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**OIL, CONFLICT AND MEDIA. STUDY OF OIL-RELATED  
STATEMENTS OF THE SOUTH SUDANESE CONFLICT PARTIES.**

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This study focuses on the role of oil in the South Sudan conflict in 2013–2014. The study consists of a description of the history of the conflict and a qualitative content analysis of the statements of the conflict parties, published in news websites Sudan Tribune and Bloomberg. The main conclusion is that oil has a role in the conflict: the government, which receives most of its revenues from oil, finances its war efforts with oil money, which has politicized the meaning of oil in the conflict context and made oil fields strategic targets to the rebels. Whether ensuring the access to oil money is a root cause of the conflict, needs to be researched further. Oil dependence of South Sudan is, however, a serious problem which should be addressed once peace is restored. Regional and international actors involved in the South Sudanese oil industry are in the key position in pressuring the conflict parties to peace.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AU	African Union
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CNPC	China National Petroleum Corporation
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICG	International Crisis Group
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement
LAPSSET	Lamu Port South Sudan Ethiopia Transport corridor
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
Nilepet	Nile Petroleum Corporation
NORINCO	China North Industries Corporation
ONGC	Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited
SPLM/A	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army
SPLM-N	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army -North
SPLM/A-IO	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan
UPDF	Uganda People's Defense Forces

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[24.2.2015]

Wikipedia Commons: Oil concessions of South Sudan

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## INTRODUCTION

The South Sudan conflict, which started on 15 December 2013, is one of the severest humanitarian crises in the world at the moment. The root causes of the conflict can be found in the political power struggle between President Salva Kiir and his former vice president, Riek Machar, internal divisions of the ruling party SPLM and ethnic tensions.

In this study, I focus only on one of the aspects of the conflict: oil. South Sudan is one of the poorest countries in the world, and it is completely dependent on oil, of which the government receives 70 % of its revenues (African Economic Outlook 2014, 2). South Sudan needs its oil wealth for development and poverty alleviation, but during the conflict, oil fields have been targeted by the rebels and the oil production has fallen dramatically (ICG 2014a). Therefore, it is important to research how oil is linked to the conflict and whether oil had a role in the outbreak of the conflict.

Relations between natural resources and civil wars have been studied at least since 1990s. One of the most notable theories of this relation is Collier and Hoeffler's (2001) model or the "greed vs. grievance" theory, which, despite many critics, has also inspired further research which elaborates causal relations and characteristics of natural resources and civil wars. Another way to analyze relations between natural resources and conflicts is the concept of resource curse, which links the weak economic development to the fragility of state, and therefore, to civil wars.

The link between the natural resources and civil wars has been established, even though the actual mechanisms affecting it are contested. Many of the studies of natural resources and conflicts are quantitative and use large amounts of national-level data in order to generalize. Nevertheless, the statistical analysis cannot reliably answer all questions. The mere existence of natural resources in a conflict-torn country does not tell whether the natural resources are linked to the civil war at all (Buhaug, Gates & Lujala 2009, 566); the more important aspect in linking natural resource extraction and civil war is how the main actors in a conflict interpret the situation (Aspinall 2007, 952).

In addition to the practical matter of oil politics, my research contributes to the debate about the statehood and state fragility. South Sudan is ranked as the most fragile state in the world (Fund For Peace 2014), and there is evidence of weak state structures affecting to the outbreak of the conflict (e.g. Radon & Logan 2014). On the other hand, Haggmann and Péclard (2010) criticize the state fragility idea for judging the African states for not following the Western ideal. According to them, the African state is more complex than the Western ideal state as a monopoly over violence in a certain territory: it is a dynamic process in which various actors negotiate constantly evolving power relations. Alternative way to look at the South Sudan conflict is to analyze it as a negotiating process in which various actors justify their claims to power using certain repertoires (e.g. propaganda) and use different resources (e.g. oil money) to achieve and legitimize the dominant position.

I study the role of oil in the South Sudan conflict qualitatively. The first step is to create a “thick, detailed description” of the sequences of the conflict (Collier, Hoeffler & Sambanis 2005, 1) and then, to study the statements of the government and the rebels in order to find out how the concerned actors themselves articulate the relation of a natural resource and the conflict. I focus on the statements of the representatives of the main belligerents because while they are not the only relevant players, they are still the most important actors of the conflict and the peace process: they are the ones whose power struggle was a starting point of the conflict, and being at the center of the peace negotiations, they are in position to find a solution.

I analyze news articles of two news websites, Sudan Tribune and Bloomberg, which have published interviews and speeches of the both conflict parties since the beginning of the conflict. They are the most logical choice for catching most of the oil-related statements regarding South Sudan, because Sudan Tribune publishes statements of both the government and the opposition and Bloomberg follows closely how the situation in the country impacts oil industry.

My research questions are:

- 1) In which ways oil and the conflict are connected by the representatives of the government and the rebels in the published statements, and how they reflect the wider social and political context?



2) Do different actors use different meanings, and if they do, in which ways?

In the first chapter, I discuss theoretical insights regarding the relation between natural resources and conflict. I begin with the “greed vs. grievance” theory and its empirical findings, its critics and other studies that have elaborated the empirical findings. Next, I turn to address resource curse and its connections to the conflicts. It must be emphasized that in this research, I focus on civil wars, even though in the case of the Horn of Africa, almost all local tensions and strives have an international element (Mesfin 2013, 11), and South Sudan is not an exception (ICG 2014a).

In the second chapter, I cover the history of South Sudan and the evolution of the South Sudanese oil industry. This enables perceiving the current conflict and the state of the economy of South Sudan in a wider context.

In the third chapter, I introduce the material and the method. In addition to introducing the news websites, Sudan Tribune and Bloomberg, and the criteria of selecting pieces of news into my sample, I discuss problems related to using media texts as a material, especially in a conflict context. For the purposes of finding a main message from the media texts, I have chosen qualitative content analysis as my method. Content analysis has common roots in mass media research (Krippendorff 2004, 5–7) and war-time propaganda research (ibid, 8–10).

In the fourth chapter, I introduce the results of the analysis. It seems that oil has a role in the South Sudan conflict, even though its meaning is different to the government and to the rebels. For this reason, and because of the different audiences, the oil-related statements of the conflict parties are analyzed separately.

In the fifth chapter, I discuss the results of the analysis and connect it to the theoretical background. The main conclusion is that oil has a role in the conflict: the government, which receives most of its revenues from oil, finances its war efforts with oil money, which has made oil fields strategic targets to the rebels. The importance of oil can be seen also in the regional and international involvement in the conflict and in the government’s assurances of its capability of defending the oil fields. As the political system in South Sudan is corrupted, it is also possible that ensuring the access to oil money is a root cause of the conflict. This argument is difficult to prove or disprove, because if the ultimate motive were purely

economic interests, the conflict parties would never say it in public. This issue should be researched further.

The sixth chapter is a conclusion in which the main ideas of the study are presented briefly. It seems that oil has several roles in the conflict: it contributes indirectly to the outbreak of the conflict and is a strategic resource and legitimate target during the conflict, as well as a tool for propaganda. Although it seems that the resource curse theory might be accurate in the case of South Sudan, the applicability of the “greed vs. grievance” model is not that clear: the risk factors of the model exist, but the mechanisms linking oil to the conflict appears to be more complex than described in the research literature. The results also implicate that the economic importance of oil is a reason why oil has become such an essential part of the conflict, which means that in order to avoid situations such as this in the future, diversifying the economy should be a top priority.

## **1 NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONFLICTS**

Civil wars have become one of the major threats to global peace and security, and other than military factors, such as the environment, poverty and natural resources have become relevant aspects of security. The UN Security Council has recognized that natural resources may contribute to outbreak, escalation and prolongation of conflicts, and thus, the Security Council stresses the importance of good governance of natural resources (UNSC 2007). Although natural resources are seldom, if ever, the sole reason for conflict, they have played a role in at least 18 conflicts since 1990s (UNEP 2009, 8).

There is, however, a lack of unanimity about the role of natural resources in the conflicts. Discrepancies exist in the strength of the connection between the conflicts and also about the actual causal mechanisms behind the connection. In this chapter, I introduce two major theoretical standpoints regarding the role of natural resources in civil wars: the “greed vs. grievance” model and the resource curse theory. These theories are the most relevant ones for my research, as I focus on the economic aspect of the South Sudan conflict.

### **1.1 Economic explanation of civil wars 1: “Greed vs. grievance”**

“Greed vs. grievance”, an econometric model developed by Collier and Hoeffler (2001), is an attempt to prove that it is an opportunity rather than a motive which is most often the decisive factor in the civil war onset. In contrast to political science explanations for civil wars, Collier and Hoeffler argue that just a mere motive to rebel is not a satisfactory explanation, but that also atypical circumstances that make the rebellion feasible have to be explained as well (ibid, 1; Collier et al. 2003, 57–8).

Within this model, a civil war is defined by the existence of an identifiable rebel group challenging the government, with at least 5 % of casualties on each side (Collier & Hoeffler 2001, 3). Civil wars are understood as an economic activity born out of circumstances where the cost of rebellion is low and where there are chances to generate income. According to Collier and Hoeffler (2001, 16), these circumstances include the possibility to fund a rebellion, for example through natural resource exploitation or financing by diasporas, and low costs of enlisting rebels, consisting of availability of uneducated young males, low

growth rate and low mean income per capita. Other issues which provide opportunities for rebels are a cheap price of conflict-specific capital, social cohesion and a military advantage through dispersed population and a rough terrain (ibid, 17). Tested against the proxies of motive and grievance, such as inequality, political rights, ethnic polarization and religious fractionalization, Collier and Hoeffler found that the opportunity proxies are more significant in predicting the risk of civil war (ibid, 17).

Even though the financing of the rebellion is only one of the aspects of the greed vs. grievance model, it is the most relevant from the point of view of my research. The rebel groups are political, military and business organizations that need substantial financing in order to challenge the government (Collier et al. 2003, 56). After the end of the Cold War, most rebel groups have to find funding from sources other than from the rival superpowers, and the regional governments have increased their donations to the rebel groups (ibid, 74). Other sources for funding are donations from diaspora or foreign governments, kidnappings and ransoms, exploitation of natural resources or selling the extraction rights of natural resources which they do not yet control (ibid, 74–77; Ross 2003, 30–35).

Exploitation of natural resources, such as diamonds, gold or oil, is a logical choice of business for rebels. Natural resources have unusually high revenues and the production is tied to a specific area without the possibility to relocate it, which means that they are relatively easily exploited and looted (Ross 2003, 30–31). Exploiting natural resources does not necessarily require more than gaining military control over the production areas, which the rebel groups as military organizations can easily manage (Collier et al. 2003, 75). Even when some extractive industries require technologies too sophisticated for the rebels to use, the multinational corporations responsible for extraction can be targeted by the rebels, for example they can threaten the infrastructure and demand protection money (ibid, 75–77).

In fact, the rebels do not have to be in control of the production areas in order to generate income from natural resources. The rebels are able to sell advance rights to the exploitation of resources that they do not yet control, but the control of which they plan to fight for, with the help of finance from the buyers of advance rights (Collier et al. 2003, 77). These advance rights, or “booty futures”, may be even more dangerous than direct looting, because they may prolong the conflict by giving a chance of finance to groups that might otherwise be forced to surrender (Ross 2003, 32–33). The booty futures are not only desperate measures for rebel

groups, but also legitimate governments have used them when the rebels have seriously threatened their position (ibid, 34–35).

### *1.1.1 Elaboration of the greed vs. grievance model*

Several researchers have elaborated the findings and theoretical model of Collier and Hoeffler by examining how characteristics and location of a natural resource, as well as different socio-economic linkages of resource production or extraction affect the dynamics of a conflict.

