

## **Cycles of Hegemonies and Civil Society Response in Africa's Gulf of Guinea in the 21st Century**

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This paper examines the critical engagement of China, the US, France and Britain in the location and exploitation of resources in the rich and strategic Gulf of Guinea in Africa. The engagement has been informed by the global competition for the control of strategic regions, depleting resources, promotion of democratic virtues, fight against drug trafficking, piracy and the management of the environment. As a result of these and other concerns the critical engagement of China and America for multifarious reasons has led to a highly competitive and contentious environment which is now becoming the centre of attention in the new found interest in Africa. The net result has been the stubborn emergence of visible signs of cycles of hegemonies which are contested and competed for continuously. These cycles have dismantled earlier exclusive spheres of influence which were controlled for a long time by Britain and France. The cycles are constantly shifting and explain the war of words and unorthodox practices between some Western countries and their African surrogates. These notwithstanding, there is a growing awareness though not uniform in the countries of the region of civil society mobilisation to check mate the excesses of the competing countries. Although such a response has its own limitations, the pace and systematic development of the civil society organisations is gradually developing into a force that will most likely garner support from all kinds of local and national civil societies to systematically challenge the hegemonic presence of China, France, Britain and France. The cycles of hegemonies are therefore not a guarantee that Western powers will permanently rob the Gulf of Guinea of its abundance of resources. There is hope for an African response to mitigate the impact of hegemonic influence in the Gulf of Guinea that has unfortunately failed in other parts of the continent like the Horn of Africa.