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Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (Oct., 2004), pp. 61-81

Published by: [Ph.D. Program in Political Science of the City University of New York](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4150124>

Accessed: 18/02/2012 14:48

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# Primary Commodities and War

## Congo-Brazzaville's Ambivalent Resource Curse

*Pierre Englebert and James Ron*

Political economists argue that developing countries with abundant natural resources are likely to suffer from the “resource curse,” a double-barreled affliction of poor governance and irresponsible economic behavior.<sup>1</sup> Analysts have applied this approach to civil wars, arguing that primary commodity dependency may stimulate armed rebellion.<sup>2</sup> Abundant natural resources are a “honey pot,” tempting potential rebels to try their luck, especially in the world’s poorest regions. With few legal economic alternatives, young males will turn to violent resource plunder for survival and enrichment. This phenomenon is especially widespread in sub-Saharan Africa, resource theorists claim, because economic conditions there are particularly grim. Indeed, the incidence of civil war was higher in sub-Saharan Africa than in other regions during the 1990s, and African war-related casualties have claimed a disproportionate share of the world’s total in that decade.<sup>3</sup>

Political rebellion, in this view, has much in common with regular crime, but its incidence is lower due to greater risks and start-up costs.<sup>4</sup> General arguments about the effects of resources on civil war rely on large-N statistical analyses, but they find support in case studies from Colombia to Afghanistan.<sup>5</sup> Some studies suggest that globalization exacerbates the resource effect on conflict, as improved transportation and communication helps even the least sophisticated warlord sell bootleg resources on world markets. Others suggest that dwindling superpower patronage makes resource-driven wars particularly attractive for elites and mid-ranking members of developing region bureaucracies and militaries.

This article tests the hypothesis that abundant natural resources stimulate war by analyzing four separate incidences of armed conflict in the Republic of Congo (Congo-Brazzaville), a small nation bordering on the Democratic Republic of Congo (Congo-Kinshasa, formerly Zaire). Drawing on interviews with former militia fighters, politicians, and in-country foreign observers, it analyzes the effects of oil wealth on armed conflict.<sup>6</sup> The resource curse theory proves valid in some respects but underspecified in others.

Following an ill-fated attempt at democratization, Congo-Brazzaville endured four rounds of brutal militia fighting in 1993, 1997, 1998–99, and 2002.<sup>7</sup> Three main militias, loosely affiliated with each of Congo’s broad ethnoregional groupings,

directly killed at least 12,000 persons, cumulatively displaced 860,000, systematically looted civilians, and raped hundreds, if not thousands, of women.<sup>8</sup> In 1998 up to 35 percent of Congo's 2.5 million people were internally displaced due to the fighting. The authors' informants uniformly believe that greed for petroleum rents in a new and uncertain political context was a major motivation for the war, as political leaders, drawn chiefly from Congo's governing class, struggled for control over the country's oil wealth. Provided that the uncertainty generated by elections is taken into account, therefore, Congo's experiences appear to confirm the link between rebellion and resource abundance.

Upon closer scrutiny, however, the impact of Congo's substantial oil wealth seems more ambiguous. In late 1999 petroleum rents helped a victorious militia led by Congo strongman Denis Sassou-Nguesso recreate an autocratic but relatively stable neopatrimonial regime. Sassou reinserted elites from rival militias into their former public sector jobs, driving a wedge between them and their militia followers. These coopted elites had been members of Congo's state bourgeoisie in the prewar era, and after their 1999 defeat they rediscovered "class solidarity" with Sassou's followers and neglected their ethnoregional ties to junior militia colleagues.<sup>9</sup> Congo's massive oil reserves, in other words, helped elevate class interests over ethnic solidarity, permitting neopatrimonial logic to trump ethnoregional secessionism or warlordism.<sup>10</sup> Congo's primary commodities had provided incentives for civil war but later helped the victor consolidate a new neopatrimonial regime.<sup>11</sup>

The protected nature of Congo-Brazzaville's oil as an enclave also limited the civil war's duration and diffusion. Congo's oil is located entirely offshore and remains unrivalled as a source of revenue; petroleum royalties, however, accrue only to Congo's internationally recognized sovereign. Following the instability created by democratization, the oil fields' legal and geographic configuration created incentives for militias to struggle for control over Brazzaville, the capital, but to eschew protracted rural warfare. Unlike other commodity-induced wars, Congo's countryside has no diamonds or coltan and limited quantities of timber. When the fighting finally spread to remote rural areas in 1998, moreover, it was remarkably short-lived. Once Sassou demonstrated his ability to defend Brazzaville against all challengers, most rebel leaders preferred to surrender in return for their old public sector jobs. Congo-Brazzaville was thus spared the spatially and temporally protracted wars witnessed in resource-rich countries such as Burma, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Congo-Kinshasa, Angola, Colombia, and Afghanistan.

Congo-Brazzaville suggests that the resource curse theory be modified in three ways.<sup>12</sup> First, it should explain more finely the link between primary commodities and war. Resource wealth is likely to tempt rebels only under circumstances of acute political uncertainty, as in the case of Congo's failed democratization effort. Second, not all resources are created equal. Commodities are configured in widely divergent legal and geographic ways, and these differences will lead to very different war tra-

jectories.<sup>13</sup> Third, the theory should account for the class logic implied by the neopatrimonial system of rule common to most sub-Saharan African countries, which sets constraints on potential warlords in resource-rich environments.

### **Resource Abundance and War**

Broadly, theories of rebel motivation focus either on greed, the desire for economic gain, or on grievance, a catch-all category including a wide range of perceived injustices. According to resource curse theorists, grievances are ever-present and thus can not explain variations in civil war initiation.<sup>14</sup> The appropriate material conditions for organizing effective rebellions, by contrast, are far less frequent, and their presence or lack is the best predictor of rebel activity. Thus, this approach resembles Skocpol's argument that, while revolutionary inclinations are omnipresent, revolutionary opportunities are in short supply.<sup>15</sup>

According to this approach, the political economy of rebellion, insurgency is a high-risk activity with low probabilities of success and substantial start-up costs. Would-be rebel organizers, therefore, encounter acute collective action problems at an early stage, prompting rebel entrepreneurs to seek cheap access to weapons and money, or their equivalents. Once this initial group acquires sufficient tangible assets, it can attract additional recruits by providing resources, arms, and further opportunities for enrichment. Greed, in this view, is the prime motivator of civil war, and opportunities for personal or small group enrichment can best explain a rebellion's emergence.

Early access to material resources is typically available in one of three ways: support from other governments, diaspora contributions, and primary commodities.<sup>16</sup> Primary commodities are particularly attractive, however, because they require little manufacturing or marketing expertise and because they are often transported through geographic "choke points" that rebel groups can extort or control outright. In poor countries primary commodities offer one of the few ways rebels can access hard currency. If rebels can credibly threaten resource extractors, they can create armies large enough to survive government reprisals, reducing thereby the barriers to entry into the rebellion business.<sup>17</sup>

Resource curse and war theory is part of the post-cold-war trend in security studies towards privileging political economy over ideology. David Keene, a leading proponent of this approach, argues that "wartime political economies may benefit governments and rebels, and as a result, some parties may be more anxious to prolong a war than to win it." Sierra Leone and Liberia are paradigmatic cases.<sup>18</sup> John Mueller, another major contributor, argues that civil war and genocide in Rwanda and Yugoslavia were mass criminal heists perpetrated by small groups of loot-seeking thugs, rather than full blown "ethnic wars."<sup>19</sup> Peter Andreas, another example,

uses the political economy of war to explain patterns of civil war emergence in the former Yugoslavia. He argues that it was shaped above all by patterns of illicit trade in weapons and other goods.<sup>20</sup> By emphasizing the role of primary commodities, resource curse theory offers one interpretation of the political economy approach.