Auty (2004) emphasizes the economic linkages of exploitation of natural resources: some of the resources, based on their form and characteristics, are more likely to fuel civil wars than others. One of the characteristics is whether they are concentrated in one area (point resource) or scattered over wider region (diffuse resource). According to Auty, point resources such as high-tech mineral mining increase the risk of conflict, because due to their capital-intensity, imported technology and small work-force, they do not have socio-economical linkages to the rest of society and only the rents contribute to the economy. Another aspect is the value/weight ratio: for example drugs and alluvial diamonds have low production costs, high prices and they are easily moved, which makes them much more “lootable” than “bulk commodities” such as oil and copper. The proximity of a porous international border is the third socio-economic linkage which facilitates rebels’ access to the international markets to gain revenue from their plunder.

On the other hand, Le Billon (2001) introduces a taxonomy of natural resources which, according to him, is associated with the type of civil war. Natural resources can be classified according to whether they are located near or far from the centre of power (proximate or distant resources) and if they are concentrated in one area or scattered in larger areas (point or diffuse resources; the concept is from Auty, see above). If there is a civil war, in the case of a point and proximate resource, such as an oil field next to the capital, the civil war is probably a coup, as in order to gain control over such a proximate and probably well-protected resource, a rebel group has to capture the state apparatus. On the other hand, in the case of a scattered distant resource, such as alluvial diamonds widely scattered over remote areas, a civil war is probably a fight between warlords, who benefit from easily accessible natural resources which governments find difficult to protect.

Lujala (2010) and Buhaug, Gates and Lujala (2009) emphasize the importance of researching the location of natural resources and their relation to conflicts. They (Buhaug, Gates & Lujala 2009, 566) criticize research using only national-level statistical data of natural resources in certain countries and comparing them to data of civil wars, without finding whether natural resources are actually relevant to the civil war at all. Therefore, Lujala (2010) has researched relations between conflict severity, measured by a number of combat deaths, and the location of natural resources on a conflict zone, and found that gemstone mining and hydrocarbon production increases the number of battle deaths. Buhaug, Gates and Lujala (2009) analyzed the impact of geographical issues, such as proximity of an international border and an access to natural resources, on the duration of civil war. They found that a production of natural resources in a conflict zone during a conflict prolongs a civil war, which supported their hypothesis that the location of natural resources matter in conflict dynamics.

### ***1.1.2 Critics of the “greed vs. grievance” model***

Collier and Hoeffler’s findings about the relationship between natural resources and civil war have received much attention from media, policy-makers and also from other scholars, some of whom have been very critical of their work and some of whom have elaborated their model (e.g. Ross 2004a; Fearon 2005; Humphreys 2005). It has been even argued that in the research of civil war economics, the role of natural resources has been exaggerated and that other, more diverse ways of financing war has been neglected (Wennman 2007). This direction is, perhaps, justified, because much of the further research by Collier and Hoeffler as well as the critics are focused on the role of natural resources. On the other hand, one has to remember that even though the role of natural resources was one of the major findings of Collier and Hoeffler, their model was much more comprehensive than the critical scholars give credit for. As presented in the original texts (e.g. Collier & Hoeffler 2001 and Collier, Hoeffler & Sambanis 2005), their model is based on a diverse array of different variables of opportunity or conditions which make a rebellion financially feasible or even attractive, and natural resources were an important, but not the only predictor of civil war.

The sharpest criticism, however, is focused on the statistical relationship between natural resources and civil wars. Several researchers (Ross 2004a; Fearon 2005) have challenged the

robustness of the statistical findings of Collier and Hoeffler. To begin with, there are concerns that the suggested correlation runs in the opposite direction to that which has been assumed: perhaps a civil war, or low-intensity violence prior to it, drives away manufacturing sector and thus makes the state dependent on natural resource exploitation which cannot be relocated (Ross 2004b, 338; Humphreys 2005, 510). Ross (2004b) reports of several studies in which Collier and Hoeffler's research has been replicated with varying results. Such results, some of which do not indicate any significant correlation at all, can, according to Ross, be the result of different datasets and timeframes used by the researchers or of too broad a category of "primary commodity exports". One possibility is that the association simply is not robust. Fearon (2005) finds that the correlation between natural resources and civil war is much weaker than suggested by Collier and Hoeffler. Even where there is a correlation it is most likely due to oil exports than to primary commodity exports in general; according to him, the mechanism linking oil and conflict is probably weakness of state institutions. Even the data used by Collier and Hoeffler is criticized by Humphreys (2005, 522), who points out that Collier and Hoeffler's proxy for natural resources, the share of primary commodity exports in GDP, does not include the most likely conflict resources, drugs and diamonds.

The most prominent assumed mechanism by which natural resources affect the risk of civil war is looting by rebels as a way to finance war or covering its "start-up" costs. This mechanism is questioned. In his econometric cross-national study, Humphreys (2005) has identified several possible causal mechanisms linking natural resources and civil wars. He does not find support for the assumption that rebellions are started in order to benefit from natural resources or that the rebels attempt to capture a state or secede because of the possibility of gaining control over natural resource wealth. On the other hand, he argues that the real link between natural resources and civil war is not the "availability of lootable resources", but more likely the negative impact of primary commodity dependence on the structure of the economy. On the other hand, Ross (2004a), even though he also finds no evidence to support the view that looting natural resources would affect the onset of civil war, argues that looting natural resources seems to be more associated with the duration of the conflict, lengthening some conflicts and shortening others. Furthermore, he found additional mechanisms, such as the increased risk of external intervention because of natural resources or the pre-emptive repression of resource-rich areas by the government.

Even though Collier and Hoeffler's model has received criticism, it has been admitted that despite the shortcomings of the statistical evidence, the basic idea behind the theory is correct: if there is funding available to the rebels, the risk of civil war is probably higher (Fearon 2005, 486). Ross (2004a, 35) even admits that the correlation exists, even though there are disagreements about the causal mechanisms behind it. He also reports some regular patterns found in earlier studies, such as that the association of oil exports with the onset of conflict, and the correlation of drugs and gemstones with the duration of conflict (Ross 2004b, 338).

The obvious problem with the "greed vs. grievance" studies and their critics is that most are quantitative studies with large-scale data with the intention to find a general theory about the role of the natural resources in conflicts. First, there are several conflicts and civil wars in the world that have nothing do with natural resources, such as Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka; and there is evidence supporting the idea that natural resource conflicts might only be a subset of conflicts (Ross 2004b, 341). Second, quantitative data itself is not necessarily the best way to assess the role of natural resources in conflicts. National-level data of natural resources in a country torn by civil war does not tell whether the natural resources are linked to the civil war at all (Buhaug, Gates & Lujala 2009, 566). Natural resources themselves are not a reason of conflict, but how the local actors interpret their meaning in certain context may legitimize a rebellion (Aspinall 2007): how natural resources become source of conflict is politics, and in order to study it, one has to go beyond the statistics. Qualitative research, with detailed descriptions to track down the sequences of the conflict, would be useful for finding out the actual mechanisms by which natural resources affect the certain conflicts (Collier, Hoeffler & Sambanis 2005, 1).

## **1.2 Economic explanation of civil wars 2: Resource curse**

Another possible way to link natural resources and civil wars is resource curse: conflicts may be only one of the negative consequences of poor management of abundant natural resources (Ross 2004b, 350–351). In this case, civil wars would not be fought because of greed of rebels and feasibility of rebellion, but rather because of incapability of weak states to resolve social problems and to control their territory (Ross 2003, 24–25). The findings of Fearon (2005) and Humphreys (2005) actually suggest that primary reasons for resource conflicts might be found in the structures of economy and weakness of state.



Originally, the finding of slower economic growth of natural resource dependent countries was made and elaborated by economists, such as Auty (1998) and Sachs and Warner (1997). Only later, the concept was captured by researchers interested in natural resources and conflicts (e.g. Ross 2003, Dunning 2005) as a part of a “political turn”, increased interest in the mechanisms behind the correlations (Ron 2005). This happened also vice versa: economists, such as Humphreys, Sachs and Stiglitz (2007, 13–14) have included conflicts in their studies of resource curse.

### *1.2.1 What is resource curse?*

Resource curse is a paradoxical situation where some resource-rich countries have weaker economical development and poorer governance than the countries with fewer resources (Humphreys, Sachs & Stiglitz 2007, 1). In the late nineteenth century, natural resources were a prerequisite for industrialization and economic development (Sachs & Warner 1997, 3), but as the shipping costs of resources declined, the resource-rich countries lost their comparative advantage to countries with fewer resources (Auty 1998, 37–38). However, reasons for why large natural resource endowments become in some cases an obstacle for economic development are more complex.

The adverse effects of resource curse are based on distinctive features of the natural resource extraction industry and the economic incentives and political consequences which it causes (Humphreys, Sachs & Stiglitz 2007, 3–4). Resource extraction is an economic “enclave” because the extraction industry can operate without forging links to other parts of economy, without large domestic work force or even without the cooperation of local population (ibid, 4). The economic incentives are caused by rents, or unearned rewards for control or ownership of natural resources, which the government receives as royalties or taxes by corporations without involvement of the population (McFerson 2010, 344).

One of the economic effects of resource curse is the so-called Dutch disease. The Dutch disease means a negative impact of sudden increase of income of state, often linked to discoveries of natural resources (Ebrahim-zadeh 2003). The increased flow of foreign currency, e.g. oil earnings, leads to increased public and private spending, which raises

sharply the real exchange rate, which, in turn, causes the decline of non-resource export sectors and at the same time raises demand on non-traded goods, such as local services (ibid; Sachs 2007, 181–182). This decline happens because the real exchange rate appreciation weakens the competitiveness of the non-resource sector (Ebrahim-zadeh 2003) and because labor and capital shift from export-oriented industries to domestic non-traded sector and to resource sector (Sachs 2007, 183; Ebrahim-zadeh 2003). Even though it is debatable whether the Dutch disease is a harmful “disease” at all, it is clear that every economic transition is painful politically and economically (Humphreys, Sachs & Stiglitz 2007, 6), especially if the declining industries used to contribute significantly to the economic growth (Sachs 2007, 183–184).

Another economic problem that comes with dependence on natural resources is volatility of prices and revenue collection, which causes further problems. Especially timing of earnings is problematic, because within the natural resource industry, the rate of extraction can differ and also the timing of payments by corporations often is irregular, for example due to tax exemptions (Humphreys, Sachs & Stiglitz 2007, 6). In addition, the prices of primary commodities, especially oil, are highly volatile: oil prices can change 5–10 % in a week (ibid, 7). Volatility of earnings means that resource-dependent countries have difficulties in long-term planning, which usually leads to high expenditures in the boom years and deep cuts in bust years, often worsened by increased lending during the good years and difficulties in debt service in bad years (ibid, 8; Shaxson 2005, 312). Volatility also raises interest rates and non-resource productive sectors are damaged by the Dutch disease phenomenon during the boom years (Shaxson 2005, 312).

The characteristics of natural resource wealth also have an impact on how the wealth is used. Usually, the valuable natural resources are nonrenewable, which means that by spending revenues from natural resources a country is “living off its capital” (Humphreys, Sachs & Stiglitz 2007, 8–9). Another problem arises with large amounts of revenue, since politicians, especially if they have uncertain hold to power, are tempted to spend it sooner than later in order to pursue short-term political objectives instead of investing revenues in longer-term economic development (ibid). Furthermore, if a state relies on natural resources for its revenue, it usually neglects investing in education and in creating a diverse skillful workforce, without which diversification of economy is impossible (ibid, 10).

In addition to economic problems, natural resource wealth also has an impact on politics: countries dependent on natural resources tend to be weaker, more unstable and less democratic than other countries (Humphreys, Sachs & Stiglitz 2007, 10). The core problem is rents, the large amounts of unearned wealth brought by natural resource extraction. A government which relies on natural resource rents is not dependent on raising revenue by taxation, which means that the government does not have to face demands of their citizens and create robust governance institutions (Karl 2007, 260–261) and that the citizens do not have means to pressure or monitor their government (ibid, 264–265). Without checks and balances, the government is free to spend its expenditure in ways which serve only its own interests at the expense of the population, encouraging rent-seeking behavior, corruption and patronage politics (ibid, 264–265). Low legitimacy and inefficient institutions enhances also the power of the neo-patrimonial networks, informal networks based on patronage relations and ethnic or other types of ties, which function parallel to state structures and increase corruption and nepotism (McFerson 2010, 342–323).

