

**Oilfields Chattels: as the Main Source of the Two Sudans Border Variance****Elnazeer Shaaeldin<sup>1\*</sup>, Mohd Rizal Mohd Yaakop<sup>2</sup>, Kamaruzaman Yusoff<sup>3</sup>, Azrai Abdullah<sup>4</sup>**<sup>1</sup>National University of Malaysia (UKM), School of History, Politics and Strategy, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, 43600, Bangi, Malaysia<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, School of History, Politics and Strategy, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, 43600, Bangi, Malaysia<sup>3</sup>Associate Professor, School of History, Politics and Strategy, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, 43600, Bangi, Malaysia<sup>4</sup>Associate Professor, University Technology of Petronas (UTP), Social Science & Humanities Unit, Department of Management and Humanities, 31750, Tronoh, Malaysia**\*Corresponding Author:**

Elnazeer Shaaeldin

**Email:** [nazeltom@gmail.com](mailto:nazeltom@gmail.com)

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**Abstract:** This paper examines the role of oilfields in driving political and armed tension between the two Sudans (North-South). It argues that oil did not cause the secession of southern region of the rest of Sudan in 2011, however, shortly after the southern' secession, it greatly rose the tension between the two successor states over oilfields and put their relationships at stake. The paper therefore, aims to explain the character of borderland in the political polarization between north and south Sudan. It also traces a robust link between violence over oilfields such as Abyei, Heglig and aboard dispute over border areas between the two Sudans. Data were collected from archive, government – non-government documents, books and articles. In using a content analysis technique to analyze these data, the results indicate that a heavily dependence on oil as strategic resource is the main reason behind an on-going rivalry to control over bordering-oilfields such as the Abyei and Heglig, rivalry which has recently turned out to be a source of military confrontation and insecurity conditions between the two parts of Sudan. Thus, the paper points out that the use of power vested to the Security Council of the United Nations and Peace, Security Council of the African Union, is essential to sustain a curbing notable conflict over the border between the two parts of Sudan. In addition, cooperation via the two countries in investing the available resources in the border sector rather than contestation is the only way to foster peace and security for the people of the parts of Sudan(north-south).

**Keywords:** Oilfields, Two Sudans, Border, Conflict, Secession, Peace.

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**INTRODUCTION**

This paper elucidates the character of border demarcation issue on sourcing violence between north and south Sudan followed secession of the southern region from the rest of the country in 2011. A focus is mainly paid to trace noticeable disputes over territories' chattels through decades up to the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement CPA in 2005 between southern Sudan's rebels and central government after two decades of civil war 1983-2005. Even though, the southern region has seceded (following the referendum, and establishment of its own state), the fight between north and south Sudan still continues without any lasting solution. Such fighting is centred over a number of unresolved issues mandated in the CPA; namely sharing of oil wealth, transit fees of oil, security arrangements and border between the two parts of Sudan [1-3]. More significantly, the issue of border demarcation between north and south Sudan

which is considered crucial and with the line of all other mentioned contested issues all together caused a series of political, violent conflicts over who controls the undefined areas which straddling the borderline between the two Sudans, shortly after the secession of 2011 [4-5]. Thus, in this paper, the researcher aims to investigate three main objectives to address the contested relationship between the two parts of Sudan, and to accomplish its goal. First off, the paper attempts to explain the role of oil in increasing the state of insecurity and polarization conditions between the two successor states of Sudan (North-South). Second, it makes a link between the struggle over oilfields (Abyei and Heglig) and the outstanding issue of the post-secession period. Lastly, it outlines the efforts being made by external actors to settle the north– south Sudan border's conflict. Basically, this work has the potential to accrete the understanding of current political, armed implications of borderlands in Sudan political realm.

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these will take in through identify of the hot flash points in terms of history of dispute, locations and economic value as well as violent occurrences around them. Mostly, the paper endeavours to establish a direct relationship between dispute over bordered areas, and endeavour of the two parties to conflict (e.g. Government of Sudan GoS and Government of South Sudan GoSS) to control over existing oil wealth.

