The Biopolitical War for Life: Extractivism and the Ugandan Oil State

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After the discovery of commercially viable oil and gas deposits in the Albertine Graben, the Republic of Uganda can be viewed as involved in a state centered discourse on what I call “oil for development,” which is found simultaneously alongside an ever-growing discourse of state security. Despite the focus on point resources, such as oil and gas I argue the aforementioned discourses and the treatment of particular populations, such as human rights defenders and particular Congolese nationals, can be analyzed as apart of a larger political transformation associated to resource governance in Uganda. In other words, a shift from sovereign power to biopower, specifically within the resource regime (constituting the state, multinational corporations, and donors) of the Ugandan state.

This paper demonstrates how discourse and state action is creating an environment focused on the biopolitical regulation/management/control of life en masse through the strategic use of statistics, shaping of social expectations, corporate social responsibility, and the promise of peace and security – all centered on resource development.

Furthermore, this paper extends and traverses the theoretical frameworks based on resource rents\(^1\), environment scarcity\(^2\) and resource wars\(^3\) and illustrates how resource governance is focused on the “problem of population.” The biopolitical state’s focus on the governance of the population as one biological corpus (Lemke, 2011) and engaged in the attempt to “make live” is thus a state which enacts a strong violent presence throughout. As Dillon (2008) has shown, through the means of selective population control, biopolitics is a violent endeavor in that a very particular life is selected in attempts to “make live.” With this in mind, and empirical research focused on the treatment of human rights defenders throughout Uganda’s

\(^1\) A theory presenting the economic paradox of resource rich nations, whereby those rich in natural resources do not necessarily maintain increased levels of development. See: (Sachs & Warner, 1995)

\(^2\) A number of variations of scarcity-induced theses have been put forth by Thomas Homer-Dixon (1991; Homer-Dixon & Blitt, 1998) and others (Baechler, 1998, 2002; Kaplan, 1994), which ultimately links environmental and resource scarcity, including demand-induced scarcity caused by population and/or consumptive growth; supply-induced scarcity caused by the depletion/degradation of resources; and structural scarcity effected by the inequitable distribution of said resources with the onset and inherency of violent conflict.

\(^3\) An understanding of violent conflict inflicted for the sole purpose of procuring and/or securing valuable natural resources.
I conclude by posing what Agamben’s (1998) furthering of biopolitics, mainly the notion of bare life, can tell us about resource governance in Uganda and extractivism more broadly, primarily through a discussion of the extreme forms of violence enacted with impunity across resource regions such as that found in Uganda.

The paper offers insight into a “new” extractive state and its focused approach to the development of its oil resources and includes a critical analysis of this focus by highlighting the potentiality of positive developmental benefits from the proposed oil development, while at the same time probes the increased militarization of resource regions and questions its impacts on life in Uganda.

In analyzing the historic shifts within extractivism, analysis can move past a focus on resource sovereignty and rents. In the case of Uganda and perhaps more broadly, this contemporary analysis views the oil industry as being led by both state and corporate violence through a biopolitical war waged for peace (or life).

The following paper will first briefly explain how biopolitics becomes increasingly relevant across resource regions and extractivism and will be followed by the example of Uganda. The paper concludes with the questioning of bare life and the state of exception and provides areas for continued research focused on the “Agamben effect” and extractivism.

**Biopolitics and Security:**

With its referent focus on life, biopolitics allows for an analysis of extractivism that moves beyond a sole focus on resource rents and economic benefits. Biopolitics also moves through a theoretical discourse centered on environmental conflicts and resource wars and highlights the sub-division of populations, an inherently violent and warlike endeavor whereby particular populations are identified, sub-divided, and ultimately terminated. Within the discursive spirals associated to extractivism, mainly “development” and security, lie the focus on not only life, but the “better life,” life enhanced by the development of extracted natural resources. Biopolitics identifies and analyzes the mechanisms attached to the search to “make

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live,” and in complete juxtaposition, identifies the inherent violence found necessarily alongside the focus on life.

Foucault (1997) succinctly illustrates that the sovereign right over life or “right of the sword” had mutated into a central focus to “make live,” in his 1975-76 lectures. After the emergence of disciplinary techniques of power focused on the individual body, Foucault (1997) traces the appearance of a new power, which can be found “embedding itself in existing disciplinary techniques” (p. 242). This new formulation of power does not focus on the individual body; rather, this form of power focuses on “man-as-species.” Foucault argues the relationship between sovereign power and biopower is possible due to its normalizing qualities in that the technologies of discipline and technologies of regulation succeeded in articulating the spaces between the body and the population as one (Foucault, 1997). However, for Foucault, this political transformation is just that – a transformation – not a complete separation from the sovereign tradition nor a supplement to traditional political norms. Rather, biopolitics “reformulates concepts of political sovereignty and subjugates them to new forms of political knowledge” (Lemke, 2011, p. 33).

In order to establish and maintain an equilibrium and to compensate for the variation that inherently takes place within a population’s “aleatory field,” biopolitics enlists a number of mechanisms to do so. Through a focus on regularizing life and its processes biopolitics aims to establish a homeostasis, not by training individual bodies as disciplinary power does, rather by “achieving an overall equilibrium that protects the security of the whole from internal dangers” (Foucault, 1997, p. 249). Here we locate a paradox, in order to establish this equilibrium or homeostasis, biopolitics directs its attention towards security.

Therefore, if biopolitics is understood as “the calculated management of life,” or in other words the administration of life (Roberts, 2010) and life which is to be administered must first be labeled a particular kind of life – a biopolitical life – we can then see how biopolitics clearly takes species life as its referent object (Dillon, 2008; Dillon & Lobo-Guerrero, 2008). Ultimately the security apparatus – the relationship between disciplinary power and biopower – that takes shape is also contingent on the referent object of the security discourse and with life as its referent object, there can be no biopolitics that is itself not specifically regarded as a security apparatus. “There is no biopolitics of this, or a biopolitics of that. When one says biopolitics one says security, albeit in a certain way” (Dillon & Lobo-Guerrero, 2008, p. 266). Biopolitics is
therefore incredibly violent. In the search to “make live” biopolitics simultaneously makes die for life (Dillon, 2008).

Administration of particular life is key in order for biopolitics to function, unfit life – life that cannot be biopoliticized – is understood to be justifiably removed. In the resource region of Uganda, biopolitics identifies life which is deemed unfit such as particular Congolese nationals and human rights defenders, which will be explained further below, and terminates this life accordingly through varying formulations of a security apparatus. As Campbell (2005) shows, killing for the collective survival of the population is “justified by the necessity of preserving life” (p. 135). Recalling that life is the referent object of biopolitics, securing life through mechanisms and practices of security are generally concerned with the life and well-being of the species, this concern centrally focuses the security of biopolitics on such themes as health, medicine, and the economy (Dillon & Lobo-Guerrero, 2008). Power’s focus transforms to those characteristics that highlight the species existence, “rather than those said to characterize ‘providence,’ ‘nature,’ or even, the ‘history’ and ‘territoriality’ of a ‘people’” (Dillon, 2008, p. 174). However within what Foucault calls the death-function of biopower we find an incredible paradox, at once security and making live in its’ politicalization is counteracted by the mass of technical and political means of devastation appropriated in the ultimate search of making life live (Lemke, 2011). “Making life live is evidently a lethal business. It makes war on life which does not fit the template of biopoliticized life and its ways of making life live” (Dillon, 2008, p. 167).

This sub-division of the population into categories of fit and unfit life is where, I argue, we must pause and consider Agamben’s (1998) conception of bare life and the state of exception. His theory is situated within the central binary relationship of politics as an understanding between bare life, known as zoé, and political existence, known as bios, or more simply: the variance between natural being and the legal existence of that being (Lemke, 2011). Central to Agamben’s theory is a figure known as homo sacer, who occupies a space in which s/he can be killed with impunity due to its banishment from the politico-legal community and stripping of all political ability, homo sacer is “reduced to the status of his physical existence” (Lemke, 2011, p. 54-55). Or in Agamben’s (1998) own words: “The life caught in the sovereign ban is the life that is originally sacred—that is, that may be killed but not sacrificed—and, in this sense, the production of bare life is the originary activity of sovereignty” (p. 83). Key to Agamben’s thesis
is an argument built upon a logical connection between sovereignty and biopolitics, unlike Foucault who painlessly pointed to the transformative nature of biopolitics and the ultimate separation from sovereignty (Lemke, 2011).

