

BOOK REVIEW

John James Quinn. *Majority State Ownership of Oil and Mining Sectors in Africa: The Resource Curse Undermined*. London: Routledge, 2024. xiv + 186 pp. \$200.00. Hardback. ISBN: 9781138390331.


John James Quinn has published widely on African politics and its political economy. Hence, it is not an exaggeration to assert that he has earned the right to be called an expert in these areas. His latest work, *Majority State Ownership of Oil and Mining Sectors in Africa: The Resource Curse Undermined*, continues his tradition of sound intellectual enquiry into the continent and its political economy. The new work takes a whole new look at the resource curse theory as it manifested in the continent during the Cold War decades in the oil and natural resources sectors. The central argument of the work is that there is more to the traditional understanding of the resource curse when Majority State Ownership (MSO) of oil and natural resources sectors is considered in Africa as the study finds that there is a more chronic version of the resource curse than is ordinarily the case in non-MSO countries. While Quinn agrees with literature on the resource curse and its various outcomes in resource-dependent countries, he strongly opines that these are made worse by the MSO model operational in the countries he studied in this work.

The work draws insight across the continent through the Most Similar Systems Design (MSSD), using countries like Angola, Botswana, Cameroon, Congo (Brazavile), Congo DRC, Gabon, Guinea, Lesotho, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Togo, and Zambia. It considers oil and gas exploration and exploitation in these countries and establishes a similar pattern of resource curse, pinning it and its outcomes to state ownership of the oil and natural resources sectors. The book is divided into six chapters, with each treating important issues around the subject of resource curse arising from the state ownership of the critical sectors, almost right from independence to the cusp of the new millennium. Quinn emphasized the rise of a new world economic and political order that saw the entrance of the private sector into the insular spaces of many resource-rich African countries.

The work presents a simplistic portrayal of MSOs in Africa, failing to factor in the impact of neocolonialism, as many of the MSOs were controlled by former colonial leaders and other superpowers worldwide. Although the argument that MSOs in Africa in the period of study were aimed more at leveraging and maximizing political power rather than economic efficiency is true, the fact that the author overlooked the role of European superpowers in all of this scheme makes the work biased. Secondly, Quinn failed to show that MSOs created monopolies for multinational corporations that mined natural resources from

the former colonies during the period covered by the work. This is because the immediate postindependence African political class were most loyal to their colonial masters, and to the extent that opening up the oil and mineral resources sectors could alter the advantage each former colonial master and superpower enjoyed on the continent. Therefore, the West could not be absolved of complicity in driving MSOs and the resultant resource curse in Africa.

The book is a valuable contribution to knowledge of African politics, political economy and energy policy, and politics. It is analytically rigorous and well researched. The author's adoption of MSSD allows him to effectively compare the ownership model of oil and natural resources, thereby affirming common themes on the subject of resource curse among the selected countries. It allows the author to develop a causal relationship between MSO and the resource curse. This work is important within the broader oil and natural resources studies in Africa, despite the criticism labelled against it earlier. Following this reasoning, Abiodun Alao's *Natural Resources and Conflict in Africa: The Tragedy of Endowment* offers a better critique of oil and natural resources governance on the continent because it traces the roots of the government's management posturing on this. This book is recommended for students, academics, researchers, civil society organizations working in the areas of oil and natural resources, and policy-makers in Africa and other developing regions of the world. It does contain some deep and far-reaching findings on the nexus between the ownership model of oil and natural resources and the resource curse, while also opening their implications for the development of the continent.

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