The evidence linking primary commodities to war is suggestive, but much remains to be conceptualized. Politics should be privileged over economic determinism, because resources are unlikely to trigger civil war in a stable political environment. Once war is underway, varying legal and physical configurations of natural resources will have different impacts on the course and style of the war. These concerns can be addressed through a detailed study of Congo-Brazzaville's wars.

### **Congo-Brazzaville's Civil Wars: An Overview**

Denis Sassou-Nguesso's single party regime ruled Congo-Brazzaville from 1979 to 1992. Sassou ran the country as a neopatrimonial rentier state, redistributing oil profits to allies and potential foes through educational benefits, military employment, and an ever-expanding civil service.<sup>21</sup> In the 1980s Sassou kept the system stable by incorporating elites from the country's three main ethnoregional groupings: the northern Mbochis, the central Laris, and the southern grouping of several distinct ethnicities referred to by some as Niboleks.<sup>22</sup> The president and senior army leadership were northern in origin, but southern elites held some positions of responsibility in the government, civil service, and army and benefited from the government's massive investment in public education.

**Democratization and Conflict** Sassou's regime came under fire in the early 1990s, following francophone Africa's wave of post-cold-war democratization. Political pressure from southern elites, labor parties, intellectuals, and French officials forced Sassou to relinquish his hold on power. The country held multiparty presidential elections in 1992, sparking competition for the apex of Congo's patron-client pyramid and giving southern elites a legally sanctioned chance to control the country's oil wealth.<sup>23</sup> Sassou's two main opponents were Pascal Lissouba, who had served as prime minister in 1963, and Bernard Kolelas, a Brazzaville politician. Lissouba led the Pan-African Union for Social Democracy (UPADS), support for which came from the southern provinces, and won the 1992 elections due to the region's demographic superiority.<sup>24</sup> Kolelas, head of the Congolese Movement for Democracy and Integral Development (MCDDI), was presidential runner-up, relying chiefly on his Lari ethnic kin, a subgroup of the Bakongo ethnicity comprising 20 percent of the population.<sup>25</sup> Sassou-Nguesso, leader of the formerly Communist Congolese Labor Party (PCT), polled a distant third, largely due to the inferior

demographic weight of his northern Mbochi kin.<sup>26</sup> Lissouba assumed the presidency in 1992 and briefly ruled with a parliamentary coalition with Sassou's PCT. Sassou abruptly left the government, however, when his followers were denied key posts in Lissouba's new government. Cabinet ministries were key sources of oil rents and patronage, and Sassou feared that he and his followers were being pushed aside.

As Lissouba struggled to assert control, it became clear that possession of Congo's presidential palace did not guarantee ownership over Sassou's former networks of allies, patrons, and clients. Lissouba had won the vote, but some senior Mbochi army officers remained loyal to Sassou. Sassou also enjoyed warm relations with foreign allies, such as France's prime minister, Jacques Chirac, Gabon president Omar Bongo (married to Sassou's daughter), and Angolan president Eduardo Dos Santos.<sup>27</sup>

Distrustful of the army and worried by Sassou's defection, Lissouba created a personal militia to bolster his rule. Relying mostly on men drawn from southern ethnicities, Lissouba established an independent security force, the *réserve présidentielle*, later known as the *Aubevillois*.<sup>28</sup> Its initial military trainers, among others, were members of private Israeli security firms.<sup>29</sup> Lissouba's supporters later created three other forces, the Cocoyes, loosely translated as "tough guys," the Zoulous, whose name was inspired by the ongoing violence in Kwazulu-Natal, and the Mambas (snakes).<sup>30</sup> In a classic example of a spiraling "security dilemma," Kolelas' followers retaliated by creating the Ninjas, a militia led by police and military officers doubling as Kolelas' bodyguards and staffed by local Lari youths living in Brazzaville.<sup>31</sup> The kernel of Sassou's Cobra militia was formed in 1992 from his old presidential guard. It expanded further in 1995 following Lissouba's purge of Mbochi military officers, some of whom decamped to Oyo, Sassou's northern political stronghold.

**Civil War, Round One (1993): Lissouba versus Kolelas** Sassou's defection created a parliamentary crisis for Lissouba, who responded by dissolving parliament in 1992 (a move deemed unconstitutional by many observers) and calling new legislative elections for May 1993. In the first round Lissouba's party won sixty-two seats, while Kolelas' and Sassou's followers jointly won forty-nine.<sup>32</sup> Claiming fraud, Kolelas called for a boycott of the second round and for civil disobedience. These actions triggered the first round of civil war, pitting the militias of Lissouba and Kolelas against each other. The fighting remained within Brazzaville's borders and caused 2,000 deaths.<sup>33</sup> The army, still led at this point by Sassou-appointed northerners, remained largely uninvolved.<sup>34</sup>

Congo's democratization had disrupted the *ancien régime's* patronage networks, but Lissouba, the newly elected leader, was unable to create a stable alternative. His failure generated an acute sense of political uncertainty whose ripple effects were

felt throughout Congo's governing class. The country's petroleum fields continued to pump out 200,000 barrels a month, however, earning \$75 million monthly in export revenue for those who claimed legal control over the government. The first round of fighting ended in January 1994, but the stage had been set for further conflict, as the armed forces, parliament, and civil service gradually split along ethnoregional and factional lines. By 1996–97 three main militia groups—Lissouba's Cocoyes, Kolelas' Ninjas, and Sassou's Cobras—had created their own zones of de facto influence in the capital city.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, Congo was following a model familiar from other instances of democratization in which political uncertainty provoked paramilitary mobilization.<sup>36</sup> Unlike countries such as Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, however, Congo's history of ethnic relations had hitherto been relatively peaceful, save for some intercommunal fighting in 1958–59, prior to independence. Although the country was now separating along ethnic lines, these were being generated by elite manipulation in Brazzaville rather than by deep-seated ethnic grievances. The impetus for conflict in the 1990s (as in the late 1950s) was political uncertainty, coupled with elite desires to control a greater share of Congo's oil. Had there been no political uncertainty, it is unlikely that Congo's resources alone would have triggered civil war.

**Civil War, Round Two (1997): Sassou and the Angolans versus Lissouba and Kolelas** In January 1997 Sassou returned to Congo after two years of self-imposed exile in France, declaring his intent to run in the upcoming presidential elections. Spurred by a subsequent attempt by Lissouba-controlled forces to disarm Sassou's Cobras in their Brazzaville stronghold, violence erupted again in May 1997, this time pitching the Cobras against pro-Lissouba soldiers and Cocoyes. By June Brazzaville was split into three militia zones. From May to September 1997 the fighting was exclusively between Cocoyes and Cobras; at the very end, Kolelas' Ninjas joined Lissouba's side.