Indeed, much criticism has been lodged at Agamben’s theories and two points are of particular importance for this paper. First, bare life appears to lack distinction within the concept itself. As Lemke (2011) argues, Agamben’s construction of the camp as a single border or a line between bare life and political existence avoids the possibility of “gradations and valuations” within bare life itself (p. 59). It would appear that bare life exists as simply one type of life, life cannot be qualified as higher or lower, better or worse, rather life is viewed simply as bare (Lemke, 2011). Therefore, bare life appears to have the same effect on all human life regardless of gender and/or sexuality. Other scholars have taken up this argument, stating that bare life is gendered as masculine and that the question of sex is a required point of inquiry when dealing with systems of power (Ek, 2006). Agamben’s analysis of legal abandonment or “the ban” is developed through a distinction of public and private which are placed onto the categories of political and biological life (Pratt, 2005). Thus, Geraldine Pratt (2005) finds the avoidance of the gender dimension of the analysis perplexing as feminist scholarship has explored this public/private dimension with great apt:

The point here is not only that many of those who are placed in the position of bare life are women. It is also that both admission to citizenship and rendering individuals as bare life are accomplished through–and often in the name of–gendered and heterosexual norms. Legal abandonment occurs through a complex and gendered layering and enfolding of geographies of public and private, one into the other. I am not claiming that women’s gender subordination creates the most egregious instances of legal abandonment. I am suggesting that there are real limitations to generalizing across the experiences of men and women, and across racialized and gendered forms of abandonment, and–most importantly–that gender hierarchies support and relay the split between biological and political life, which is both cause and effect of abandonment. (Pratt, 2005, p. 1056-1057)

The second criticism of particular import to this project, is Agamben’s avoidance of the relationship between the state of exception, bare life, and colonialism. A number of scholars have

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argued Agamben’s original thesis is not considered outside the political environment of “Western politics” and yet the mention of colonialism, a vital process of past and current “Western politics,” is trivial. Furthermore, this avoidance also excludes the critical interventions of colonized peoples (Bignall & Svirsky, 2012). That said, a number of scholarly work has indeed taken Agamben’s theorization and applied it to colonialism and colonial legacies with one such volume concluding that the “Agamben effect” allows particular reflection into: “the difficult relations between legal and political bodies and their subjects, revealing how these bodies are shaped by hierarchical selections that reify two interconnected spheres of existence, zoē and bios” (Bignall & Svirsky, 2012, p. 6). It is this “Agamben effect” which finds particular relevancy in this project, primarily in connection to the “war on terror” and the levels of impunity operationalized by resource regimes affecting particular populations in resource regions significantly affecting the political status of life within these regions.

Despite this criticism, Agamben’s (2005) State of Exception finds particular relevancy when operationalized by scholars analyzing aspects of the “war on terror” and indeed Agamben himself has pinpointed the state of exception within the “war on terror,” particularly in a brief discussion of the US Patriot Act and the detainee at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba where “bare life reaches its maximum indeterminacy” (p. 4). However an important distinction is necessary here. The state of exception is not a type of law, such as the law of war or the Patriot Act, rather the state of exception is a suspension of the juridical order. The state of exception defines the very threshold of the law and accordingly becomes the definitive point of relation between the law and the living being whereby the living being is simultaneously bound and abandoned by the law itself (Agamben, 2005).

The discursive rise of the “global civil war” and the “war on terror” leads Agamben to argue the state of exception is increasingly seen as a paradigm of modern politics, particularly with regards to war-time measures taken by political states to the point where, in the the modern political state, it becomes increasingly difficult to recognize the distinction between peace and war and foreign and civil war (ibid, 2005). Within this paradigm of modern politics, the

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emergency exception, where bare life was at once on the sideline utilized in desperate measures, ultimately becomes the norm, or in other words – the state of exception becomes the rule (ibid, 2005). As Lemke (2011) clarifies:

The threshold to biopolitical modernity will be crossed, according to Agamben, when bare life proceeds beyond the state of exception to become central to political strategies; the exception will become the rule, and the difference between inside and outside, factum and law enter into a “zone of irreducible indistinction.” (p. 56-57)

Again, there remain numerous points of contention between both Foucault and Agamben, mainly the role sovereignty maintains in biopolitics, however the definition of life comes to represent a critical avenue in both theoretical claims and is particularly important in the following argument. The notion of bare life represents a reality in which a questioning of life must remain and it is here when Foucault and Agamben must be read together. Elizabeth Dauphinee and Cristina Masters (2005) identify a rupture in the realm of control of which biopower enlists over the “human.” Bare life questions the very definition of “human” after all – how can you kill that which is not living? “It is this process of “desubjectification” –construction of life as (potentially) bare life–that makes it necessary to read Foucault and Agamben simultaneously” (Dauphinee & Masters, 2005, p. xiii).

Biopower operates in particular manifestations in resource regions due to its direct connection to the “war on terror” and security. In the case of Uganda and its delicate attachment to the discourse of security, which according to Agamben (2005) continues to blur the existence of the state of exception: “the declaration of the state of exception has gradually been replaced by an unprecedented generalization of the paradigm of security as the normal technique of government” (p. 14). I argue the analysis of the biopolitical management of these resource regions and the bare life that populate them remove the barriers of the dominant discourse presented in critical analysis of resource rents, territory, and environmentally determinant analyses and instead, much like the war on terror, take analysis “through the sites that are not explored–the sites where human bodies succumb to technologies of death and are erased” (Dauphinee & Masters, 2005, p. xiii-xiv). Therefore this paper looks to uncover these sites, normally hidden from view, and asks what are the implications of a resource regime which potentially produces bare life? If the potential for bare life to be produced within resource regions exists then the potential implications found within the biopolitical war for life within
resource regimes remain seemingly endless. After all, according to Agamben, political modernity enlists the potential of bare life within us all, within the bodies of every living being (Lemke, 2011), with the camp operating as “the hidden matrix of the politics in which we are still living” (Agamben, 1998, p. 175).

Uganda: Securing a Population Full of Oil

To discover and possess the source of oil is to feel as if, after wandering long underground, you have suddenly stumbled upon royal treasure. Not only do you become rich, but you are also visited by the mystical conviction that some higher power has looked upon you with the eye of grace and magnanimously elevated you above others, electing you its favorite... The concept of oil expresses perfectly the eternal human dream of wealth achieved through lucky accident, through a kiss of fortune and not by sweat, anguish, hard work. In this sense oil is a fairy tale and, like every fairy tale, a bit of a lie.

– Ryszard Kapuściński: Shah of Shahs, 1982

Although the fascinating analysis of the discovery of oil by Kapuściński depicts an image related to the Shah’s reign in Iran, similar points become central to an analysis of the discovery and discursive realities of a “new” oil state such as the Republic of Uganda. It was not until 2006 that Uganda announced the discovery of commercially viable oil and gas deposits in and around the North-Western shores of Lake Albert, a region known as the Albertine Graben. Initially, a number of such oil discoveries were reported and interestingly an online news provider wrote of how the President, Yoweri Museveni, proclaimed a “thanksgiving ceremony” to pay homage for the discovery of oil and gas (ActionAid International, n.d.). These initial discoveries in western Uganda are compounded by more recent discoveries in northern Uganda which traverse different political, ethnic, and environmental lines. As Angelo Izama (2013) argues, this narrative variance regarding the location of oil deposits brings with it a vastly different historical perspective. My interviews conducted with Ugandan civil society were primarily located within the western

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7 The oil and gas industry will herein be referred to as simply the oil industry. Although I’m of the belief that resource typology is of extreme importance, this paper’s central focus on state discourse and action do not require a typological analysis at this point.