## METHOD AND DATA COLLECTION

The paper uses a qualitative – un-obtrusive technique to gather and analyze data, this research method is high applicable to collect data from insecurity condition, observe issue form outward manner in a natural setting and elicit information from variety sources [6]. In this paper major of data were collected in a part of a field work conducted in Sudan during the period from June 2012 to June 2013. Since nonreactive nature of the method, the gathered data largely are sourced from archive, formal and informal document; international and regional bodies reports, books and professional articles. Such data is closely relevant to issue of ethnic, territories, oil, conflict and peace as well border arbitration process. For analytical process, the researcher used historical analysis a subset of un-obtrusive technique to investigate the focusing issue, however, in this paper using of this research technique is aimed at allowing the researcher to establish historical background of the correlation between border and armed, political contestation in Sudan, moreover, provided an ability to examining of dynamic, interlinked past – current events, process relating to the issue through skip- off the historical points to connect present one to in-depth analysis for studied issue and go far than other analysis to achieving different finding or in-depth examination.

## BACKGROUND

Sudan is a vast, varied country in terms of land and people, which is located in the northeast of Africa. Recently, it occupies a territory which is nearly estimated around 1,881,000 km square [7]. It also contains over 500 ethnic groups speaking more than hundred tongues, and it gained its independence from Britain in 1956 [1, 3]. At present day, Sudan is a sovereign federal state that has been ruled by presidential system since 1994 [8]. The country embodies plenty of natural, mineral resources, such as oil, gold, copper and uranium, however, only oil is being exploited [9]. During its short history as an independent state, the country has lived a situation of political, development, cultural and societal disparities, and thus, suffering from a long-running civil war on the continent, which was launched even before gaining its independence in 1955 in the southern part, officially called the war between north and south Sudan [10]. The first period of the war had put a temporal end for a decade time which was followed by signing the Addis Ababa agreement in 1972 between the government and

the southern rebellions [11]. However, the war started fresh in 1983 after the collapse of the Addis Ababa agreement [12]. After two decades of war, finally, the Sudanese had successfully reached a Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Naivasha, Kenya in 2005 between the central government and southern rebels. Such an agreement fruitfully led the southerners to achieve their secession and found their own state in July 2011, according to a referendum right that was stipulated in part A, article (1.3) of the agreement [13].

Broadly speaking, within the country, there had always an Arabic, Islamic culture extending in the north and the African, blackness, Christian and indigenous beliefs in the south [14]. Administratively, the regional division reflects these ethnic and cultural varieties of the country. Thus, earlier than the southern region's secession, the country has been divided administratively into two parts: northern Sudan which consists of six regions (Khartoum the capital, Northern-Nile provinces, Eastern region (Kassala and Red Sea provinces), Central region (Blue Nile, White Nile and Gazeria provinces), Kordofan (north Kordofan and south Kordofan provinces) and Darfur (North Darfur and south Darfur provinces). Southern Sudan consists of three provinces (Equatorial, Upper Nile and Bahr El-Ghazal provinces) [15]. By establishing the federal system of 1994, these nine regions are divided into 26 states sixteen in north and ten in south [16]. After secession of the southern region Sudan lost a quarter of its land and these internal-administrative boundaries became international borders, caused contested state between north and south Sudan on some undefined areas [17-18]. Therefore, in order to deepen the knowledge and advancement in the current debate surrounding the issue of border's conflict between the two Sudans, the present paper narrowed the examination of such issue to be focused on the contestation between north and south Sudan over rich-oilfields of Abyei and Heglig and regional, international efforts exerted to mitigate the conflicts.

Regarding the boundary demarcation question, it is important to mention that during the modern history of Sudan, these administrative, ethnic and geographical boundaries were changed within the colonial administration system. Therefore, the major root-causes of the current conflict over the border between the two parts of Sudan originated in earlier policies. However, the Britain administration (1899-1956) primarily thought to re-draw an internal boundary, modernize the administrative units to impose administrative coherence on the ethnic variety of the Sudanese areas [19]. This attempt which was carried out through amalgamation of some districts, adjust provincial boundaries and transfer of some tribes of the northern provinces to southern provinces or converse is a true based of ethnic, cultural and administration setting.

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Thus, within this policy, the colonial government transferred administration of Kaka and Tunja towns from the Upper Nile province in the south to Nuba mountainous province in the north [20-21]. Moreover, in 1928, Sudan Government Gazette amalgamated Nuba mountainous province and Kordofan of the north in one administration unite [22], as well as transferred nine Dinka Ngok chiefdoms from Bahr El- Ghazal, south to Kordofan province in 1905 [23]. Concerning tribal transformation, the colonial administration transferred the Dinka and Nuer tribes from the Nuba Mountains, north to the Upper Nile region [24], along with transferring clans of Dinka from Kordofan to Upper Nile and adjusting the border between the two provinces [25]. According to the colonization administrators, this change in terms of towns and tribal transformation is presently a modification of internal administrative boundaries and it did not make any change in the border line between north and south Sudan [26]. Nevertheless, this policy has lately influenced the internal boundaries and led to a rivalry over land ownership and competition over territories between the north and south. Furthermore, the presence of oil in the long 1970s` has worsened the political, military situation in these areas in the period following its exploration [27].