The Cobras were initially outgunned, but their fortunes changed in October 1997 when a contingent of heavily armed, battle-hardened Angolan troops intervened on their behalf, securing Brazzaville and the southern coastal city of Pointe-Noire for Sassou.<sup>37</sup> Lissouba and Kolelas fled into exile (where they have remained after being sentenced to death *in absentia*), and Sassou assumed the presidency for a three year "transitional period," promising he would hold national elections in 2001. Southern political and military elites fled Brazzaville with their Ninja and Cocoye militias, returning, for the most part, to their families' villages in the Pool and southern regions.

**Civil War, Round Three (1998–99): Sassou and the Angolans versus the Southern Militias** Violence soon erupted again, however, as first the Ninjas and

then the Cocoyes clashed with Angolans and Cobras. For the first time, much of the fighting took place in the southern countryside, far from Brazzaville.<sup>38</sup> According to Sassou's spokespersons, rebels and bandits attacked government garrisons in southern towns. According to southerners interviewed by the authors, by contrast, Cobra and Angolan forces provoked the fighting through heavy-handed patrols of the north-south railway and southern towns.<sup>39</sup> A third version was advanced by a western aid official with extensive local experience, who said the first battles were triggered by a drug deal gone bad between local Ninjas and police in the Pool region.<sup>40</sup> The fighting spread back to Brazzaville towards the end of 1998, when a Ninja force raided the city's outer suburbs. Elsewhere, small, semi-independent groups of Cocoyes and Ninjas launched hit-and-run raids on government forces in southern and Pool region towns. Larger Ninja and Cocoye bands of up to one hundred men were led by former military officers, but many of the smaller groups, often no more than a dozen, were led by urban youths who had risen to prominence during Brazzaville's 1993 and 1997 street battles.<sup>41</sup> The fighting peaked in December 1998, but skirmishes continued throughout the south until mid 1999. At the end of 1999 the rebellion ended with a deal that provided amnesty to all Ninja and Cocoye commanders, save for Lissouba and Kolelas, and guaranteed soldiers and civil servants their former jobs.<sup>42</sup>

### **An Empirical Puzzle**

Congo-Brazzaville's experiences recall other cases of state collapse in which rapid political transitions, coupled with ethnic heterogeneity and abundant resources, sparked civil war. Unlike Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, and Angola, however, Congo's conflict did not deteriorate into protracted territorial warfare by warlords and/or separatists. All three Brazzaville-based militias recruited rural youth, and each of the three main political parties organized along regionally defined "ethno-parties."<sup>43</sup> Still, the first two rounds of fighting occurred exclusively in the capital, while in the third southern militias did not take lasting control of any city (though several were briefly conquered and looted) and did not attempt to seize Pointe-Noire, the petroleum industry's administrative nerve center. Nor did they carve out warlord fiefdoms in Congo's remote areas. Instead, southern military and political leaders quickly surrendered in return for amnesty, reintegration into their former public sector jobs, and vague promises of recruiting the militias' rank-and-file members into Congo-Brazzaville's reconstituted security forces.

For theorists of ethnic warfare, the lack of protracted rural fighting is puzzling because of the ethnic heterogeneity of Congo's three main ethnoregions. For theorists of the resource curse, the south's quick surrender is intriguing because Congo's oil is located directly off southern shores and could have formed the base for southern seces-

sionism. Congo also confounds Reno's prediction that neopatrimonial, resource-rich countries are likely to deteriorate into warlord zones as an "equilibrium outcome" situated halfway between chaos and state consolidation, as both rebels and governments develop some territorial control but lack incentives to build broadly encompassing state institutions.<sup>44</sup> Whether driven by oil greed or by ethnoregional grievances, the first three rounds of Congo's wars should not have ended so quickly, and Sassou should not have been able to refashion a stable neopatrimonial regime with such relative ease.

There were indications that the rebels might have developed into either entrenched rural warlords or a unified and determined secessionist movement. Examples of warlordism include a protection racket run by Ninjas from 1993 on in which travelers through one of Brazzaville's main ports were systematically extorted and consistent claims by civilians and militiamen on all sides that from 1998 on most of the fighters engaged in sustained looting, even against their own communities.<sup>45</sup> As one informant trapped in the Pool region in 1998–99 recalls: "Ninjas attacked their own populations.... They collected money from their own people to let them cross the river. From May 1999 onwards, the war was but roadblocks for ransom."<sup>46</sup> All of the lower-ranking militia gang leaders admitted to the authors in interviews that looting was central to their war activities.

There are also indications of occasional efforts by high-ranking figures to create an organized secessionist/liberation movement in the south, especially during the 1998–99 fighting. For example, a former Ninja officer called himself the *Commissaire* and claimed to be resolved to "defend" his region in 1998 by building a political-military organization grounded in traditional local structures. "I got in touch with the wise men of my village," the *Commissaire* recalled, "and they told me to go and 'free the villages.' So I called in the Ninjas one by one until I had about 250 men, along with 200 new ones that I trained myself." After attacking a local army garrison, the *Commissaire* consulted traditional leaders, who encouraged him to "go on fighting to liberate our region." Each village that he liberated, the officer said, was assigned a military leader "who worked together with the village chief."<sup>47</sup> The *Commissaire*, in other words, claimed to have created an alternative political structure in the Pool region with the help of his rebel armed force and traditional village chiefs. A senior Cocoye commander, Colonel Mboundou-Mboundou, similarly claimed that in the southern Pool region he and his followers had organized a "popular war, just like the Vietcong," during the 1998–99 fighting.<sup>48</sup> There was good reason to believe in 1998, therefore, that Congo-Brazzaville might be headed towards protracted war in both the cities and the countryside, with the prospect of organized secessionism in some areas and long-term lawlessness in others. If Congo-Brazzaville's civil war had deteriorated into Sierra Leone-style chaos or Sudan-style secessionism, these events would have easily been explained by resource curse theory.

However, the exact opposite occurred. The Ninja-Cocoye alliance never material-

ized; the southern militias remained disorganized; towns were “liberated” but then quickly abandoned; and key national infrastructure, such as the Brazzaville-Pointe-Noire railway, was never seriously threatened. Ethnic polarization remained limited as populations suffered as much at the hands of their own ethnic militias as from government reprisals. Most important, the 1998–99 rebellion was over soon after it started; most of the senior political and military leaders returned to Brazzaville and received back pay from the civil service or military. As a result, virtually all of Congo’s territory reverted to the autocratic but largely stable rule of Denis Sassou-Nguesso.

### **Asset Specificity, Norms of Sovereignty, and the Dynamics of Violence**

Congo’s trajectory was shaped by the geographic and legal configuration of its oil reserves. They are located offshore and are expensive to operate, making them accessible only to international petroleum companies. Contrary to what some have argued, these conditions do not make Congo’s oil invulnerable to looting, since oil revenues can be illegally diverted into slush funds for a broad variety of purposes. During the 1997 war with Sassou’s Cobras, for example, embattled president Pascal Lissouba reportedly siphoned off substantial amounts of Congo’s oil revenues to arm his private militias.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, all of Congo’s leaders have “looted” the country’s oil revenues for their own neopatrimonial purposes. However, because the country’s oil fields are offshore, Congolese politicians must first be recognized as the country’s sovereign government to gain access (legally or otherwise) to oil revenues. Given the structure of the international legal regime, foreign oil companies will pay revenues only to broadly recognized sovereign leaders.