On the other hand, the resource curse thesis has been also criticized, for example because of its inability to explain the huge variation between the performances of resource-rich countries. The critics have presented different options which might explain the variation. For example, Basedau and Lay (2009) have noted that most of the literature on resource curse does not make a distinction between resource-abundance and resource-dependence, and suggest that it is the dependence on a single primary commodity which causes the problems. On the other hand, Di John (2011) argues that the role of politics is crucial in explaining whether natural resources become a curse or not, and the analysis of power relations and political issues are neglected in the resource curse literature. There is also evidence that the quality of the institutions, measured by indices for example for rule of law, bureaucratic quality and lack of corruption, has an impact on whether natural resources will accelerate or slow the economic growth (Mehlum, Moene & Torvik 2006).

### ***1.2.2 How does resource curse relate to conflicts?***

There are several suggested mechanisms by which resource curse can cause conflicts. The economic problems caused by resource curse create circumstances for a conflict, or they act as a precondition for a civil war (Auty 2004). Corruption, irregular boom and bust cycles and

inequality cause grievances, which might exacerbate the existing tensions, such as identity-based issues (Karl 2007, 268–269). In bad economic situation, it is more likely that people challenge their government and it is easier for rebels to recruit (Ross 2003, 21).

One of the mechanisms is the grievances in producing regions. People in producing regions may suffer from negative effects of resource extraction, such as health and environmental problems, or feel that they have a stronger claim on the resource wealth than the population in other parts of the country (Humphreys, Sachs & Stiglitz 2007, 13). Usually, the grievances of the producing regions are genuine, because often the people who suffer most about the resource extraction tend to be those who get the least rewards (Karl 2007, 268–269). The worst-case scenario is that these real or perceived grievances of the population in the producing-region may give rise to secessionist claims by giving the population an economic incentive to secede (Ross 2003, 27–28). It has also been suggested that if the marginalized identity-groups are located in the producing regions, it will increase the risk of a civil war (Basedau & Richter 2014, 552).

As it is usually the state leaders who control the resource wealth, the non-state actors may have an incentive to capture the state apparatus in order to gain control of the wealth (Humphreys, Sachs & Stiglitz 2007, 13–14). The huge economic benefits from getting the control of oil revenues might be one of the explanations for higher conflict risk of oil-producing countries (Fearon 2005, 503–504).

As described above, the resource-abundant countries often have weak state structures and institutions for several reasons. It has been argued that the weakness of these institutions is the reason for civil wars in resource-rich countries. The governments are unable or unwilling to develop institutions that would put the whole country effectively under its control (Fearon 2005), which means that the government is unable to intervene in social conflicts (Ross 2003, 25) and reconstitute itself after political upheavals (Karl 2007, 269). In this sense, democracy, as a system designed to resolve conflicts peacefully, can be one of the mitigating factors of civil war risk in resource-dependent countries (Basedau & Richter 2014, 554).

### *1.2.3 Does resource curse always cause conflicts?*

The statistical evidence for the abovementioned mechanisms is mixed. For example, Ross (2004a) does not find evidence to support the idea that the grievances of the population in the producing regions might cause conflicts. He admits that these grievances are often real, but they do not lead to a civil war, unless it is a secessionist war (Ross 2004a, 51–52). Nevertheless, Humphreys (2005) finds support for mechanisms of grievance, such as the real or perceived injustice suffered by the population in the producing regions and unjust distribution of the natural resource wealth.

On the other hand, the effects of the resource curse might also contribute to peace and political stability. For example, corruption and inefficient economy do not necessarily cause political problems. The governments of resource-rich states can use the resource wealth to “buy off” the key segments of the society in order to ensure their compliance (Fjelde 2009). The crucial issue is whether a country uses its resource wealth to stabilize the society through high military spending, the patronage networks and wide-scale distribution of the wealth is whether the country is genuinely resource-rich or just resource-dependent (Basedau & Lay 2009). Attempts to diversify the economy might be even dangerous for the political elites in resource-rich countries, because the economic prosperity might enable the opposition to challenge the government (Dunning 2005).

The resource curse does not affect only the government but also the rebels and the potential rebels. For example, Weinstein (2005) argues that the rebel organizations which rely on looting of natural resources as their source of finance attract mostly recruits with low commitment and short-term goals, which undermines the strength of a rebel organization. In addition, the rent-seeking behavior, which is harmful for the cohesion of the society and favors competing for personal gain, makes also starting a rebellion more difficult (Fjelde 2009, 203).

It is clear that there is a huge variation between the stability and prosperity of resource-rich countries. Even though the resource curse theory cannot truly explain that variation, it is reasonable to assume that the institutions and politics play a role, as suggested by Di John (2011) and Mehlum, Moene and Torvik (2006). The findings of Basedau and Richter (2014), focusing on oil production, also support this assumption: according to them, risk of conflict

caused by the oil production will be mitigated if the government is capable enough to manage potential conflicts through democratic institutions, such as Norway, or to use oil revenues to “buy peace”, such as the Persian Gulf countries. It might be possible that resource curse and its adverse effects can be just consequences of bad politics.

### **1.3 Evaluation of the “greed vs. grievance” model and the resource curse theory**

Although the resource curse theory has received much criticism, the basic logic behind it is rational. Taken into account the huge amounts of money involved, it would be a wonder if natural resource industries would not encourage rent-seeking behavior and corruption and thus, weaken the state institutions. The resource curse theory, and especially the elaborations that emphasize the role of politics, is a justified choice for a theory, at least in explaining the indirect effects of oil industry on the conflict outbreak.

Similarly, even though the statistical base of “greed vs. grievance” model is questionable, the rationale behind it is sound: the rebels need to finance their activities somehow, and natural resources, if available, are a feasible possibility among others. Some of the underlying assumptions behind the model are simplistic. For example, it is usually assumed that there is only one mechanism functioning at a time even though the cases of resource conflicts are often very complex. Another simplistic assumption is the emphasis on looting, the illegal acquiring of natural resources by the rebels, while neglecting many other types of possibilities on how natural resources are linked to the conflicts. Because of these shortcomings, the study of resource conflicts should be complemented with qualitative research.

### **1.4 Conclusion**

There is a certain level of agreement that the natural resources and civil wars are linked, even though the researchers disagree on the exact causal mechanisms and the theoretical assumptions behind them. The role of natural resources in civil wars has become a paradigm inside the research of conflicts (Ron 2005, 443).

Even though the greed vs. grievance model and the resource curse are linked together in many studies (e.g. Ross 2003; Dunning 2005), I have made a clear distinction between these two

approaches in studying civil wars and natural resources. The resource curse is originally a purely economic concept describing the adverse economic effects of natural resource abundance. On the other hand, the greed vs. grievance model is an econometric model used to predict the risk of civil war, based on economic and social indicators, one of which is the share of natural resources in GDP. These two approaches, even though merged with each other, have different theoretical assumptions. The “greed vs. grievance” model emphasizes rebelling as an economic activity and that the risk of a civil war is high when the costs of starting rebellion is low and where there is a possibility of generating income. The resource curse, on the other hand, suggests that resource-abundance can lead to economic problems, corruption and patronage politics. These, in turn, exacerbate tensions, weaken the institutions and create grievances, which might result to a civil war. Within the “greed vs. grievance” model, war is business as such; within the resource curse theory, the economic mismanagement turns into a political turmoil.

Oil is an important factor in both of the approaches. Especially many of the studies of resource curse focus solely on oil or oil and gas (e.g. Karl 2007; Humphreys, Sachs & Stiglitz 2007; Fjelde 2009). According to Collier, Hoeffler and Sambanis (2005, 16), oil is the single most risky primary commodity, whereas Fearon (2005) argues that the oil exports is the actual factor that explains the whole correlation between civil war and natural resources. Ross (2004b, 338) argues that the link between oil exports and civil war onset is one of the regular patterns in the research of natural resources and conflicts. It is clear that oil production does not always lead to a conflict (e.g. Fjelde 2009). However, it is reasonable to assume that certain issues, such as high dependence on oil and lack of democracy, increase risk of a civil war (Basedau & Richter 2014).

South Sudan is an excellent example of an oil-dependent, politically unstable country with political and social indicators and economic situation that match with the “symptoms” of the resource curse and the risk factors of the “greed vs. grievance” model. Did the conflict of South Sudan start because of the low costs of rebellion and a possibility of make profit, or because of its corrupted government and weak institutions were unable to prevent violence, or because of completely different reasons? In order to find answers, one has to look at the history of South Sudan, the South Sudanese oil industry and the roots of the conflict, to which I turn in the next chapter.

## 2 SOUTH SUDAN AND OIL

After decades of civil war, South Sudan gained its independence from Sudan in 2011 in a referendum. Independence did not bring peace and stability to South Sudan, where low-level violence, widespread poverty and human rights violations are still common. The SPLM, the former liberation movement, now the ruling party of South Sudan, is the dominant institution in the country, but it is not and has never been a unified movement. The discrepancies within the SPLM are the root cause of the current conflict.

Oil production became a major industry in South Sudan when it first signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005. The industry, however, suffers from several problems, which are the oil-related tensions with Sudan, rampant corruption and lack of oversight and monitoring.

### *2.1.1 The first civil war of Sudan (1955–1972)*

The two civil wars of Sudan were fought between the Muslim and Arabic North and the Christian, Animist Southern Sudan. The first civil war took place in 1955–1972. The main reasons for the Southern rebellion were the economic marginalization and political marginalization of the South and religious persecution by the Sudanese government (Atta-Asamoah, Sharamo & Mwanzia 2011, 2; LeRiche & Arnold 2012, 24–25). Rebellions in the South against Northern hegemony started already in 1955 (Ali et al. 2005, 193), but only in the 1960s, the first organized rebel movement in the South, an overtly secessionist Anya-nya, emerged (ibid, 199).

After a decade of fighting, the war ended because of a military stalemate in 1972 to the Addis Ababa Agreement, which granted autonomy to Southern Sudan (LeRiche & Arnold 2012, 27–28). According to the Agreement, the fighters of Anya-nya were to be integrated into the Sudanese army. This provision was problematic, because the rebel soldiers were disappointed when they were forced to serve with their old enemies; with other grievances, such as deploying the Southern forces in the North and poor living conditions, some of the soldiers started to mutiny (ibid, 29–30). In response, the Sudanese president imposed Islamic sharia



law on the whole country and declared Arabic as national language, which practically ended the Southern autonomy (Atta-Asamoah, Sharamo & Mwanzia 2011, 2). The Southern autonomy was also weakened by the changes in the internal boundaries of the South (LeRiche & Arnold 2012, 60). These grievances triggered the second civil war in 1983.

### *2.1.2 The second civil war of Sudan (1983–2005)*

The strongest Southern actor in the second civil war was the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and its military wing, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLM/A), led by Dr John Garang. The SPLM/A was not a cohesive movement: the struggle against the government gave a common cause to the people of the South, but it hid ideological differences and ethnical tensions (Ali et al. 2005, 201). During the civil war, these ideological, political and ethnical tensions have led to the two major bloody splits (Mamdani 2014). The internal divisions of the SPLM/A were open to manipulation of the government, which allied with splinter factions and other armed groups against the SPLM/A (Le Riche & Arnold 2012, 44– 45). The SPLM/A was supported by the Ethiopian regime, and thus, adopted Marxist rhetoric (Anderson 1999, 70).