#### **ORIGIN OF OIL DISCOVERY IN THE NORTH-SOUTH BORDER DISPUTE**

Production of oil in Sudan is delayed until the end of 1990s due to the political turmoil, insecurity and civil war between the north and south of Sudan which has always been considered as the main feature of such unstable condition. Although since 1959 the Sudanese oil exploration operations commenced in the north-eastern part of the Red Sea, when Ajip Company of Italy was given a concession to explore the areas extending from Mohammed Goul in the north up to delta Tokar in the south, nothing was found [28]. The Chevron, a giant American company, made the first discoveries. This company began prospecting for oil in 1975 in the Muglad basin in western Sudan [29]. Chevron pioneered the way for other companies to come to Sudan to prospect for oil and concessions were taken up by Total of France and Texas eastern of the US. Total was engaged in Red Sea and Texas Eastern large concession in the Red Sea Hills is dating from late 1979 [30]. By the early 1980s, it was clear that oil was present with remarkable exploitable quantities, in Abujabra and Sharif areas in Kordofan and Darfur on the border along the northern border of Bahr El- Ghazal province of south Sudan [31], discovered oil was not exploited during that era, due to the outbreak of the Sudan` second civil war in 1983 between the north and south [32].

Nevertheless, commercial oil production finally started in 1997 [33]. Until now, the major oil

production has been located in the area of Muglad in the west -south part of the country. The Muglad basin expands from Muglad in west Kordofan through Bentiu in the south- west in Upper Nile state in the south and that where the discovery of oil had started in the north of Bentiu in the western upper Nile state (currently Unity state) in blocks 1-2 in Bentiu and Heglig fields [34]. According to the European collation on oil in Sudan [21], Sudan has only 23 blocks: the first seven blocks are active, and the majority of the produced cured is found in south Sudan.

On the topic of politics and stability, the discovery of oil on a scale capable of commercial exploration is not always a blessing to Sudan, indeed it spelled a curse. However, through the past three decades of its first discovery in the early 1980s and up to date, oil has become the origin of series of political impacts in the country; hence, it has become a factor key element that influences the Sudanese politics and national security, even in post- secession period. Although it was not one of the causes of the civil war, it led to worsen the situation in the period following its discovery [35-36]. It is well recognized that the existence of oil reserve in border areas between north and south Sudan has raised historical -contested issues which were found even before the actual flow of crude oil. Such issues topped by a controversy on the internal administrative boundaries and define some contested areas between the north and south such as Abyei which was transferred to north in 1905 [37]. Thus, since an earlier period, the issue of border has been growing to be controversial, much heat in the country. It should be noted that the impact of oil discovery upon the south is first detectable in the extreme suspicion and jealousy with which the southerners guard against any internal boundary changes with the north happened in earlier periods. However, there has always been a believe among southerners that the successive national governments have adopted strategies to shift the borderline into south and annex some areas to north mainly including oil during the first war period (1955-72), and neglected their people to benefit from the oil revenues [38].

The border dispute of the 1970s between the north and south concentrated on some mineral rich areas; Kafia- Kingi, Hofrat-Elnihas, Benitu where oil is first discovered, Chali Elfil and Abyei, which were claimed by southerners themselves as an original part and parcel of the southern territory, have been transferred from the south to be governed by the north during the national history [39]. The signing of the Addis Ababa agreement between the central government and the southern rebellions in 1972 provided the southerners a considerable degree of self-autonomy over their region. The agreement identified the southern region by the boundaries of the three southern provinces, Upper Nile, Equatorial and Bahr

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El- Ghazal with their boundaries as they stood in the independence on January, 1, 1956, and any other areas that were culturally and geographically a part of the Southern complex as may be decided by a referendum [40]. For some technical, economic and administrative reasons as well as recurrent of war between the central government and southern rebellion in 1983, the referendum on the contested areas such as Kafi-Kingi, ChaliElfil and Abyei did not complete [41].