African coup makers exercising effective control over capital cities are typically recognized internationally, unlike warlords with state-like qualities. As a result, control over Congo’s capital, Brazzaville, is one of the few strategic goals worth pursuing. Oil is the main natural resource, and there are no major trading/smuggling routes for which to provide protection, as in Afghanistan. Consequently, Congo’s political struggles are likely to end once a major faction credibly wins the war for Brazzaville.

**Congo and Its Oil Industry** The Congolese oil industry is dominated by the Belgian-French company TotalFina Elf, successor to France’s Elf Aquitaine. With an estimated US\$10 billion worth of Congo investments, TotalFina produces 60 percent of Congo’s 265,000 barrels per day.<sup>50</sup> Next in line is Italy’s AGIP, responsible for 30 percent of production, while smaller actors, including the U.S. firm CMS Nomeco with 4.1 percent of production, handle the remainder. The government-owned Société Nationale Pétrolière du Congo (SNPC), created in 1998, independently markets but does not produce some oil.

The vast majority of Congo's oil fields are situated thirty to fifty miles off the coast of Pointe-Noire, the major southern port city. Fields in operation before the 1990s have terminals in Pointe-Noire, but the most recent and lucrative ones, including the massive Elf-controlled N'Kossa field (70,000 barrels a day), have their own offshore terminals. Pointe-Noire, in other words, is not physically crucial to Congo's oil industry, since its administrative functions could be easily handled elsewhere.

Only the most technologically sophisticated international companies can extract Congo's oil. The N'Kossa field is located thirty-eight miles off shore in 600 feet of water, while other fields are a further twelve miles away under 3,000 to 6,000 feet. Petrol is loaded directly onto tankers from offshore terminals, eliminating the need for pipelines. Armed nonstate groups, therefore, have virtually no access. Pirate-style raids on the platforms themselves or on tankers are the only alternative, but neither are particularly feasible. Furthermore, even if they could damage oil extraction infrastructure, rebels could not operate the platforms on their own. Congo's oil wealth, in other words, is physically inaccessible to local armed factions.

Oil is also Congo's economic lifeline, accounting for 90 percent of foreign exchange earnings, 40 percent of GDP, and 70 percent of government revenues.<sup>51</sup> Congolese access to oil profits is possible only due to the international legal regime, which awards sovereignty rights to offshore mineral resources. Had oil been a precious commodity during the colonial era, Europeans would have seized it without compensation. Today, western companies are the only actors physically able to extract the oil, but they must also pay rents to Congo's sovereign rulers.

Oil rents come in various forms. The most important include royalties on sales by western companies, which amount to 12 percent of Congo's overall export value, and a 1991 agreement awarding the state half of the oil companies' profits, equal to 19 percent of export value.<sup>52</sup> A third source of rents comes from sales made directly by the state-owned SNPC. This company's accounts are not transparent, however, and its profits are a crucial tool in Congo's presidential patronage system. According to observers, SNPC monies are a hidden slush fund that Congo's internationally recognized ruler uses to purchase arms for his private militia, pay off friends and potential rivals, and keep the country's neopatrimonial system afloat. The SNPC is a vehicle for "looting" Congo's oil but is available only to the country's internationally recognized sovereigns.

**The Importance of Brazzaville**    Following Congo's democratic transition, Lissouba failed to demonstrate credible control over Brazzaville due to poor relations with the army's senior ranks, paramilitary mobilization by all three contenders, and lukewarm relations with important foreign actors. His rivals carved out militia zones in the capital, and both Kolelas and Sassou fought sharp battles with Lissouba loyalists in the city. The fighting, however, remained centered in the city, since it was the only prize worth having.

Thus, Congo is the opposite of Angola, where easy access to alluvial diamonds allowed UNITA to endure for several decades, despite the MPLA's control of off-shore oil.<sup>53</sup> In Congo, factions that are not formally in power have no way of raising funds from natural resources, and "rebel" forces can not fund their efforts, thereby shortening the fighting. The combination of physical and legal restrictions on Congo's oil also explains why southern rebels did not try to seize Pointe-Noire from its Angolan defenders, or even attempt to destroy its facilities. A successful attack would not have secured control over the oil fields themselves, and the oil companies could have easily moved their headquarters elsewhere.

Interestingly, southern rebels also made no serious attempt to create a southern secessionist movement that might have claimed international recognition of their sovereignty over the oil fields. Secession was briefly discussed as an option if the regime refused dialogue, but the debate was half-hearted. Not only was Congo-Brazzaville's oil located offshore, but in the contemporary international legal climate secessionists tend not to gain international recognition, as illustrated by Somaliland.<sup>54</sup> As Colonel Mboungou-Mboungou, vice president of the *Conseil National de la Résistance* (CNR), told the authors, "the idea of secession came up during the fighting but it got no support. Had we tried, we would have been beaten. What country would have helped us?"<sup>55</sup> Contrary to the resource curse argument, therefore, Congo's oil reserves did not solely promote rebellion and conflict. Instead, the physical and legal specificity of Congo's natural resource also thwarted the emergence of prolonged rural warlordism or secessionism. Resource abundance, in this case, had ambiguous effects.

### **The Patrimonial Peace: State Control and Class Interests**

Congo's resource configuration also contributed to the unusual nature of Congo's peace. Although the rhetoric of war often stressed the importance of north-south ethnic divisions, interviews suggested that intraethnic class divisions were also important and helped bring about an end to the war. Common class interests between southern and northern elites, nurtured historically by the state's patrimonial distribution of oil rents, eventually overrode ethnic cleavages and facilitated a peace deal. The interests of southern political elites differed substantially from their rank-and-file militia supporters. The former ended the war and returned to relatively lucrative public sector jobs, while the latter were left to fend for themselves or to solicit modest support from an international "reinsertion" campaign for veterans.

**Elites and Militias in the 1998–1999 Fighting** During the 1993 and 1997 fighting in Brazzaville, Lissouba and Kolelas exercised reasonably tight control over the militia supporters through a cadre of political elites and military defectors, often at the rank of

colonel. During the 1998–99 fighting in the south, by contrast, centralized control over these two factions broke down. Lissouba and Kolelas fled the country, and their militias scattered to the countryside. Although second-tier political and military leaders were also in hiding, only lower-ranking militias were involved in significant violence. Sadat, a Cocoye *chef d'écurie* (gang leader) from Brazzaville who commanded some 150 fighters, alleges that he attacked and briefly occupied Nkayi and Dolisie in 1998. As he puts it, “the colonels could not control us very well. Officially, they gave us orders, but we controlled the elements.”<sup>56</sup> According to Stéphane Rostiaux, chief demobilization officer for the International Office of Migration in Brazzaville, “most of the fighting was carried out by small bands led by low-ranking militia leaders,” a finding strengthened by the authors’ militia interviews.<sup>57</sup>

Lower-ranking militias privileged looting over long-range strategy. Consequently, real alliances did not emerge between Ninjas and Cocoyes. They attacked each other as well as Sassou’s forces. Furthermore, both groups were weak, unorganized, and fragmented, assembling fewer than 200 men for any single attack.<sup>58</sup> Hence, although militia groups, army defectors, and civilian opponents all escaped Brazzaville for the south after October 1998, they were far from a uniform group and never acted in a collectively coherent manner. Militiamen attempted to defend themselves from Cobra attacks and to sustain their wartime lifestyles by continued looting. The political and military leaders kept out of the fighting for the most part and hid in remote villages.

