growing international "anti-colonial anxiety," they were asked to observe Article 73e of the UN Charter, "which obliged colonial powers to supply information 'relating to economic, social and educational conditions in the territories for which they [were] respectively responsible" (Campos, 2003: 97). In 1957, following Portugal's lead, Spain responded to the UN by denying the existence of Spanish colonies and instead "claiming that [its] African territories were part of the national territory and, therefore, covered by the international principle of non-intervention" (Campos, 2003: 98). In order to convince the UN of this assertion, Spain altered its colonial legislation to integrate "Spanish Guinea into the administrative territorial structure of the metropolitan state" and renamed Spanish Guinea the Spanish Provinces of Fernando Po and Rio Muni (Campos, 2003: 98). Other than the change in name and an increase in the hiring of Guinean elites to the administration, Spain's colonial regime remained untouched (Campos, 2003: 98). What the assimilationist policy change did achieve, however, was "enhanced political awareness among the colonial population in Guinea" (Campos, 2003: 100). In December 1962, petitioners from Guinea's nationalist movement denounced Spain's strategy of assimilation and asked for independence at the UN General Assembly's Fourth Committee (Campos, 2003: 103). In response, Spain reformed their tactics of colonial rule to more resemble French and British strategies, moving forward with "administrative decentralization and the establishment of an autonomous government in Guinea" (Campos, 2003: 103). These changes, referred to as the Regime of Autonomy, were passed by a referendum of the Guinean people in 1963 (Campos, 2003: 103). The referendum process was important not only for the results it yielded, but for its creation of the first Guinean political groups which campaigned for and against the referendum (Campos, 2003: 104). The Regime of Autonomy included the combining of the two Spanish Guinea provinces into Equatorial Guinea in addition to the creation of legislative and governing councils to operate under the Governor-General (Campos, 2003: 104). Despite the addition of representative bodies, power remained concentrated in the Spanish Governor-General's office, a reality which caused conflict among the Guinean elite (Campos, 2003: 104). Bonifacio Ondó Edú, the head of the Movimiento de Unión Nacional de Guinea Ecuatorial (MUNGE) party, became the president of the governing council and attempted to unite the country's moderate nationalists with Spanish officials (Campos, 2003: 104). Equatorial Guinea's other main political party, Movimiento Nacional de Liberación de Guinea Ecuatorial (MONALIGE), on the other hand, quickly became the chief critic of the new government and the strongest social movement in the country (Campos, 2003: 104-105). By 1966, the dissatisfaction of MONALIGE supporters with the Regime of Autonomy had spread to the general population and was evidenced by a strike of civil servants across the country (Campos, 2003: 105).

Independence

Growing calls for independence were heard by the UN Special Committee of Twenty-Four, which, despite Spanish attempts to convince the body that Equatorial Guinea was enjoying self-determination, demanded that Spain assist in granting full independence to the territory no later than July 1968

(Campos, 2003: 108). A UN-organized referendum for independence was held in Equatorial Guinea in August 1968 and the Guinean population voted 72,000 to 40,000 in favour of full independence (Campos, 2003: 113). Immediately after the referendum, organizing began for the first presidential and legislative elections. In October 1968, Macías Nguema was elected the first president of independent Equatorial Guinea in elections which the UN deemed free and fair (Campos, 2003: 113). Sovereignty was officially handed over to Nguema from Spanish officials on October 12, 1968 and the following month Equatorial Guinea was admitted to the UN (Campos, 2003: 114).

Obiang Seizes Power

Eleven years after Macías Nguema was sworn in as Equatorial Guinea's first democratically elected president, he was overthrown in a violent coup d'état. In August 1979, a coup was organized against the president by his Deputy Defence Minister and nephew, Lt.-Colonel Teodoro Obiang Nguema (Baynham, 1980: 65). Macías barricaded himself near his home village on the border of Cameroon with several hundred troops (Baynham, 1980: 65). Fighting broke out between those loyal to Obiang and Macías guards, resulting in the deaths of approximately 400 people (Baynham, 1980: 65). Macías was captured after fleeing to Cameroon and returned to Equatorial Guinea later that month (Baynham, 1980: 65). He was then tried before a military court and executed in September 1979 (Baynham, 1980: 65).

Immediately after Macías fled Equatorial Guinea, Obiang assumed control of a Supreme Military Council which ran the country for three years (Krennerich et al., 1999: 352). In August 1982, Obiang was confirmed as the president of Equatorial Guinea for a full seven-year term as part of the passage of a new constitution (Krennerich et al., 1999: 352). The constitution also "provided theoretically for the protection of human rights and a limited right of association" in an attempt to distance the Obiang regime from the human rights abuses of its predecessor (Krennerich et al., 1999: 352). In reality, however, no political reforms took hold. Obiang continued to control the single party state which his uncle had established, and created a government party, the Partido Democrático de Guinea Ecuatorial, PDGE, in 1987 (Krennerich et al., 1999: 352). Legislative elections in 1988 were largely pro forma as the constitution had failed to afford the legislature any independent powers (Krennerich et al., 1999: 352).

