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## Land Resource, Livelihoods and Ethnic Mobilisation: A Comparative Study of Two East African Locations

Peter Wafula Wekesa

### **Introduction**

Since 2006, explorations by Tullow and other companies have led to major oil discoveries across the Albetine Graben in western Uganda and Turkana County in northern Kenya. Although the western Ugandan oil discoveries have been in the news for a while, it was only on 26 March 2012, that the then Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki announced to the nation that Kenya had finally discovered oil in Turkana County (DNA, 27 March 2012). Confirmed reports from the various oil exploration companies indicate that the two East African locations have between one and two billion barrels of oil, which if fully exploited would put the regions among the top fifty oil producers in the world (Kiiza *et al.* 2011; Kathman and Shannon 2011).

The news on the discoveries is however generating intense debates on the implications of this new resource find on the political economy of the two East African countries and the Great Lakes region as a whole. While some of the debates have clearly focused on the benefits of the oil discovery to the two countries in terms of the “windfall” oil revenues that will deliver substantial social, economic and infrastructural improvements, some analysts have adopted a cautionary stance. The latter, building on “resource curse” arguments have noted that the discovery of oil and other resources generally have often paradoxically led to economic stagnation, the death of other traditional and non-traditional exports and conflicts. The latter scenario is especially common in countries with poor records of public resource management, high levels of systematic corruption, weak institutions of governance and authoritarianism (Karl 1997; Collier and Hoeffler 2002; Oyefusi 2007).

While the above debates provide a meaningful approach in understanding the dynamics around and about oil discovery in both Kenya and Uganda, there is perhaps an urgent need to comparatively contextualize these debates within the broader realm of resource competition and its significance to the emerging trends towards ethnic mobilization in the two areas where oil has been discovered. Again, the historical and geographical dynamics shaping the nature of such claims need to be interrogated to ascertain their nuances within contemporary discourses. Historically, the two ethnic groups within the areas of oil discovery have over several centuries been at the centre of major social, economic and political transformations characterized by myriad forms of contestations. Geographically, on the other hand, these locations where the oil resource has been found have shared boundary spaces which have over the years continually defined broader questions around intra and inter-state relations. Both the Albertine Graben and Turkana oil resource explorations and discoveries have been made in key border (internal and international) areas which are experiencing frequent disputes over land claims, delimitation disputes, lawlessness, security alerts, and bitter political exchanges between governments (Okumu 2010:281) and conflicts between communities.

As new resource explorations and discoveries intensify therefore, it is certain that inter-community and inter-state tensions, whether real or imagined have increased in the two areas. On the other hand, anxieties by the local communities over a likelihood of exclusion are growing as local grievances related to marginalization within the two areas intensify. Both historical and contemporary issues are thus coming into play to shape the nature of debates and mobilizations around oil. Further, both Turkana and the Lake Albertine Graben are also ecologically sensitive areas with an enormous amount of biodiversity. The Albertine Graben specifically covers most of the national parks, game reserves and forest reserves and thus the environment and ecology is under threat, as well as the tourism sector. It is also a politically sensitive area that lies between two countries, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), with a history of violent border conflict. In addition the local inter-ethnic dynamics in Uganda surrounding the historical and cultural competitions around the various kingdoms and the identity politics around membership and non-membership have become critical issues to consider.

Turkana on the other hand which is the northernmost County in Kenya is a vast, hot and desolate region that borders Uganda to the west, South Sudan and Ethiopia, including the disputed Ilemi triangle to the north and northwest respectively. The area encompasses Lake Turkana which supports a huge pastoral economy from the four neighboring countries for provision of water and sustaining pasture. Fishing on Lake Turkana also complements local livelihood options. Turkana has historically also been a significant archeological location that has yielded huge evidence on early evolution of humankind. It is thus a prime tourist and research destination. More recently, results of an underground study have indicated that the region is sitting on an underground water reservoir

that could meet Kenya's entire water needs for over seventy years (DNA, 2013). The physical and ecological location of Turkana however remain susceptible to numerous internal and external disputes. The region has remained a volatile border hotspot prone to incessant inter-community conflicts especially between the neighbouring pastoral Turkana, Toposa, Pokot, Samburu, Dassenetch, Karamoja, Jie, Dodos, Diding'a and Nyang'atom communities (Mkutu 2007). Most of the cross-border conflicts between these groups, which have often been linked to competition over scarce resources, especially pasture and water, have negatively impacted on the security of the states in the region.

An important aspect that is under-represented in the emerging discourses around new resource discoveries in the Albertine Graben and Turkana areas relates to new forms of ethnic mobilization. Both the Banyoro and the Turkana communities who predominantly occupy the two respective regions are increasingly beginning to lay claims to not only their historical and cultural lands but also to a substantial share of the oil revenue. Indeed, the discovery of oil in these areas has raised hopes and expectations among the local communities to the fact that their historical sovereignty over the lands needs to be respected and restored. There have also been attendant demands by both the Turkana and the Banyoro for the respective governments to address the historical injustices and marginalization that have generated high levels of poverty and led to the rapid decline in the key livelihood options in the two regions.

The implication of the communal demands over local resources especially land and on the other age-old livelihood survival patterns of the local communities need to be emphasized in order to understand the basis of potential ethnic mobilization in the two areas. The "scramble" for oil seems to be escalating competition over land in Bunyoro and Turkana not only between the local communities and the multinational companies, but also between new emerging interests and immigrants. The competition between the former seems to be couched within the broader grievances over land rights and especially between who, the local population and the government, should have the final say with the multinational companies over land access and use in the respective areas. The latter scenario on the other hand seems to be generating new tensions around broader questions of indigenous and foreign land rights in the two areas. All these issues have important implications on local, national and regional redefinitions of space and boundaries between various ethnicities.