**The Importance of Social Class** Militia fighters differed from the leaders in terms of social class, defined chiefly by their historic relationship to the state. A comparison of the social backgrounds of militia leaders with those of the rebel elites who signed the 1999 peace accord illustrates these class divisions. Jean-François Guembo, a self-declared regional leader of the 1999 rebellion, was appointed *sous-préfet* of the southern town of Makabana by Sassou in 2001. Before the war he had twice been a member of parliament during the communist era, as well as a senior executive for Comilog (a then publicly owned timber company) in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>59</sup> The members of the National Resistance Council (CNR), the southern rebel politico-military umbrella organization, whom the authors interviewed, displayed similar class backgrounds. Colonel Mboundou-Mboundou was a high-ranking army officer; Luc Koussala, a medical doctor; Joseph Mankita, an accountant; and Benoît Bati, a former justice.<sup>60</sup> Other political leaders who negotiated with Sassou on behalf of the southern rebels included Abel Mokono, former mayor of Bacongo, Eugène Banguissa, former *préfet* of the Pool region, and Bernard Ntandou, a former *gendarmérie* commander. The militiamen, by contrast, came from far more humble backgrounds. *Chefs d'écurie* included a former army sergeant, two market stall owners, a local gang leader, a hospital janitor, and an electrician.

Until 1997 the core of the three main militia groupings had military or quasi-military origins. However, the rank and file was composed mostly of unemployed or underemployed young men, few of whom had a chance of working in the stable, publicly owned formal sector. These youths were recruited by Sassou, Lissouba, or Kolelas loyalists at different times from 1993 to 1997.<sup>61</sup> At first, the politico-military elites used these young men to wage their factional struggles, chiefly in Brazzaville. Most of the militiamen who were interviewed, whether on the side of Sassou's regime or the opposition, declared having received at least part of their weapons from higher-ranking military officers. *Le Japonais*, a former stall owner and gang leader before the war, said that his Cocoye band received its weapons from the military. "One evening," he recalled, "our brother, who was a military commander, brought us fifteen AK47s." In 1997 "a colonel came and gave us weapons and asked us to fight with them. He paid CFAFr 15,000 per week."<sup>62</sup> According to the *Commissaire*, the Ninja band leader, "Commandant Camille, who had been in jail with Kolelas, recruited youth for the Ninjas."<sup>63</sup> For elites, militias were political instruments, but for the rank and file, conflict was an opportunity for small-scale looting, hence the propensity of militiamen to rob people of their own ethnic background, including their own political leaders.

**The Return of Neopatrimonial Logic** As the violence progressed during 1998–99, elite-militia class differences led to diverging political agendas. For the elites, the most pressing concern was to end the war and return to Brazzaville, as they grew fearful of their militia "followers," who seemed increasingly uncontrollable. The elites hoped to build a support base among ordinary southerners, but they were being looted and intimidated by the militias. In the words of Colonel Bougouanza, one of the highest-ranking military officers in the southern rebel movement: "Idle youth is like a bomb. When kids go to war, it is to improve their material existence, which reduced our chances of success in the war."<sup>64</sup> Whereas militiamen recall the war with nostalgia, the elites speak of 1998–99 in terms of fear and hardship.

Others have noted that Congo's militias looted their ethnic kin, but few have reflected on this development's political importance. The militiamen's growing importance in the 1999 fighting threatened to sideline the southern political and military elites, and the looting of civilians created a groundswell of local support for peace talks. According to Mossendjo mayor Maurice M'Bobi, a member of the southern political leadership, his colleagues elected to rejoin the state "to bring peace for the local populations."<sup>65</sup>

Fearful of their own fighters and eager to regain their public sector jobs, southern elites responded to Sassou's 1999 peace offer enthusiastically. They calculated they would be better off reintegrating a stable, oil-funded neopatrimonial state than remaining in villages with unreliable fighters. Sassou was ready to oblige, since a

peace deal would legitimize his conquest of Brazzaville. This “patrimonial peace” began in November 1999, when southern leaders signed a cease fire with Sassou’s representatives in Pointe-Noire, and continued in December, when the southern political leadership, the CNR, surrendered in exchange for amnesty and public sector reintegration. The CNR describes itself as a “political movement of popular essence” based on a sense of social injustice and on the need for cohabitation after the war.<sup>66</sup> It portrays itself as the political wing of the militias but is staffed chiefly by senior southern military officers. Most CNR activists are former members of Lissouba’s UPADS party or Kolelas’ MCDDI, but the organization does not represent the exiled leaders directly. Indeed, the CNR leaders the authors interviewed had little sympathy for Kolelas and Lissouba and, according to some observers, went against their wishes in negotiating the peace. In effect, the CNR represents the second tier of politico-military leaders who rejected Lissouba and Kolelas, on the one hand, and the life of rural guerrillas, on the other. Under the 1999 peace deal CNR members can return to state employment in Brazzaville, an option available to neither Lissouba, Kolelas, nor militia fighters themselves. The resulting situation is unusual, but rational, from the point of view of patrimonial politics: former opposition elites eagerly rebuilding central state institutions to protect themselves from their own militias. It is a far cry from the warlord equilibrium that might have been expected.

Had natural resources been locally available, the south might have sustained a warlord situation, and young militia rank and file, with their comparative advantage in violence, might have seized leadership. Without readily available resources, however, the logic of patronage proved stronger than that of warlordism, and the system reverted to its neopatrimonial outcome. As the Mossendjo mayor noted, “we now have the right to position ourselves for ministerial, prefectural or mayoral posts. That’s what democracy is about.”<sup>67</sup>

This strategy appears to be working. Participation by MCDDI and UPADS politicians in government is limited, but the government takes care of most opposition elites. Several are housed at government expense in Brazzaville hotels, while they and others receive their salaries, despite not working. In fact, the 200-odd military members of the CNR all receive their pay, as do a few dozen senior civilians. Accommodation has also brought considerable peace in the south. All the political and civilian authorities the authors met in the south, including mayors, *sous-préfets*, and census workers, were appointees from the “resistance,” while the local military command was more northern. This policy is a relative bargain for the state, compared to the cost of accommodating the exiled Kolelas and Lissouba. Some 1,000 Ninja and Cocoye fighters were integrated into the army by mid 2001, and others were being helped by a UN assistance plan that gives business grants in exchange for illegal weapons.<sup>68</sup> As of the end of 2001, some 7,250 former militiamen had been assisted under the plan, in return for 11,000 weapons.<sup>69</sup> According to one report, however, 41,000 of 74,000 illegal weapons were still in circulation.<sup>70</sup>

**The 2002 Fighting** Violence flared up again in March 2002, when a group of Ninja militiamen led by “Pasteur Ntoumi” in the Pool region attacked government forces. The fighting spread to Brazzaville in April, displacing 15,000 before conditions normalized.<sup>71</sup> Ntoumi had signed the 1999 peace agreements but refused to surrender with his 500 fighters, saying guarantees for the latter’s integration into military or civil life were insufficient. Interestingly, Ntoumi’s social origins differ from others’ in the CNR. A religious leader and former director (or patient, depending on sources) of an insane asylum in Brazzaville, he did not fight in 1993 and 1997 and had not been politically active before 1998. Although he is currently the only senior figure in Congo not to participate in the patrimonial peace, this last round of violence seemed related to shortcomings in the 1999 peace accords implementation, rather than to new grievances. Ntoumi was rumored to be demanding an appointment as army general before surrendering.<sup>72</sup> He is also said to want his Ninjas to benefit from the UN reintegration program, which has run out of funds. Moreover, the recent violence also occurred on a much smaller scale than earlier instances and involved none of the better-known southern political and military elites, who seem unwilling to return to war.