8 Izama is alluding to the decades-long violent conflict in Northern Uganda with the Lords Resistance Army (LRA), and also clearly indicates two issues separating these regional difficulties, one being the majority of oil discoveries and exploration activities are taking place in environmentally protected areas in the north and the second being a long and dark history of colonial violence, including “scorched earth policies” and the creation of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, directly linked to the current “underdevelopment” of particular kingdoms in the west. See: Izama, A. (2013). Facing northwards. Oil, geography and politics in Uganda. angeloizama.com. Retrieved March 30, 2013, from http://angeloizama.com/2013/02/02/facing-northwards-oil-geography-and-politics-in-uganda/
region, however the experiences of informants cover a vast area of Uganda’s resource region, which as stated, now represents a significant portion of the north and west part of the country.

A central tenet of my argument is the prevalence of a discourse currently permeating Ugandan society, built on this idea of “thanks and praise” or as Kapuściński (1985) writes, the realization of the “eternal human dream of wealth achieved through lucky accident, through a kiss of fortune and not by sweat, anguish, hard work” (p. 35). I call this discourse “oil for development” and argue it operates in an attempt to manage/control/regulate the population and/or species through the use of particular technologies of biopower such as statistical estimates, corporate social responsibility (CSR) schemas, and the overall focus on oil as a means to provide the “better life.” This discourse is found functioning far outside the resource regions of Uganda, rather its focus is centrally linked to Ugandan society as a whole, linked to the problem of population and the biopolitical focus of managing that population. Furthermore I argue this “oil for development” discourse is found functioning simultaneously alongside a seemingly ever-growing discourse of state security, which operates as a tool of the state aimed at promoting particular biopolitical life and eliminating that which is deemed unfit. This elimination of life, whether physical and/or political, appears to operate with impunity through a process of desubjectification and is a particular focus of the following analysis.

Although some debate the actual timeframe of when Uganda discovered geological deposits of oil, it was not until 2006 that commercially viable deposits were publicly announced. Discoveries are now seemingly common-place across East Africa and a number of international media outlets and commentators have been quick to jump at labeling the East African region as a new fossil fuel boomtown.9 In Uganda, initial discoveries were placed in the billions of barrels and in late 2012 were pushed to 3.5 billion barrels, with further discoveries expected (BBC, 2012b). Although Uganda has yet to produce a commercial barrel of oil, there have been a number of contractual alterations on the corporate side of the coin, as is often the case in the oil sector as junior exploration companies sell their claims to corporations set to extract and produce

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the resource. Perhaps most watched, due in large case to its alleged illegality, is the sale of Heritage Oil plc’s Ugandan claims to the British listed corporation Tullow Oil plc.\textsuperscript{10} Tullow Oil remains in the sector and is accompanied by other major corporations, mainly the Chinese National Offshore Oil Company (CNOOC), and the French company Total, making up the trinity of oil corporations operating within Uganda, for now. The corporate make-up could drastically change as Uganda, in late 2012, was rumored to have some 80 corporations, varying in size awaiting a licensing auction on hold due to legislative debate regarding two petroleum bills (Musoke, 2012).

Much of the discussion concerning the oil sector put forth by the media, international organizations, civil society, and other stakeholders has been centered on the economic phenomena known as the resource curse, wherein states with abundant natural resources fail to increase their levels of development, regardless of said resource wealth (Sachs & Warner, 1995). Other work of particular import in the Ugandan context, is the charted correlation between resource wealth and violent conflicts such as civil war. Much of this works is focused specifically on the DRC (Ross, 2004; Fairhead, 2001), a nation which borders Uganda’s oil region. These purely economic analyses are not the central focus of this paper, rather it is my belief that a more nuanced and broad approach is necessary in order to push critical analysis of the sector further and avoid what Marcuse has called “one dimensional” thought, that is, thought that denies “meaningful reflection and critical engagement in social progression” (Bauder, 2011, p. 1131).

\textsuperscript{10} The arbitration case, heard in London, is to settle a tax dispute between the government of Uganda and Heritage Oil, who sold their Ugandan claims to Tullow Oil for a reported US $1.45 billion. The government of Uganda and Uganda Tax Appeals Tribunal claims Heritage Oil owes US $435 million in capital gains tax through the sale. Calls for the case, being held in London “in camera,” meaning there is no public access, to be open to the public have been made by the Civil Society Coalition on Oil (Civil Society Coalition on Oil and Gas in Uganda, 2012).
Particular scholarship, such as Campbell (2005) and Mitchell (2011)\textsuperscript{11} articulates the importance of a shifting discursive focus from oil rents and economics to the intricate relationships involved throughout the processes of development in an oil based society. These are just two examples which expose the benefit of a discursive shift in an attempt to avoid “one dimensional” thought and continue to engage critically with oil discourse and the sector more broadly. Biopolitics can continue this shift by illustrating how resource regimes which bolster particular discourse such as “oil for development” and state security are mired in a seemingly permanent internal war – war which functions as a technology of biopower in the biopolitical states attempt to “make live.” I will start by illustrating how “oil for development” is taking shape within the Ugandan state and how it ultimately bleeds into an ever-growing discourse of permanent state security, which takes the species life as its referent object or primary target.

**“Oil for Development” and State Discourse:**

To begin this discussion on state discourse focused primarily on insuring the “better life” for all Ugandans, we must first briefly re-visit the mechanisms which accompany biopolitics in its transformation from sovereign power. These mechanisms arose in response to the general phenomena inherent to populations, general phenomena whose characteristics become easy to regulate when placed together in a collective, but entirely random when approached in a particular individual. Therefore, biopolitics introduces a plethora of mechanisms with different characteristics and varying outcomes than those of disciplinary mechanisms (Foucault, 1997) in order to administer these general phenomena. General statistical estimates are one such mechanism and statistical estimates are, without a doubt, vital to the global expansion of extractivism. This mechanism is key in articulating the viability of the industry and ultimately, 

\textsuperscript{11} Timothy Mitchell succinctly argues the relationship between oil and democracy is made up of a number of mechanisms on varying levels that are involved in the processes of producing and using carbon energy. He highlights a variety of actors and networks involved throughout the carbon energy industries in their varying arrangements of people, finance, expertise, and violence as they assemble into relationships that both open and/or confine political possibilities directly attached to the control of carbon energy. See: Mitchell, T. (2011). *Carbon democracy: Political power in the age of oil*. London: Verso.

In an interesting article using the sports utility vehicle as the means of explanation and analysis David Campbell argues “that the predominant representation of oil as simply an external, material cause of insecurity is insufficient for a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of contemporary geopolitics” (p. 132). Instead of an attempt to explain the US-led invasion of Iraq, he articulates the political and cultural conditions available in the US at the particular moment of invasion, in which the sports utility vehicle played a dynamic role. See: Campbell, D. (2005). The biopolitics of security: Oil, empire, and the sports utility vehicle. In E. Dauphinee & C. Masters (Eds.), *The logics of biopower and the war on terror: Living, dying, surviving* (pp. 129–156). Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillian.
the functional ability of the extractive industries’ contribution to the biopolitical management of the species. Statistical estimates measure the quantity of oil while this total affects oils’ overall contribution to the management/control/regulation of the species and/or population as a whole. These statistical estimates contribute in particular ways to the “oil for development” discourse and their ambiguous nature requires attention in order to see one function of the “oil for development” discourse in operation.

In a country whose estimates are continually changing, it appears Uganda’s oil industry is growing exponentially, and quite simply the changing estimates play into the regime’s discourse, in that they provide a view into the potentiality of utilizing “oil for development.” If the 1 billion, 2.5 billion, 3.5 billion, or 8 billion barrels of oil are properly utilized, the potential for development strictly stemming from oil is nearly endless, so goes the rhetoric.

