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PHRONESIS AND RESOURCE CURSE HYPOTHESIS IN POST-INDEPENDENT SIERRA LEONE

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Abstract
Sierra Leone has over the years been identified and branded as a resource cursed nation. A situation which arises as a result of fund and resources mismanagement which subsequently led to a clear distinction between the "haves" and the "have-not". This study therefore, explores the concept of Phronesis and the political economy of non-renewable natural resource management that ensures everyone in Sierra Leone benefit from the proceeds of sales of non-renewable resources, as opposed to the branded assertion of the country being a resource cursed nation, where only a handful of individuals enjoyed the country's wealth, while the less privileged live in poverty and at the mercy of aids provided by donor countries/agencies. Based on critical phenomenological discourse of scholarly literature and analytical hermeneutics of secondary data collected, evidence showed that bad governance in natural resource extraction and management in both the colonial and post-colonial periods contributed immensely to the resource curse syndrome in Sierra Leone; a situation which has impacted negatively on the nation's drive to economic development. This study thus suggests an effective application of rule of law in the prosecution of perpetrators of unethical acts in the exploitation of non-renewable natural resources to deter future cases of unethical practices.

Key Words: *Phronesis, Paradox of Plenty, Political Economy, Natural Resources, Resource Curse, Sierra Leone*

JEL Classification: F50, N57, P16, P48, Q32, Q34, Q38

Introduction
Although different in their disciplinary interpretations, Phronesis and resource curse theories are both considered very important in addressing the state of economic development, particularly for economies endowed with natural resources. Historically, Sierra Leone has enjoyed the benefit of being a nation with abundant natural resources (both mineral extracts and forest reserves), but very little has emerged when it comes to real sector investment in the transformation of living standard for the entire population (Jackson, 2015a).

The resource curse syndrome prevalent in Sierra Leone as exhibited in the forest and mineral resource sectors, [with near collapse of the Western Area Peninsula Forest Reserve (WAPFoR)] is perpetrated by individuals and officials of the Ministry of Land. Poor administration and governance in terms of contention as to which Ministry (Ministry of Land or Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security [MAFFS]) is responsible for taking action on land encroachment and the abuse of the natural resource environment, which are contributing factors to resource curse syndrome in the country (Jackson, 2015a; 2015b; 2015c).

The above stated causes of resource curse in Sierra Leone are thus far different from those given by Rosser (2006), who viewed them from seven different perspectives:

> *(i) economistic perspectives that emphasise economic mechanisms; (ii) behaviouralist perspectives that emphasise emotional or irrational behaviour on the part of political*

> *actors; (iii) rational actor perspectives that emphasise self-interested behaviour on the part of political actors; (iv) state-centered perspectives that emphasise the nature of the state; (v) social capital perspectives that emphasise the degree of social cohesion in countries; (vi) structuralist perspectives that emphasise the role of social groups or socio-economic structure; and (vii) radical perspectives that emphasise the role of foreign actors and structures of power at the global level*.

Scholars, such as McGregor, (1942), Cole, (1968) Leach and Fairhead, (2000) and Munro, (2008) saw the causes of resource curse from the hegemonic dominance of colonialism, which witnessed a divide of the country into what is typically classified as the '*Colony and the Protectorate*'. This divide made it easy for the colonialists to mastermind their acts of supremacy through legislations that favour their dominance on how dealings with forest timber trade were decided in the colony, while the protectorate was mainly utilised selfishly for its rich non-renewables like diamonds, to support the assertion of resource curse or Dutch disease.

Ross (1999) and Rosser (2006) were also of the view that a weak political economic structure is to be blamed for resource curse. This is seen through high level of dependence by successive governments on naturally extracted mineral for its revenue and the growth of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the sporadic fluctuations in world market prices, high rate of corruption through illicit exportation of the resources and the uncontrollable influence of government in mineral-rich resourced locations, particularly around the protectorate. The scenarios were not without their implications. For instance, in 1988, official diamond exports accounted for $22 million, as opposed to $250 million in illicit exportation which resulted to heavy loss of revenue that would have been used for the economic development of the country (see, also Ross, 2003; Jackson, 2015a and Trading Economics, n.d).

