Journal of Retracing Africa

Volume 3 | Issue 1 Article 15

2016

Hicks, Celeste. Africa's New Oil: Power, Pipelines and Future Fortunes. London: Zed, 2015, 239 pp.

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Recommended Citation
Crofford, Brad. "Hicks, Celeste. Africa's New Oil: Power, Pipelines and Future Fortunes. London: Zed, 2015, 239 pp.." *Journal of Retracing Africa*: Vol. 3, Issue 1 (2016): 90-92. https://encompass.eku.edu/jora/vol3/iss1/15

Hicks, Celeste. *Africa's New Oil: Power, Pipelines and Future Fortunes.* **London: Zed, 2015, xiv +239 pp.**

Celeste Hicks' *Africa's New Oil* is a comparative case study of five countries fairly new to oil production: Chad, Niger, Ghana, Kenya, and Uganda. Through her comparative approach, Hicks aims to show how countries have adopted a variety of approaches to combat the resource curse. The book's primary argument is that "the fundamental issues in all of the countries profiled are those of governance and the ability of citizens and civil society...to influence leaders towards transparent and beneficial ways of using natural resource revenues" (pg. 15). Drawing on interviews in the profiled countries and her review of the relevant academic literature, Hicks presents a balanced account of the countries' early successes and struggles with oil production.

In Chapter 1, Hicks discusses the creation and ultimate demise of the CCDP, a joint plan between the World Bank and international oil companies to finance the development of Chad's oil fields. Hicks suggests that the Chadian government's ending of its agreement with the World Bank was not the result of negotiating in bad faith, but rather the result of the World Bank's lack of flexibility toward the government's spending of oil revenues in the face of severe security threats from rebel forces. Hicks presents the aftermath of the CCDP in Chapter 2 along six key themes: "the contracting process; transparency with regard to the receipt of money from oil; effective revenue management; civil society engagement; environmental management; and the impact on the local economy" (39). Hicks' assessment here is nuanced. On the one hand, there remains a suboptimal level of transparency, high expenditures on infrastructure projects without the concomitant investment in human capital, and other serious problems. On the other hand, some important measures have been retained, such as environmental protection remaining a key focus and civil society continuing to monitor revenues. Even the Chadian government's use of oil revenues for military spending may be somewhat justified; Hicks suggests such military expenditure is at least partially responsible for keeping rebels from toppling the government and thereby avoiding destructive instability (75). She concludes the chapter by arguing that whether Chad turns out to be resource-cursed will depend on if it continues down its current path or moves toward wiser investments in development, education, and health.

China's involvement in Chad's oil industry is the subject of Chapter 3. Hicks' account begins in 2006 and continues to late 2014. It starts with Chad breaking its diplomatic relations with Taiwan in order to begin a relationship with China. Much of her account draws on a visit to a Chinese company's oilfield and refinery in 2013, though she also incorporates scholarly and journalistic sources. Although the transparency of its agreements with China's CNPCIC and the fact that many of the oil company's workers are Chinese expats leave much to be desired, the Chadian government's willingness and ability to stand up to it to enforce environmental rules "gives some cause for optimism about the health, safety and environmental standards of any future expansion in the industry" (102). However, the future remains uncertain; Hicks notes the relationship turned sour in 2013 over issues like environmental damage and increasing prices for refined petroleum products.

Chapter 4 examines Niger's oil industry, with a particular emphasis on resource nationalism. Hicks frames the oil discussion background information on Niger's uranium exports to France. She also addresses the role of China's CNPC, as well as civil society and transparency. She concludes that progress is mixed: there is no stabilization fund to deal with fluctuating prices, a significant portion of revenues are being used for military spending, and there is "nothing in the constitution to suggest the setting up of an official civil society monitoring group" (121). Nevertheless, she notes "the kernel of transparency and accountability has been sown," as evidenced by such things as its compliance with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (125). This initiative, as well as the efforts of the group Publish What You Pay, are frequently invoked by Hicks in evaluating the five countries.

In Chapter 5, Hicks discusses Ghana's oil industry with an emphasis on the role of civil society. The country's civil society is more empowered in dealing with oil than either Chad's or Niger's. The greatest issue confronting Ghana seems to be its oil sector developing rapidly before the finalization of important legislation, such as the Petroleum Exploration and Production Bill (155). The spending of oil revenues is also a concern, as expenditures are occurring outside the four areas intended to promote social development. Overall, while Ghana also has issues in its oil sector, they appear less severe in Hicks' account than either Chad's or Niger's.

Chapter 6 examines Uganda and Kenya's approaches to oil development. The recency of the process in these countries means the chapter is primarily focused on legislation and the debate over future development rather than their experiences in production. Kenya seemed to be moving faster, but Hicks suggests "Uganda's go-slow approach...may begin to be seen as a better way of ensuring the country is ready to make oil wealth work for the benefit of all" (194). She also discusses women's involvement in the oil industry, noting that it is more extensive in East Africa than in the other countries she visited. While earlier chapters mostly examined individual countries, Hicks provides more direct comparisons in the conclusion using five dimensions: (1) "exploration and production rights and contract transparency," (2) "revenue management," (3) "local content," (4) "environmental and social protection," and (5) "transparency and accountability" (pg. 198-201). She ends on a positive note, suggesting there has been significant progress in the past decade in regards to the resource curse as civil society and government in the profiled countries are actively debating how best to prevent it and harness their natural resources for long-term benefit.

Hicks' journalistic approach and evocative writing make for a readable introduction to the topic. Hicks includes a variety of stakeholders, from government officials to civil society monitors and from corporate representatives to typical community members. Her interviews with these varied stakeholders present a balanced account, yet they have their limits. At times the level of detail feels more akin to an extended newspaper or magazine article rather than an academic publication. While Hicks occasionally references the literature on the resource curse, it is not discussed as extensively as one might hope given the book's topic; this is possibly due to the "African Arguments" series, as noted in the book's front matter, being intended for "students and general readers who want to know more about the African continent." Unfortunately, the chapters on all countries except Chad seem short–even shallow–compared to Hicks' extensive and nuanced discussion of that country's development. This is perhaps best explained by Hicks' having worked there as a BBC correspondent and her argument that the Chadian experience played an important role in shaping the other countries' subsequent approaches to oil. Despite this unevenness, *Africa's New Oil* is a well-written journalistic introduction to the continent's new oil producers and its case studies can offer something of value to academic and lay readers alike.

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