A De Jure Multi-Party State is Established

Obiang and the PDGE were able to maintain full political control in Equatorial Guinea until 1989, when increasing public demands forced the government to establish a political plurality (Krennerich et al., 1999: 352). A PDGE congress agreed to the adoption of a multi-party constitution which was approved by referendum in late 1991 (Krennerich et al., 1999: 352). The following year, laws governing the activities of political parties were passed, a transitional government was formed and political exiles were given amnesty (Krennerich et al., 1999: 352). The state's election laws, however, de facto excluded all exiled political opponents from competing in the state's 1992 legislative elections, which were boycotted by eight of the fourteen parties constituting Equatorial Guinea's opposition alliance, the Platforma de la Oposición Conjunta (POC) (Krennerich et al., 1999: 352). Members of the POC refused to take part in the elections after Obiang rejected calls to review controversial election laws and allow "independent observers to inspect voter registration" (Krennerich et al., 1999: 353). Representatives from the Organization of African Unity who were allowed to observe the elections did report "widespread violations of electoral procedure" (Krennerich et al., 1999: 353). Local elections in 1995 were the first truly multi-party elections in the country as all fourteen legal parties participated and the elections were monitored by international observers (Krennerich et al., 1999: 353). After initial results showed an overwhelming victory for the opposition parties, however, official tallies awarded victory to Obiang's party (Krennerich et al., 1999: 353). The UN-drafted electoral registers and independent observers present for the 1995 local elections were eliminated for the 1996 presidential contest which saw Obiang elected to a third term with 99 percent of the vote (Krennerich et al., 1999: 353). Under the post-1995 electoral laws of Obiang's regime, legislative candidates were required to be members of the PDGE and appear on the single-party list created by the President (Krennerich et al., 1999: 353).

The Discovery of Oil

In 1996, oil and gas reserves were discovered in Equatorial Guinea. Large-scale production began in the early 2000s, and the country soon ranked as one of the world's fastest growing economies, in part due to the investments of ExxonMobil in the Zafiro Oil Field, which would eventually elicit nearly 190,000 barrels of oil a day (Macmillan, 2020: 436; Rupiya, 2020: 106). In 1997, the country's economy grew by a record 148 percent (Macmillan, 2020: 437). Between 1992 and 2004, Equatorial Guinea experienced two-to-three-digit economic growth annually as a result of its burgeoning hydrocarbons sector (Macmillan, 2020: 437). Between 2000 and 2014, however, inflation also grew steadily, averaging 4.9 percent annually (Macmillan, 2020: 437). In 2015, despite hydrocarbon exports being valued at $11 billion USD the year before, Equatorial Guinea's GDP growth averaged -2.8 percent (Macmillan, 2020: 437). This decline in growth was due to government mismanagement of resource revenues, lower international commodity prices and a slowdown in oil and gas production (Macmillan, 2020: 437). In 2021, Equatorial Guinea exported $2.78 billion USD in crude petroleum (OEC.World, 2022). The main destination for Equatoguinean oil was China, which imported $750 million USD worth, followed by India at $600 million USD, Spain at $490 million USD and South Korea at $250 million USD (OEC.World, 2022). As of 2022, Equatorial Guinea's population totalled 1.6 million (WorldBank.org, 2023).

Corruption of the Oil Industry

The growth of Equatorial Guinea's oil industry under the Obiang regime resulted in "the spawning of a culture of corruption where monies were laundered between oil companies and the Obiang Nguema dynastic network" (Rupiya, 2020: 107). The offshore location of the country's oil reserves meant production was not hampered by sporadic violence or coup attempts on the mainland and that Obiang's exploitation of the industry went largely unseen by Equatorial Guinea's population. In 2004, "hearings conducted by the [U.S.] Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations … revealed that a number of American corporations were complicit in efforts by President Obiang and members of his family to cash in on Equatorial Guinea's oil wealth" (Williams, 2011: 630). "One of the first American oil companies in Equatorial Guinea, Walter International, paid for Teodoro ["Teodorin"], President Obiang's oldest son to take summer English-language classes at Pepperdine University in Malibu, California" (Williams, 2011: 630). Teodorin "spent at least $50,000 of Walter International money over the course of a single year according to employees of the Houston-based company" (Williams, 2011: 630). The investigation also found that Obiang "had transferred over $35 million from government accounts to suspicious offshore" Riggs Bank accounts as part of his assertion that oil revenues in

Equatorial Guinea were a state secret and that, in order to be protected from corruption, the funds needed to be in a foreign bank account of which he was the personal signatory (McFerson, 2009: 1358). Riggs Bank managers stated that, "on occasion, Equatoguinean embassy staff and others brought suitcases full of cash into a bank branch to be deposited" (Williams 2011: 631-32). Riggs Bank accounts belonging to the Obiang family, the government of Equatorial Guinea and the families of senior government officials contained nearly $700 million USD as of 2004 (Williams, 2011: 631). The Senate's findings additionally revealed "that Walter International's arrangement with the Obiang family in the early 1990s had been replicated and expanded by other petroleum companies, including ExxonMobil, Amerada Hess, and Marathon" (Williams, 2011: 630). Between the mid-1990s and the Senate investigation in 2004, it was determined that oil companies had collectively spent more than $4 million USD to sponsor study-abroad fees for 100 Equatorial Guinean students, the majority of whom were related to top officials in the Obiang administration (Williams, 2011: 630). Subsidiaries of the oil companies also often rented properties from relatives of Obiang, including a 2001 lease entered into by Triton which "required payments of $445,800 to a fourteen-year-old relative of the president" (Williams, 2011: 631). Two years after the U.S. Senate investigation revealed the Obiang regime's corrupt practices, ExxonMobil and Marathon "entered into confidentiality agreements with the Equatoguinean government, which thwarted efforts to improve the transparency of oil company contracts in the country" (Williams, 2011: 631). The U.S. Senate investigation not only made public the Obiang dynasty's exploitation of Equatorial Guinea's oil industry, but also resulted in the largest fine to that date in the history of U.S. banking being levied against Riggs Bank (Williams, 2011: 631). A journalist covering the case aptly noted, "Obiang treats Equatorial Guinea's national treasury like his personal checking account" (Williams, 2011: 633).