Drawing from the above, this study therefore examined some of the root causes of Sierra Leone's current economic problems in relation to Phronesis, which addresses virtuous actions on the basis of practical intelligence on good governance. The methodological inquiry of the investigation was based on critical phenomenological discourse of scholarly literature and the analytical hermeneutics of secondary data collected (Jackson, 2016a; 2016b).

The Concept of Phronesis and Resource Curse

Meaning of Phronesis

According to Engberg-Pedersen (1983), Eikeland, (2006) and Jackson, (2016a; 2016b), phronesis is a philosophical concept that addresses virtuous actions of human beings. In the context of this study, it is linked to the concept of political economy, which is grounded on how (virtuous) decisions are made about the judicious use of a country's resources for all. Resource allocation from a country's wealth is normally a decision of politics. In Africa countries the influence of power struggle makes it difficult for virtue to predominate, leading to the manifestation of selfish gains as priority-with resources not judiciously utilised to serve the nation, rather diverted into the hands of few rich individuals (Rosser, 2006).

Phronesis is a form of Greek moral philosophy developed by Plato and Aristotle. It is centred on a character/individual performing an action and not the action itself (Hursthouse, 2008, Lian, 2009). The concept as translated by Gadamer from the Greek term *'Praktisches Wissen'*, denotes *practical wisdom.* (see, Dottori, 2009: 301).

Meaning of Resource Curse

Resource curse as a concept in political economy is not strange to the plight of developing nations endowed with abundant natural resources (both renewable and non-renewable). Synonymous to resource curse is the concept of '*paradox of plenty*'; which implies that countries with abundant natural resources, specifically non-renewable resources, such as, iron ore and crude oil, tend to have less growth, less democracy and worse development outcomes than countries with fewer natural resources (Sachs & Warner, 2001). This is a hypothetical statement that seem to make rational sense, and has been substantiated through studies conducted by scholars, such as, Gelb (1988), Auty (1990), Sachs and Warner (1995, 1999 and 2001), and Gylfason *et al.* (1999). The concept is also akin to '*Dutch disease*' (coined in 1977 by scholars , such as, Van Wijnbergen, (1984), Ebrahim-Zadeh, (2003), Neumayer, (2004), CEPA, (2010) and Venables, (2016), which also implies an apparent causal relationship between the increase in development of a specific sector (for example, natural resources) and the decline in other sectors, for example, manufacturing and agriculture.

Hermeneutic context of the theories of resource curse and Phronesis enables human conscience dictate the obvious action of allowing a country's resources to be utilised wisely for the enhancement of society's welfare/well-being. A form of ethical manifestation that distinguishes between the *episteme* of knowing and the *techne*, that is, the knowledge of knowing how things are done. It is also a form of practical knowledge expressed by Gadamer as the knowledge of *oti* (see, Dottori, 2009: 309).

Analytical Discourse: Economic Rationality of Resource Curse and the Sierra Leonean Political Economy

Sierra Leone's political-economic history and structure, especially from the pre-independence to post-independence periods provide the needed tool in explaining and understanding the idea of resource curse. The Freetown colony which is presently the capital city of Sierra Leone was established by an English humanist, Granville Sharp, with the aim of repatriating former slaves, comprising of multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic groups of people, which later resulted in a new set of ethnic community popularly known as the *Krios* (July, 1970; OECD, 2010).

Based on the excerpt from Jackson (2016a; 2016b), the political-economic history and structure of Sierra Leone was stated thus:

> *"Sierra Leone as a nation consists of 149 constituent chiefdoms established in 1886 under the premiership of Governor Cardew who empowered sets of 'Paramount Chiefs[1] as the authorities of local governments in the created Sierra Leone Protectorate and the colony of 'Freetown'. (Reed & Robinson, 2013: 2). Prior to independence in 1961, the colony of Freetown was governed by elected local government councils under the British legal system, while the rest of the country (registered as Protectorate) was governed under the chieftaincy system (OECD, 2010). The legacy of the divided country (Protectorate and the Colony of Freetown) still resonates in the entire structure of governance, the consequences of which were high level of ethnic tension and an untamable level of corruption witnessed across the country. The first election for administrative governance in the entire country was held in 1962, which also left the country divided on ethnic grounds. With series of coup plots (all between the late 1960s and the 1980s) and during*

[1] According to Reed and Robinson (2013) only individuals from the designated "ruling families" were eligible to become Paramount Chiefs.