### **New Resources and Ethnic Mobilization: The Research Agenda**

The discussions around ethnic mobilization in Bunyoro and Turkana need to be contextualized within the broader dynamics of location and the socially constructed boundaries through which ethnic groups ascribe difference. According to Barth (1969), competition stemming from overlap in the economic or political activities

of multiple ethnic groups becomes a key mechanism through which particular boundaries are reinforced. Ethnic boundary formation in both Bunyoro and Turkana needs to be analyzed within the collective dynamics shaping their separate history. Bunyoro has historically remained a fairly stable Kingdom in Uganda with well established centralized social, economic and political institutions that have maintained strong inter and intra ethnic relations not just in Uganda but even beyond. Turkana on the other hand runs on a decentralized socio-political structure whose organization is mediated at the clan level. This distinction is important given that ethnic mobilization, the process by which a group organizes along ethnic lines in the pursuit of collective social, economic and political needs ought to pay attention to the fact that ethnic solidarities tend to intensify in contexts where such groups occupy similar spaces and develop spatial and complementary niches.

The case of Bunyoro and Turkana as research locations is significant given that explanations around ethnic competition and mobilization are by nature contextual since they posit that contention among individuals and groups is in fact shaped by environments that lend themselves to perceived or actual contexts over available resources. While broader issues about state stability and legitimacy in Africa and other parts of the world have been at the centre of inter and intra state mobilizations, such discussions operate at the macro level. The case of the Great Lakes region has perhaps generated several of such studies given that the region has witnessed intense inter and intra state tensions and conflicts in the recent times. Although the causes of these tensions and conflicts which are still ongoing in some regions such as South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are multiple, issues of competition over resources, ethnicity, boundary questions, struggles for power, religion and geopolitical considerations remain key factors. This study outlines how the discovery of oil and other resources in Bunyoro (Uganda) and Turkana (Kenya) has engendered new forms of ethnic mobilization in the respective areas.

While paying specific attention to the dynamics in the two locations this analysis draws from the competitive model of ethnic relations (Barth, 1969) that emphasizes the role of resource competition in the formation and mobilization of ethnic groups. However, while competitive dynamics become most striking when they result in sustained mobilization and sometimes protracted conflicts, the competitive model needs to stretch the analysis beyond the oil discovery narrative and perhaps provide more insights into the processes through which ethnic grievances translate into mobilized contentions within heterogeneous entities. The study investigates how certain aspects related to the debates around oil and other resources in Bunyoro and Turkana have restructured economic and political competition in ways that emphasize linguistic, religious and cultural differences among populations and in turn encourage mobilization on the basis of ethnicity. The ways in which these ethnic claims continue to appeal to new redefinitions of

space and boundaries as well as appeal to issues of self-determination in Bunyoro and Turkana form this study's fundamental research questions. More useful in this investigation however is understanding the nature and transformation of such ethnic claims over time, and if it is possible through research, to tease out areas where certain individuals and groups within communities mediate the coalescence of grievances to serve as crucial mobilization venues.

Specifically, this study was guided by the following objectives:

- Examine the historical nature of ethnic mobilization in both Bunyoro and Turkana areas of Uganda and Kenya respectively.
- Compare the livelihood patterns in both Bunyoro and Turkana before the massive resource explorations in the two areas.
- Analyze the impact of new land resource grabs in Bunyoro and Turkana on local livelihoods.
- Examine the nature of the new forms of ethnic mobilization in both Bunyoro and Turkana and its implications on broader issues of territoriality in the region.

## **State of the Literature**

The literature on the broader issues of resources, livelihoods and ethnic mobilization is varied, vast and continues to grow. The way in which various scholars have tried to contextualize the dynamics related to the relationship between states and communities at the global, regional and local levels in regard to resources has provided interesting scholarly discussions. How these issues have come to be manifested in the recent times, especially with the global push by multinationals and the increasing challenges these pose on inter and intra state relations has been a critical research agenda. These analyses have obviously fed into the broader discussions on regionalism and territoriality. It is important that other discussions be contextualized within specific historical and comparative perspective as the case of Bunyoro and Turkana seeks to do.

The phenomenon of 'global land grab' has recently come to describe the current explosion of large scale transnational commercial land transactions, which are largely concentrated in the developing world. Given the speed and magnitude of this trend, the implication of this process is increasingly generating a rich body of literature around the issue of land as a key resource in deriving livelihoods for the great majority of the population. A significant amount of literature now exists on land grabbing in Africa. This either draws attention to the specific global crisis in the 2006-2008 period leading to international investments in biofuels or large scale food production in Africa for export (Borras et al. 2010) or places land grabbing within the context of the development of liberalization policies that created land markets and new avenues for international investments in large

scale land acquisitions (Zoomers 2010). Whereas this review seeks to draw on this large body of relevant literature, it particularly focuses on the consequences of land grabs in the identified study locations and on its implications to local livelihood patterns as well as on emerging ethnic mobilization within these two volatile trans-border areas. The latter theme has scarcely been addressed in the emerging literature and thus forms the context of this current study.

Since the global crisis of 2006-2008, there has been a substantial land rush on the global scale especially in the developing countries. This process has been characterized by the formal transfer of lands in the agrarian states from peasant farming and pastoral sector into the hands of large-scale producers and/ or speculators. The latter are both local and international and include not just private sector actors but foreign states or their parastatals (Deininger *et al.* 2010). There has been a great deal of both theoretical and methodological case study analysis that have focused on this process. There have been works sustained by development economists, especially those that are associated with the staple theory of growth, which have argued that this process is driven not only by the global crisis but indeed by natural resource abundance especially available in the developing countries (Collier and Hoeffler 2002; Oyefusi 2007). The argument is that the global rush for land and indeed for other natural resources would eventually help the backward states overcome their capital shortfalls and provide revenues for their governments to provide public goods and lift their citizens out of the doldrums of poverty.