These first estimates of oil deposits hovered around the 2.5 billion barrels mark and appeared attached to nearly any mention of oil in Uganda (Williams, 2012; Mbanga, 2012). Despite both the government (Action Aid International, n.d.) and other sources (CIA World Factbook, n.d.) expecting roughly one billion barrels to be extracted, cited estimates in the media quote the 2.5 billion barrels total without consideration for the expected extractable totals. One respected Canadian journalist wrote of the discovery: “2.5 billion barrels should be a game-changer for a poor African country” (York, 2011). Here Kapuściński’s words ring true; suddenly oil has changed what it means to be a Ugandan, much like an Iranian, once a “poor African,” but now a new identity awaits with seemingly endless possibilities as the “game” (of life?) in Uganda has changed.

Ranking Uganda on a global scale statistically also contributes to the “oil for development” discourse as Uganda quickly shot up the global ladder of the largest oil deposits and positioned itself within the top-50 (York, 2011). If recent indications are true, this ranking will continue to climb. However with a little digging, statistical discrepancies are not difficult to uncover. According to the CIA World Factbook (n.d.) as of 2010 Uganda had “proven” reserves of one billion barrels of oil, situating it as the nation with the 41st largest proven global reserves, yet numerous media publications continued to quote the 2.5 billion barrels total. If these totals were “proven” Uganda would be situated in 33rd place on the global list, tied with the actively producing state of Syria. What implications could a 1.5 billion barrel discrepancy have throughout the Ugandan imaginary, especially in areas where information regarding the sector is
difficult to obtain, such as the Albertine Graben region itself? With expectations associated to the sector exceptionally high thanks in large part to the utilization of “oil for development” discourse, this misinformation or lack of information has the potential to confuse current and future expectations and lived realities. Indeed, this confusion, traceable through the discourse of “oil for development,” is already taking place even before Uganda begins commercial production of oil. One such concern expressed by a number of interviewed Ugandan NGOs is the overall disapproval of readily available information regarding the sector, especially in the communities experiencing direct activities (read: exploration) with the sector.\(^\text{12}\) Lack of information regarding the sector comes to the forefront particularly regarding expectations, whereby the management of such expectations comes to be significant in a “new” oil state. An employee of an NGO active in the oil sector explains the importance:

> There is no information being given, right from the basic information like what should a lay person in Buliisa expect?... Because such information is not given there is high expectations, this high expectation will lead to [human rights] violations, because violations will come as more people start demanding and others get frustrated for their expectations not being met, so you are likely to get that backlash... It is all about information, it is all about managing expectations, it is all about being open. Some of the things there is nothing in them, but just because the state decided not to tell the people... it just keeps building tensions. These things are new to the communities as well, they need to understand the process.\(^\text{13}\)

Furthermore, in September of 2012 the Commissioner of the Ministry of Energy’s Petroleum Exploration and Production department announced an increase of 40 percent in discovered oil deposits, bringing the total discovered deposits to 3.5 billion barrels. Steps to further the “oil for development” discourse were also clearly taken by articulating a statement in a similar fashion to the comments made by President Museveni when the initial oil discoveries were announced in 2006. “If we are extremely lucky, we could move to eight or ten billion barrels of oil very soon,” the Commissioner, Ernest Rubondo, said. Rubondo also claimed the new total of 3.5 billion barrels of oil is located in a zone of the Albertine Graben which represents only 40 percent of the explored area (Musoke, 2012) tantalizingly leaving the door open for “luck” to uncover further deposits. Is this the Ugandan version of the “eternal human

\(^{12}\) D. Holterman, interview, June 6, 2012.

\(^{13}\) D. Holterman, interview, June 12, 2012
dream of wealth achieved through lucky accident” (Kapuściński, 1985, p. 35)? After all, growth in oil deposits fits the regime’s discourse perfectly; the more oil found, the more development Uganda will retain. Increase the barrels of oil and increase levels of development across the nation in the forms of energy, education, and infrastructure, to name but a few.

Besides making the point that this is not always the case – as numerous states have shown an increase in resource revenues is not always connected to increased development – I am also illustrating the state discourse centered on oil in order to analyze a state which is at the helm of a significant political project. I am not debating the potential for discovered oil deposits to grow – this is exceedingly possible as new technology is uncovered and new land appropriated for exploration – rather I am debating the utilization of state discourse directly connected to oil and the quest for development within Uganda, and how this discourse becomes inherently violent through biopolitics and its focus on to “make live.” What lies beyond an analysis of the oil sector as one directly connected to revenues and development, is a version of the sector run and maintained by violence. Discourse leads directly to state action and produces real, lived experiences. In Uganda, actions based on the “oil for development” discourse are centrally focused on a sub-division of the population as a whole: those onboard and entitled with “oil for development,” those who are not, and those who are exposed to political subjugation and eliminated.

Another form of advancing the state centered “oil for development” discourse is what Nick Young (2013) has pointed to as a “petro-rivalry,” which alludes to the growth of the oil sector across the region and the push for prime access to the market. It is true that neighboring Kenya and Tanzania are growing oil states with recent discoveries of their own. Other states within the region are also expecting big gains in the sector, including Mozambique and Somalia (Young, 2013). Both Kenya and Tanzania do expect to begin commercial production prior to Uganda, despite its position as leader in a not so distant past, and this has “oil for development” enthusiasts worried as concerns of fleeing capital to more immediate markets arise. These concerns had President Museveni calling for Parliament to avoid roadblocks and to simply trust the country’s industry pioneers currently in control of the oil sector (Uganda Media Centre, 2012). Young’s (2013) recent commentary concludes these claims are “nonsense,” as the globe’s addiction to oil remains and therefore the region has great potential in the oil sector if tapped properly and strategically. In Uganda, the state’s response is delivered simply as making sure the
right checks and balances are in place before forging ahead with commercial development (Musoke, 2012). Oil critics in Uganda argue otherwise. Prominent journalist Angelo Izama (2012) argues the discourse centered on appropriate legal and development frameworks is simply a ploy, a politicalization of the issue to ensure the elite rung of Ugandan society benefits as the country goes through a political transition:

This is not a conversation about more laws or policies, it is a political conversation about the future of Uganda’s entitled classes and the elite bargain they need to make. As seen from the energy sector, there is a political price to pay for the continual procrastination surrounding public works. As political transition stumbles forward, crises will eventually bring the poor violently face to face with the eating classes. (Izama, 2012)

The Civil Society Coalition on Oil and Gas (CSCO), a Kampala-based loose network consisting of a number of NGOs, has also claimed that the oil sector has become overtly politicized and as a result is moving at a reduced pace due to the undermining of the process by corruption, secrecy, and government and/or executive controls (The Africa Report, 2012). These examples clearly signify the complexity of the political project currently taking place in Uganda’s oil sector, centrally focused on an understanding of the oil sector as one which brings a particular kind of life: lucky life with access to eternal wealth and the Ugandan resource regime fascinatingly positioning itself in a leading role. This life, discursively enhanced by the properties and benefits of oil, is perhaps best signified by the National Planning Authority’s Vision 2040 (2012) report which indicates on its front cover a number of images presenting an imaginary of the Ugandan state in the year 2040, including a high-speed rail, an oil well, and even a Ugandan rocket. The report also promises spending increases in education, infrastructure, and energy projects (Izama, 2012), much of which is based on the theoretical benefits of an oil sector which has yet to produce a drop of oil. Resources have suddenly become central to the public imaginary of the Ugandan state and central to the discourse of development led by the state and maintained by other actors who constitute the resource regime.

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14 This is particularly interesting as even after a freeze on negotiating new production sharing agreements with corporations was put in place by Parliament the President himself was discovered as signing new agreements with multinational corporations, some of which are now accused of bribing the President. See: Dennys, H. (2013). Tullow Oil apologises to Ugandan government over bribery allegations. The Telegraph. Retrieved April 10, 2013, from http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/energy/oilandgas/9949319/Tullow-Oil-apologises-to-Ugandan-government-over-bribery-allegations.html
Izama and others are merely hinting at the rationale behind the transformation within the Ugandan state, a transformation to a resource regime operating biopolitically. Ultimately biopower utilizes particular mechanisms in its determination and its divisible tactics in the management of the species as a biological corpus. The above section illustrates how biopolitics utilizes state discourse centered on making live with what I’ve deemed “oil for development.”