The second civil war has been often mistakenly labeled as a secessionist war (e.g. Ross 2004a, 50–53; Le Billon 2001, 573). The misunderstanding might be caused by the incorrect media reports, which throughout the conflict described the SPLM/A as a secessionist movement, even though the statements of the movement itself claimed otherwise (Öberg & Sollenberg 2011, 51). The goal of the SPLM/A was not a secession, but it pursued Garang's vision of "New Sudan", a comprehensive reform of a pluralist, secular and democratic Sudan (LeRiche & Arnold 2012, 32–33; Anderson 1999, 70–71). The "New Sudan" vision gave the SPLM/A a chance to ally with the rebel groups in the North and made the support from the Ethiopian regime possible (LeRiche & Arnold 2012, 34). However, the rank and file of the SPLM/A was mostly in favor of secessionism, and therefore, the self-determination of the South and an option of referendum to independence were always on the agenda of the SPLM/A (ibid, 34–38).

Even though the root causes of the second civil war can be found in other issues, oil also started to play a role in the war. The first oil companies came to Sudan in 1970s, but the first

significant finds were made in the 1980s; in the 1990s, the Western oil companies were replaced by the Asian companies and petrodollars started to flow to Sudan (Patey 2014). First, oil politics contributed to the outbreak of the conflict (Ross 2004a, 52), and later, it became an essential strategic resource to fight for (Ali et al. 2005, 214).

When oil was found in the Southern Sudan, the Sudanese president took every measure to keep them under control of the North. For example, he decided that the pipeline would be constructed via Port Sudan, via the Northern territory, (Patey 2014, 34). He also attempted to move North-South boundary so that the oil wells would be in the North (LeRiche & Arnold 2012, 68). While this failed, an oil refinery, which was planned to be built in the South, was constructed in the North (ibid). The SPLM/A argued that Khartoum was stealing the resources of the South (Ross 2004a, 52) and threatened the oil companies to suspend their operations (Patey 2014, 38–40). The SPLM/A even deliberately targeted oil companies, which were considered as allies of the government (ibid).

Even though many Western oil companies had ceased the operations in Sudan because of insecurity, the Chinese oil company CNPC stayed despite civil war and built an oil infrastructure in Sudan practically from a scratch with close cooperation with the Sudanese government (Patey 2014). The Chinese paid for the protection of the Sudanese army and militias (Patey 2014, 107–108). Oil revenues were critical for the government, because the government could use it to buy modern weapons, such as attack helicopters and jet fighters, and by stabilizing the economy, maintain the support of the Northern elites (LeRiche & Arnold 2012, 105).

According to the SPLM/A, oil companies were “legitimate targets”, because the SPLM/A argued that the companies were “mercenaries working for the Islamist regime” (Patey 2014, 107). The rebels attacked the oil fields by sabotaging and bombing them and kidnapped and killed some oilmen (ibid, 108–109). The government was able to take advantage of the divisions of the Southern front and used the splinter groups of the SPLA and other armed groups to fight the SPLM/A especially in the oil producing areas (LeRiche & Arnold 2012, 100). This strategy helped Khartoum to harass the SPLM/A, keep oil fields secured and spread propaganda of alternative Southern groups willing to cooperate with the government (ibid).

Even though the conflict parties had negotiated throughout the war, only in the late 1990s and the early 2000s, realistic chances for peace appeared: both parties saw that they could not win militarily, and the Sudanese government was under increasing pressure both internally and internationally (LeRiche & Arnold 2012, 105–106). The loss of oil revenues due to war also contributed to making peace attractive: because of the war, the government could not use the full potential of oil fields, and the Southerners did not benefit at all (ibid, 106).

The ceasefire started in 2002 and the final peace agreement between the Sudanese government and the SPLM, Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), was signed in 2005, in the same year, when the SPLM/A leader John Garang died accidentally and was followed by Salva Kiir, the current president of South Sudan. Under leadership of Kiir, the SPLM practically abandoned Garang's vision of "New Sudan" and started to pursue independence (LeRiche & Arnold 2012, 115–116).

CPA included agreements on power-sharing, sharing of oil wealth and ending the conflicts in Abyei and South Kordofan, and most importantly, autonomy for Southern Sudan and the possibility of independence after a six-year transition period and a referendum (Le Riche & Arnold 2012, 108–110). In 2011, after the transition period, the referendum was organized, and a vast majority voted for independence (Atta-Asamoah, Sharamo & Mwanzia. 2011, 1). South Sudan declared its independence in the same year.

## **2.2 Challenges of South Sudan after the peace agreement**

Neither autonomy nor independence after the six-year interim period brought peace to South Sudan. Political disputes inside the SPLM, now the ruling party of South Sudan, widespread insecurity due to small-scale rebellions and inter-tribal cattle-raiding and oil-related tensions with Sudan have marked the post-CPA period.

### **2.2.1 *South Sudan politics***

In South Sudan, power has centered in the SPLM and the president. The political system in the country gives unreasonable amount power to the president, who is the head of the executive, but not subject to legislative confidence (Radon & Logan 2014, 155–157). Another

problem is the dominant position of the SPLM, which has been unable to transform itself into a truly political party. Like many other ex-liberation movements, the SPLM has a militaristic structure and an autocratic grip on the South Sudanese politics (LeRiche & Arnold 2012, 218–225); opposition is often responded by violence (Minale 2012, 15).

One of the biggest problems of South Sudan is corruption, which is deeply embedded in the country's political culture (Radon & Logan 2014, 159): political office means an easy access to state resources (ibid, 154). It is estimated that South Sudan has lost billions of dollars due to corruption, such as fake contracts and excessive salaries of the ministries, in addition to the money spent wastefully by the politicians (Patey 2014, 218).

Insecurity due to small-scale rebellions, inter-tribal clashes and cattle raiding is widespread (Atta-Asamoah, Sharamo & Mwanzia 2011), and the SPLA, the army, is fractured. President Kiir's "big tent strategy", absorbing rival armed groups and splinter factions of the army back into the SPLA and giving their leaders high positions, created divisions inside the SPLA (ICG 2014a, 5–6; Atta-Asamoah, Sharamo & Mwanzia 2011, 5). The problem in this approach is that it gives the officers an incentive to defect in order to gain even better position when returning (LeRiche & Arnold 2012, 235–236), which already has occurred several times (Atta-Asamoah, Sharamo & Mwanzia 2011, 6).

Even though the SPLM has put in place basic structures of governance (LeRiche & Arnold 2012, 220) and created a legislative framework for human rights, rule of law, anti-corruption and independent judiciary (Minale 2012, 17), people of South Sudan still face huge social problems. The majority of the population lives in poverty: 51 % of the population lives under the poverty line of 2 dollars per day (African Economic Outlook 2014, 10; LeRiche & Arnold 2012, 167), and 85 % of the working population lives on the subsistence economy (World Bank 2014b). Among other problems, poor infrastructure, lack of financial services and access to credit, low literacy rate of the population (27 %) and questionable judiciary makes South Sudan unattractive country for the investors and businesses (African Economic Outlook 2014, 6).

### **2.2.2 Oil industry**

Oil industry is without doubt the dominant and the most important economic sector in South Sudan. In 2013–2014, the government received 70 % of its revenues from oil (African Economic Outlook 2014, 2), and before the oil shutdown in 2012, the percentage used to be 98 % (World Bank 2014b). Oil contributes 90 % to the exports of South Sudan (African Economic Outlook 2014, 5) and over 60 % to its GDP (ibid, 2). The exact amount of the oil production of South Sudan is difficult to estimate because of frequent disruptions on the production. However, in 2011, before the shutdown, the average level of production was estimated to be 340,000 barrels per day, and during the first half of the year 2014, the amount was 150,000 barrels per day (US Energy Information Administration 2014, 7). The pre-oil shutdown production amounts made South Sudan the third biggest oil producer in Africa (Global Witness 2012, 7). The national-owned oil companies, China's CNPC, India's Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Malaysia's Petronas, are the main stakeholders in the oil consortia in South Sudan; South Sudan's own national oil company, Nilepet, holds minor stakes (US Energy Information Administration 2014, 6).

The oil sector of South Sudan has many challenges. According to Global Witness (2012, 1) the most severe problems, in addition to over-reliance on oil, are corruption and lack of transparency and oversight. Although there is a law that requires publishing information about oil revenue and contracts, the Petroleum Act, the law is not implemented (ibid, 9–14). The bill which regulates the management of oil revenue and establishes two funds for stabilization of oil income and to compensate the future loss of oil resources (Savage 2013) still needs to be signed by the president (Global Witness 2014, 3). The oil companies, which have not got used to such a heavy regulation, have opposed the bill (Patey 2014, 233). There are also measures taken to combat corruption, but the anti-corruption bodies are not offered enough resources and institutional independence to investigate and prosecute the suspects (Global Witness 2012, 25–27).



Map 1. The oil producing areas and the oil infrastructure of South Sudan and Sudan. (US Energy Information Administration.)

### 2.2.3 Oil-related issues with Sudan

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement 2005 stated that the oil revenues should be divided between the governments of the North and the South, 50 % to each government, minus 2 % to the respective oil producing states (LeRiche & Arnold 2012, 128). The government of Khartoum was in charge of management of oil money and the SPLM was denied access to the contracting and accounting processes (ibid, 128–129; Patey 2014, 210–211). The secretive manner in which the oil money was managed caused disputes between the governments, as the SPLM suspected that it did not receive its fair share, and despite attempts to resolve the dispute, suspicions between the southern and northern officials remained (Patey 2014, 210–212).

After the secession in 2011, two thirds of the Sudanese oilfields were left in the South, which means that Sudan lost 55 % of its fiscal revenue and its oil export revenues fell almost by 10 billion dollars (US Energy Information Administration 2014, 1). Even though South Sudan got the most of the oil fields, it was still dependent on the pipelines to the Red Sea port in Sudan (Atta-Asamoah 2012, 1–2). Despite expectations of the international community (ibid) and contrary to the tenets of the liberal theory, this interdependence did not lead to cooperation.

One of the most serious disputes that disturbed the cooperation between Sudan and South Sudan was the issue of transit fees. For compensation of the loss of oil revenues, Sudan demanded transit fees of 36 dollars per barrel for the use of its pipelines, which was grossly overpriced – usually the transit fees are under a dollar per barrel (Patey 2014, 226). When the South did not accept the demand, Sudan confiscated oil shipments (which belonged to a Chinese company) from the South as a payment of the transit fees, and in response, South Sudan halted the oil production completely to gain more leverage in the negotiations with Sudan (ibid, 227–228). The oil shutdown seriously damaged the economy of the both countries (Atta-Asamoah 2012, 3), and only after months, the compromise was reached in the AU-mediated negotiations (Patey 2014, 236). China, a major oil importer, was in a difficult position balancing between the two governments (ICG 2012).

In addition, Sudan and South Sudan still have disputed border areas, which has caused tensions. Especially the fate of oil-producing areas of Abyei (LeRiche & Arnold 2012, 189) and Heglig (Ylönen 2012) has strained the relations between the two countries to the brink of war. Even though the tensions still exist, the relations between Khartoum and Juba have warmed since 2013 (ICG 2014a, 23–24).

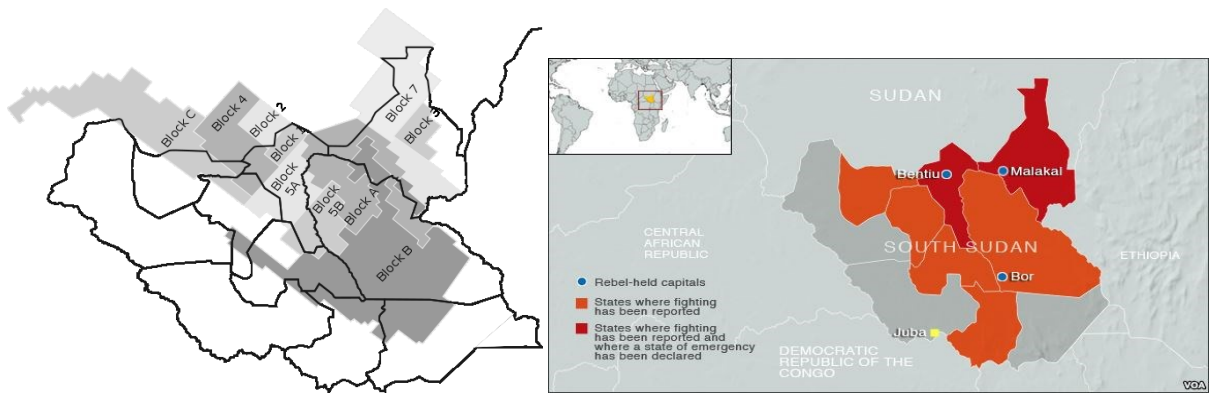
## 2.3 The conflict of South Sudan



Map 2. South Sudan. (CIA: The World Factbook.)