Alden (2012) has made a very useful contribution to the debate on the phenomenon of land grabs by providing us with both the historical and legal dimensions of this process. The author observes that the land rush is indeed already or potentially detrimental to the land rights of thousands of land dependent households; that the surrender of lands is significantly involuntary on the part of those deprived of lands they believe to be their own, or at least they are ill informed or even misled about the benefits of surrendering these lands; and that so far, most of the lands being taken or proposed for land takings are in sub-Saharan Africa (2012:752). Looking back to the year 1607, the author examines the various phases of land rush in Africa from the pre-colonial to the present period while paying attention to the various trends, participants and consequences. On the legal status of such acquisitions, the author notes two different legal ways through which investors acquired different rights over land; first, depending on their counterparts and secondly, depending on the proprietary regime of the host countries. These are useful observations for this study for they raise important dimensions not only on the history of the process but also on the private and public nexus of the land grabbing debate in general.

Further useful contributions on land grabbing have been made by Shepard Daniel (2012) who specifically pays attention to the investment question within the land grab debate. The author notes that there have been four main investment types

in international land deals. First is the direct investment by sovereign wealth funds, second are state-owned enterprises, third is the government to government deals and finally the private sector investments (2012: 704). Kojo Sebastian Amanor (2012) on his part focuses on the issue of global resource grabs, agribusiness concentration and the small holder experience using two West African case studies. Particularly important for the current study is that the author offers a thorough examination of the impacts of recent transformations in agrarian accumulation upon small holder production, scales and economies of production and on livelihoods access to land. His observation that increasing competitiveness and concentration within agriculture creates pressure on small holders that results in dispossession is central to any analysis of the land grabbing phenomenon on both pastoral and agricultural economies anywhere in Africa. A similar useful case study is provided by Tom Lavers (2012) who analyses patterns of agrarian transformation and state mediated commercialization of land in Ethiopia.

Perhaps, a more sustained debate on land grabbing in Africa away from the foregoing agribusiness dimension regards biofuels. Over the last five to ten years there have been sustained oil explorations in Africa generally and in the specific locations of Turkana and the Lake Albertine Graben in East Africa. In East Africa specifically new oil explorations and discoveries have been accomplished due to what some scholars show as two interconnected reasons (Karl 1997; Snyder and Bhavnani 2005). On the one hand is the rise in the global demand for hydrocarbons and the related price increments whose consequence has been the push of companies into new zones of exploration to maximize their reserves. On the other hand, the big hydrocarbon consuming countries especially the USA have come to realize the danger of over-relying on the Middle Eastern petroleum sources in the wake of increased incidents of insecurity, terrorism and other political considerations. The need to diversify their sources has therefore pushed them into massive exploration programmes especially in Africa and East Africa mostly.

The consequences of the rush for biofuels in Africa on land grabbing and food security is emerging as a useful theme in current studies on Africa. In a recent edited work, Matondi, Havnevik and Bayene (2011) focus on this debate and assesses the manner in which the sharp expansion of worldwide interest in biofuels leads to land grabs in Africa, in turn impacting on the livelihoods of African small holder farmers and their communities. In particular, the contributions in the book attempt to evaluate whether land grabbing for large scale biofuels and food production-destined mainly for external markets- will contribute to the development of Africa and its people, or whether the latter will find themselves further marginalized and impoverished in the process. Anderson and Browne (2011) pay specific attention to the politics of oil in eastern Africa and discuss the economic and political implications of the new development of the petroleum industry in the region. These are indeed central concerns that are directly relevant to the two cases of Turkana and Albertine

Graben. The two areas have become prominent because of oil explorations and discoveries in the recent past that have led to massive cases of land grabbing and generated other social, political and economic dynamics.

The link between oil explorations and discoveries to the general debates on resource-curse, that is the tendency for resource rich countries to attain poor developmental outcomes than resource poor countries has been a sustained discourse in the recent literature on Africa (Auty 1993; Collier *et al.* 2004). A growing number of works have established that resource abundance has a number of socio-economic problems including slow growth, greater inequality and poverty for a larger majority of the population and corruption of political institutions (Oyefusi 2007; Deininger *et al.* 2010; Kiiza *et al.* 2011). Of all the natural resources, oil has been found to have the highest risk of civil conflict because of the large rents it offers and the shocks to which the government and the national economy are exposed (Collier and Hoeffler 2002). The usefulness of these debates to the general context of Turkana and the lake Albertine Graben cannot be understated. The ways in which resource curse could be a consequence or result of the new forms of ethnic mobilization in the respective areas is an issue that requires further comparative investigation.

Related to biofuels, land grabbing and resource curse debates are the emerging issues on the geographical locations where explorations and discoveries are being made. There are sustained discussions relating to the fact that most of these activities are taking place in volatile shared border areas thus making such locations key conflict hotspots (Okumu 2010). Resource explorations, discoveries and exploitations are thus transforming borderland areas, which are territorial spaces of political, cultural and economic power, into veritable locations of contestation. Heightened tensions and increased potential for intra and inter-state conflicts in the East African region especially in the resource rich border or borderland areas have become common (Okumu 2010; Wekesa 2010). Although the causes of these conflicts could be multifaceted and in most cases could precede such new resource finds, issues of territorial claims over lack of clearly defined and marked boundaries, the availability of trans-boundary resources especially fish and security related matters take centre stage. Trans-boundary conflicts over resources both in water and on land have arisen due to the dwindling economic fortunes in the region coupled with increased population pressure, external competition and poor management of such resources.