Another aspect of the political right to “make live” is the ever-growing and relatively new concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR). In exploring CSR as incorporated within the “oil for development” discourse and its central tenet primarily focused on life-enhancing projects or rather mechanisms, CSR can be analyzed as another of biopower’s functioning mechanisms operating within Uganda’s resource regime to “make live.”

CSR in the Ugandan context is intricately positioned alongside an ever-growing state discourse of security, of which the following section will turn. The paradoxical nature of the biopolitical search to “make live” is perhaps best viewed within the two main ideals of CSR, as discourse informs onlookers that CSR provides an ideological legitimation of corporations (Hanlon & Fleming, 2009) undertaking their life-enhancing projects while simultaneously militarizing their security operations and forging violent links with state entities, discussed below. Hanlon and Fleming (2009) rightly point to how states have come to fill their “legitimation breach left in the wake of a reconfigured state” (p. 942), by welcoming the multi-national corporation, whose CSR mandates articulate this legitimation, with open arms. How is this done? Extractive industry corporations generally focus their CSR mandates on educational and medical expenditures within resource regions, often in areas where the state is easily targeted as falling behind its role of providing similar services. CSR projects fit seamlessly with the “oil for development” discourse and are bolstered by public relations stunts, media hypocrisy, and corporate propaganda.15

The production of particular CSR mandates is currently underway across Uganda, where an employee of Publish What You Pay – Uganda easily pointed to the beneficial aspects of particular projects such as the development of health centres, distribution of text books for

15 Indeed as analysis has shown (Hanlon & Fleming, 2009) broadening this viewpoint of CSR as more than corporate propaganda within the contemporary shifts within capitalism can also point to the predatory corporate practices currently taking place “in which firms prospect and appropriate aspects of the non-corporate (and even anti-corporate) sectors in order to enhance their own interests” (p. 942), such as procuring contracts etc.
schools, the installation of lighting systems, and the conducting of feasibility studies for future projects. However the employee of the Uganda sector of the internationally known NGO also signified these CSR projects are driven by the corporation, in this case Tullow Oil:

These projects are good, but the only element that is missing is involving the communities, asking them what they need so they can own it, because if they’re not properly involved you find at the end of the day they will say this is Tullow’s hospital.16

To summarize the above point, made on a number of occasions during this research: consultation with the community is lacking. What the community “needs” is underwritten by the corporations’ push to publicize their good faith – a school here, a hospital there. In another example, a representative from a separate NGO operating in Hoima town, the main centre of activity in the oil region of Uganda, explained how the oil sector’s CSR projects were not aligned with the district development plans already put in place by the district governments.17

Here lies a disconnect between the “oil for development” discourse, which CSR creatively encompasses, and the lived realities of these so called life-enhancing projects in the communities where they are situated. It becomes painstakingly clear how concepts such as poverty reduction or CSR have taken a discursive life of their own and by so doing pretend that poverty or CSR and accountability is addressed... CSR as discourse resolves the problems symbolically in order not to resolve them practically. (Charkiewicz, 2005, p. 81)

Laid out above is a clear articulation of CSR’s mandate centered on making a population live. This discourse of CSR and “oil for development” has developed into a mechanism which places the species life as its central tenet in the search to “make live.” The aforementioned examples of limited community consultation and avoidance of district development plans by the CSR projects of particular oil corporations, in cahoots with the remaining actors found within the resource regime of Uganda, illustrate how CSR functions at a level of overall generality. This generality is particularly focused on life-enhancing mechanisms such as the development of hospitals and schools, formulated in an attempt to manage and regulate the population as a whole, not individually and not on a project-to-project basis, but as one biological corpus.

In Uganda the discursive focus of “oil for development” is also intricately linked to an ever-growing state centered discourse of security, and it is this simultaneous focus on securing

16 D. Holterman, interview, July 6, 2012
17 D. Holterman, interview, July 5, 2012
particular life which justifies the death function in the Ugandan biopolitical resource regime. This direct connection between discourse and state action is situated within the executive and best analyzed from the lips of President Museveni himself.

In a February 10, 2012 address to Parliament, Museveni outlines the foundation of the “oil for development” discourse eloquently by first reminding his audience of the meanings behind two names given to him by the Alurs and Bakiga, two ethnic groups found in Uganda. The first in Alur, Jalukunga meaning “the one who nurtures things to maturity” and Ruhemba-Ogwenjura, meaning: “the one who successfully makes fire using wet firewood” (Uganda Media Centre, 2012) are clear examples of a discursive paternalism within the state’s oil discourse put forth by Museveni and the ruling party, the National Resistance Movement (NRM). However this particular speech is about more than a political legacy; it encompasses hints of Museveni’s pending political end and also delves into the potentiality built within the “oil for development” discourse. Perhaps most blatantly, the speech in itself signifies a political transformation. Museveni on occasion cites instances and memories of how he and the liberators of Uganda captured Kampala, structured the economy and country into a nation and importantly, how this nation will now develop into a middle income country in “the next few years” (ibid, 2012). Even the most statistical and neoliberal juggernauts of international finance and aid find the latter statement particularly problematic as the World Bank clearly points to Uganda as a very poor country and “far from the middle income status it aspires to achieve in one generation” (World Bank, 2012). In addressing Parliament Museveni provides a clear example of the “oil for development” discourse in action and also highlights the biopolitical transformation underway within the nation. Museveni makes clear the distinction between the days of liberation, when the sovereign right over life grew with the availability of military weapons, to the biopolitical transformation of oil development, energy, and education centrally focused on the attempt to “make live:”

With the four strategic factors in place now i.e. security in the whole country, enough electricity, an educated population and the signing of the oil agreements, the NRM has regained the strategic initiative – more or less like in December, 1985, when we finally had the manpower and the weapons to capture Kampala and defeat the reactionary regimes. We now have the security, the electricity, the educated human resource and the money to transform Uganda – our long time-held wish. (Uganda Media Centre, 2012)
Museveni clearly identifies a transformational shift within the political right from that of the struggle for liberation, where success is tied directly to weaponry and militarized manpower required to capture the capital city or in other words a focus on the sovereign right over life, to the biopolitical right strictly focused on the right to “make live” through a multitude of life-enhancing mechanisms central to the regulation and management of the population as one whole. Education, electricity, and “oil for development” are all intricately connected to a management of the population for the betterment of the species. Keeping in mind that biopolitics is inherently violent and the “oil for development” discourse is operationalized in part to provide those life-enhancing mechanisms, the above speech perhaps most clearly articulates the connection to security and ultimately violence in Uganda’s biopolitical resource regime. Security remains a central tenet in the biopolitical war for life, and Uganda is no different; “security in the whole country” comes to represent a vital aspect of biopolitics and indeed is read as the waging of a permanent war against both external but perhaps more pertinent, internal enemies. Through the “oil for development” discourse an analysis of this permeable focus on state security is clear; the connections between security and oil are deeply rooted and strongly fortified through, among other means, the global “war on terror” and of course, the political focus to make particular life live.