### **Comparative, Theoretical, and Normative Implications**

This article has offered a single-N test of the resource-curse-and-war theory. As the theory might expect, Congo-Brazzaville’s substantial petroleum resources helped fuel civil war in the 1990s, but some of Congo’s experiences also run counter to the theory. Congo experienced very little violent conflict prior to the 1990s; its battles were largely concentrated in the capital; secessionism and territorial warlordism were aborted in the hinterland; and the fighting was largely over by the decade’s end. These elements of Congo’s trajectory are not easily explained by resource curse theory.

The interaction between primary commodities and domestic politics thus seems crucial. If a country has a stable political system, authoritarian or otherwise, it is unlikely to experience civil war, regardless of resource availability and distribution. During the 1980s, while Sassou-Nguesso remained firmly in control of the country, Congo-Brazzaville did not experience civil war; once democratization dislodged Sassou’s grip in the early 1990s, however, resource-related wars broke out. In this respect, the experiences of Botswana, Gabon, and Cameroon are instructive counterexamples. Despite abundant reserves of accessible diamonds (far more “lootable” than Congo’s petroleum), long democratic Botswana has not only avoided civil war but has been quite successful at building institutions.<sup>73</sup> Cameroon and Gabon, too, have proved more peaceful than Congo-Brazzaville, although they share similar

political and economic structures, because their leaders negotiated democratization in the early 1990s with greater skill and stability than Sassou in Congo.<sup>74</sup> No matter how tempting natural resources might be and how they may exacerbate ongoing instability and armed conflict, they are unlikely to stimulate civil war on their own unless the political context is already unstable.

This finding has important implications for promoters of democracy in Africa and elsewhere and grimly illustrates the potential risks involved. Like Sassou's Congo, many authoritarian systems are based on neopatrimonial structures that rely on personalized, deinstitutionalized power machineries. Electoral change and sudden elite turnover do not present newly elected leaders with a neutral state apparatus, but rather saddle them with biased and uncooperative networks. Reshaping and controlling these networks, as Congo-Brazzaville's Lissouba attempted to do in the early 1990s, may trigger militia formation and resistance by fearful or excluded elites and, consequently, spiraling security dilemmas. Democratization does not inevitably lead to violence, but it can certainly be provocative, especially when lucrative natural resources are involved.

A second implication of Congo is that the legal, physical, and geographic specificities of natural resources are crucial. When resources are physically accessible and geographically dispersed, protracted and territorialized conflicts may occur, as in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Congo-Kinshasa), where rival armies have carved out warlord enclaves based on widely dispersed subsoil minerals. If, by contrast, resources are physically accessed only with great difficulty by technologically sophisticated mining companies, wars will be temporally and spatially limited. Revenues accrue then to recognized sovereigns through mining company royalties, not through physical access itself. Political actors thus try to control the sovereign apparatus in the capital city, rather than peripheral territories. Warring parties, moreover, may be more readily willing to collaborate with whatever party establishes credible, long-term control over the capital city. Angola's protracted civil war was an important counterexample. The country has substantial offshore oil resources, but its diamond deposits are easily accessible in outlying regions, which made protracted territorial war possible.<sup>75</sup>

Congo also suggests that prospects for civil war termination are better when the conflict is preceded by a reasonably inclusive neopatrimonial system. Although the 1990s were bloody, Congo's legacy of peaceful elite participation in Sassou's regime in the 1980s made it possible, once Sassou reconquered the capital, for opposition elites to imagine cooperating once again under his rule. Sierra Leone presents an interesting counterexample: prior to the civil war in the 1990s, presidents Stevens and Momoh used diamond revenues to build exclusionary, self-serving "shadow" structures of power, rather than inclusive neopatrimonial systems.<sup>76</sup> When civil war erupted, rival groups readily resorted to territorialized warfare. Neopatrimonialism

can promote either political stability or violent conflict, depending on its level of inclusiveness.

Congo-Brazzaville is not idiosyncratic. Many African countries have embraced neopatrimonialism at one time or another, and many of their systems were (or are) underwritten by a single, or dominant, export commodity. Congo's experience can thus provide insight into why many weak African states have not collapsed into warlordism, even after the drying up of cold war patronage.

War over control of primary commodities is only one of several paths to violence. Rwanda, for example, had very little in the way of lootable natural resources, but it did have deep reservoirs of ethnic insecurity and a legacy of intercommunal violence. When democratization pressures and a guerrilla insurgency reached a crescendo in the early 1990s, the result was ethnic hypermobilization and genocide.<sup>77</sup> Oil, diamonds, drugs, coltan, and other natural resources may persuade some to take up arms, but ethnic fears, when stoked by political propaganda, can be equally, if not more, destructive. Congo-Brazzaville, in many ways, was blessed by its lack of deep-seated ethnic fears, which helped facilitate war termination.

A final cautionary note: Congo-Brazzaville's civil war has largely ended, but the outcome is not all positive. Sassou's refurbished rule is not conducive to democratic deepening, and most Congolese remain as poor and disenfranchised as before.<sup>78</sup> Although some elites may have been reshuffled, the country's basic social cleavages remain unchanged, and the war has apparently not led to political consciousness-raising, democratic mobilization, or popular organization.<sup>79</sup> Over one-third of the country was displaced; tens of thousands were killed or injured; and thousands endured sexual assault. Most Congolese are relieved that hostilities are over, but prospects for long-run positive change are few. Remarkably, recent advances in international human rights scrutiny and war crimes accountability have had few discernible effects on Congolese events or discourse.<sup>80</sup>

## NOTES

The authors gratefully acknowledge financial support from United States Institute of Peace Grant SG-46-00, which made research travel to Congo possible, and McGill University's Internal Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council grant, which helped with research and writing. We are thankful for generous assistance in Brazzaville and Kinshasa by John Clark, Kevin Hartigan, Cassie Knight, Steve Michel, Dominique Morel, Stéphane Rostiaux, Jim Swan, and others who preferred to remain anonymous. Comments by Michael Ross and two anonymous reviewers were extremely helpful.

1. Terry Lynn Karl, *The Paradox of Plenty: Oil Booms and Petro-States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Michael L. Ross, "The Political Economy of the Resource Curse," *World Politics*, 51 (January 1999), 297-322; Michael L. Ross, "Does Oil Hinder Democracy?," *World Politics*, 53 (2001); Jeffrey D. Sachs and Andrew M. Warner, *Natural Resource Abundance and Economic Growth* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Institute for International Development, 1995).