When news of the Riggs Bank investigation broke in Equatorial Guinea via a Spanish television network, it "sparked amazement in the streets of the capital Malabo" (Williams, 2011: 633). Amid mounting public outcry over the corruption laid out in the Senate's investigation, Equatorial Guinea's information minister Alfonso Nsue Mokuy attempted to discredit Spanish media which he said "always went out of their way to broadcast information that confused public opinion at home and abroad with the single aim of destabilizing the democratic political regime of Equatorial Guinea" (Williams, 2011: 633). In 2004, Mokuy threatened to bring criminal and civil suits against all media outlets which reported on the Riggs Bank investigation, and Spanish outlets in particular, for "tendentious comments and the manipulation of the truth" (Williams, 2011: 633). The same year, members of an Australian television crew were forced to leave the country amidst threats of imprisonment after reporting on Equatorial Guinea's oil wealth (Williams, 2011: 633).

Entrenchment of the Obiang Regime Through Exploitation of Oil Revenue

Although Obiang's authoritarian regime came to power in 1979, the 1996 discovery of oil, which was immediately co-opted by Obiang, provided his regime with the funds necessary to consolidate and entrench his authoritarian rule. Prior to 1996, Obiang was successful only in co-opting Equatorial Guinea's legislature by ensuring the election of PDGE loyalists in rigged elections. Following the establishment of the state's oil industry, however, Obiang expanded the reach and effectiveness of his corrupt authoritarian regime by exploiting state oil revenue. In order to access and benefit from Equatorial Guinea's new lucrative industry which was exclusively staffed by subcontractors, citizens were required to present a PDGE membership card to subcontracting agencies headed by Obiang's family and close associates (Frynas, 2004: 541). PDGE loyalists in government were rewarded for their continued support with oil-revenue-funded supplements to their state salaries. Many of the children of high-ranking government and PDGE officials, as mentioned above, were sponsored to study abroad by oil companies with lucrative contracts in Equatorial Guinea. Obiang spent large amounts of oil revenue on private security companies which have been employed both as personal security for Obiang's regime and as a police force against political opponents. Obiang's model for undemocratic elections has also advanced since the discovery of oil. Not only are candidate lists and results manipulated to favour Obiang loyalists as was the case in pre-1996 Equatorial Guinea, but oil wealth has since been used to co-opt media coverage of elections, employ private security firms to intimidate voters, and purchase the support of a judicial system which prosecutes opposition leaders to eliminate electoral rivals. The 1996 discovery of oil in Equatorial Guinea marked a turning point in the country and in the Obiang regime as his authoritarianism gained financial backing in the form of exploited oil revenue which was subsequently used to consolidate his power and achieve regime longevity. The specific ways in which Obiang exploited state oil revenue to consolidate and entrench his regime will be expanded upon in subsequent sections of this chapter.

Neopatrimonialism and Party Consolidation

In order to consolidate his power and achieve regime longevity, Obiang has exploited Equatorial Guinea's oil revenue to ensure the continued legislative dominance of party loyalists and position his son as his constitutional successor. First, Sá and Sanches' 2021 analysis of corruption in Equatorial Guinea's government highlighted the important role "co-optation through patronage, distribution of natural resource revenues, and appointment of political positions" has played in Obiang's regime longevity (88). They concluded that much of the country's obvious "patronage system is underpinned" by oil revenues which are selectively distributed to "purchase support and demobilize opponents" (Sá & Sanches, 2021: 88). Equatoguinean legislatures "loyal to the regime are systematically rewarded" while political newcomers and challengers to the political status quo are strongly opposed (Sá & Sanches, 2021: 89). Since the late-1990s following the discovery of oil, members of Equatorial Guinea's government appointed or supported by Obiang were likely to be re-elected three or more times (Sá & Sanches, 2021: 91). In 2011, more than 80 percent of the country's government ministers were serving at least their third term, leaving only 20 percent of elected positions open to political newcomers and Obiang dissenters (Sá & Sanches, 2021: 91). The super majority in Equatorial Guinea's government maintained by the PDGE since Obiang seized power is further evidence of the consolidation of the country's political elite around their ruler. Between 1994 and 2020, the most cabinet positions held by members of opposition parties was three out of twenty-six in 2013 (Sá & Sanches, 2021: 92). Such an absolute majority loyal to Obiang was able to be achieved as a direct result of Obiang's total control of Equatorial Guinea's oil industry. In order to purchase continued guaranteed support, Obiang supplemented the salaries of loyal ministers with small-scale rent distributions from the country's oil revenue (Sá & Sanches, 2021: 92).