Key studies focused on the specific locations in East Africa are useful to this research. Kiiza *et al.* (2011) and Lay (2010) provide very useful insights on the Bunyoro question by raising important proposals on how to right resource curse wrongs in Uganda within the context of popular anxieties and expectations. An important observation by these authors regards the claims that are being made by the Banyoro to the government of Uganda and to the oil companies. As with



most governments, the Banyoro are quickly waking up to the reality that power concedes nothing unless there is pressure. The feeling therefore that people must organize and demand for proper compensatory mechanisms around the use of local resources is attaining credence in local discourse. Closer to the Turkana and focused on the pastoralists in Sudan, a recent study by Sara Pantuliano (2010) provides a useful interjection between oil, land and conflict. The author particularly examines the strategies employed by the Misseriya pastoralists in Sudan to cope with a number of external pressures ranging from adverse government policies, climatic changes, the impact of oil exploration, conflicts and the effects of Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Whereas this current study examines the comparative context within the pastoral and agricultural economies, the studies on Bunyoro and Sudan are critical to the analysis.

Historical works that focus on Bunyoro and Turkana areas are clearly central to this analysis. On the whole, these studies succeed in contextualizing the entire debate of ethnicity and claims within the communities' narratives on their origin, migration and settlement. By so doing they emphasize not only the broader basis of inter and intra community relations in the two locations under study but equally raise important questions on the bases of the two communities' claims beyond the biofuel narrative. Doyle (2009) specifically focuses on the ethnic politics in colonial Buganda by paying attention to the lost counties dispute between the Banyoro and the Baganda that stemmed from the colonial period. Medard and Doyle (2007) have broadly made useful contributions on slavery in the Great Lakes region by paying specific attention to key examples from Buganda and Bunyoro. Another useful historical study is that of Karugire (1980). Among the Turkana useful works exist that specifically focus on long running ethnic conflicts between the Turkana and the Pokot (Bollig 1990 and Mkutu 2008). Most of the latter conflicts are premised on different communities' claims over resources. Such studies are useful to this analysis.

Specific works on ethnicity and especially on ethnic mobilization in the world and Africa particularly are central to the current research concerns. Ethnic mobilization as a process by which groups organize around some feature of ethnic identity (skin colour, language, customs etc) in pursuit of collective ends has been a dominant feature in numerous studies (Barth 1969; Horowitz 1985; Gellner 1983; Anderson 1983; Smith, 1986). In Africa specifically, it has been observed that the numerous problems that have beset many countries and affected the daily lives and material conditions of millions of people are associated with ethnicity (Ogot 1996; Nzongola-Ntalaja and Lee 1997; Collier and Hoeffler 2002). Conflicts arising from ethnicity have constantly challenged the different countries' abilities to forge national and regional harmony in order to effectively confront the numerous socio-economic and political needs of the people (Olukoshi and Laaso 1996; Mamdani 1996). Specifically in terms of ethnic mobilization

most works have emphasized the manner in which political coalitions, access to economic and political resources and patron-client relations in Africa are often organized along ethnic lines. But while these works are significant to this analysis the emerging trend towards ethnic mobilization in response to local and multinational pressure need further investigation. The impact of this pressure on local livelihoods in both pastoral and subsistence agricultural economies will certainly benefit from comparative outputs.

It is clear to note that in spite of the useful insights gained from the foregoing recent researches on land grabs, resources and ethnic mobilization in Africa and East Africa specifically, there seem to be a lacuna in terms of works that focus on the emerging relationship between land as a resource, livelihoods and ethnic mobilization. These emerging trends do not just arise from local interests but equally from transnational and multinational interests. Land as a resource is increasingly becoming an arena on which identity based tensions and mobilization are being played about, especially in the key areas where new resources are being explored and discovered. The fact that the land which is being grabbed for local, transnational and multinational interests had provided age-old livelihood survival options for the local communities needs to be emphasized in order to understand the basis of potential ethnic mobilization in the two study areas.

Both the Turkana and the Banyoro have historically derived their livelihoods from the land that is now currently under considerable competition. Being mainly pastoralists and subsistence based agriculturalists, the Turkana and the Banyoro respectively are perceiving the new competition over their land as a threat and direct onslaught on their traditional way of life, livelihoods and even cultural identity. A comparative focus on both agricultural and pastoral livelihood patterns and their impact on the escalating competition over land is critical to this analysis. This research sought to investigate the emerging trends towards ethnic mobilization in both Turkana and Bunyoro. Broader historical issues on the nature of mobilization, and grievances over land rights, access and use are examined within the context of the new tensions around indigenous and foreign land rights in the two areas. All these issues have important implications on local, national and regional redefinitions of space and boundaries between various ethnicities.

### **Ethnic Groups, Mobilization and Competition: Some Theoretical Issues**

In recent times, several scholars have proposed a number of models in an attempt to examine the nature of intergroup conflicts, especially by demonstrating how variations in ethnic mobilization relate to intergroup struggles over scarce resources. Pioneering studies by Barth (1969) and Hannan (1979) have provided useful inspirations to more recent analyses. According to these scholars, the competitive

model, simply presented emphasizes the fact that ethnic conflicts and social movements based on ethnic (rather than some other) boundaries occur when ethnic competition increases. Based on various empirical research data from the 1960s and 1970s, the authors point out that the resurgence of ethnic movements within this period in the various multicultural societies resulted from increased ethnic competition, especially job competition. This increased competition is viewed as the result of modernization processes, especially urbanization, the expansion of the secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy, the expansion of the political sector and supranational organizations, and increasing scale of organizations (Nagel and Olzak 1986:3-4).