> *the authoritarian premiership of the 'All Peoples Congress (APC)[2] ' headed by the late Dr. Siaka P. Stevens, and later in the 1980s with the transfer of power to the late Brigadier Joseph Saidu Momoh (OECD, 2010) and the emergence of the insurgence group, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the country was further divided along ethnic groups/lines. The end of the war finally spearheaded the transition to a properly elected system of democratic governance, which unfortunately did not solve the challenges of ethnic divide"* (see also Reynal-Querol, 2002; Ballantine, 2003)

The prevailing political-economic structure in Sierra Leone that is along ethnic divides further justifies the extent to which resource curse has become inimical to the country's development (Jackson, 2016a; Trading Economics, n.d). In Sierra Leone, resource curse has proved to be a '*farce*'[3] when applied to rich mineral resourced countries, such as, Norway, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong and Botswana, given their efforts in controlling the massive abuse of their nations' non-renewable reserves from the hands of few rich individuals and foreign investors (Larsen, n.d; Sachs & Warner, 2001: 829).

Study by Wilson (2013: 997) ascertains the reality of the resource curse syndrome in Sierra Leone due to the existence of '*patrimonial politics*' the country experienced between 1968-1992. Trading Economics (n.d) also provided an outline of the economic reality of Sierra Leone in terms of her GDP from 2006 to 2016. Given the country's stance in recovering from the experience of a bitter and bloody civil war (1991 - 2001), post-war era up to 2014 revealed some signs of economic recovery, particularly, from resource curse syndrome, which is attributed to the inefficient utilisation of natural resource(s) for the good of all in maintaining sustainable growth. As evidenced in Fig. 1, post-war governance in the mining sector, for example, witnessed gradual improvements until 2014 when there was a sharp decline of 4.2 per cent in GDP (i.e. a 16.1 per cent fall from 2013).

Drazen (2000) was of the view that resource curse was as a result of the injudicious use to which resources were and still being utilised in Sierra Leone. Jones (2014) saw the situation of resource curse in Sierra Leone as a result of debt-overhang in the economy. Austerity measures introduced to address the nation's economic challenges also contributed negatively to resource use and the nation's economy because of inadequate investment in the real sector and the inability of the government in ensuring that proceeds from export commodities (about $2.2billion in 2014) were judiciously utilised to facilitate economic growth (see also BTI, 2016).

Wilson (2013) also observed that the decline in the price of iron ore in the global market aided the curse on resources. This manifested in the country's inadequacy in utilising revenues generated from the sale of non-renewable minerals into productive ventures, especially investment in intermediary industries that would have helped in the curtailment of the country's high dependence and vulnerability to global shocks. The lack of governance in the mining industry has resulted in situations where exploiters, particularly in war-torn economies like that seen in Sierra Leone were more inclined to make financial gains, while the economy struggled to meet its obligations in delivering economic growth and sustainability. This lack of governance can be said to be applicable to Gadamer's hermeneutic philosophy of humane virtues.

[2] During the tenure of the one-party ruling system (within the 1960s and the 1980s), the country experienced high level of problems that resulted in exploitation of the country's environmental reserve. Between 1990 and 2000, the economy also contracted at an average annual rate of 4.5 per cent, with a two-fold increase in population growth to nearly 6 million (UNEP, 2010: 11).

[3] This is a form of theatrical expression to insight fear and then stigmatise poor nations around Africa in particular about the coined phrase of 'Resource Curse/Dutch Disease'.