Second, in order to ensure the continuation of his lucrative authoritarian regime, Obiang, immediately following the discovery of oil in Equatorial Guinea, positioned his eldest son as his constitutional successor while enriching his entire family with state oil revenue. Obiang's oldest son Teodorin was first appointed to a government position by his father in 1998 when he became the Minister of Forestry and Environment (Sá & Sanches, 2021: 89). In 2012, Teodorin was appointed to the newly created position of Vice President of Equatorial Guinea, and promoted to First Vice President in 2016 (Rupiya, 2004: 98). Since the early 2000s, when it was speculated that Obiang may be suffering from prostate cancer, the positioning of his eldest son in the country's government has been more closely watched (Rupiya, 2004: 101). Teodorin has used his position as Vice President and his place within Equatorial

Guinea's political elite to amass an incredible personal fortune. According to a U.S. Department of Justice investigation, Teodorin supplemented his official income while serving as Forestry Minister by requiring all international logging firms to pay a tax on timber in "'cash or through checks' to a forestry company he owned" (Silverstien, 2011: 57). More than $100 million USD of the personal wealth Teodorin has amassed has been funnelled into the United States (Williams, 2011: 633). His Malibu mansion alone cost $30 million USD, in addition to his two homes in South Africa, "seven Ferraris, two Lamborghinis, two Maybachs, five Bentleys, two Porsches, and four Rolls Royces" (Williams, 2011: 633). A 2007 U.S. Justice Department investigation concluded that many of his assets "derived from 'extortion, theft of public funds, or other corrupt conduct'" (Silverstein, 2011: 57). In 2011, French authorities joined the numerous countries prosecuting Teodorin when they charged him with ill-gotten gains (Sá & Sanches, 2021: 89). The same year, U.S. authorities seized Teodorin's Malibu mansion and rare car collection, along with $59,850 USD worth of rugs and a pair of $1,734 USD wine glasses (Silverstein, 2011: 57).

The personal enrichment of the Obiang family and political loyalists from state oil revenues was enabled by the continued control of Equatorial Guinea's oil industry by Obiang's second son, Gabriel Obiang Lima, who has served as the country's Minister of Mines and Hydrocarbons since 2003 (Sá & Sanches, 2021: 89). A year after Lima was appointed by his father to head the lucrative industry, the 2004 U.S. Senate investigation of Riggs Bank found that both ExxonMobil and Armerada Hess paid into a private bank account in the Obiang family name worth at least $300 million USD (Wood, 2004: 560). The payments were part of contracts negotiated by Lima to allow the international oil companies access to Equatorial Guinea's reserves (Wood, 2004: 560). In 2020 reports surfaced of a similar criminal complaint filed against Lima and Portugal-based company Armando Cunha which alleged that Lima had "used his powerful position to… extort bribes from businessmen and siphon off millions of euros of state money from a construction project" in one of the country's oil fields (OCCRP.com, 2021). The Lisbon headquarters of Armando Cunha was searched by police in December 2020, following the revelation that millions of euros in bribes had ended up in "offshore companies and accounts controlled by Obiang Lima's associates" (OCCRP.com, 2021). Not only has Obiang positioned his two sons in powerful government positions to reap the benefits of his corrupt regime, but the number of Obiang family members appointed to ministerial positions in Equatorial Guinea has consistently increased since the discovery of oil, reaching twenty-nine in 2020 (Sá & Sanches, 2021: 90).

Since Equatorial Guinea's discovery of oil in 1996, Obiang has exploited his complete control of the country's oil market, by virtue of his son heading the industry, to amass great personal wealth for himself and his family while, more importantly for this dissertation, positioning his eldest son as his constitutional successor and purchasing the continued support of political loyalists. Obiang's authoritarian regime existed prior to 1996, but it was not until the discovery of oil that Obiang had the funds necessary to purchase and reward the support of loyalists and oversee lucrative contracts with international oil companies which enriched his family and those of top government officials. Only after the discovery of oil did Obiang also take steps to position his eldest son as his constitutional successor in an effort to entrench his neopatrimonialist authoritarian regime even past his own rule. Post-1996 oil wealth thus provided Obiang the funds with which to consolidate his power through party and government loyalists and entrench his neopatrimonialist regime.

Elimination of Political Opposition

Since Obiang seized power in 1979, his style of ruling has largely followed in the authoritarian footsteps of his predecessor. Following the 1996 discovery of oil, Obiang's authoritarianism became more extreme, now with the financial backing of natural resource wealth. Rupiya (2020) noted that, in post-1996 Equatorial Guinea, "in order to dissuade opposition, Obiang undertook secret operations, in agreement with governments where he would snatch or kidnap the opposition from exile such as in Benin, Cameroon, Gabon and … South Sudan where they would stand trial and following confessions extracted under torture would then be summarily executed" (105). So entrenched in Equatoguinean politics was the violent oppression of political opponents that scholars began referring to the practice as Nguemaism (Rupiya, 2020: 103). In 2008, Manfred Nowak, a UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, found that torture was "systematically used by the police forces against persons who refuse to 'cooperate' – persons suspected of political crimes as well as suspects of common crimes" (Rupiya, 2020: 106). Nowak noted in a UNESCO report the same year that "some prisoners suspected of political crimes were being held in solitary confinement for up to four years, almost always shackled at the legs" (Rupiya, 2020: 106). Political crimes included membership to banned political parties and insulting the head of state (Rupiya, 2020: 106).