The current conflict of South Sudan started on 15 December 2013 at the meeting of the National Liberation Council of the SPLM in Juba, after a clash between the rival army units (Sorbo 2014, 1). President Kiir accused the former Vice-President Riek Machar of a coup attempt and arrested several senior politicians who were allegedly involved (ICG 2014a, 1). Machar denied the coup attempt and involvement in the clashes in Juba, but later announced that he is in charge of the armed opposition called the SPLM/A in Opposition (the SPLM-IO) (ibid). Fighting spread to the northern areas of South Sudan and escalated into a full-scale civil war (Sorbo 2014). The war has features of an ethnic conflict: both sides have targeted people along ethnic lines (ICG 2014a, i). Despite several negotiation rounds mediated by the regional body Intergovernmental Authority on Development, IGAD, the conflict is still unresolved.





Map 3. Much of the fighting has focused on the oil-producing states of South Sudan. (Wikipedia Commons; VoA News).

### 2.3.1 Conflict parties

The SPLM/A has never been a politically or ideologically unified movement. According to Mamdani (2014), every split and division of the SPLM/A is most often caused by either discrepancies of the direction of the future, or about the politicization of ethnicity. The current conflict emerged as a consequence of such a split (ibid). Following the intra-party debates about the leadership of the SPLM/A and the future direction of the party, President Kiir dismissed Vice-President Riek Machar and majority of the other cabinet members in July 2013 (ICG 2014a, 3–4).

The dismissed politicians continued their protest by publicly criticizing President Kiir of losing the vision and accusing him of “dictatorial tendencies” (ICG 2014a, 4–5). Soon after that, the units of the SPLA clashed in Juba following the meeting of the SPLM National Liberation Council on 15 December (ibid, 1). It remains contested what happened in reality, but Kiir accused Machar and other dismissed politicians of attempting a coup, whereas those critical of Kiir argue that the president himself tried to disarm soldiers and officers who were believed to be loyal to Machar (Sorbo 2014, 1). Machar denied the coup attempt, but while the fighting spread to the northern parts of the country, he announced that he leads the armed opposition forces and intends to oust Salva Kiir (ibid). The other dismissed politicians were accused of being involved in the coup attempt and they were arrested (ibid).

According to LeRiche (2014), it is inaccurate to claim that the South Sudan conflict would be a clear-cut struggle between a government and an opposition: the conflict is about a

fragmentation of an ex-liberation movement, in which the personal ambitions are as important as the different political agendas. In addition, it is questionable whether Riek Machar is in control of the rebel forces (ibid). Acknowledging this, I refer to the opposition forces, which affiliate with Riek Machar and fight against Salva Kiir's government as "rebels", following suit of Collier and Hoeffler (2001, 3) who used the concept of rebels as a group which intends to challenge their government.

In addition to the main belligerents, there are also other actors involved in the conflict. The politicians, who openly criticized President Kiir and were later arrested, still play a role in the conflict. Seven of them were released, and they formed a neutral third block in order to participate in the peace negotiations (ICG 2014a, 13). As a non-violent group in between the two conflict parties, they offer an opportunity to "bridge the gap" between them, but on the other hand, their contribution to the peace talks have been seen as opportunistic (ibid).

Even though the conflict started as a pure power struggle, the forces of both sides have targeted people along ethnic lines (Fleischner 2014, 5). Divergent views exist of ethnicization of the conflict. For example, International Crisis Group argues that people were targeted deliberately and systematically on ethnic basis (ICG 2014a, 11). However, Radon and Logan (2014, 150–151) point out that ethnicity hardly played a role in triggering the conflict, because the politicians who opposed Kiir in December 2013 represented various ethnic groups, some of them even were from Kiir's own group. According to Radon and Logan (2014), it is more likely that ethnic violence is a consequence of ethnic-based patronage system. In the similar lines, LeRiche (2014) argues that ethnicization was purely accidental. Most of the high-level politicians have body guard forces from their own tribes, as had Riek Machar and other politicians who were thought to be involved in a coup attempt. When the president sent his forces to arrest them, his soldiers had to neutralize the body guard forces and the army units, most of who were from the Nuer tribe. Consequently, the Nuers thought that they were been targeted by the Dinkas (because like the other politicians, the president too had surrounded himself with his own tribe members). Taken into account the violent history of tensed relations between the two tribes (LeRiche & Arnold 2012, 229–231), it is no wonder that the situation escalated into a circle of attacks and retaliation (LeRiche 2014).

### 2.3.2 Regional dynamics



Map 4. The countries of the Horn of Africa. (Maps of World, Africa.)

Horn of Africa can be described as a security complex: because of the inter-connectedness of the region, one country cannot be secure unless all the others are secure, too (Mesfin 2013). In addition, South Sudan is a “critical link in the regional economy” (ICG 2014a, 18). Therefore, the other countries are interested in the resolution of the South Sudanese conflict and aim to impact on it.

The regional intergovernmental body Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has led the peace mediation efforts without much success. Despite many negotiation rounds, several separate ceasefire agreements and targeted sanctions by USA and the EU, the fighting has not ceased. Both parties see advantages in delaying or even avoiding negotiations and instead finding a military solution (ICG 2014a, 27–28). They have repeatedly breached ceasefires (e.g. ICG 2014a, 20; BBC 11.5.2014; BBC 21.7.2014) and at times delayed negotiations by boycotting them (Aljazeera 17.6.2014). IGAD has threatened the conflict parties with punitive measures, but despite non-compliance of the parties, IGAD has never implemented them, which diminishes its credibility and leverage (Fleischner 2014, 2–3; Akol 2014, 8–9). Neutrality of IGAD has been questioned and it has been accused of deliberate siding with the government (Akol 2014, 9) and the role of Uganda has raised suspicions (ibid; ICG 2014a, 20–21). In addition, IGAD has been criticized for its failure to promote inclusive peace process (Akol 2014). Critiques argue that limiting the peace talks to the government and the SPLM/A in Opposition does not help to bring peace, because the other local-level

armed groups, most of which are nominally allied to the main conflict parties, are potential spoilers (Akol 2014, 4; ICG 2014b) and even though the peace agreement was between the main belligerents, its implementation is a collective responsibility (Akol 2014, 4).

Sudan supports openly the government of South Sudan and is actively involved in the IGAD-mediated peace negotiations (ICG 2014a, 23–24). Sudan has interests in the resolution of the conflict, because its economy is dependent on the transit fees South Sudan pays it for using the Sudanese pipelines (ibid). It has been speculated, though, that since the stakes are that high, Sudan might aid the South Sudanese rebels covertly while publicly supporting the government (Gordon 2014, 3; ICG 2014a, 24). The presence of the Sudanese rebel groups in the South has strained the relations between the two governments (e.g. Sudan Tribune 20.5.2014).

Uganda has intervened in the conflict at the request of the government, and according to some analysts, the intervention practically saved the government (ICG 2014a, 22–23). Uganda has a long and close relationship with the SPLM/A: the Ugandans and the SPLM/A have cooperated in the fight against the Ugandan rebel group LRA and Uganda is also the most important trade partner of South Sudan (Awolich 2014, 2–3). The Ugandan intervention was criticized, because the Ugandan military presence in the country compromises the neutrality of IGAD (ICG 2014a, 21) and might risk the regionalization of the conflict by bringing its old enemy Khartoum into the conflict (ibid, 24–25), but the intervention of Sudan seems unlikely (Awolich 2014).

### **2.3.3 *Consequences of the conflict***

The South Sudan conflict is one of the most severe humanitarian crises at the moment and the civilians have suffered immensely. Tens of thousands of people have died or injured, and 1.9 million people have been displaced, most of whom inside the country (UNOCHA 2015, 10). Due to collapse of already weak health services, diseases such as cholera have broken out and the poor health situation will be worse in this year (ibid, 13). Violence, displacement and loss of livelihoods have weakened agricultural production, and thus, 1.5 million people are severely malnourished; the number is expected to grow (ibid, 15).

According to the Human Rights Watch (2014), both sides of the conflict and their allies have committed atrocities against civilians, which might be war crimes or even crimes against humanity. The both forces have targeted civilians along ethnic lines, pillaged and destroyed their property and attacked places of refuge, such as hospitals and churches, and even the UN compounds (ibid). The soldiers responsible for these actions have not been prosecuted, which only increases the culture of impunity (ibid). Boys and young men have been forcibly recruited, and girls and women are vulnerable to sexual violence (UNOCHA 2015, 10).

Whether intentional or not, the conflict has had traits of ethnic conflict: both sides have targeted people along ethnic lines, and ethnic attacks and reprisals have become a dominant pattern of the war (HRW 2014). The government has failed to hold the perpetrators accountable, and has not even tried to find and prosecute the suspects of the worst incidences (ibid). Similarly, the rebel forces have committed atrocities against civilians, and apparently there have not been any attempts to investigate or prosecute the suspects (ibid).

Volatile security conditions, especially clashes between the government and the rebel forces, have made the delivery of humanitarian aid difficult in many places (USAID 9.2.2015).

The economy has also suffered because of the conflict: it is estimated that South Sudan would lose even 15 % of its GDP because of the conflict (World Bank 2014b). If the conflict continues for a year to five years, South Sudan might lose even 22–28 billion dollars, plus the long-term human costs due to deaths, hunger and disease (Frontier Economics 2015, 5). The conflict will also strain the resources of the neighboring countries and the international community by tens of billions of dollars (ibid).

The oil production in South Sudan has been partially shut down because of the conflict (US Energy Information Administration 2014, 6) and the key oil installations have suffered serious damages (ibid, 11). There are different estimates of how much the oil production has fallen, for 20 % of the World Bank (2014b) to 30 % of Bloomberg (14.1.2014), but the any substantial loss of oil production means that the government revenues will shrink.

There is also a risk that the limited state budget will be diverted from development and services to military budget, of which there are examples (Global Witness 2014, 2–3). Global Witness (2014) has also encouraged the South Sudan government to issue a moratorium to all

new oil contracts in order to protect the oil wealth from hastily made deals which might be harmful for South Sudan in the longer term, but the government rejected the proposition (Sudan Tribune 28.7.2014).

#### **2.3.4 Conclusion**

During its short time of independence, South Sudan has not experienced peace or stability. Low-level violence, human rights violations, lack of democracy, oil dependence and corruption, and oil-related tensions with Sudan have hampered the development of South Sudan, which has remained as one of the poorest countries of the world. The root causes of the current conflict can be found in these issues: power struggle within the ruling party SPLM provided a spark which the weak state institutions were not able suppress.

Despite several negotiation rounds and agreements, there has not been a durable cease-fire. The violence has driven almost two million people from their homes and left thousands of people dead and injured. In addition, economic losses due to fighting are huge and the oil industry, the main industry of South Sudan, has been seriously damaged.

### **3 CONTENT ANALYSIS AND PIECES OF NEWS AS MATERIAL**

As method, I will use qualitative content analysis, which is a basic method of all types of qualitative research and on which much of the qualitative research is based (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 91). Content analysis is a systematic way to categorize material and to create a concise picture of a phenomenon in order to draw conclusions about it (ibid, 103). Content analysis means that the material is divided into pieces, then conceptualized and then compiled into a logic, coherent entity (ibid, 108).