It's important to note that the fresh productive oil has become a source of rivalry due to the interest of the two main parties in the conflict; the Central government and Southern rebels, in using the oil wealth through dominating the oil- rich areas. Therefore, during the civil war period 1983-2005 and with continuous discoveries, the government sought to secure oilfields. Since 1990s, oil security has represented a strategy for the government and rebels given that the production areas are found in areas of conflict in the south. Block 1,2,4,6 included a contested area of Abyei (See map 1.1) while the SPLM/A regard oilfields as a military target [42]. The government security forces and backing militias that were composed of the Baggara tribes in south Darfur and Kordofan used to attack the rebels to protect oilfields [43]. This caused an insecure condition and a fragmented ethnic relation at the local level.

It is evident that the discovery of oil has brought about political changes along with the military aspects and insecurity around oil areas since oil has been seen for so long as a strategic, high-valuable resource as well as a source of power that often was in favour of the central government. However, the central government took advantage of the oil revenues to rebuild its military, security machinery to defeat the southern rebellion [44]. Although oil held greatly a high stake in the civil war in Sudan and is one of the main causes of such insecure condition in the oil regions, it has had a positive trend and played a key role in achieving peace as the government and southern rebels signed an agreement about sharing its wealth in 2004 [45].

#### **PEACE AGREEMENT AND CONTESTED BORDER**

Since the Sudan government and the southern movement signed the CPA of 2005, the issue of border demarcation has been a recurring topic for the peace partners, regarding the definition of the border between north and south Sudan. Like the Addis Ababa agreement of 1972, the agreement of 2005, defined the southern border by the boundaries of the three southern provinces (Equatorial, Upper Nile and Bahr El- Ghazal) and borderline of 1956 [46]. However, a dispute over inexact separated line of 1956 and the status of the three southern provinces' border is growing arguable. As argued by the southerners, the border –line of 1956 is

modified several times earlier and moved southward to annex some southern areas to the north since colonization and post- independence regimes, primarily during the early age of oil discovery in 19070s [47]. Therefore, it is a priority to re-define the border between the two parts of Sudan and revert to south all transferred-contested areas such as Abyei while the government in north insists in re-defining the border as they stood in a date of Independence, January, 1<sup>st</sup>, 1956 [48].

In an attempt to settle this dispute, the peace partners agreed on finishing the re-demarcation of the border between north and south Sudan during the pre-interim period, started in January and concluded by July 2005 [49]. A technical Committee of Border Demarcation TCBD was founded in September 2005, joined member from north, south and Border States, with the task of demarcating the border line between north and south Sudan as of 1/1/1956 [50]. However, the committee faced many challenges regarding the border demarcation including procedures and processes besides the lack of fixed maps that determine the precise location of borders between north and south Sudan as they stood in 1956. Moreover, the committee technical task was politicized by both peace partners who limited the physical and logistical support of it and who continued blaming each other for the non-completion of border demarcation [51] although, during the 2005-2011, the TCBD succeeded in demarcating 80% of the borders since the two parties pledged to complete the demarcation of borders before the referendum in January 2011 [52]. However, the southern referendum and secession ended, and up to date the border demarcation did not complete. Thus, shortly, after the foundation of the new southern state in July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011, north and south Sudan have engage in enmity and a series of military confrontations because of undefined –bordered areas between the two successor states, mainly Abyei, Raja, Kafia-Kingi and Chali Elfil.

#### **Conflict over Oilfields in Post-secession Period**

It should be important to note that generally, the current contested border sector of Sudan expands from the meeting point between west Bahr El- Ghazal and South Darfur states in the south-west to the meet point between the Blue Nile and Upper Nile State in Southeast. Has an estimated length of 1,936 km. 70% of it lies in South Darfur and South Kordofan states (the current oil production areas of the north) [53]. The significant importance of this sector increasingly grows as the main oil production region in the two Sudans. It includes the rich oilfields of Heglig, Melut, Unity and Muglad [54]. In nature, the oil productive blocks are located in ten bordering states between the north and south. The states on the northern part are White Nile, Blue Nile and Sinnar, south Darfur and south Kordofan includes Abyei while the southern states are Upper



Nile, Unity, Warrab, North Bahr-El- Ghazal, and West Bahr-El-Ghazal [55].These meeting points between the states form a bordering oil sector, which extends from the adjoin point between south Darfur, Kordofan and

Bahr –El-Ghazal regions from west to the adjoin point between Upper Nile, Sinnar and White Nile from east and Unity state and Abyei form south.