Obiang’s oppression of political opponents has been aided by his use of state oil revenue to hire private military contractors. Equatorial Guinea’s oil windfall resulted in “the ruling elite [having] considerably more money to spend on security, and this [led] to an influx of international private security firms” (Wood, 2004: 564). Such firms were then explicitly used to target political opponents of Obiang, including in 2002 when, during a purge of political opponents accused of coup plotting, founding members of the Fuerza Demócrata Republicana (FDR) and Popular Union Parties were arrested (Wood, 2004: 552). In 1994, prior to the discovery of oil, military expenditures made up less than one percent of central government spending; by 2008, military expenditures had increased to nearly eight percent (Sá & Sanches, 2021: 96). In particular, Obiang hired the American private military corporation Military Professional Resources Incorporated (MPRI) (Williams, 2011: 637). The company’s contract has since been expanded numerous times and MPRI has assumed the responsibility for Obiang’s private security and for training the country’s police forces (Williams, 2011: 637). Additional private security firms have also been contracted by the country’s top government officials, and paid generously from oil profits. Foreign oil executives who visit Equatorial Guinea are often afforded private security by the firm Sonavi, which is run by Obiang’s brother (Frynas, 2004: 539). MPRI personnel also staff checkpoints throughout the country alongside Equatorial Guinean police (Wood, 2004: 563). Following multiple alleged coup attempts in the early 2000s, these checkpoints were used to arrest those alleged to have been conspirators or supports of opposition parties and are still used to “restrict the movement of opposition figures” and extort passers-by (Wood, 2004: 563). MPRI personnel and the Equatorial Guinean police and military apparatus as a whole have, with continued investment from the country’s oil profits, become an extension of the Obiang regime itself. Obiang’s government relies on security and para-security groups directly funded by state oil revenue to “control the permanent traffic of persons and goods” throughout the country (Campos-Serrano, 2013: 328). Since the early 2000s, private security personnel at checkpoints have routinely and arbitrarily detained individuals, particularly of the Bubi ethnic group who have historically mounted some of the most serious challenges to Obiang’s rule (Wood, 2004: 562). Members of Obiang’s police force have established checkpoints at each entrance to and exit from Bubi enclaves on Bioko island and the ability of Bubis to travel to the mainland requires advance permission from police or military officers (Wood, 2004: 562).

In addition to Obiang’s use of police and private military contractors to violently dissuade political opposition, he has also exploited his unilateral control of the state's judicial system to punish political challengers. Members of Equatorial Guinea's judiciary at all levels routinely have their official salaries supplemented with oil-funded bonuses in return for their continued loyalty to the president. Most consequentially, the Supreme Court of Equatorial Guinea has continued to do Obiang's bidding, including upholding his ban of the country's main opposition party, Citizens for Innovation, in 2018 over allegations of electoral violence (Macmillan, 2020: 436). In 2019, one hundred and thirty defendants, including dissenting members of the PDGE and members of the opposition Coalition for the Restoration of Democracy Party, were tried for their alleged involvement in a 2017 coup attempt (FreedomHouse.com, 2022). Several defendants claimed they were tortured to elicit confessions, and two defendants died in custody while awaiting trial (FreedomHouse.com, 2022). One hundred and twelve defendants were found guilty and sentenced to harsh prison terms, including 97-year sentences (FreedomHouse.com, 2022). In March 2020, ten individuals were convicted of links to an opposition party, treason, espionage and verbal abuse of the head of state in a closed-door trial and given prison sentences of up to 90 years (FreedomHouse.com, 2020).

As evidenced in this section, the 1996 discovery of oil in Equatorial Guinea and resulting windfall revenue directly provided Obiang with the funds necessary to hire private security contractors tasked in part with the oppression of political opponents. It was not until after the establishment of Equatorial Guinea's lucrative oil industry that Obiang's investments in the country's police and military apparatus meaningfully increased. Since then, the state's police and military forces, supplemented by private security firms, have been paid by the Obiang regime with state oil revenues to staff checkpoints, limit the movement of potential opposition groups and arrest opposition leaders. Simultaneously, the country's judiciary has been purchased by Obiang with state oil revenue in return for its prosecution and imprisonment of opposition figures. Such oil-funded elimination of potential opponents by the state's top law enforcement and judicial bodies has resulted in Obiang's consolidation of power and regime longevity.

Undemocratic Elections

Despite the establishment of a de jure multiparty state in the 1990s, presidential and legislative elections in Equatorial Guinea have been far from democratic. In 1996, during the first Equatoguinean presidential election following the discovery of oil, Obiang received 99 percent of the vote as all but one of the opposition candidates boycotted the election after their demands for a delay were denied (Hughes, 1996: 442). The delay was requested to address several instances of government manipulation of the electoral process, including the election date being moved up by six months (Hughes, 1996: 442). Obiang opponents also argued against the imposition of strict eligibility requirements for presidential candidates, which included a deposit of 3 million CFA francs, five continuous years of residency in Equatorial Guinea, being of Equatorial Guinean descent and having no criminal record (Hughes, 1996: 443). "These conditions [were] particularly restrictive for opposition leaders who [had] spent considerable periods of time in exile or [had] been arrested for their political activities" (Hughes, 1996: 443). It is widely believed that Obiang himself may have not met these conditions, given that his parents were most likely from neighbouring Gabon (Hughes, 1996: 443). In order to preserve the outward appearance of multi-party elections, Obiang offered the equivalent of 7,000 Great British pounds of state oil revenue to each of the four primary opposition candidates if they would participate in the election, an offer only one candidate accepted (Hughes, 1996: 443).