Content analysis is a suitable method for analyzing different types of texts, including articles (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009, 103). In fact, content analysis has long common roots with mass media and war-time propaganda research (Krippendorff 2004, 5–10). Content analysis differs from discourse analysis in a sense that with content analysis, it is important to seek meanings in the text and not how the meaning is constructed (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 104). This way, it is a logical choice of method, because my material consists of secondary sources and thus, the goal of my research is to find the message of the speakers and not concentrate on how that meaning behind the message is created by journalists.

#### ***3.1.1 Qualitative and quantitative content analysis***

There are two different types of content analysis: qualitative and quantitative. Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009, 105–107) make a clear distinction between quantitative and qualitative content analysis: quantitative content analysis is based on counting frequencies of words and sentences, whereas qualitative content analysis describes the content of the document verbally. According to them, qualitative and quantitative content analysis of similar material can yield completely different results, and that the results by qualitative analysis are more reliable.

Krippendorff, on the other hand, finds this distinction artificial: the basic idea of analysis process is similar even though the research design is different. In both ways of doing content analysis, one has to analyze texts, which is an inherently interpretative activity, to divide the texts into smaller units and contextualize them (Krippendorff 2004, 87). He admits, however,

that for researching political information (2004, 10) or mapping the multiple perspectives or voices (2004, 88) the qualitative research design is better than quantitative.

### *3.1.2 Approaches of content analysis*

There are different ways of approaching content analysis and the relationship between a theory and an analysis. One way is to make a distinction between material-driven, theory-driven and theory-tied approaches (Eskola 2010, 182). Theory-driven analysis means that the starting point of a research is a theory and the material is only used to test hypotheses derived from the theory (Eskola 2010, 182–183). Material-driven approach means that there is no theory guiding analysis, but a theory is constructed from a material (Eskola 2010, 182). This is problematic, because it is practically impossible to make pure observations from the data, taking into account that the research setting and the presuppositions of a researcher will affect to the results (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 96). There is also a middle ground between the two: theory-tied analysis, which means that the analysis has theoretical connections, but it is not strictly based on any theory (ibid). Essentially, theory-tied analysis is similar to material-driven analysis, but the difference is how the results are linked to a theory in the end of the research (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 96–97).

These different approaches have been linked to the different chains of logical reasoning. Theory-driven is close to the deductive reasoning, from general to specific, whereas material-driven is inductive, from specific to the general (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 96–98; Elo & Kyngäs 2008, 109–112). Theory-tied analysis, on the other hand, is close to the abductive reasoning, where the researcher aims to combine the general theory and the single observations creatively (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 97).

The other typology of approaches is the text-driven, problem-driven and the method-driven analyses, which are different starting points for the research (Krippendorff 2004, 340). Text-driven analysis starts from the interesting body of texts, which the researcher goes through without an explicit research puzzle in mind: the research questions evolve at the same time with the analysis (ibid, 340–342). It resembles the material-driven approach in the sense that the analysis and interpretation of the material are the essential part and the theoretical background has not so much meaning. Problem-driven analysis starts with the research puzzle



which guides the research process (ibid, 340). This approach seems to be the basic starting point for research in general. The last starting point is method-driven analysis, which means that the topics and research questions are selected in order to be able to use the usual method (ibid).

My research is problem-driven, because the research question, the role of oil in the South Sudan conflict, guides all the phases of the research process. According to the typology of Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009), my research is a mixture of material-driven and theory-tied analysis. The main difference between the two is that in the material-driven approach, the categories are created from the material, whereas in theory-tied analysis, the categories are borrowed from a theory (ibid, 117). In the analysis, I create the categories myself, according to the material, which would suggest that my research resembles the material-driven approach. On the other hand, pure material-driven analysis would require that no prior knowledge or theory would affect to the results of the analysis or its realization (ibid, 95). However, I cannot deny that the prior knowledge about the political context of South Sudan and its oil industry, as well as the theoretical concepts, had not affected to the analysis process or the results.

### ***3.1.3 The phases of content analysis***

Before starting the analysis, the first task is to define the unit of analysis, which can be, for example, a word, a sentence or an idea consisting of several sentences (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 110), or a theme or a meaning (Elo & Kyngäs 2008, 109). Krippendorff calls the units of analysis recording units, and the “textual matters that set limits on the information to be considered in the description of recording units” (Krippendorff 2004, 101). In my research, the recording unit is the idea. Since the ideas are expressed very briefly, I have also had to take into account the larger context units, such as related comments or extra information, for example about the phase of conflict or who controls which oilfield at that moment or if the comment is an answer to somebody else’s comment.

The first phase is to reduce the material by excluding everything irrelevant to the research question (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 109). Reducing can be done by coding all the relevant

expressions or units of analysis from the material and by summarizing their information in a brief expression (ibid).

The second phase is clustering, which means that the coded expressions are categorized according to their similarities and differences (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 110). The criteria for forming a category can be a feature, a property or a perception of a phenomenon (ibid). The categories, all of which are given a name that describes the content of the category, can be used to preliminary analysis of the phenomenon (ibid).

In the third phase, abstracting, theory-tied analysis is different than material-driven. In material-driven approach, the researcher creates theoretical concepts from the categories found in the material (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 111), and in theory-tied analysis the categories are linked to the previously known and introduced theoretical concepts (ibid, 117).

#### ***3.1.4 Problems of content analysis***

Even though content analysis has a reputation of being an “overly simplistic method” (Elo & Kyngäs 2008, 113), there are several pitfalls that a researcher has to avoid. For example, one of the problems of content analysis as a research method is that a research is often unfinished: the material is analyzed and categorized, but no conclusions have been made of it (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 103). The goal of the analysis is to organize the material for drawing conclusions, but they are not results as such (ibid). In my research, I took this into account by dividing the findings and the actual discussion into the separate chapters, which helped me to first introduce the findings and then, draw conclusions from it.

One of the challenges is to find a balanced number of categories. Too many categories mean that a researcher has been unable to categorize; too few of them means that the analysis process has been incomplete (Elo & Kyngäs 2008, 113–114). The related challenge is to compress the material sufficiently without losing the richness of the material during the analysis process (ibid). To avoid these pitfalls, I created both the main categories and their subcategories and described both them in order to maintain the richness of the material.

### **3.1.5 Realization of the research**

I started my analysis by reading carefully the chosen media texts and familiarizing myself with the material. After that, I reduced the material by distinguishing the parts in which the representatives of the conflict parties speak about oil related to the conflict. I coded those statements by using different colors to distinguish which text parts were from the rebel side and which were from the government side.

After that, I clustered the reduced material by creating preliminary categories according to what was said and how it was said and copy-pasted the excerpts under the headlines, making notes simultaneously. Having categorized all the excerpts, I summarized their main ideas and named the categories accordingly. After revising all the categories and comparing similarities and differences in them, I abstracted the categories by organizing them into main categories and subcategories according to the main idea and the meaning of the main category.

## **3.2 Material**

My research focuses on the published statements of the conflict parties of South Sudan and how they themselves connect oil and the conflict, and how this reflects the wider social and political context. I use news media as my material. It is common for the conflict parties to use news media to promote their cause for the local people and to the international audience (Öberg & Sollenberg 2011, 61–62), and the South Sudanese conflict parties are not an exception. The news media is the easiest way to get access to the propaganda of the conflict parties, because at least at the time when I was collecting the material, the rebels did not have their own websites (Sudan Tribune 16.7.2014) and the speeches of the president are not archived in the internet. Since these medias publish the statements of the both sides and also those of the other actors, they seem to be part of the “negotiation arena”, a space and a network of social relations that the different actors use to negotiate the power relations which construct a state (Hagmann & Péclard 2010, 550–551). In addition, the media material, which includes the interviews of other leaders and representatives than just Salva Kiir and Riek Machar, is much more diverse and rich.

I use news articles of two news websites, Sudan Tribune and Bloomberg, as research material. These two websites were chosen because they have covered the South Sudan conflict since its beginning and they both follow closely how the situation in the country evolves. They are also the most logical choice for catching most of the oil-related statements regarding South Sudan, because Sudan Tribune publishes statements of both the government and the opposition and Bloomberg follows closely how the situation in the country impacts oil industry. It is likely that most oil-related statements are published at least in either of these. Even in cases where statements are published in both, they are likely to complement each other, because they have different audiences and thus, different point of views (Öberg & Sollenberg 2011, 56).

Sudan Tribune is a France-based non-profit news website, founded in 2003 and run by a team of “independent Sudanese and international journalists and editors” (Sudan Tribune: About). Despite its name, it publishes news both from Sudan and South Sudan from many perspectives. There are both English and Arabic versions of Sudan Tribune (ibid). In this research, I used only the English version.

Bloomberg, on the other hand, is a company founded in 1982, which describes itself as “private network with data, analytics and other financial information” (Bloomberg: History). In addition to offering services to financial professionals, Bloomberg publishes news around the world, including South Sudan. Bloomberg has 15,500 employees in 192 different locations (Bloomberg: About the company).

The articles which were chosen for the sample were from the time frame 15.12.2013–15.12.2014, or exactly one year after the conflict started. I used three criteria for selecting articles for the sample:

1. The article is a piece of news, not an opinion, meaning that the goal of the article was to deliver information in a neutral way, and not express somebody’s opinion or present an argument,
2. The article addresses the current conflict of South Sudan, thus excluding the Abyei conflict and low-scale inter-tribal clashes, and
3. In the article, the word “oil” is mentioned in relation to the South Sudan conflict by a representative of conflict parties, namely the political and military leadership

of the SPLM/A and the SPLM/A in Opposition or other high-ranking official/officer representing the conflict parties.

The sample of the chosen articles will be available on request for five years from the publication.

### *3.2.1 Limitations of material*

There are several problems associated with using media texts as material, especially in the conflict contexts, and I will address them below. One of the obvious problems is, though, that the news articles are, actually, interpretations. In order to write a coherent text, journalists make an interpretation from the diverse material and from different voices (Fairclough 1997, 102). A researcher has to be especially critical, when the text describes intentions or other unobservable issues, because they are most likely only interpretations (Öberg & Sollenberg 2011, 62–63).

In order to minimize the risk of studying journalists' interpretations instead of stated intentions of the conflict parties, in the analysis I have focused on direct and indirect quotations of the conflict parties or their representatives in the analysis. Even though indirect quotations are without a doubt interpretations and the framing of the direct quotations affects how they are interpreted, with a critical analysis they can be useful in finding out how the conflict parties themselves think about oil and the conflict. This is one of the reasons why I decided to use content analysis instead of discourse analysis: with content analysis, the focus is on the meanings and the basic message of the text and not how these meanings are constructed (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 104).

Another limitation of using the media texts and propaganda is that one can never be sure to what extent the given information is true: it is possible that the conflict parties use the media for bluffing (Öberg & Sollenberg 2011, 53). For the most part, the truthfulness of the news items is not that important for my research: I am interested in perceptions and meanings given to oil by the conflict parties, not whether the perceptions are true. There is, however, a danger that even the goals of rebel organizations are misinterpreted by the media, as happened in the case of the second civil war of Sudan and the SPLM/A that was labeled as secessionist (Öberg

& Sollenberg 2011, 51–52). I try to avoid this problem by focusing on the statements of the conflict parties themselves (direct or indirect quotations), and by familiarizing myself with the origins of the conflict from several sources.

A serious limitation is that while the propaganda can be useful in analyzing perceptions, it is impossible to reveal any possible hidden agendas or even the secret motives of the conflict parties. For example, with my material, it is practically impossible to prove or disprove the arguments that the conflict parties' real motivation to fight is to get access to oil money, because no politician or rebel leader in their right mind would say such a thing aloud. By analyzing published texts, I can only analyze how the issues are represented and justified in public by the conflict parties. In order to do study motivations behind the public, deeper and more profound material is needed.