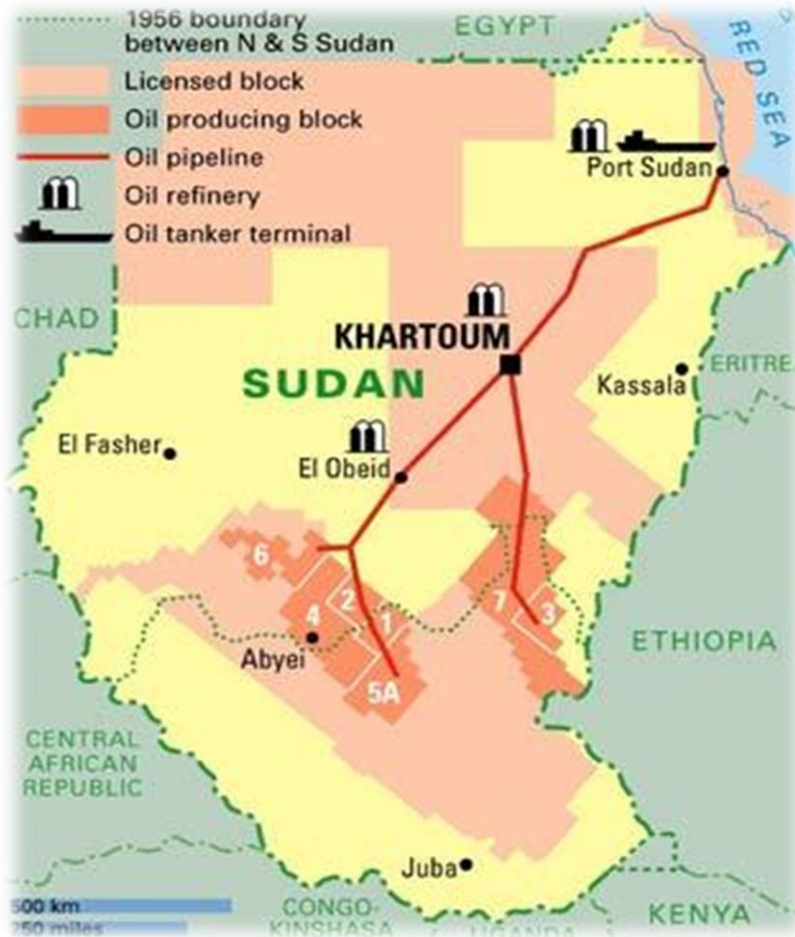


Fig. 1: Oilfields locations in Borderline (Source: London School of Economics and Political Sciences)

Table 1: Oil- Bordering States

Meeting point	State(s)	Oil block(s)
Point 1	South Kordofan and Unity state	Blocks 1
Point 2	Heglig (south Kordofan and Unity states)	Block 2
Point 3	Upper Nile and Blue Nile	Block 3
Point 4	Abyei (south Kordofan and Unity states)	Block 4
Point 5	Unity state	Block 5 A
Point 6	South Darfur	Blocks 6
Point 7	Blue Nile, Upper Nile, white Nile and Sinnar states.	Block 7

(Source: adapted from Saeed. Challenges Facing Sudan after Referendum Day 2011: Persistent and Emerging Conflict in the North-South Borderline States)

In fact, this sector has economic, strategic importance of the two parts of Sudan. However, it also includes current active blocks of 1, 2,3,4,5,6,7,8 [56]. This is a matter that leads to intensify competition between a number of states from both sides of the Sudan, as often takes place between White Nile, Sinnar and South Kordofan from north and Upper Nile, Unity

and Bahr-El-Ghazal of the south [57]. These states continue competing to get control over these oilfields. In order to put across a better understanding of the border dispute in Sudan, our focus will be on the oil-rich areas of Abyei and Heglig as they play central roles in the current dispute over the border between the north and south Sudan.

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### **The conflict over Abyei**