Six years later, in 2002, when Obiang won his fourth presidential term with 97 percent of the vote, his administration was admonished by the European Union and Amnesty International which accused his police and military apparatus, including private security firms contracted with oil revenue, of torturing political prisoners (Macmillan, 2020: 436). The same year, in a highly-publicized trial, opposition leader Fabian Nseu Guema was found guilty of insulting Obiang on a website and sentenced to prison by Obiang's co-opted judiciary (Macmillan, 2020: 436). After sweeping the 2009 presidential election, Obiang's regime led a successful 2011 referendum on constitutional amendments to loosen presidential term-limits and raise the age restriction on incumbent presidential candidates, which was formerly capped at 75-years-old (Macmillan, 2020: 435). The amendments also created a new legislative chamber, the Senate, which would be comprised of 55 elected members and 15 members directly appointed by the president (Macmillan, 2020: 436). A new vice president position, also in charge of the country's defence and security, would be filled through presidential appointment (Macmillan, 2020: 435). Government-released results showed the referendum passed with 97.7 percent of the population in favour and 91.8 percent turnout (Macmillan, 2020: 435). Opposition parties within Equatorial Guinea disputed the results. In 2016, Obiang's oldest son, Teodorin, was appointed to the position of vice president and has served in the role ever since (Macmillan, 2020: 436). Ahead of the 2016 presidential election, the leader of a main opposition party, Gabriel Nsé Obiang Obono, was put under house arrest and supporters who had gathered outside his residence were fired upon with live bullets by police officials (FreedomHouse.com, 2022). The election resulted in Obiang being elected President of Equatorial Guinea for the sixth time, receiving 93.7 percent of the vote compared to the two main opposition candidates who each received 1.5 percent (Macmillan, 2020: 436). In the 2017 legislative elections, "the ruling PDGE won 99 out of the 100 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and all 55 directly-elected seats in the Senate. All 15 appointed members of the Senate were also from the PDGE" (Macmillan, 2020: 436). The head of Equatorial Guinea's National Election Commission during the 2017 elections was also a member of Obiang's cabinet and a member of the PDGE, who, like loyal parliamentarians, had had his official salary supplemented by oil-funded bonuses in return for continued support of the president (FreedomHouse.com, 2022). Freedom House stated in their annual country report on Equatorial Guinea that in the 2017 elections, "The preelection media environment was tightly controlled, and a wave of arrests of [Citizens for Innovation Party] supporters began when police [, aided by Obiang's private security contractors,] dispersed an opposition rally ahead of the vote. Among other irregularities on election day, a ban on private vehicles prevented many voters from reaching distant polling stations, and polls closed one hour earlier than scheduled" (FreedomHouse.com, 2022). Government-published election results showed 93 percent turnout for the 2016 presidential election and 84 percent turnout for the 2017 legislative elections (Macmillan, 2020: 436). Obiang's reelection in 2016 officially made him the longest serving head of state in Africa (Sá & Sanches, 2021: 79).

The most recent elections, originally scheduled for 2023, were held in November 2022, and resulted in the PDGE receiving 94.9 percent of the vote (State.gov, 2022). A public condemnation by the United States following the elections cited reports by international observers which included "credible allegations of … election-related irregularities, including documented instances of fraud, intimidation, and coercion" (State.gov, 2022). In particular, the 2022 elections were marred by allegations of repeat voting, non-secret voting booths and the presence of heavily-armed security contractors, hired by Obiang with state oil revenue, within 20 meters of voting locations (State.gov, 2022).

Equatorial Guinea's police and military apparatus' fierce control of the movement of political opponents, the judiciary's prosecution of electoral challengers and private security contractors' intimidation of voters has created an electoral environment conducive only to the campaigns of Obiang and PDGE members. Freedom House reported in 2022 that private guards and members of the country's police force, funded by state oil revenue, patrolled voting booths and polling locations during presidential and legislative elections, intimidating voters to uphold the Obiang regime, in which they have a vested financial interest (FreedomHouse.com, 2022). The very organization of Equatorial Guinean elections themselves has been linked to the state's corrupt oil industry. Although it has been denied by ExxonMobil, numerous reports surfaced that the oil corporation was responsible for hiring Strategic Concepts, a South-African based company, to organize Equatorial Guinea's first multi-party elections and subsequent contests (Hughes, 1996: 444). The control of election organization by a company with a vested interest in maintaining the Obiang dynasty which welcomed it into the country and has maintained its lucrative oil contracts is perhaps the most stark example of the absolute power Obiang and his oil-funded loyalists wield over Equatorial Guinea in every sector from law enforcement to the judiciary and election administration.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This thesis has sought to address the question of how the authoritarian leaders of Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon exploited their state's natural resource industries in order to consolidate their power and achieve regime longevity. A thorough analysis of existing literature on both states' authoritarian leaders, systems of corruption and oil industries - three fields of literature which had yet to be considered together in the contexts of Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon- has yielded a better understanding of the research question. The interaction, rather than simple combination, of authoritarianism, corruption and natural resource wealth leads to an understanding of how, and why, Obiang and Biya have for decades consolidated their power and entrenched their regimes. The interaction between natural resource wealth, authoritarianism and corruption created a feedback loop in Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon which provided Obiang and Biya the incentives, mechanisms and need to continue their corrupt exploitation of their states' natural resource revenue.