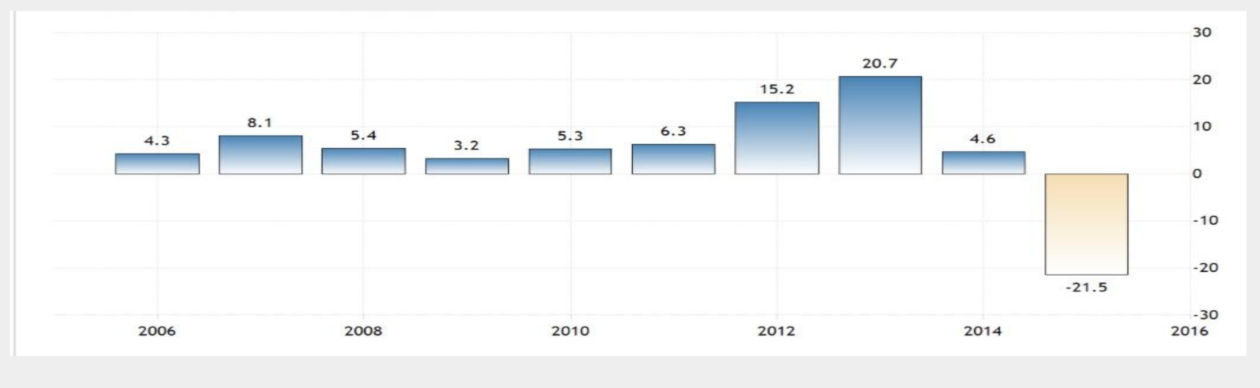

Figure 1: Sierra Leone GDP Annual Growth Rate (%)
Source: Trading Economics (n.d)

With the emergence of the deadly Ebola virus in mid 2014, Sierra Leone also witnessed its worst economic down-turn in recent time, which in turn led to more resource curse syndrome (Jackson, 2016a). For instance, the nation's GDP contracted from an annual growth rate of 20.7 per cent in 2013 to -21.50 per cent in 2015 (Trading Economics, n.d).

The above situation brings to fore the issue of resource governance which is also linked to the doctrine of human virtue. As indicated in Table 1, with a given set of criteria (e.g. institution and legal setting, safeguards and quality controls and enabling environment), Sierra Leone was ranked 25th out of 58 countries in resource governance. One is led to believe that the experience of the resource curse syndrome during the era of the civil crisis has generated a wake-up call on successive governments in post-war period to address issues of poor governance in all areas associated with non-renewable natural resource management for the good of all. This has in fact led to the establishment of the National Protected Area Authority (NPAA), an independent wing of the division of forestry at MAFFS responsible for overseeing the uncontrollable abuse of protected forest areas. Whether this agency has achieved its set goals or not, is yet to be seen.

Table 1: Sierra Leone's Performance on Resource Governance Index

Indicators of Resource Governance Index	Rank (out of 58 countries)	Score (out of 100 countries)
Composite Score	35	46
Institution and Legal Setting	43	52
Reporting Practices	28	47
Safeguards and Quality Controls	25	59
Enabling Environment	41	44

Source: National Resource Governance Institute (n.d).

Linked to resource governance is the change in total forest cover in Sierra Leone. As indicated in Table 2, the total change in forest cover revealed a fall of about -9.53 per cent between 1990 and 2005, and the situational loss of forest cover had also worsened along the WAPFoR communities (Jackson, 2015b). The mining and petroleum sectors are governed under the Mines and Minerals Act of 2009 (monitored by the Ministry of Mines and Mineral Resources and Exploration and Production Acts of 2011 respectively)[USGS, 2012].

Table 2: Sierra Leone Change in Total Forest Cover 1990 – 2005

Year/Annual Change	Forest Cover
Forest 1990	3,044,000(ha)
Forest 2000	2,851,000(ha)
Forest 2005	2,654,000(ha)
Annual Change 1990 -2000	(19,300 ha) -0.63%
Annual Change 2000 -2005	(29,400 ha) -0.68%
Total Change 1990 -2005	(290,000 ha) -9.53%

Source: www.mongabay.com (n.d).