The oil-rich area of Abyei is considered as the main challenge barrier in the path of achieving peace between the two parts of Sudan (North-South). This is mostly because of the demarcation of its border, which was shared by both the Misseriya tribe (considers north) and Dinka Ngok nine clans (considers south) as well as because of the disagreement over a referendum on defining its final situation; whether it remains with north or should join the independent south. Such a referendum was supposed to be conducted simultaneously with southern Sudan referendum in 2011 [58]. Abyei region is located at the mid-site of the oil border sector, in northern Bahr al-Arab area in south west Kordofan [59]. It is enclosed by the south Kordofan state (the Nuba Mountains and Misseriya homeland) from the north, North Bahr-El-Ghazal, Bahr al-Arab in the south and south Darfur state from the west [60]. The region is rich in natural resources, and besides its oil, it is a rich area for grazing and a source of livelihood, so it is attractive to nomadic pastoralists Arab tribes, mainly the Misseriya from South Kordofan and Darfur and the Dinka Ngok of Northern Bahr El - Ghazal in the south [61]. The dispute between the northern and southern politicians on a right over the region which transferred in 1905 from Bahr El - Ghazal (south) to Kordofan in the north has a long history dating back to the 1970s, when the central government agreed in 1972 with southern rebel which joined a number of Dinka Ngok' people on a referendum of Abyei people in order to identify its administration position, however, the referendum is not completed [62].

After two decades of the civil war (1983-2005) between south and north Sudan, and when the spirit of enmity became less severe, the two parts of the country tended to have peace in the mid of 1990s. Likewise, the parties had challenged to bring a final resolution of the Abyei issue during the marathon peace negotiation that extended from 2000 to 2004. However and finally, the parties agreed to sign a protocol on conflict resolution in Abyei in May, 26<sup>th</sup>, 2004, which was included in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005, the said protocol was silent a progress on its final resolution for the interim period 2005-2011 [63]. Through the interim period, the dispute greatly increased between the peace partners over Abyei. As a consequence, in order to address such serious issue of the region, a professional body named Abyei Border Commission (ABC) was founded on 17/12/2004 which was composed of members of the peace' partners and impartial experts from the peace' observers countries [64].

The Abyei Border Commission had the task of demarcation of Abyei border through identifying the area of the nine Dinka Ngok sheikhdoms that was transferred into Kordofan in 1905 and also the arrangement of a referendum to define the position of

the region whether in the north or south [65]. In May 2005, the ABC presented its report to the presidency of Sudan as the experts reported that they failed to re-define precisely the location of Dinka Ngok which they transferred into Kordofan in 1905 [66], though the committee gave the Dinka a large land of more than a hundred km square distant of the north Bahr – Al-Arab; such an area historically had been considered a homeland of the pastoralists' Misseriya of the north. Thus, this report was not in favour of the north leaders, and they claimed that the experts' report is biased to the southern vision [67].

The dispute over Abyei between the peace partners continued during the period following the expert's report, and thus, several armed clashes between the Sudan Army Forces (SAF) and Southern army (SPLA) took place and thousands of the Abyei' inhabitants flee into north and south Sudan [68]. Lastly, the two peace parties; NCP & SPLM came to an agreement about referring to the Abyei issue to the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in the Hague, to decide whether the Abyei Borders Commission had exceeded its authorities concerning the demarcation of borders of Dinka Ngok chiefdoms or not. The Arbitral Tribunal Court made a compromised decision which acknowledged that the Experts Committee had exceeded their powers concerning the demarcation of eastern and western borders of Abyei, so it ordered their redrawn [69]. Despite the agreed position of the two parties to the court decision, they did not commit to it. However, violent conflicts renewed over the oil-rich area till the Sudanese army took over the area in 2011 [70], and later they withdrew off following the issue of the Security Council resolution No 1990, and deployment of the United Nation troops in the region [71]. Till now, the tension over the region has been going on and no final resolution has been reached.

### **The conflict over Heglig**

The Heglig area lies in the South Kordofan state by the border of South Sudan, westward of Abyei and it is rich with oil. Heglig has a strategic significance to northern Sudan. Recently, the area witnessed an intense contestation between the two parts of Sudan [72]. Formerly, the report presented by the Abyei Border Commission (ABC) in 2005 annexed the area to the Abyei region [73]. Such a report was completely rejected by the Sudan government, and the Abyei issue was referred to the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA). The compromised decision was made by the PCA in 2009, decided that the Hague should re-define the border of Abyei, abolish the southern territory of Abyei and automatically give the controlling of the Heglig and Balila oil fields to the northern government [74]. This decision did not go well with some of the southern leaders, who claimed that the Heglig area is originally a part of the Unity State (Wihdeh) within which the major oil fields were located and that the

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SPLM would demand that Heglig be included as part of the south at the time of the demarcation of the border [75].

It is important to state that the Heglig area is not among the contested areas in the negotiation between northern and southern Sudan in regard to the border demarcation during the mission of the Technical Committee of Border Demarcation 2005-2011 [76]. The committee was to complete the demarcation of 80% of the contested border which is roughly 1,936 km in length [77]. As mentioned earlier, the dispute is centred on Abyei, Kafi-Kingi and Hofrat El-Nihas, Cahli Elfil and Raja. Following the secession of south Sudan, the area became the most active firing zone between the Sudan Armed forces and the Southern Sudan People's Liberation Army.