In this section I’ve illustrated how the use of statistical estimates of oil deposits and their potential monetary benefits have directly contributed to a growing political discourse focused on utilizing “oil for development” in an attempt to manage the population through the means of operationalizing the right to “make live.” In so doing, I’ve deconstructed this oil discourse and shown how the use of discursive frames such as Uganda being “lucky” in its discovery of oil is leading to an imaginary of eternal wealth for Ugandans simply heading down the path of development, happiness, and potential. The predatory nature and propaganda based CSR projects of oil corporations are also intricately tied to this discourse in Uganda. However a conclusion that this discourse symbolizes a fairy tale, and therefore is full of lies, will only tell one side of the story, the side described above whereby biopolitics attempts to “make live.” However what of the other side? Hanlon and Fleming (2009) clarify a truly vital aspect behind the power of a discursive lie, in their case focused on CSR:
This facet of CSR harbors contradictions since many see through CSR policies as rather clumsy propaganda – it cannot deliver the promise it offers us. But this does not make CSR a lie since the effects of the discourse are of utmost importance. (p. 947, emphasis added)

As alluded to above, it is the effects of this discourse which justify the death function in the economy of biopower, whereby particular life is sub-divided, identified, and if necessary eliminated. First we have a discourse which utilizes biopolitical mechanisms such as the strategic use of statistics, CSR, and the potential benefits of the oil sector, in the search to “make live.” Secondly, we have a discourse focused on security, which operates to identify life which is biopolitically unfit and therefore primed for termination. After all, the technological mechanisms of biopower are continuous, based in science, and retain the power to “make live,” and it is here the political transformation exists: “Sovereignty took life and let live. And now we have the emergence of a power that I would call the power of regularization, and it, in contrast, consists in making live and letting die” (Foucault, 1997, p. 247). Securing Ugandan society against external and internal enemies and justifying the death function of biopolitics through the utilization of extreme violence specifically within resource regions is where this paper will now turn.

**Securing a Border and Population Full of Oil:**

As mentioned above, it remains important to realize the geographic locations of the oil deposits in discussion, especially as the practices of security central to the focus of this paper have taken place within a particular subset of this region. With oil discoveries moving both north and south along the Albertine Graben the political and cultural histories and discourse alter (Izama, 2013). Figure 1 illustrates a rough estimate of discovered deposits and their situated geographic location aligned with the blocks and deposits in the DRC.

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18 I’m speaking here in general terms as some informants have included testimonies and experiences from regions closer to the Northern reaches of the Albertine Graben, some as far north as Nebi. I want to clarify that this security discourse operates en masse and on a level of monitoring general phenomena, however the practice of security I am about to discuss can be pinpointed to particular instances and geographic locations, therefore specificity remains important. This in no way works to reduce the effects of discursive realities when considering the general phenomena discourse is enacted upon, rather it provides clear examples of the realities presented by discourse set to manage and regulate general phenomena.
As the following section progresses we will move away from a discourse focused on the general phenomena throughout the state and come to be centrally focused, geographically and practically, on the subsets of this vast and growing resource region located near the centers of Buliisa, Hoima, Masindi, and Lake Albert, which Figure 2 locates.

Figure 1: This map illustrates the demarcated exploration blocks found alongside Lake Albert, the main water body in the image. The corporate distribution of block ownership rights is also shown (Platform, n.d.)
The effects of state discourse are key to this discussion. Through further illustration of how the discourse of “oil for development” operates simultaneously alongside an ever-growing discourse of state security this section focuses on the militarization of Uganda’s oil sector and works to operationalize Dillon’s (2008) argument that: “biopolitical peace is inscribed with the logic of war through the discourses and practice of security” (p. 195, emphasis added). Under the guise of securing the nation from external threats such as DRC militias, terrorism, and al-Shabab,19 and simultaneously securing the nation from a particular kind of internal life, biopolitical war is being waged across Uganda’s oil sector, primarily focused on sub-dividing fit life from that deemed unfit and ready for extermination. Before analyzing the risk of the external “threats” mentioned above, this section will briefly illustrate the violent history of this region and resource regime operating within it, of where the Ugandan state is situated. I will proceed by describing the biopolitical security practices currently taking place across this resource region by focusing on two primary examples: first, the militarized suppression and management of Ugandan human

19 The terrorist organization al-Shabab is thought to have direct ties to the more infamous al-Qaeda.
rights defenders, activists, and journalists attempting to operate and monitor the activities of this resource region; second, the brutal killings of Congolese citizens by the Ugandan Peoples Defense Forces (UPDF) on Lake Albert.

It would be naive to think that what follows is an in-depth and all-encompassing history of the region in question. Instead, I will simply point to a few key happenings, also keeping in mind the deep and dark colonial legacy within this region, more thoroughly explained in other projects. That said, without a doubt this region has been heavily militarized for decades. Transnational violent conflicts have been underway, centrally fixated within the colonial borders of the DRC, particularly the provinces of East Kivu, North Kivu, and Katanga and of course the 1994 Genocide in neighboring Rwanda, among others. These conflicts do not have easily located beginning and end dates and have seen an inordinate number of deaths; some estimates of the most recent conflictual experiences have put the death toll at 5.5 million civilians in the DRC. Of course the violent reign of Belgian King Leopold also viciously produced the deaths of millions of Congolese as the King pillaged what is now the DRC under the guise of an internationally recognized protectorate and later “official colony” (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2011).

Uganda has often been seen as a driver of these conflicts in a number of manifestations across the region. For example, the value of Congolese minerals does indeed have causal links to violent conflicts in the region and particular Ugandan military leaders have been accused of continuous involvement in the control and management of this vast resource region (Kock & Sturman, 2012), which is extremely wealthy in a plethora of minerals and other resources including timber, oil, and gas. Intricate links are also found within the resource regime operating within Uganda. James Fairhead (2001) clearly articulates a line of connection between the overthrow of the Mobutu regime in the DRC and an alliance of the United States and British governments, a number of multinational corporations, and the forces of Laurent Kabila who would ultimately come to power and whose son Joseph now leads the DRC. The United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) makes an appearance in operation to support Kabila with links of support as far back as 1993, years before the first Congo war would oust Mobutu in 1997. Uganda is also central to the story of violence in the DRC from an international policy standpoint: “U.S. foreign policy in DRC has been backing (or “hitch-hiking” on) a Uganda/Pan

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Africanist alignment in southern African politics since the days of the Bush administration in the United States, and of Mulroney in Canada” (Fairhead, 2001, p. 224). During the same military campaign to overthrow Mobutu it is thought that some $3 billion in mineral deals were procured by North American corporations. At one point American Mineral Fields was lending Kabila their executive Lear jet among other forms of support for the campaign (Fairhead, 2001).

Furthermore, as recently as 2012, a United Nations report claims that both Rwanda and Uganda, the same two states as mentioned above, received numerous benefits from international financial institutions such as the World Bank for their armed removal of mineral resources, and they continued to arm and support the M23 rebel movement operating in the eastern DRC (Reuters, 2012).

The above are but a few examples of the intricate links found within the violent conflict in the DRC and the East African region. It is now clear to see how geographic locations in the DRC can be situated within what I’ve called Uganda’s resource region and how these regions are made-up of intricately connected resource regimes constituting the state, multinational corporations, donor states, and international financial institutions.

This historically destabilized region and its contemporary military endeavors has Uganda set on a crash course to become East Africa’s regional military powerhouse, or at the very least has the state attempting to do so. For the first time, in 2011, Uganda’s military expenditure surpassed that of regional neighbor Kenya. An article in The Independent (2012) speculates the growing discoveries of oil in Uganda have pushed military strategy towards the purchase of new advanced fighter jets worth a disclosed US $750 million, and further suggests an increase in military spending is synonymous with resource deposits, citing Algeria, Angola, Libya, and South Africa as examples (Matsiko, 2012a).

Security discourse points to Uganda being entirely surrounded and consumed by enemies of the state. Indeed, Museveni has attributed an increase in military spending to the threats situated within the country and which appear ready to “surface and destabilize the peace in Uganda;” while indeed it would be an odd military strategy to utilize fighter jets against the agents apparently set to destabilize Uganda’s peace, such as DRC militias, the Lord’s Resistance
Army (LRA),\textsuperscript{21} and al-Shabab (Matsiko, 2012a). Regardless of the critiques, state security discourse is rife across the nation and has two significant links to the biopolitical war for peace being waged within the resource region of Uganda. First, many of the “threats” to Uganda’s peace are said to be operating from within the colonial borders of the DRC including the LRA and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) opposed to the rule of the Museveni government (International Alert, 2009). Second, the threat of an attack attributed to al-Shabab draws Uganda both discursively and practically into the global “war on terror” (Kock & Sturman, 2012).