2. Philippe Le Billon, "The Political Ecology of War: Natural Resources and Armed Conflicts,"

*Political Geography*, 20 (2001), 561–84; Paul Collier, “Doing Well out of War,” in Mats Berdal and David M. Malone, eds., *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2000), 91–111; Paul Collier, “Rebellion as a Quasi-Criminal Activity,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 44 (2000), 839–53; Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, “On Economic Causes of Civil War,” *Oxford Economic Papers*, 50 (1998), 563–73; Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, “Greed and Grievance in Civil War” (Washington, D.C.: unpublished paper, World Bank, 2000); Indra de Soysa, “The Resource Curse: Are Civil Wars Driven by Rapacity or Paucity?,” in Berdal and Malone, eds., pp. 113–16. Two important works in progress include Michael L. Ross, “Oil, Drugs and Diamonds: How Do Natural Resources Vary in Their Impact on Civil War?,” in Karen Ballentine and Jake Sherman, eds., *Beyond Greed and Grievance: The Political Economy of Armed Conflict* (forthcoming); and Richard Snyder, “Does Lootable Wealth Breed Disorder? States, Regimes, and the Political Economy of Extraction” (unpublished).

3. Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, “On the Incidence of Civil War in Africa” (Washington, D.C.: unpublished paper, World Bank, 2000). According to our compilation of annual SIPRI publications, sub-Saharan Africa is responsible for 52 percent of all direct war-induced casualties in the 1990s.

4. Collier, “Rebellion as a Quasi-Criminal Activity.”

5. Philippe Le Billon, “Angola’s Political Economy of War: The Role of Oil and Diamonds, 1975–2000,” *African Affairs*, 100 (2001), 55–80; Catherine Brown, “Burma: The Political Economy of Violence,” *Disasters*, 23 (2001), 234–56; Global Witness, *A Crude Awakening: The Role of the Oil and Banking Industries in Angola’s Civil War and the Plunder of State Assets* (London: Global Witness, 1999); Tony Hodges, *Angola from Afro-Stalinism to Petro-Diamond Capitalism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); Michael T. Klare, *Resource Wars: The New Landscape of Global Conflict* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001); Bertil Lintner, *Burma in Revolt: Opium and Insurgency since 1948* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994); Barnett R. Rubin, “The Political Economy of War and Peace in Afghanistan,” *World Development*, 28 (2000), 1789–1803; William Reno, *Corruption and State Politics in Sierra Leone* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); William Reno, “War, Markets, and the Reconfiguration of West Africa’s Weak States,” *Comparative Politics*, 29 (1997), 493–510; William Reno, *Warlord Politics in African States* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998).

6. The authors conducted fifty-five semistructured interviews with key informants, including fifteen former militiamen, from June 26 to July 16, 2001, in the Republic of Congo. Interview locations included Brazzaville, Pointe-Noire, Dolisie, and Mossendjo. Some militia members were contacted through the militia reinsertion program of the International Office of Migration in Brazzaville. High-ranking political and military figures are identified by name, but the anonymity of lower-ranking individuals has been preserved.

7. Remy Bazenguissa-Ganga, “The Spread of Political Violence in Congo-Brazzaville,” *African Affairs*, 98 (1999), 37–54; John Clark, “Petro-Politics in Congo,” *Journal of Democracy*, 8 (1997), 62–76; John Clark, “The Neo-Colonial Context of the Democratic Experiment of Congo-Brazzaville,” *African Affairs*, 101 (2002), 171–92; Pierre Englebert, “Congo: Recent History,” in *Africa South of the Sahara* (London: Europa Publications, 2001); Patrice Yengo, “Un recours endémique à la violence,” *Afrique Contemporaine* (1998), 33–57.

8. See Englebert, p. 397; *SIPRI Yearbook* (Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2000), p. 25; United Nations, *UN Plan: Republic of Congo, 2001–2002* (United Nations Brazzaville office, 2001–02), p. 1. The latter estimates 50,000 overall deaths due to violence, disease, and malnutrition. According to relief officials in nearby Kinshasa, an additional 50,000 were displaced during the spring 2002 fighting. Email communication, June 4, 2002.

9. On social class and the African state, see Richard L. Sklar, “The Nature of Class Domination in Africa,” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 17 (December 1979), 531–51; Catherine Boone, “The Making of a Rentier Class: Wealth Accumulation and Political Control in Senegal,” *Journal of Development Studies*, 26 (1990), 425–49.

10. On neopatrimonial politics, see Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle, "Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa," *World Politics*, 46 (1994), 453–89; Christopher Clapham, ed., *Private Patronage and Public Power* (London: Frances Pinter, 1985); Richard Snyder, "Explaining Transitions from Neopatrimonial Dictatorships," *Comparative Politics*, 24 (1992).

11. This view is consistent with the resumption of fighting in March 2002 between Sassou's troops and a rebel holdout force, led by a religious leader who was never part of the state elite. See below.

12. In addition to its implications for war, Congo's oil wealth has had some long-term effects on society, including relatively high rates of wealth and education. See John Clark, "Resource Revenues and Political Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: Congo Republic in Comparative Perspective," *Afrika Spectrum*, 37 (2002), 25–41.

13. Ross, "Oil, Drugs, and Diamonds"; Snyder, "Does Lootable Wealth Breed Disorder?"

14. Paul Collier, "Rebellion as a Quasi-Criminal Activity."

15. Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979). Skocpol's "opportunity," however, is state collapse, rather than the ready availability of resources.

16. Collier, "Rebellion as a Quasi-Criminal Activity."

17. See *ibid.*, p. 842, for a comparison of the costs of rebellion and household crime.

18. Keen, "Incentives and Disincentives for Violence," p. 27.

19. John Mueller, "The Banality of 'Ethnic War,'" *International Security*, 25 (2000), 42–70.

20. Peter Andreas, "The Clandestine Political Economy of War: Lessons from the Balkans," paper presented to the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, 2001; Stathis N. Kalyvas, "'New' and 'Old' Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?," *World Politics*, 54 (2001), 99–118, argues that civil war greed is not a uniquely post-cold-war trend.

21. The bureaucracy grew from 3,300 persons in 1960 to 80,000 at the beginning of the 1990s, or almost 7 percent of the country's adult population. See Clark, "Petro-Politics in Congo," p. 66; *World Bank Africa Database 1998/99* (CD Rom). For rentier states, see Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani, eds., *The Rentier State: Nation, State and Integration in the Arab World* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987); Hootan Shambayati, "The Rentier State, Interest Groups, and the Paradox of Autonomy," *Comparative Politics*, 26 (1994); Douglas Andrew Yates, *The Rentier State in Africa: Oil Rent Dependency and Neocolonialism in the Republic of Gabon* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1996).

22. Nibolek is a relatively new ethnic marker derived from the contraction of the names of three major southern provinces, Niari, Bouenza, and Lekoumou.

23. For democratization, see Jean-Pascal Daloz and Patrick Quantin, eds., *Transitions Démocratiques Africaines* (Paris: Karthala, 1997); John Clark, "The Neo-Colonial Context of the Democratic Experiment of Congo-Brazzaville," *African Affairs*, 101 (April 2002), 171–92.