### ***3.2.2 Additional issues of the media in a conflict context***

Even though media texts are useful material for research, there are several pitfalls which have to be taken into account. One of those issues is selection bias: what is reported in the news is only a fraction of what has happened in reality. To increase the reliability of my research in this regard, I use two different media sites.

The piece of news has come through a multiple phases of selection, editing and processing by journalists and editors, whose decisions depend on the news value criteria and the target audience (Öberg & Sollenberg 2011, 53–56). Thus, one has to be especially critical when analyzing media texts, because they are never absolutely true or complete. In this research, this was not that serious problem. By focusing the quotations of the conflict parties themselves, I aimed to avoid the interpretations of the journalists.

The related problem is the center-periphery bias: the most media attention is given to the politically and economically important core areas of the world (Öberg & Sollenberg 2011, 54). For example, developing countries in Africa are one of the periphery regions that are not much covered (ibid). In the case of South Sudan, this was not a problem: the international nature of the oil industry ensures media attention.

One of the potential dangers of using the media is a risk of re-circulation of information which is taken as a fact even though it might not be (Sollenberg & Öberg 2011, 60). It is possible that some numbers or “facts” are circulated in several second-hand reports, making it look like it has been verified several times, even though all the second-hand reports may have only one primary source (ibid). This is problematic, because it is difficult to distinguish what is the original source of certain facts, and therefore, difficult to find out whether that fact actually is true (ibid). In my material, this kind of re-circulation is clearly seen in the oil-related numbers. In most of the oil-related news of South Sudan it is stated as a fact that South Sudan gets 90–98 % of its revenue from oil, even though according to the African Economic Outlook (2014, 2) the real figure is nowadays closer to 70 %. Using multiple sources to check the facts is one way to minimize this risk.

### 3.2.3 *Introduction of the material*

In the final sample, there are 65 articles from Sudan Tribune and 37 from Bloomberg. The reason why there are so much less of Bloomberg articles may be because the two web pages have different target audiences (Öberg & Sollenberg 2011, 56): Sudan Tribune is more focused on South Sudan and it might have more articles on just South Sudan, whereas Bloomberg covers issues on a global scale and with a variety of topics. Another reason might be the fact that Sudan Tribune publishes more statements from the South Sudanese leaders, while Bloomberg relies more on international experts’ and other foreign actors’ statements and analyses.

	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bloomberg	12	4	3	1	7	5	0	1	0	3	1	0	0
Sudan Tribune	7	11	7	7	13	4	3	4	2	1	3	3	0

Table 1. Number of articles of Sudan Tribune and Bloomberg.

Both of the web pages published news from the South Sudan conflict since the December 15, when the fighting began and followed closely how the situation escalated into a full-scale civil war and how the peace process faced constant difficulties. Both of the web pages also

published reports of the suffering of civilians and comments of the humanitarian organizations. In addition to the conflict-related issues, the news items also commented on the political and economic situation of South Sudan and quoted both South Sudanese politicians and officials and also several international experts.

In both Sudan Tribune and Bloomberg, the oil-related comments by the conflict parties are most often short, but they are often framed with the general information about the South Sudanese oil industry. In Bloomberg, these framings are more focused on amounts of oil and the companies extracting oil, while Sudan Tribune emphasizes more the oil dependence of South Sudan. In Bloomberg, the oil-related comments were included already into the first reports of the conflict; in those, the representative of the government assured that the oil production has not been affected by fighting. In Sudan Tribune, oil is mentioned only after days of clashes and it becomes an issue when Riek Machar announces on December 23 that he will cut the oil revenue flow to Juba. This indicates that oil has a role, but it is probably not the most acute grievance or the most important popular demand of the rebels.

Most of the oil-related statements are published during the first months of the conflict, especially from January to summer. After summer, the oil practically vanishes from the propaganda, even though oil fields are still targets of fighting (e.g. Sudan Tribune 10.10.2014; 27.10.2014). There might be several reasons for the absence of oil-related comments. One of the possible explanations could be so called news fatigue: when the same pattern continues for a long time, it will not necessarily be reported because it does not have a news value (Öberg & Sollenberg 2011, 59). On the other hand, there might have been other pieces of propaganda more interesting than the oil issue. One of the potential more interesting issue might be the progressive steps taken at the peace negotiations, which cover much of the media space and has been the focus of attention of the conflict parties in the autumn. It is also interesting to note that oil is not mentioned at all in relation to the peace negotiations, even though the conflict parties comment and criticize the propositions of IGAD in public very openly. It raises questions whether oil is excluded from the agenda of the peace process.

Even though oil is not necessarily one of the root causes of the conflict, there are enough statements by the both conflict parties to prove that oil is definitely an important part of the conflict. In the next chapter, I turn to the more detailed analysis of the role of oil in the South Sudan conflict.



### **3.2.4 Conclusion**

Despite several limitations, media texts are useful while analyzing the propaganda and the perceptions of the conflict parties. I have chosen two news websites, Sudan Tribune, which follows closely the South Sudanese politics, and Bloomberg, which follows the situation from the point of view of oil industry, and analyzed the oil-related statements by the conflict parties with content analysis. Content analysis is the most logical method for analyzing the main message and the meaning, and it has a long history in the research of mass media and war-time propaganda.

#### 4 ANALYSIS

The oil-related statements of the governments and those of the rebels are very different and it would be incoherent to introduce them simultaneously, so I have separated them. It seems that oil has more important role in the rebels’ rhetoric than in that of the government: whereas oil is a part of a strategy for the rebels, the government focuses on assuring that it is in control.

The tone of the statements of the both parties changes during the war. First, the government assures that everything is fine; then it admits that there are problems, but they will be solved; finally, the government has to admit that the conflict has seriously damaged the oil fields, and thus, the economy of South Sudan. The role of oil in the rebel strategy seems to change also. First, the rebels intend to control the oil fields and continue the production; later, the strategy is to stop the production in order to prevent the government using the oil money. In the rebel propaganda, oil is inherent part. In the table below, the main categories of statements, or the main changes, are presented in a timeline. The red boxes are the main categories of the government statements and the blue boxes are those of the rebels.

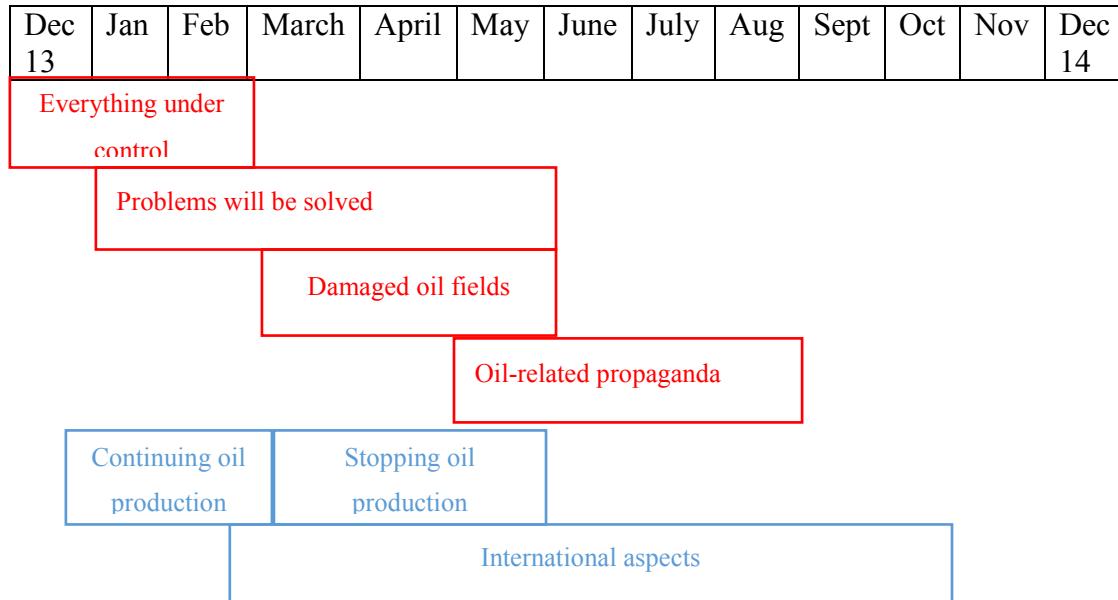


Figure 1. Timeline of the main categories. The red boxes are for the government and the blue boxes for the rebels.

#### 4.1 Analysis: the government

The statements of the government representatives can be divided into four main categories, two of which have several sub-categories. These are presented in the table below.

The first main category, “Everything under control”, includes two sub-categories, “Oil fields under control” and “Cooperation with Sudan”. The statements of this category aim to create a sense of normality and continuity of oil production despite the conflict.

The second category, “Problems will be solved”, consists of three different sub-categories, “Problems are not serious”, “Defending oil fields” and “No need for military assistance”. The main message is that the problems for oil industry caused by the conflict are admitted, but their significance is downplayed, and the capability of the government to fix the problems is emphasized.

The third and the fourth categories do not have sub-categories. In the third, “Damaged oil fields”, the government admits that the conflict has severely damaged oil industry and the South Sudanese economy. The need for financial assistance and permission for Chinese peacekeepers to secure the oil fields are admitted. In the fourth category, oil is used as a tool for propaganda.

The excerpts from the material are chosen because they were the most frequently presented in the material or because they crystallize the idea of the category.

Main category	Sub-categories
<b>Everything under control</b>	Oil fields under control Cooperation with Sudan
<b>Problems will be solved</b>	Problems are not serious Defending oil fields No need for military assistance
<b>Damaged oil fields</b>	
<b>Oil-related propaganda</b>	

Table 2. Categories and sub-categories of the government statements.

#### **4.1.1 Everything under control**

##### *Oil fields under control*

The statements of the first sub-category were published around December and January, straight after the conflict started. In this sub-category, the South Sudanese government officials assure that the on-going fighting has not affected to the oil production at all. Despite rumors and temporary evacuation of some workers, the government is in control of the oil wells, and oil flows normally.

*"The oil fields are safe. There is no problem. They are under control", he said. [Ateny Wek Ateny, the spokesperson of South Sudan's president, ST 25<sup>th</sup> December 2013]*

##### *Cooperation with Sudan*

The majority of these statements were published in January and February: a more critical statement was published in May, and after a long pause, the next one, emphasizing cooperation, in November. Within this sub-category, the cooperation and good diplomatic relations between the governments of Sudan and South Sudan are emphasized. The representatives of the governments discuss ensuring the oil production in the South Sudanese oil fields, oil flow through the Sudanese pipelines and the needs of the oil companies. In addition, the South Sudanese defense minister announced that if needed, his government may request military assistance to secure oil fields. In the only critical comment, in which the South Sudanese minister criticized the decision of the Sudanese officials to welcome the rebel leader Riek Machar to Khartoum, the oil was mentioned as a sign of good relations between the two governments.

*"Until now we have not asked the Sudan government to send in their forces" to protect South Sudan's oil fields, the minister said.*

*"Should there be a threat, anything threatening the oil field, definitely the government of South Sudan may ask the Sudan government to come in and support," he added. [Kuol Manyang Juuk, Defense Minister of South Sudan, ST, 17th January]*

#### **4.1.2 Problems will be solved**

*Problems are not serious*

The statements of this sub-category were published in a time period from the end of December to the mid-April. The government officials and ministers admit that the oil production is hampered because of fighting. They also admit that, first, part of the Unity state oil fields are controlled by the rebels, and later, that the whole oil production has stopped. On the other hand, the ministers and officials assure that the problems faced by the government are not that serious and will be fixed: the oil production still continues partly and more troops will be sent to secure oil fields. Even the situation of Unity state was seen in a positive way. First, the oil shutdown of the state was assured to be only temporary. When the ministers and officials admitted that the oil production in Unity has stopped completely, they emphasized that all the oil wells of Upper Nile state are still under the government's control, and Upper Nile is the state that produces the most of the South Sudanese oil.