A debate centered on Uganda’s security policy is not the intention here. Instead, what is vital in the description of how the Ugandan resource regime is set on the search to “make live,” is how discourse is operationalized into security practices with tangible effects on populations deemed biopolitically unfit. In fact, for a number of reasons a justification of increased military presence and state security expenditures within Uganda remains entirely reasonable. For instance Kampala, the capital, was the victim of attacks to which al-Shabab laid claim in 2010, killing more than 70 people who were watching football at popular destinations across the city. Uganda is also one of the key contributing forces in the current Somalia “peacekeeping” mission where they contribute a large portion of the force on the ground in the war-affected country.\textsuperscript{22} For these reasons, an argument for justifying the bolstering of security within the country can be made with ease. This increased militarization and security has also been justified due to the oil discoveries within the resource region of the country as these sites of extractivism have been labeled as potential sites for “terrorism” (Kock & Sturman, 2012). Indeed, this discursive utility has even penetrated those focused on critical engagement with the oil sector. For example, two prominent NGOs critically engaging with the oil sector in Uganda pointed to an internalization of this state discourse by expressing their general acceptance in an increase in the militarization


of the oil region based on the presence of al-Shabab and the potential of oil sites as targets of “terrorism.”

**The Suppression of Internal Threats:**

The practical culmination of the aforementioned security discourse has two main tenets, which articulate considerably different formulations of the biopolitical war for peace and the internal sub-division of the population. The suppression of internal “threats,” individuals and members of civil society attempting to monitor and operate internally within Uganda’s oil region will be the first of these two discussed.

Members of civil society such as journalists, human rights defenders, and NGOs face difficult challenges as they attempt to conduct their work across the resource region of Uganda. In two separate instances employees of the credible, internationally structured and reputable organization Publish What You Pay have been arrested with their equipment confiscated for months as they attempted to screen a documentary at community meetings in the oil region of the country. In another separate case a small group of journalists and NGO employees attempting to administer a questionnaire in the town of Buliisa concerning the relationship between land rights and oil were arrested, unlawfully detained for hours and had their equipment confiscated. After a lengthy ordeal the group was allowed to administer their questionnaire under the supervision of a local police escort. The data was later confiscated, copied, and returned to the group. Individuals and groups also mention the fear of reprisals as they view themselves as targeted members of civil society and society at large.

Suppression of the activities of those monitoring and attempting to operate critically within the resource region has been structurally normalized. An example of this structural normalization is clear as those attempting to conduct research or hold consultatory/community meetings in the region are expected to obtain permission from the Ministry of Energy. This was

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23 D. Holterman, interviews, June 15, 2012; July 3, 2012


25 D. Holterman, interviews, July 7, 2012: For a more in-depth description of the events see: (East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project, 2012)

26 D. Holterman, interview, July 9, 2012.
the case in the aforementioned situation in Buliisa, which culminated in the arrest and
detainment of the group of civil society members. The need to acquire permission to operate
within the resource region is also discussed in a recent Human Rights Watch (2012) report,
which states that this requirement does not appear in writing or in law, but does appear to have
become the norm. Obviously, filtering all research and community consultation through a branch
of the government, which then holds the monopoly on approval for such requests, can have
severe consequences for those submitting applications and looking to monitor the oil sector,
especially critically. This is particularly worrying when those who do not apply and await
approval from the ministry are threatened and/or violently suppressed. The words of one
informant articulates this structurally normalized fear clearly:

People, even ourselves [NGO employees], are full of fear... it’s only the brave that are going to
remain in NGOs, if you began observing the attitude towards the work by NGO actors it is
varying... it becomes difficult because only the brave will talk about oil. Now, if you’re not brave,
you will not.\(^27\)

The formulation of the police enacting this security discourse is also confused, policing is
done by joint forces which include the military branch of the state. In fact, the UPDF has been
active in the oil region, perhaps securing the border so alluded to by state discourse, but forces
are also actively engaged internally within the resource region. The aforementioned members of
civil society who found the increased militarization of the region as legitimate, due to the
discursive utilization of the external “threats” from terrorism and the DRC, also find the internal
utilization of the UPDF as a particular dualism:

That is the description that has been given, which I think when you look at the face of it is very
genuine. But of course that itself creates some level of intimidation, people are used to dealing with
police, because police have been close to people, but they are not used to dealing with soldiers and
in the majority of cases, the way soldiers conduct themselves and the way police conduct

\(^{27}\) D. Holterman, interview, July 9, 2012. This particular interview is also cited in the title of the report: EHAHRDP.
(2012). ‘Only the brave talk about oil’: Human rights defenders and the resource extraction industries in Uganda
and Tanzania.
themselves are different... when you are in that area [resource region] you cannot feel completely comfortabe.28

Furthermore, according to research conducted by Kock and Sturman (2012) and backed by my personal communication with informants, the UPDF has also been involved in enabling corporate exploration activities on Lake Albert, interrupting fishing activities by enforcing a moratorium on fishing for up to three days.

These are clear examples of how, despite discourse pointing to the need to protect and secure the state from external “threats” such as Congolese rebel groups and al-Shabab, the UPDF and the state are blatantly engaged in an attempt to sub-divide the population into subsets primarily formulated as biopolitically fit and unfit life. Through the discourse and practice of security, the resource regime of Uganda is intricately involved in an attempt to manage and regulate a particular kind of life by promising that life’s prosperity through a discourse of “oil for development” which is closely linked and simultaneously operating alongside a discourse of state security. Those unfit for biopolitical life, where the war for biopolitical peace must be waged, is the life “brave” enough to talk about oil. Alas, this life is identified, sub-divided, and deemed unfit and therefore justifiably terminated, politically and physically. After all as Dillon (2008) argues: “the peace which biopolitics seeks ‘makes live’ through continuous warring against life which does not fit” (p. 167).

**Life and Death on Lake Albert:**

As the above analysis has shown, life in Uganda’s resource region is subjected to a new articulation of biopower. Through the search to secure the state from external “threats” Ugandan human rights defenders, journalists, and NGOs have been subjected to a new biopolitical formulation of power, one determined to “make live” and justifiably remove those bodies who are deemed unfit. Political subjugation and the process of exposing one to both political and physical death is currently taking place across the resource region of Uganda. The above examples illustrate the process of political subjugation within biopolitics and the happenings of September 24, 2007 on the waters of Lake Albert illustrate how the power of life’s subjugation

28 D. Holterman, interview, June 15, 2012. While I traveled on public transportation to the resource region and particularly to Buliisa this relationship was perhaps on display, along with a sense of frustration from passengers during the numerous police inspection points as we approached the town, which is central to oil activity. One passenger spoke in an angry tone to the inspecting officer of his attempts to get to work being interrupted by the numerous inspection points.
over death is operationalized through violent entities who possess intricate links to the Ugandan resource regime.

On that day in September, the UPDF sent three boats to engage a passenger ferry traversing the waters of Lake Albert traveling on a scheduled crossing from Rukwanzi Island, DRC to Kasenyi, DRC. According to accounts of the day’s events, including a fact-finding mission led by the UN mission in the DRC Monuc and a Congolese team, the UPDF approached the vessel, indiscriminately opened fire and killed six Congolese citizens, including a three-year-old child. Prior to the UPDF opening fire on the ferry, a Heritage Oil plc exploration team directly contacted the UPDF requesting military assistance after they had illegally crossed the DRC border. Heritage Oil claims the team was undertaking exploration activities on the Ugandan side of the border, “‘lifting cables to mark the completion of the seismic survey’” (Corporate Watch, 2012, p. 4). Tensions that day were likely high as the previous month another Heritage Oil plc exploration barge floated across the DRC border. On this occasion an engineer of the corporation was killed, allegedly by armed DRC militias (ibid, 2012). Neither Heritage Oil nor the Ugandan state has investigated either incident (ibid, 2012). Many questions around the two incidents remain unanswered and the border itself is disputed, and holds vast oil wealth. Rukwanzi Island is located nearly on-top of the border (ibid, 2012). The border and resource region is overdetermined by nature and does indeed have a conflictual history. The border is also a site for historic transnational social interaction including trade, fishing, shared ethnicity, and migration. For instance, particular Congolese, perhaps fleeing conflict, have peacefully settled on the Ugandan side of the border (International Alert, 2009). These lakeside communities are not without controversy particularly regarding land and fish, however research by Kock and Sturman (2012) claims the Congolese in these lakeside Ugandan communities live in relative peace and in some instances are even allowed to vote in Ugandan elections, despite not having legal status to do so. Furthermore, although conflicts on Lake Albert do exist, they appear to be strictly over fishing related interactions, not those attributed to oil development. A recent International Alert (2009) report highlights these historic conflictual interactions as one respondent clearly identifies: “Oil has not changed our relationship; these are outstanding old conflicts like stealing fishing nets, engines [...] only that nowadays we feel it is more dangerous” (p. 77).