24. Some 48 percent of Congo's population are Niboleks. Political Risk Service (PRS), *Congo: Country Report* (Syracuse: PRS, 2001), p. 1.

25. In the second round Lissouba won 61 percent of the vote to Kolelas' 39 percent. Sassou won 17 percent in the first round.

26. In subsequent parliamentary elections Lissouba's party won thirty-nine of 125 seats, while Kolelas and Sassou won twenty-nine and nineteen, respectively. John F. Clark, "Socio-Political Change in the Republic of Congo: Political Dilemmas of Economic Reform," *Journal of Third World Studies*, 10 (1993), 56–63.

27. See *Africa Confidential*, Oct. 24, 1997. Although France and Angola played important roles in the outcome of the Congolese conflict, this dimension is not focused on in this article. For an excellent discussion of France's role, see John Clark, "The Neo-Colonial Context."

28. Their first training camp was in Aubeville, located in Congo's Bouenza region.

29. The Israeli connection was indicated by a former southern subprefect, who was a Lissouba supporter, and by a representative of the Israeli Aircraft Industries. Interviews, Dolisie, July 6, 2001, Brazzaville, July 2, 2001.

30. Roland Pourtier, "1997: Les raisons d'une guerre 'incivile.'" *Afrique Contemporaine* (1998), 7–32.
31. Interview with Ninja commander, Brazzaville, July 12, 2001; Henri Ossebi, "De la galère à la guerre: Jeunes et 'Cobras' dans les quartiers Nord de Brazzaville," *Politique Africaine* (1998), 17–33. For civil wars and the security dilemma, see Barbara F. Walter and Jack L. Snyder, eds., *Civil Wars, Insecurity and Intervention* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
32. In 1993 Lissouba's party was named the *Mouvance Présidentielle* and included UPADS and five smaller factions.
33. Englebert, p. 397.
34. Pourtier.
35. By the mid 1990s, according to an interview with former chief of staff Jean-Marie Michel Mokoko in Brazzaville on July 5, 2001, the Cobras had recruited some 20,000 fighters, compared to 10,000 each for the Ninjas and Cocoyes. The army could muster 15,000.
36. See Nancy Bermeo, "Myths of Moderation: Confrontation and Conflict during Democratic Transitions," *Comparative Politics*, 29 (1997), 302–22; Havard Hegre, Tanja Ellingsen, Scott Gates, and Nils Petter Gleditsch, "Towards a Democratic Civil Peace? Democracy, Political Change, and Civil War, 1816–1992," *American Political Science Review*, 95 (2001), 33–48; James Ron, "Ideology in Context: Sendero Luminoso's Tactical Escalation," *Journal of Peace Research*, 38 (2001), 569–92; Jack Snyder, *From Voting to Violence* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000).
37. The Angolans intervened because of Sassou's cold war-era ties to Dos Santos and because Angolan UNITA rebels were using Lissouba-controlled territory to export diamonds. See *Africa Confidential*, Oct. 24, 1997, pp. 1–3.
38. Remy Bazenguissa-Ganga, "The Spread of Political Violence in Congo Brazzaville," *African Affairs*, 98 (1999), 37–54; Florence Bernault, "Archaïsme colonial, modernité sorcière et territorialisation du politique à Brazzaville, 1959–1995," *Politique Africaine* (1998), 34–49.
39. All southern combatants insisted they fought only after Angolan and Cobra persecution.
40. Interview with western relief worker, Brazzaville, June 29, 2001.
41. Interviews with western diplomats, Brazzaville, July 2, 2001, and with former militia members, Brazzaville, July 6–12, 2001.
42. *Accord de cessation des hostilités en République du Congo*, Pointe-Noire, November 16, 1999; *Accord de cessez-le-feu et de cessation des hostilités*, Brazzaville, December 29, 1999. Peter Wallensteen and Margareta Sollenberg, "Armed Conflict, 1989–99," *Journal of Peace Research*, 37 (2000), 635–49, note that few wars in the 1990s ended with peace deals.
43. See Bazenguissa, "The Spread of Political Violence." The term "ethno-parties" is from Yengo, p. 42.
44. William Reno, "Shadow States and the Political Economy of Civil Wars," in Berdal and Malone, eds.
45. Yengo; interview with Abel Mokono, mayor of the capital's Bakongo suburb, Brazzaville, July 13, 2001; Ossebi.
46. Interview with Congolese relief worker, Brazzaville, July 6, 2001.
47. Interview with *Le Commissaire*, Brazzaville, July 8, 2001.
48. Interview with Colonel Mboungou-Mboungou, Brazzaville, July 3, 2001.
49. See Ross, "Does Oil Hinder Democracy?," for lootable versus nonlootable resources; and *Africa Confidential*, Oct. 21, 1997, and Pourtier for Lissouba's wartime use of oil revenues.
50. Data for this section come from Political Risk Service and interviews in Congo-Brazzaville.
51. *Africa South of the Sahara 2001* (London: Europa Publications, 2000), p. 405; *Africa Confidential*, Aug. 30, 2002, p. 6.
52. Pourtier, p. 29; Political Risk Service, pp. 26–27.
53. Hodges and Le Billon, "Angola's Political Economy of War," p. 71.

54. Clark, "Petro-Politics in Congo," p. 70; Lawrence S. Eastwood, Jr., "Secession: State Practice and International Law after the Dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia," *Duke Journal of Comparative and International Law*, 3 (1993), 299–349; David Strang, "Anomaly and Commonplace in European Political Expansion: Realist and Institutional Accounts," *International Organization*, 45 (1991), 143–62.
55. Interview with Colonel Mboungou-Mboungou.
56. Interview with Sadat, Brazzaville, July 6, 2001.
57. Interview with Stéphane Rostiaux, Brazzaville, July 5, 2001.
58. Interview with senior western diplomat, Brazzaville, July 2, 2001.
59. Interview with Jean-François Guembo, Dolisie, July 9, 2001.
60. Interview with CNR delegation, Brazzaville, July 5, 2001.
61. See Bazenguissa; Yengo; Pourtier.
62. Interview with the *Japonais*, Brazzaville, July 6, 2001.
63. Interview.
64. Interview with Colonel Bougouanza, Mossendjo, July 10, 2001.
65. Interview with Maurice M'Bobi, Dolisie, July 11, 2001.
66. Interview with four leaders of the CNR, Brazzaville, July 5, 2001.
67. Interview with Maurice M'Bobi.
68. Interview with senior western diplomat, Brazzaville, July 2, 2001.
69. International Office of Migration and United Nations, "Programme de Réinsertion des Ex-Miliciens et de Ramassage des Armes Légères," *La Réinsertion en Images* (Brazzaville: United Nations, no date).
70. Spyros Demetriou, Robert Muggah, and Ian Biddle, *Small Arms Availability, Trade and Impacts in the Republic of Congo* (Geneva: Small Arms Survey Special Report, April 2002). See also *Africa Research Bulletin (Political, Social and Cultural Series)*, Nov. 1–30, 2001, p. 14647. The authors were taken to see a number of undeclared weapons caches hidden in the family compounds of former militia-men.
71. Observatoire de la Démocratie en Afrique [democraf.com], April 16, 2002.
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