As Williams Jr. (2011) and Esteban (2009) note, authoritarianism in Africa rarely offers opportunities "for leaders to be changed by peaceful and non-coercive means" (Williams Jr., 2011: 636, Esteban, 2009: 667-685). In authoritarian African states, political competition is a zero-sum game in which power is accrued to a single ruler and his loyalists, while those on the outside and in opposing political parties are denied any political power, and accompanying personal wealth. Such consolidation of power, wealth and control makes authoritarianism, in Africa and elsewhere, extremely high stakes. The great personal wealth and power accrued to authoritarian presidents prompts leaders to do anything to stay in power while simultaneously incentivizing challengers to seek power, often through violent coup d'états. Falling to a successful coup is often fatal for African rulers, the threat of which prompts sitting authoritarian leaders to oppressively crack down on any dissent or potential political challengers. Likewise, failed coups and unsuccessful political challenges often end in a sentence of execution for the plotters which largely discourages citizens from challenging sitting authoritarians in the first place. Thus, "once established, such all-or-nothing [regimes] become difficult to change because they are structurally self-perpetuating" (Williams Jr., 2011: 636, Esteban, 2009: 667-685). Such self-reinforcing behaviour has clearly been present in the regimes of Paul Biya and Teodoro Obiang.

Paul Biya followed in the footsteps of his authoritarian predecessor who had established state control over Cameroon's oil industry in the 1970s. By the time Biya assumed the presidency during the height of Cameroon's oil boom in 1982, the position of president of Cameroon came with it tremendous personal wealth. Once in power, Biya reaped the benefits of the country's soaring oil revenue, which led Cameroon to average 9.4 percent GDP growth throughout his first years in office (Gauthier & Zeufack, 2009: 4). The extreme growth of state oil revenue, and Biya's unilateral control of such wealth, prompted an attempted coup by Anglophone Cameroonians two years after Biya assumed the presidency. In addition to severely punishing those deemed responsible for the coup, Biya tapped into the state's oil windfalls to purchase political support and further consolidate his power, hoping to stave off future challenges. Biya's regime exploited the state's rapidly increasing oil revenue to reward electoral support by funding scholarships and development projects on university campuses in the francophone ethnic regions which housed his supporters (Gauthier & Zeufack, 2009: 23). State funds, largely from oil revenue, were also used to consolidate Biya's power within state government. Between 1977 and 2006, only 46 percent of Cameroon's total oil revenues were officially transferred to the national budget, leaving 54 percent unaccounted for (Gauthier & Zeufack, 2009: 5). Throughout his first four terms in office, Biya purchased the loyalty of CPDM members and ensured loyalty to the CPDM was near-obligatory for all Cameroonians wishing to receive any government assistance. His regime simultaneously violently oppressed opposition leaders and parties and manipulated legislative elections. As a result, by 2008, the Cameroonian parliament was stacked with CPDM members who voted to approve Biya's request to abolish presidential term limits (ICG, 2010: 33). The purchasing of continued guaranteed support from Cameroonian voters and CPDM parliamentarians was made possible only by the discovery and large-scale production of oil in Cameroon and Biya's unilateral control of the industry.

As evidenced above, Biya exploited the country's oil boom which paralleled his ascension to power, expanding presidential control through private security firms, control of the CPDM, de facto outlawing of other political parties, violent crackdowns of any opposition and CPDM dominance in local and state legislatures. As a result, under Biya, the office of the president of Cameroon brought with it virtually unbridled power, control and personal wealth which was selectively shared with loyalists. Such concentrated power and wealth naturally attracted an attempted coup by Biya opponents, which was unsurprisingly followed by harsher crackdowns of opponents and more blatant use of state funds to reward supporters. The more Cameroon's oil wealth grew and accrued to Biya, the more likely a challenge to his rule became. This risk led Biya to become more oppressive of potential challengers and more obvious in purchasing continued support. This self-reinforcing behaviour continued for the next forty years as Biya has continued to, by all means necessary, hold on to the office through which he has amassed near total control of Cameroon. . ~~Throughout his tenure, Biya has amassed immense power to the office of the presidency, prompting people to try to take it which he has cracked down upon, and making him all the more dedicated to staying in power.~~ The positive feedback loop created by the interaction between authoritarianism, corruption and natural resource revenue in Cameroon over the past forty-one years has resulted in the power consolidation and regime entrenchment of Paul Biya.