Although the ethnic competition theory has provided one of the most powerful explanations for intergroup relations in various contexts, it is useful to derive its relevant insights especially among the Banyoro and the Turkana of Uganda and Kenya respectively. By its very nature, this theory makes a persuasive argument, which is that ethnic solidarities intensify when members of groups occupy similar positions- most often associated with overlapping and competitive niches- and vie for scarce rewards. The basis for this conflict lies in the threat posed by competing groups, for whom ethnic identities take on enhanced salience in competitive contexts. Herein lays the major conditions that must apply for the competitive model to work. On the one hand, ethnic competition leads to ethnic conflict and ethnic movements if, and only if, the competition is perceived to be unfair. To what extent do the Banyoro and Turkana feel unfairly treated in historical and contemporary times to justify their claims? This study obviously assumes that claims of injustice and inequality follow from ethnic mobilization rather than cause it. In this regard competition at most leads to institutionalized collective action, as when competitors with a common ethnic background form an association to lobby for their interests through routine channels.

On the other hand, it is important to focus on both Banyoro and Turkana claims as collective and not individual claims. This is an important concern given that from the competitive model perspective, for conflict to be widespread and intense it must be social rather than interpersonal, and the competition must be intergroup rather than individual since the objects of competition are collective goods rather than individual goods. These observations are relevant from the global point of view. The current focus on Banyoro and Turkana is by its nature contextual and this is how it must be viewed. The contextual historical, social, economic and political environments that have shaped the nature of such claims among the two groups need to be emphasized. It is these environments, as diverse as they are, that have shaped the various competitions and claims and in turn sustained mobilized and protracted conflicts. What are the historical and contextual moments that have defined these claims? Have these claims been changing over time?

The foregoing questions are critical from a historical point of view given the new discovery of oil in Bunyoro and Turkana. By focusing on these two cases as the units of analysis, is it theoretically sustainable to argue for the link between the contextual conditions that translate into such claims and people's perceptions that they are being excluded and marginalized? While the relationship between contexts and grievances is often assumed rather than expressly demonstrated, it is clear that claims and competition among the various groups need to be viewed in broader historical, social, economic and political dynamics. They need also to be viewed and backed by relevant empirical data in order to delineate perceptions from realities. It could be possible that some of the perceptions that fuel ethnic claims and competitions are not necessarily and uniformly associated with conditions of unfairness but historically, materially and socially come to be encrypted and encoded within intergroup prejudice. Herewith could therefore be a possibility of a mismatch between the "objective" levels of competition and the individual's and group's sense of threats, marginalization and exclusion. These are relevant theoretical issues that provide useful insights into this study.

### **A Note on the Research Methodology**

Data for this research was procured from both primary and secondary sources. These are broadly categorized into oral and written sources. In order to provide a useful background for field research, secondary evidence was consulted and analysed to provide the initial data and scrutinized to identify gaps for further research. These data also enabled the researcher to situate the study theoretically and supply the conceptual framework with which to work on the primary data. The secondary sources of data included mainly written sources such as published books, journals, unpublished theses, newspapers and periodicals among many others. These were derived from the various libraries in Nairobi and Kampala. More secondary information was also sourced from other external libraries. Also, considerable use of the resources available at the King's palace in Hoima in Bunyoro was made. Online journals accessible on the Internet also provided an important contribution to the secondary data for this research.

Useful sources of primary data were the archives located in Nairobi and Entebbe as well as any other private archives available in the respective research areas. From the archives we gathered information related to issues of land, livelihood patterns and ethnic mobilization in the two respective areas of Turkana and Bunyoro. Information on issues concerning petitions and complaints regarding land matters, border restrictions, legislative council sessional issues, court matters, land tenure and land policy issues, labour issues, taxation, demography and the plight of farmers and pastoralists in the respective areas, among many others was collected. Although data from such archival sources is rich, it was not entirely reliable and regular. As such, a critical analysis of the content was essential. It was necessary to complement

and corroborate the data derived from such sources with the secondary sources and analyse them together with that from oral sources.

Oral interviews constituted another important source of information for this research. Field visits to Bunyoro and Turkana provided a useful opportunity to observe and interview several respondents. Interviews were carried out in both Turkana and Bunyoro which are the research sites. A purposive sampling procedure was employed to identify and select the interviewees. The identification and selection of the prospective interviewees was based on the information yielding from primary, secondary and archival research. From these sources a temporary list of interviewees was drawn for both Bunyoro and Turkana. This list was eventually altered where necessary, by either inserting the names of different interviewees as mentioned by the others or withdrawing possible interviewees in case they are deceased. The selected interviewees were well informed, concerned and were expected to have participated in the various issues that the research was concerned with. Although no rigid age limit was observed, knowledgeable elders were given a priority. The researcher sought to interview a wide range of stakeholders (including local leaders, administrators, elders, youth, women, farmers, pastoralists, traders, representatives of government and oil companies and aid workers among others). Both in-depth personal interviews and focused group discussions were adopted. Generally, the data collection and field analysis strategies were focused on issues such as community assets, as well as livelihood strategies and outcomes, which were examined within the broader historical, environmental, social, political and economic contexts to take into account the institutions, policies and processes affecting the various changes in Turkana and Banyoro livelihoods. Special attention was paid to the relationships between different interest groups in the respective areas, to map evidence of competition over resources and to identify points of possible conflict.

The data gathered from the diverse sources outlined above formed the basis of analysis on the theme of land resource, livelihoods and ethnic mobilization. Oral data, which was recorded on tape recorder with permission from the interviewees, were transcribed before the process of analysis. The actual data processing and analysis was done in accordance with the objectives of the study. This was essential for ensuring that all relevant data for the specific themes to be discussed and for making contemplated comparisons and analysis was available.

The analysis and interpretation of data was done qualitatively. All the data collected from the various sources was edited to detect errors and omissions and to correct these where possible. The data was then classified according to their content and the specific historical time frame within which events and developments took place. Secondary data collected from written sources was carefully weighed against evidence from the archives and the field interviews to ensure the validity of the sources in terms of their content. On the other hand, the analysis of qualitative data gathered from interviews was done by breaking down

the information into various themes. All data was carefully scrutinised to ensure that it was accurate and consistent with other facts gathered from secondary sources and the archives, and was then uniformly recorded as completely as possible and arranged to facilitate the writing and presentation process. The importance of this strategy was to provide a chance to counter-check, compare, contrast and ultimately be able to corroborate the various kinds of information collected. The final outcome of the study was thus both descriptive and analytical.