Why then do we have an instance of the blatant disregard for Congolese life on the waters of Lake Albert, while in other instances Congolese appear to retain the rights and abilities of
Ugandan citizens living peacefully and politically within the country? I argue it is in connecting these two examples that we again see how the UPDF and the resource regime more broadly are engaged in regulating/managing/controlling a particular kind of life, life that fits within the discourse of “oil for development” and state security. This is a discourse that produces distinct and real lived experiences and reactions, often through the practice of security. Life outside of this discourse, such as the aforementioned members of civil society, journalists, and particular Congolese, are clearly identified and deemed as unfit biopolitical life, life that cannot be biopoliticized, and therefore must be removed or eliminated, even when that life exists on the other side of the border. There is a clear distinction being made between particular Congolese life throughout this resource region; some must live, while others must die. Life is categorized, known or unknown to those who wield political agency, through its connection to the resource region. Thus, a formulation of internal war is being waged by this manifestation of a resource regime on the population as a whole – the population as a species. Oil will bring a more prosperous and more pure life, but a biopolitical mechanisms must first sub-divide the population and enact the death function of biopower. It is here we are drawn back to the other face of biopolitics, not life but rather death. Ultimately, death becomes central to the goal of to “make live” as Ewa Charkiewicz (2005) argues:

Life is consumed and killed in the processes of the reproduction of capital. Those without spending power are redundant human waste. Hidden therefore behind the caring face of biopolitics is its double, the control of life by means of dispensation of death. (p. 80)

Therefore it does indeed seem the “game” of life for a “poor African country” as York (2011) so put it, is changing and we can trace a number of these changes to the discovery of oil and its associated discursive realities. Discourse centered on “oil for development” and state security if analyzed biopolitically can move past an understanding of the oil sector as solely concerned with finances, corruption, terrorism, and/or territory, to examine how the oil sector in Uganda is channeled by the resource regime to manage/control/regulate the population in a biopolitically violent way. Moving through these concepts, not leaving them behind but permeating them, the oil industry in Uganda is presented as one led by state, corporate, and other forms of violence through what can be called the biopolitical war for peace or life.

As the above analysis shows strengths in the transformation of the sovereign right over territory to a focus of state power more concerned with the control of individual man as a
collective species through the discourse and practice of “oil for development” and security, it perhaps falls short in articulating the extreme violence enacted towards life deemed unfit, such as the Congolese on Lake Albert. Therefore concluding life in Uganda is changing due to the discoveries and associated discursive realities of oil is perhaps not enough. The question of “what is life” remains unrefined. Life itself appears so easily removed, eliminated, terminated, and destroyed both physically and politically. Death – in the name of a life based on oil – is produced and enacted with impunity. Keeping this analysis in mind, we can therefore deduce that oil, whether 2.5 billion or 8.5 billion barrels, has become a “game-changer” for this “poor African country” (York, 2011), in that particular life has been stripped to its barest form and is subjected to a formulation of violence that traverses a zone of indistinction in a normative manner. Life is completely subjected to the point of death, to the point of being killed but not sacrificed; life has transformed into bare life.

**Conclusion: State of Exception and Extractivism:**

The discursive rise of the “global civil war” and the “war on terror” leads Agamben (2005) to argue the state of exception is increasingly seen as a paradigm of modern politics, particularly with regards to war-time measures taken by political states to the point where, in the the modern political state, it becomes increasingly difficult to recognize the distinction between peace and war and foreign and civil war (ibid, 2005). Within this paradigm of modern politics, the emergency exception, where bare life was at once on the sideline utilized in desperate measures, ultimately becomes the norm, or in other words – the state of exception becomes the rule (ibid, 2005). As Lemke (2011) clarifies:

> The threshold to biopolitical modernity will be crossed, according to Agamben, when bare life proceeds beyond the state of exception to become central to political strategies; the exception will become the rule, and the difference between inside and outside, factum and law enter into a “zone of irreducible indistinction.” (p. 56-57)

This indecipherability, whereby the potentiality exists for anyone to be deemed bare and leading to the moment when bare life becomes the norm, can be viewed around the world’s many resource regions. For example, in Guatemala, despite a Canadian mining company Hudbay Minerals inc. potentially being taken to court for the first time in Canada for its’ operations
overseas, in May 2013 President Otto Pérez Molina enacted a state of siege in four municipalities around a contested mining project owned by Tahoe Resources. It was expected the state of siege was to suspend constitutional rights such as freedom of movement, freedom of assembly and protest, and particular rights of prisoners and detainees (Cuffe, 2013). The state of siege does indeed merge into the state of exception (Agamben, 2005). In Ecuador, over 300 activists standing-up to extractives projects have been charged with terrorism in the country, despite Ecuador’s constitution stating nature has constitutional rights (Zorrilla & Mychalejko, 2011; Amnesty International, 2012). In Peru, years of the strategic broadening of criminal charges by the state has led Peruvian communities and organizations to point to these changes as a means to criminalize and investigate legitimate anti-extractives activism. These legislative changes appear to be connected to the friendly relationship between the state and multinational corporations, primarily that of mining and other extractive industries (Peru Support Group, n.d.). My own work has also shown similarities in the case of Tanzania, whereby anti-mining activists and human rights defenders are suppressed and in some cases murdered by the armed entities of the resource regime. However I am not intending to discuss criminalization in this paper. I argue, the categorization of life in Uganda’s resource region and perhaps those cases mentioned here, is something quite different than criminalization. Instead this categorization is simultaneously a hardening and softening of categories and characteristics of life itself. Those deemed fit and unfit can change at any time, in any place, when the processes of extractivism is involved. No doubt similarities exist when discussing the “war on terror.” A critical distinction must be made here, which is the foundation of this variance between categorized life and criminalization. The state of exception, of which bare life populates, is not a type of law, such as the law of war, rather the state of exception is a suspension of the juridical order. It defines the very threshold of the law and accordingly becomes the definitive point of relation between the law and the living being, whereby the living being is simultaneously bound and abandoned by the law itself (Agamben, 2005).

Therefore we can conclude that the extreme violence enacted with impunity on Lake Albert in Uganda speaks to the potential that exists for life to be deemed as bare and stripped of its ability to operate in the political realm. Those engaged in historic and daily social interactions are at any given time, in this case as exploration activities are taking place, potentially enlisted as undergoing this political reduction. It is the potential enlistment of bare life, that questions the formulation of life itself (Dauphinee & Masters, 2005). If at any given time, life can be stripped to its barest form within resource regions, as I have shown here, then the potential limits of violence within extractivism remain nearly endless. Life and death remain locked in a seemingly continuous softening and hardening of divisible categories. At one moment, political acts are allowed, perhaps even encouraged such as the case of Congolese voting in Ugandan elections, while at another moment these very same bodies are subject to a complete removal of all political categories and in extremely violent ways are terminated. Biopolitics justifies this termination via its enlistment of these very divisible categories labeling particular life as unfit. However, the definition of life is then encapsulated within the potentiality of being labeled as unfit, life is not immediately unfit, but the potential remains for it to be so – at absolutely any given time.
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