Resource Curse Remedy in view of Sierra Leone's Current Economic Situation

Sierra Leone is small in size, with precisely 7.07 million people (based on the publication of the 2015 census data) and well-endowed with precious non-renewable natural resources. Through careful planning, honesty (in the application of Gadamer's ethical virtues of goodwill) and efficient monitoring and management of her non-renewable natural resources, Sierra Leone can overcome its current challenges of economic crisis (UN, 2016).

First in the direction of development is the need for honest manifestation of virtuous character displayed by public servants in particular, and also independent agencies hired by the government to salvage remains of the country's resources (renewable resources and non-renewable resources). Furthermore, the government should seek to apply stringent measures [similar to that instituted by countries, such as Norway (Larsen, n.d)] to remedy situations like corruption on the part of those seeking to fulfill their selfish desires at the expense of the entire nation. These measures should include the confiscation of assets from the hands of public servants which have been unjustifiably acquired during their tenure of work with the public service.

Consideration should also be given to the issuing of license(s) to private individuals or businesses, and with a call for strict demand on minerals extracted to be properly assessed by experts to ensure that correct percentage of proceeds from sales are paid directly into the government's coffer. There should also be commitment towards '*corporate social responsibilities*'[4] adopted by private national and multinational firms operating in endowed non-renewable resource communities. This will serve as a way of salvaging the country from the resource curse syndrome (Jackson & Jackson, 2016).

As in the case with most developed nations like the United Kingdom (UK) where the enactment of laws are considered supreme, individuals caught defrauding the state should be tried independently, and if found guilty, charged and punished for inflicting economic malaise on the nation.

Phronetic values of goodwill is more or less a thing of the past in Sierra Leone, particularly in the public service where public servants are expected to exercise strict ethical values in discouraging malpractice acts like bribery and corruption. The manifestation of virtuous ethical goodwill needs to be implemented from above, and with a continuous review of its implementation carried out annually so as to prevent lapses, particularly those waiting to see how far the law can be exercised effectively.

[4] This simply entails agreement with potential investors to commit themselves to invest in communities where their operations are said to be particularly associated with environmental sustainability. Such investments can take the form of improvement in human resource potential (e.g., creation of training centres to enhance skills set of locals), and the establishment of intermediary businesses to aid the transformation of raw materials into finished products. Through this, the country will be more capable of preparing for unanticipated global or national shocks which may likely impact adversely on prices of non-renewable commodities.

The political economic structure of Sierra Leone should endeavour to discourage all forms of allegiances with political groups, particularly that, which is seen as undermining the integrity of competent citizens to become part and parcel of a developmental society. Politics is part of an economic system, but not to the extent of its dominance on the entire economic system. This, in most cases, can prejudice citizens, with preferential treatments granted to those in allegiance, on the basis of their membership or support of a political view. Critical discourse in all subjects pertaining to the development of an economy must be encouraged in a virtuous manner that promotes intellectual debate on issues pertaining to economic progress of the country, where judicious utilisation of non-renewable resources are concerned, more so, in serving the good of the nation as a whole.

Conclusion

This study explores the concept of Phronesis and the political economy of non-renewable natural resource management that ensures everyone in Sierra Leone benefit from the proceeds of sales of non-renewable resources, as opposed to the branded assertion of the country being a resource cursed nation, where only a handful of individuals enjoyed the country's wealth, while the less privileged live in poverty and at the mercy of aids provided by donor countries/agencies.

The resource curse syndrome is a reality when one reflects on the extent of exploitation inflicted on the country's non-renewable natural resource environment (e.g., the forest and mining sectors), and with very limited evidence of real development witnessed across the country since independence. The country's steady growth in GDP up to 2014, and followed by a decline thereafter, is an attestation to justify a critique of methodology on which the resource curse syndrome is anchored.

The governance of natural resource extraction has also been poorly managed in Sierra Leone. This situation is a serious issue that needs to be resolved as a way of moving forward on the country's agenda for sustainable development (where the abundant resources is utilised for the ethical good of both present and future generations). Sierra Leone has the capacity to step out of the so-called symptom of resource curse; this can only be achieved when the rule of law is applied, and perpetrators of unethical acts, leading to the exploitation of non-renewable natural resources are punished severely to deter future cases of unethical practices.

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