### **Historical Nature of Ethnic Mobilization in Bunyoro and Turkana**

There is a critical need to meaningfully understand the historical nature of ethnic mobilization in both Bunyoro and Turkana in order to appreciate the dynamic nature of the problem. The ways in which the new discoveries of resources, mainly oil, have led to the reconfiguration of the experiences of the two communities in relation to their neighbours and the respective states has unmasked dynamic questions surrounding the emerging claims, new forms of mobilization and attachment to territory. All these issues clearly raise important historical questions as the evidence from the respective areas demonstrate.

#### **Bunyoro**

The Albertine Graben specifically is a region that is predominantly occupied by the Banyoro and the Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom. The kingdom covers the mid western region of Uganda comprising the four districts of Hoima, Kibaale, Buliisa and Masindi. At the height of its power in the pre-colonial period Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom was very extensive, prestigious and famous (Nyakatura 1973). Having existed for over 1000 years and its status being entrenched into the present Uganda Constitution under Article 246, the officials of the kingdom have historically and culturally laid claims to the lands where oil has been discovered in Hoima, Kibaale and Buliisa districts.

The discovery of oil has raised hopes and expectations among the Banyoro just like other neighbouring communities in Uganda and beyond. Especially for the Banyoro, the fact that they have historically had sovereignty over the oil rich lands seems to present a new avenue to demand for a substantial share of the oil revenue. There has also been attendant demands by the Banyoro for the government to address the historical injustices committed against them in regard to the perennial issue of the Banyoro's seven lost counties, the historical destruction of Bunyoro's productive economy (such as ironworks, textiles) and the subsequent marginalization of the Banyoro (Kiiza et al. 2011). The people of Bunyoro perceive themselves as the poorest in Uganda. Whether these perceptions are real or imagined is a question that one gathers from qualitative interviews in the area. They have a poor road network, no railway line, poor education and

health services, no quality polytechnic or government funded university, no high value added manufacturing industries and hardly any access to electricity. Most of the people are poor small holder agriculturalists. This, according to Kiiza et al (2011), contrasts with the pre-colonial situation where the Banyoro were proud cattle keepers or skilled artisans. The discovery of oil has thus reignited hopes of restoring the glory of Bunyoro Kitara.

Specifically for the oil revenues, the Bunyoro kingdom has been asking for between 15 per cent and 50 per cent share of the revenue to be distributed to the locals. On the political side, violent conflicts between the central government and local political authorities have been noted in Buliisa and Masindi areas. According to Anderson and Browne (2011), a number of ethnic groups in these areas including the Bagungu, Alur, Banyankole among others are laying claims to “rights” in the oil resource and also raising contestations over land rights. Although most of these conflicts are a consequence of the new oil explorations and discoveries, some arise from age-old rivalries over fishing and herding rights between the various groups. The tensions are fuelled by the expectation that the new oil revenues will make their lives better. The revenue is expected to improve the local infrastructure, education, create jobs and generally shield the community from the negative consequences of oil exploration, mining, processing and marketing. In summing up the negative consequences Lay (2010) have noted that oil development in western Uganda is most likely to exacerbate poverty, distort the Ugandan economy, increase human rights violations, entrench the power of the military forces, escalate tensions across the border with the Democratic Republic Congo, create new health problems for local communities, increase both international corruption and revenue mismanagement, reduce Uganda’s wildlife stocks, and pollute the land, water and air. Certainly the Banyoro will bear the brunt of most of these negative consequences.

Whether the emerging tensions are real or imagined there is certainly a resistance site to them that needs to be carefully managed. As with most governments, the Banyoro are quickly waking up to the reality that power concedes nothing unless there is pressure. The feeling therefore that people must organize and demand for proper compensatory mechanisms around the use of local resources is attaining credence in local discourse. Until more specific legislation is made over local resources, identity based tension and mobilization will persist and this will affect local communities and the Uganda state as a whole. If, for example, the local resources especially oil is shared equitably between all Ugandans, the Banyoro grievances with the government should increase because it is on ‘their’ land that the resource is being exploited.

It is interesting to mention that the Bunyoro region has historically remained a volatile one. Right from the colonial days when King Omukama Kabalega mounted fierce anti-colonial wars against the British troops and their Baganda

allies, through the independence period the Kingdom's marginalization has been a source of build up rebel activity of different forms. Not to mention that its geographical location is proximate to or directly overlaps areas North of the country that have previously seen significant Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) resistance activity, the region itself has in the recent times been alive to two significant conflicts. First, there has been clear evidence of rejuvenated rebel groups around the oil exploitation issue pitting local groups against immigrants. The arrival of new immigrants in the area whose aim is to obtain future rents and other benefits from oil is increasingly generating serious social tensions. The arrival of the Bafuruki or immigrants has increased fears that further immigration will eventually lead to loss of jobs and political clout for the Banyoro. Secondly, the area's close proximity to war prone DRC has meant that it has and will continue to shoulder both direct and indirect consequences of the war. Directly, more and more civilians fleeing their DRC homes because of war have found their way in Bunyoro. Indirectly and as the case has been since the early 1990s, the high incidences of insecurity and insurgency backed by smuggled small arms have made the area prone to violence and instability.