### **Why is Heglig?**

The key reason behind the conflict in Heglig stems from its strategic and economic values of the two parties in conflict [84]. The area has a huge oil reserve and also it is the site of much of the basic facilities of the Sudanese oil industry's infrastructure, such as the primary oil pumping plant that pumps the oil through a pipeline to the export ports on the Red Sea that are 1610 kilometres away [78]. The importance of Heglig in Sudan's economy is undeniable as it is the major source of the country's revenue after the secession of the south. It produces nearly 6,000 bpd, accounting for more than a half of Sudan's total 115 thousands bpd [79]. The strategic accessibility of the oil, oilfields, infrastructures and pipelines also attract the new south Sudan state to lay claim over the area. This is because south Sudan lacks an oil infrastructure and is a landlocked region. Thus, control over Heglig means the region is free to use such infrastructures in producing and transporting roughly 350 bpd from the rich-oil field in the Unity state which is the neighbouring area of Heglig [80]. Since the secession of south Sudan, both sides of Sudan have claimed and counterclaimed Heglig. However, as the negotiation between the two Sudans on the outstanding post-referendum issues, Abyei, transit fees and border demarcation are still deadlocked, a series of intense clashes have occurred. This is due to the South Sudan Army's (SPLA) short occupation of Heglig in 2012 for ten days before withdrawing [81].

It is apparent that the dispute in the oil sector, mainly political and armed conflict over Abyei and Heglig will closely remain part of the border disputes. The disagreement between the two Sudans over oilfields which are located along the border line between the north and south regions makes the issues unresolved during the post-referendum period. Initially, oil was the key factor in the current conflict between the two Sudans; as it is a source of wealth and power to the both parts of Sudan. In the earlier periods, oil had not caused a civil war or secession of the south. However, it

greatly increased the tension among the Sudanese since both north and south governments are depending heavily on oil for their revenue which is estimated at 98% for south Sudan and 60 % for Sudan [82]. The importance of oil makes it remain the key source of dispute during the interim or post-referendum period.

It is worth mentioning that the dispute about oilfields in Sudan influences other issues such as the increase of violence between the people of Border States and the rivalry over the right of land possession and use. This typically illustrates the case of violent conflict between the Rizeigat tribe from South Darfur and Dinka Mulual from North Bhr- Al-Ghazal state. The conflict between the tribes centred on the grazing-rich area of Safaha, 14 miles south of the Bahr Al Arab (Kiir River) [83], and thus, both Sudan Army (SAF) and South Sudan Army (SPLA) supported their sided group. So far, such competition over grazing, land and water point has turned into a political contestation over the border areas as south Sudan claims its right over the area. Moreover, the dispute over oilfields becomes in the line with the other outstanding issues of the peace agreement of 2005. In this case, a continuing failure in bringing an agreed resolution for the contested area of Abyei, adding to that the invasion of Heglig by the southern troops delayed the achievement of the final resolution of the post-secession issues; security arrangements, border demarcation, and the exporting of south 'oil through north, in particular. This challenge has encouraged the Security Council of the United Nation and Security, Peace Council of the African Union to be involved in mediating between the two conflicting parties in order to address theses outstanding questions.

### **On Border-Conflict Mitigation**

Broadly speaking, the on-going conflict between the two parts of Sudan becomes a serious domestic and regional issue that has multiple political, security impacts on the neighbouring countries. This is due to the expansion of the conflict to their borders, mainly the threatened countries of Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda. Such an issue is a growing concern and a source of increasing stress for many African countries and the international community alike. In response to this challenge, the Addis Ababa, Ethiopia hosted yet series of negotiation's rounds between the conflicting parties; for instance, the Sudan government and the south Sudan government were mediated by the African Union, which attempted to put an end to the conflict in Sudan. Yet, current negotiation is focusing on solving the post-referendum issue which has been topped by border demarcation and sharing of the oil wealth and Abyei question [85].