In neighbouring Equatorial Guinea, natural resource wealth, authoritarianism and corruption have likewise entrenched the regime of Teodoro Obiang. Obiang himself seized power during a violent coup in 1979 against the country's first democratically elected president, Macías Nguema (Baynham, 1980: 65). After a hasty trial in military court, Nguema was executed and Obiang became the president of a Supreme Military Council which ran Equatorial Guinea for three years until his first election in 1982 (Krennerich et al., 1999: 352). In 1996, sizeable oil and gas reserves were discovered off the country's coast, which led Equatorial Guinea to a record 148 percent economic growth the following year (Macmillan, 2020: 437). Between the early 1990s and 2004, the country's hydrocarbons boom resulted in two-to-three-digit economic growth annually (Macmillan, 2020: 437). As a direct result of the discovery and large-scale production of hydrocarbons in Equatorial Guinea, Obiang's office of the presidency amassed extreme wealth and power which simultaneously attracted challengers and financed his corrupt and oppressive methods to stay in power and deter opponents. U.S. Senate hearings in 2004 revealed that Obiang had transferred at least $35 million USD of oil revenue from government accounts to private offshore accounts which he alone controlled (Williams, 2011; McFerson, 2009: 630). Those loyal to Obiang were also rewarded, as oil companies with contracts in Equatorial Guinea were discovered to have spent more than $4 million USD collectively on scholarships for one hundred Equatoguinean students to attend U.S. universities, the majority of whom who were children of top officials in the Obiang regime (Williams, 2011: 630). In return, loyal members of the PDGE continued to seek reelection and consistently constituted a majority of the Equatorial Guinean parliament. The country's judiciary was similarly co-opted by Obiang, and the Supreme Court of Equatorial Guinea largely served as the enforcement arm of the regime. In 2018, the Supreme Court upheld Obiang's ban of the primary opposition party. The following year, the Court tried more than one hundred members of opposition parties and dissenting members of the PDGE and sentenced them to decades in prison (FreedomHouse.com, 2022). Equatorial Guinea's judiciary, and the country's police and military apparatus which Obiang supplemented with private security firms, have been used to oppress and punish conspirators of multiple coup attempts, most notably in 2004 and 2017, after which the crackdown on opposition voices only grew more violent. Following the attempted coup in 2004, opposition leader Fabian Nseu Guema was sentenced to prison after being found guilty of insulting Obiang on a website (Macmillan, 2020: 436). The path for Obiang to stay in power indefinitely has likewise been aided by loyalists in the state's government and its security apparatus. Amid accusations of corruption and voter intimidation, Obiang declared victory in a 2009 referendum which loosened presidential term limits and age restrictions on incumbent candidates, paving the way for his continued re-election (Macmillan, 2020: 435).

Obiang's occupation of the presidency of Equatorial Guinea since before the discovery of oil has allowed him to shape the state's hydrocarbons industry to his liking, and consolidate the resulting revenue. Throughout his more than forty years in power, Obiang has consistently shaped the industry to personally benefit his family and regime loyalists. PDGE parliamentarians have received special treatment for their families and children while party dissenters have routinely received arbitrarily harsh sentences from the state's judiciary for acting against Obiang. Both the rewarding of loyalists and their families and the purchasing of loyalty from members of Equatorial Guinea's judiciary were made possible by the exploitation of oil revenue. Oil profits also funded the private security firms contracted by Obiang to oppress potential political rivals. The more Obiang's unilateral control was challenged by political opponents and coup attempts, the harsher his oppression of dissenting voices and political opponents became, and the more extravagant his purchasing of loyalty grew. Like Biya, Obiang came to function in a positive feedback loop in which the threat of violent coups continually motivated his authoritarian oppression of opponents and his corrupt use of hydrocarbon revenues to purchase continued loyalty from supporters.

This dissertation has illustrated the interactions between authoritarianism, corruption and natural resource wealth, and the positive feedback loops which such interactions created, in both Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon. In both states the large-scale production of hydrocarbons, which made the position of president all the more lucrative, in turn enabled pre-existing authoritarian regimes to become more oppressive and corrupt. Thus, although the discovery of oil in Cameroon occurred under Biya's predecessor, the advantages of being the authoritarian ruler in Cameroon were significantly enhanced after large-scale oil production, and accompanying revenues, began during Biya's presidency. In neighbouring Equatorial Guinea, large-scale oil production also made Obiang more protective of his power and more willing to engage in institutional corruption and political oppression to maintain his unilateral control. Obiang instituted neopatrimonialist rule in which his family and close associates were positioned as his successors and enriched in return for their loyalty. In Cameroon, Biya adopted a clientelist network which relied on purchased support from government officials at local, state and federal levels in order to stay in power. The regimes of both rulers, and perhaps their lives in the event of a violent coup, depended upon their ability to control such wealth that the public's loyalty to each was necessary to live safely and with some degree of comfort. Such purchasing power was made possible directly because of natural resource, specifically oil, revenues.-

While the political and economic ecosystems present in Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon, made up of authoritarianism, corruption and natural resource revenues, have been explored at length in this thesis, the patterns observed in these states are worth studying in other contexts. As stated in the methodology chapter, one of the main goals of this dissertation was the author's desire to drive academic and policy making attention to less well-known cases of the political and resource curses. This thesis has attempted to illustrate the harm being done by resource-rich authoritarian regimes in Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon and the level of natural-resource-related corruption which exists in these relatively small oil producers. In the same vein, the patterns and positive feedback loops observed in this thesis should be researched in the context of other authoritarian states rich in natural resources which have yet to be the focus of existing literature. An examination of similarly endowed states under authoritarian regimes to determine if the three variables identified in Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea similarly resulted in positive feedback loops, or if other variables were present, would provide a valuable contribution to existing scholarship. Complexity theory could be utilized to study the interactions between existing variables and the results of such interactions (de Coning, 2016). Study of the patterns observed in this dissertation in the contexts of other less well-known resource-rich authoritarian states would additionally advance the author's goal of expanding academic and policy making attention paid to such states.

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[1] In 2004 when Jensen and Wantchekon's piece was published, all three states had experienced what were considered successful democratic transitions. As of 2023, however, Freedom House ranked Mali as not free and Benin and Madagascar as party-free due to post-2004 political and social trends.

[2] Mobutu was President of the DRC from 1965 until 1997.