The continued arrival of new immigrants into Bunyoro has created not only tensions but also new fears and ethnic mobilization among the local Banyoro population. As has already been indicated, these fears are not only limited to land concerns but also other livelihood survival patterns in the area. The fact that Bunyoro, like other areas of Uganda subsist on agriculture makes competition over land as a resource an important source of ethnic mobilization in the area. Yet, apart from agriculture other economic livelihood activities in the region such as fishing are not insignificant. There has for instance emerged anxieties among the local community in Kyehoro and other fishing villages that their fishing rights and access to Lake Albert are being interfered with. Apart from the section of the lake that has been declared a no go zone by Tullow, the discovery of oil beneath Lake Albert has also raised worries over the risk of oil spills that could suffocate the fish to death and cause irreversible damage to the lake, the fishing villages and the surrounding environments. All these issues have important research implications to ethnic mobilization in Bunyoro.

## **Turkana**

Turkana area is located in northwestern Kenya within the Great Rift Valley. It is Kenya's largest county, with an area of 77,000 sq.km. Ethiopia, Sudan and Uganda form international boundaries with Turkana to the north and west. The area is sparsely populated, arid and inhabited mainly by the Turkana, an ethnic group of the Karamojong cluster, a group of languages which belong to the Eastern branch of Nilotic languages. Generally the Turkana have historically relied on several rivers, such as the Turkwel and Kerio to sustain their pastoral



economy, mainly for watering livestock and human consumption. Livestock has remained an important aspect of Turkana culture.

The most conspicuous feature in the area is Lake Turkana which has remained the lifeblood of the local community as a source of water and fish. The history of the Turkana is punctuated with a series of narratives surrounding their military power and wealth especially generated through livestock raids. This militaristic power enabled the Turkana to expand southwards conquering ethnic nations south of its borders. The Turkana people easily conquered groups they came in contact with by employing superior tactics of war, better weapons and military organization. By the 1600s, the Turkana basin had been fully occupied by Turkana people and allied friendly groups.

The onset of colonialism almost coincided with sporadic conflicts involving the Turkana, the Arabs, Swahilis and Abyssinian slave raiders and ivory traders. European colonization brought a new dimension to the conflict, with the Turkana putting up a lasting resistance to a complex enemy, the British. The Turkana put up and maintained active resistance to British colonial advances leading to a passive presence of colonial administration in the area. During the Second World War, the Turkana actively participated in the wars as allies of Britain against invading Italy. Turkana was used as the launching pad for the war against invading Italian forces leading to the liberation of Abyssinia, now Ethiopia. After World War II, the British led disarmament and pacification campaigns in Turkana, leading to massive disruptions and dispossession of Turkana pastoralists. The colonial administration practiced a policy of deliberate segregation of Turkana people by categorizing Turkana province as a closed district. This led to the area's marginalization and underdevelopment in the lead up to Kenya's independence.

The narratives of marginalization, poverty and underdevelopment have been at the centre of the Turkana experience during the colonial and post-colonial periods. Apart from these, there has been archaeological discoveries in the region. Four sites of Stone Age cultures have been located in Turkana demonstrating that the area is important in the history of man's earliest ancestors – *Australopithecus*, *Homo habilis*, *Homo erectus*. Until Tullow oil started making explorations in the area, various archaeologists, remarkably the Leakeys, had established critical historical sites in this region. Like in Bunyoro however the new oil discoveries in the area are raising new frontiers of debate in the region. Claims of inclusiveness, indigenous verses foreigners, and rights over land, pasture and water are emerging as central concerns.

Turkana has for a long time suffered from high levels of resource related intra and inter community conflicts, cattle raiding, and road banditry, as well as the spill over of conflicts from neighbouring states (Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Uganda). In the recent times there has been sustained arms flows across Turkana's long, porous border, such that the Turkana community has become the most

militarized in Kenya (HRW 2002). The region also has a small government and police presence which has fueled the claims by the locals over whether they are in “Kenya” or “outside”. The region is not only remote but its poor infrastructure equally curtails any external investment in the area. In a recent government survey, Turkana ranked as Kenya’s poorest county, with 94.3 percent of the people living in poverty (DNA 2011). This is the context that seems to be generating the feeling of marginalization and exclusion.

From March 2012 when Tullow oil intensified its explorations in Turkana and made significant oil discoveries in Twiga South-1, Ngamia-1 and Etuko-1 sites, the debate has centred on the relationship between the local community, the state and multinational companies. More important has been the ownership rights of the land on which the oil is being explored and the necessary compensatory mechanisms for the local community. Added to these have been the incessant demonstrations by the local community over employment rights in the oil firms, that have led to stoppages in the exploration exercise (DNA 2013). All these issues only represent a tip of the iceberg in the larger narrative on ethnic mobilization and resources. Not to be forgotten, there is the recent discovery of the massive underground water reservoir in Turkana that has equally ignited the interest in the area that initially seemed neglected by the state. The relationship of these issues to the politics of immigration, indigenous rights and sanctity or otherwise of internal and international borders present a lively interplay in this narrative and research.

### **Borders, Resources and New Forms of Ethnic Mobilization in Bunyoro and Turkana**

As the new oil explorations and discovery in Bunyoro and Turkana continue to generate what Frynas and Paulo (2007) referred to as the “new scramble for African oil”, the ways in which this process is taking shape not only in remote areas but also within volatile border zones need to be clearly conceptualized. The battle over border resources, the tensions and fears occasioned by this at the community, national and regional levels is a theme that deserves greater attention. Analytically this theme is not far removed from the previous contestations over trans-boundary resources in the region. Within the Great Lakes region, like elsewhere in the world, boundaries (both internal and international) have remained important definitive forms of statehood, sites of citizenship and arenas of development. As territorial organizations of political, cultural and economic power, boundaries have, as Lord Curzon (1907) noted, become the razor’s edge on which hang suspended modern issues of war or peace, of life or death to nations. In the last five years alone there has been heightened tensions and increasing potential for intra and inter-state conflicts in the Great Lakes region due to inter-ethnic animosities usually fanned by political differences and growing discoveries or rumors of the existence of natural resources on borders or in borderlands.