Optimistically, Sudan and south Sudan have reached a deal on most controversial issues, including oil and fees, border monitoring support mission

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agreement, cessation hostilities and deployment of troops along the border and buffer zone [86], though these agreements have not been enforced yet, because the conflicting parties have failed to reach a final solution regarding the status of Abyei region. As a result, the African Union High Level Implementation Panel (AUHLIP) leading by former South African president Thabo Mbeki continued and has gradually succeeded to persuade the two parties to conclude negotiations on a final status of the Abyei region [87]. However, the two parties' positions are not closer to an agreement yet. The Sudan government has endured that Abyei referendum remains a domestic affair and all Abyei' people have the right to vote including the Misseriya and other small tribes while the southern government has limited this right for Dinka Ngok only [88].

The Security Council of the United Nation, from its side, is severely concerned about the scaled tension in Abyei as in several occasions, it persuades north and south Sudan to resolve the border dispute including Abyei in a peaceful way for bringing peace in the area initially by redeploying all their armies from the area [89]. Moreover, in an attempt to restore the current instability in the area, the Security Council advocated withdraws of Sudan army forces (SAF) which controlled Abyei in 2011 and placed the United Nation Interim Security Force (UNISFA) to support the stability and prevent the conflict in the region [90]. On this side, the council requested the two countries to reach an agreement about finalizing this dispute and urging the establishment of civil institution, local council and the police services in Abyei in the way to provide humanitarian support and give up violence against civilians [91]. In an attempt to use a stick rather a carrot, the Security Council called for re-deploying forces from the area, which carry out the commitment of ceasing all kinds of hostilities and setting a time limit to settle the dispute between the two parts of Sudan in a peaceful way or seeking other options including the imposition of international sanctions [92]. Currently, the Abyei issue remains unresolved, waiting for an agreement on a compromise resolution that may satisfy the region people (Misseriya and Dinka Ngok) on the one hand and Sudan and south Sudan governments on the other hand. Seeking for conflict settlement, the Addis Ababa, Ethiopia also, has hosted a number of presidents' summit talks between the two parts of Sudan (north –south) in order to breakthrough a deadlock negotiations and reach a final agreement on the contested areas topped by Abyei and Heglig [93].

## CONCLUSION

To conclude, obviously, the comprehensive peace agreement of 2005 stipulated the right to self-determination of the southerners as it successfully led them to gain secession from the rest of the country; nevertheless, it failed to put an end to the historic

conflict between the north and the south. More recently, the conflict has grown to be more complex as it has centred on the controlling over oilfields, the majority of which are located on the border between two parts of Sudan. Moreover, the secession took place even before completing the task of the final demarcation of the border line between the two sides of Sudan.

By focusing on examples of Abyei and Heglig oilfields, the main findings of this paper indicate that conflict and insecure condition on the border between the two successor states will continue in the case of failure to achieve a final and committed agreement on the contested border areas. This is because both parts of Sudan heavily rely on oil in their economy' processes. Besides oil has become a source of power, politics and national symbolists of the two countries, and it is becoming more difficult to lose it. Another finding demonstrates that the conflict over oil in Sudan influences other issues such as the ethnic rivalry in particular; besides, it has a direct impact on unresolved issues of the post- referendum phase including security arrangements, border demarcation and export oil. Given the key role to oilfields in origin conflict, this causes insecurity between the two parts of Sudan and has impact on the regional security visibly, and therefore, a collective effort to put an ending to such conflict is required. In the case at point, political, lawful power vested to the Security Council of United Nation is favourable, especially, through a direct involvement rather than only condemning and persuading the parties to continue their negotiation. Since it becomes clear that the two parties have a less will and lack of trust in each other, this matter results in posing obstacles in the path of reaching a final settlement regarding their questions including oilfields and specification of their possessions.

At the heart of a final resolution, a reach of a win-win agreement and cooperation between the countries is considered as a cornerstone on their endeavour to place a final peace and welfare of their two affected people. Thus, sound of integrated processes in terms of management, use and invest of the rich-resources which are located in the border sector will support the increasing of wealth that proceeds the two sides rather than competing over. Therefore, it should be recommended that a soft border, buffer zone should be established and the border areas should be cooperatively governed via the two sides of the country. Moreover, sharing contested oil wealth and infrastructures, allowing for a board exploitation of their plenty resources existing in the border' territory as well as mitigating a growing ethnic conflicts which are robustly related to possession, use of land (as conflict often takes place between framers and pastoralists of the two countries) all together should be agreed upon and resolved. To secure all, the regional and international creditable presence is essential as long as



they will constitute the backbone for agreement on the contested territories because any agreement reached should observe sustainability of peaceful co-existence between the border' ethnic groups of the outcome of the talks or the settlement.

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