The areas of Bunyoro and Turkana in Uganda and Kenya respectively are surrounded by a multiplicity of international and internal boundaries within the outlying areas. Lake Albert and Lake Turkana are perhaps the most conspicuous natural features in these two areas. Like in other hotspot border areas in the Great Lakes region the Albertine and Turkana border areas have been confronted by several border disputes in the recent times. As Okumu (2010) has pointed out, these disputes are mainly over territorial claims, and are most frequently caused by the lack of clearly defined and marked boundaries, the availability of transboundary resources and security related matters.

The proximity of Albertine and Turkana to DRC and South Sudan respectively pose an important dimension in the discussion around state borders, security and other related concerns including immigration and refugee flows. Although disputes over trans-boundary resources in the Albertine and Turkana have drawn attention only in the last five years, border security has been the main focus in border relations throughout the two regions over many years, with cattle rustling, drug trafficking, human trafficking, gun smuggling and auto theft all featuring in the economy of the borderland areas. Other security issues relate to terrorist activities, illegal and undocumented immigrations through illegal border points by communities that have relatives on both sides of the border, and illegal cross – border activities, such as the use of herds-boys as informers for human traffickers and monitoring the movements of the patrol teams (*ibid*).

Perhaps, the other most pronounced causes of the resource-driven conflicts in the region have been the dwindling economic fortunes coupled with increased population pressure, external competition and poor management of the trans-boundary resources both in water and on land. As Khadiagala (2010) has pointed out in reference to the resources of Lake Victoria, as these resources have declined, states are increasingly being forced to institute more restrictive maritime controls on the exploitation of its resources. The case of the Albertine Graben and Turkana is critical in analyzing this phenomenon. More specifically, these two areas which previously seemed neglected by the central administrations in Kampala and Nairobi are quickly emerging as key political and economic focal points.

The analysis of trans-boundary conflicts over resources cannot be restricted to water but land as well. As Tullow and other companies have made major oil discoveries across various border locations in the Albetine Graben and in Turkana, new forms of demands and mobilizations have come up. The news on the discoveries is generating intense debates on the implications of this new resource find on the political economy of these volatile border areas. While some of the debates have clearly focused on the benefits of the oil discovery to the region in terms of the “windfall” oil revenues that will deliver substantial social, economic and infrastructural improvements, some analysts have adopted a cautionary stance. The latter, building on “resource curse” arguments have noted that generally, the discovery

of oil and other resources has often paradoxically led to economic stagnation, the death of other traditional and non-traditional exports and conflicts.

The foregoing debates are important in understanding the dynamics around and about trans-boundary resources. As already observed, most of the trans-border regions where resources have been discovered are ecologically sensitive areas with enormous amounts of other meaningful resources that provide livelihood options to the various local communities. The broader grievances over land rights and especially between who, the locals or the governments should have the final say with the multinationals over land access and use in the respective study areas is a critical issue. The latter on the other hand seem to generate new tensions around broader questions of indigenous and foreign land rights. All these issues have important implications on local, national and regional redefinitions of space and boundaries between various ethnicities.

The local border communities are quickly waking up to the reality that power concedes nothing unless there is pressure. The feeling therefore that people must organize and demand for proper compensatory mechanisms around the use of local resources is attaining credence in local discourse. Until more specific legislation is made over local resources, identity based tension and mobilization will persist and this will affect local communities and the various states in general. Ethnic mobilization, the process by which a group organizes along ethnic lines in the pursuit of collective social, economic and political ends, has been noted to be at the centre of state stability and legitimacy questions in Africa and other parts of the world. Debates around oil discoveries in Bunyoro and Turkana are restructuring economic and political competition in ways that emphasize linguistic, religious and cultural differences among populations and in turn encourage mobilization on the basis of ethnicity. These ethnic claims continue to appeal to new redefinitions of space and boundaries as well as appeal to issues of self-determination in the various regions.

There are certainly great implications of the Bunyoro and Turkana experiences on the broader issues of local, national and regional redefinitions of space and boundaries between various ethnicities. Issues of cooperation and conflict generate diverse interpretations at different cultural levels and both international and internal boundaries play a key role in redefining their orientations in the region. Conflicts always presuppose a critical focus among social science and other researchers on some of the mechanisms that could ameliorate the problem. Although the concept of borders as has been articulated in the literature implies the widespread notion of their “artificiality” and “unnaturalness”, there is need for cooperation between economically and culturally linked border regions as a mode of strengthening regional cooperation. Also important is the need for proper management of common resources in border areas such as rivers, lakes and forests and the recognition by border populations of their role in addressing their own survival and developmental concerns.

## Conclusion

By all indications both Bunyoro and Turkana regions are quickly emerging as important locations in the politics around oil explorations. While the new drive and resurgence in the interest around oil exploration in the two areas have been pitched at the broader state-multinational relations, the dynamics shaping the local communities' assertions and claims need to be further explored. More important are the implications of these ethnic assertions and claims to issues of state security and stability in the Great Lakes region. There is growing anxiety in the two study regions that the oil rush may fuel new economic and political conflicts at the community and state levels if they are not well managed. The potential of conflicts at the community level revolving around claims over land and the need to have a share of the proceeds from the oil is just but a tip of the iceberg. It is, like the case of Bunyoro and Turkana marked by longstanding and unresolved disputes that could go beyond the current debate on oil but which obviously emphasize issues of marginality and exclusion. The extent to which states are likely to deal with the internal political tensions by striking clear collaborations between the local communities and the multinational companies may mean that the oil revenues will have greater rewards to all. This will certainly dispel the possibilities of reducing the development of the oil sector to a simplistic choice between "blessing" and "curse" to states. But again, finally, there is all likelihood that the international oil prices are plummeting and no one seems to be sure what this new trend will portend for the massive explorations, expectations and anxieties already generated at the state and community levels.

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