*Production slowed at the Unity field because of the attacks and output should be returned to pre-attack levels soon, South Sudan Petroleum Minister Stephen Dhieu Dau said by phone today. The government is sending forces to secure oil fields and prevent more attacks, he said. [B, 20<sup>th</sup> December 2013]*

*While oil production has been halted in Unity state because of the violence, output in Upper Nile state has been unaffected so far and is pumping 160,000 to 200,000 barrels a day, South Sudanese Foreign Minister Barnaba Marial Benjamin said Feb. 11. [B, 19<sup>th</sup> February]*

### *Defending the oilfields*

Most of the statements of this subcategory are published between the last day of December 2013 and the end of May 2014, and the majority of speakers are military officers. The officers assure that the army is capable of defending the oilfields from the rebel attacks and the heartland of the oil production, Upper Nile state, is safe. The tone of the statements is very defiant and at times, even pompous. At the same time, they tell about the repulsed attacks of the rebels and dismiss the threats posed by them.

*Paloch is “where we will be buried,” Vasili, an in-law of Kiir, told reporters at an oil field 20 minutes drive from the town of the same name, saying that rebels don’t have the capacity to take control of the oil fields and Paloch . “We are not running from this place.” [Major General Gregory Vasili, an oil defense force commander, B, 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013]*

*South Sudan’s only oil fields still pumping crude after four months of conflict are safe from rebel attacks, the army general charged with defending them said.*

*Rebel leader Riek Machar’s threat to seize the Paloch oil field in Upper Nile state is a “joke,” Lieutenant-General Johnson Gony Biliu said in an April 14 interview in the state capital, Malakal. Insurgents can’t reach the fields through the war-ravaged town and have failed “five times” to seize Paloch by another route, he said. [B, 17<sup>th</sup> April]*

### *No need for military assistance*

The statements of this sub-category are published between the beginning of January and the beginning of May. Most of the statements focus on denying the reports of South Sudan asking for assistance to protect its oilfields. The first reports were published in January, when the Sudanese foreign minister announced that Sudan and South Sudan establish a joint force to protect the latter’s oil fields. Later, both Sudanese and South Sudanese politicians denied this. Other statements deny also that South Sudan has asked assistance from other IGAD member countries; it is corrected that South Sudan did not request anything, but the member countries of IGAD themselves offered to deploy forces to protect the South Sudanese oil fields. The

point seems to have been that the South Sudanese government wants to assure that it is capable of defending its oil production facilities without outsiders.

*Sudanese and South Sudanese governments denied on Tuesday reports that presidents Omer Al-Bashir and Salva Kiir a struck a security deal to deploy joint forces to protect oil areas in South Sudan. [ST, 7<sup>th</sup> January]*

*"I did not say the government of the republic of South Sudan had asked for deployment of troops from IGAD member countries. I said the government of the republic of South Sudan had received a proposal from individual IGAD member countries seeking to deploy troops to protect oil fields," he stressed. [Ateny Wek Ateny, the spokesperson of South Sudan's president, ST, 7<sup>th</sup> March]*

#### **4.1.3 Damaged oil production causes problems**

Most of the statements of this sub-category take place in March, April and May 2014, but there are single comments throughout the year, the first one in January, the last one in October. The speakers, mainly representatives of the Petroleum Ministry and the Finance Ministry, finally admit that the conflict has affected the oil production, which has serious consequences to the economy of South Sudan. Oil production has been declined by a third, Upper Nile is the only state still producing and even there, there are declines. South Sudan has been forced to take loan from the oil companies and delay repayments of existing loans. The Finance Minister says that South Sudan lives "hand to mouth" (Bloomberg 28.5.2014). In one of the last statements, the Foreign Minister announces that Chinese peacekeepers are deployed in the oil fields in order to secure these "vital installations" (Bloomberg 10.9.2014), which can be seen as a sign of weakness after the defiant statements about being capable of defending oil fields and about not needing military assistance.

*South Sudan borrowed \$200 million from oil operators and postponed repayments on domestic loans after the country's six-month-old conflict cut crude output, the government's main source of revenue, Finance Minister Aggrey Tisa Sabuni said.*

*Loss of about a third of revenue led the government to seek advances from oil producers in South Sudan over the past five months, Sabuni said today in an interview in the capital, Juba. The government also asked to delay payments due on loans to commercial banks and shelved plans to improve the country's infrastructure, he said. [B, 28<sup>th</sup> May]*

#### **4.1.4 Oil-related propaganda**

In the material, there were only two occasions in which the government side used oil as a clear propaganda against the rebels. In May, an official accused the USA of being in the side of the rebels because of oil (Sudan Tribune 15.5.2014). Later, in August, President Kiir warned that the rebels will become a regional threat and used the rebel attacks against oil fields as an example of the cruelty of the rebels, calling them terrorists (Sudan Tribune 31.8.2014).

*“If they are not given meaningful and serious attention by the region and the international community involved in this peace process, I am sure that their activities would reach other countries and when this happened, the conflict will be a regional issue,” he said.*

*If today like they did before, they attack the oil area, they will not spare anybody. This is [a] terrorist act,” he added. [Salva Kiir, president of South Sudan, ST, 31<sup>st</sup> August]*

## **4.2 Analysis: the rebels**

The statements of the rebels can be divided into three main categories, each of which has several sub-categories. These categories are presented in the table below.

The first main category, “Continuing oil production”, consists of three sub-categories, “No deliberate damage to oil fields”, “No oil money to government” and “Cooperation with Sudan”. The main message is that the rebels aim to control the oil fields in order to continue the production, and even if some of the facilities are damaged or the production is partially halted, it is not deliberate. The rebels intend to use the oil money themselves.



The second category, “Stopping oil production”, there are three sub-categories, “Fight for control of oil fields”, “Starving military budget” and “Forced oil shutdown”. The common denominator for these sub-categories is the goal of the rebels to control the oil fields and stop the production in order to prevent the government using it. Unlike in the “Continuing oil production” category, within this category there are no signs of willingness to continue production or taking over the oil revenue.

The last category, “International aspects of oil production”, is the most diverse, and consists of four sub-categories: “Blood oil”, “No foreign forces to oil fields”, “Role of China” and “Oil as a possible sanction”. In this main category, the role of oil is especially political and sensitive, and the different roles of international actors are commented and criticized. The common idea is that some international actors and peaceful international interventions are welcomed (such as using oil as sanction or contributing to the development of oil industry), any kind of meddling into the conflict is not tolerated (such as the government using oil money to hire Ugandan “mercenaries” or to buy Chinese weapons, or IGAD or the UN sending peacekeepers to secure oil fields).

As in the case of the government statements, also in the excerpts from the rebels’ material are chosen because they were the most frequently presented in the material or because they crystallize the idea of the category.

<b>Main category</b>	<b>Sub-categories</b>
<b>Continuing oil production</b>	No deliberate damage to oil fields
	No oil money to government
	Cooperation with Sudan
<b>Stopping oil production</b>	Fight for control of oil fields
	Starving military budget
	Forced oil shutdown
<b>International aspects of oil production</b>	“Blood oil”
	No foreign forces to oil fields
	Role of China
	Oil as a possible sanction

Table 3. Categories and sub-categories of the statements of the SPLM in Opposition.

#### **4.2.1 Continuing oil production**

##### *No deliberate damage to oil fields*

In this sub-category, most of the statements were published between the end of December 2013 and the end of February 2014. The rebels admit that the oil production has been hampered because of lack of workforce due to evacuations. They also emphasize that any decline in the production is not their fault, and definitely not their intention: the decisions were made by the evacuated oil workers themselves. In addition, the government is accused of oil shutdown, criticized of ignoring the livelihoods of people. The government forces were also alleged of looting the oil facilities. Later, in summer, the rebels announce that even though they would be capable of attacking and controlling the Upper Nile oil fields, they will not do it in order to not to damage oil installations.

*James Koang Chuol, who took control of the army's fourth division in Unity state on Saturday, told Sudan Tribune that he had not ordered the shutdown, saying the decision was taken by oil technicians who were evacuated from the area on 25 December. [ST, 26<sup>th</sup> December 2013]*

*In a separate statement, Koang also accused the government forces of resorting to looting the facilities in the oilfield of Paloich in fear of imminent attacks as Akoko is closer to the oilfields. [Brig. Gen. Lul Koang, the spokesperson for the rebels, ST, 23<sup>rd</sup> February]*

*He said while rebels had the ability to attack and control oil production areas in Upper Nile state, Machar had halted forces progressing further on oil fields located near the Sudanese border for fear of damaging oil installations. [Yohanis Musa Pouk, SPLM-IN-Opposition spokesperson, ST, 7<sup>th</sup> June]*

### *No oil money to the government*

All of the statements of this sub-category were published between 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2013 and mid-February 2014. Most of them cite the interview of Riek Machar, who announced being in control of oil fields and allowing the oil companies continue production under protection of his forces, and diverting the revenue from Juba to an escrow account until the conflict is over. The other statements echo Machar's interview. The main points are that the continuation of the oil production is in the interest of the rebels, the oil revenue should not go to the government and that the rebels assure they know how to manage the oil money responsibly. It is even suggested that the international community should be in charge of the oil revenue.

*"We'll protect the oil workers, the oil companies, the oil installations and the oil can be transported and sold," Machar said by phone from an undisclosed location. Revenue from crude sales will be placed in an escrow account "until the conflict is over," he said. [Riek Machar, the leader of SPLM in Opposition, B, 24<sup>th</sup> December 2013]*

*"We do not want to close down the oil because other parties would be hurt. Closing the oil fields has not been one of our objectives otherwise our forces would have closed them down long time ago because we control 90% of the areas where oil is produced in both Unity and Upper Nile state", Mar said on Sunday. [Hussein Mar, a representative of the SPLM in Opposition delegation in the peace negotiations, ST, 16<sup>th</sup> February]*

### *Cooperation with Sudan*

All the statements of this sub-category were published in December, in the context of the rebels announcing their will to continue oil production, while diverting the revenue from Juba. The rebel leaders said that they would take over the implementation the cooperation agreement with Sudan, which concerns the use of the Sudanese pipelines by South Sudan. Interestingly enough, there are no other comments or statements regarding the "hijacked" cooperation agreement and whether it worked out, or how the Sudanese authorities react to this.

*He said no money would go to the government in Juba, explaining that his group plans to divert oil revenues and deal directly with Sudan in implementing the September 2012 cooperation agreements, as they are in control of the concerned states. [Riek Machar, the leader of SPLM in Opposition, ST, 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2013]*

#### **4.2.2 Stopping oil production**

##### *Fight for control of oil fields*

Most of the statements of this sub-category were published between January and June, and after a months-long pause, one statement was published in November. The statements were made by military officers from the rebel side, and they were mostly reports of fighting around the oil fields and of which oil fields are under the rebel control. In many statements, the oil fields were mentioned as an intermediate goal for something bigger, such as taking over Juba or ousting President Kiir. Many of the statements also emphasized that it was the government forces who had initiated the fight, sometimes even during the ceasefire, and the rebels had only defended themselves. In the last statement, it was also suggested that the government forces deliberately aim to recapture the oil fields before the permanent ceasefire is signed.

*"Our forces have now taken full control of Leer county, Mirmir and Tharjiath oilfields in the operations to clear the state from the pro-Salva Kiir soldiers and their foreign mercenaries," he told Sudan Tribune by phone from Bentiu. [Lt. Col Peter Riek Gew, rebel military spokesperson ST, April 19]*

*"The government is entirely responsible for these unnecessary attacks motivated by its desires and attempts to recapture oil fields under our control before a permanent cessation [of hostilities] agreement could be signed," Koang said in a statement extended to Sudan Tribune on Monday. [Brig. Gen. Lul Ruai Koang, the spokesman for rebel forces ST, 10<sup>th</sup> November]*

### *Starving military budget*

The statements of this sub-category were published between the end of March and May, and they are made by Riek Machar and other rebel leaders. They announce openly that they are going to capture oil fields, especially the ones in Upper Nile state, in order to deprive the government of oil revenue for military purposes. By starving a military budget, the rebels aim to prevent the government (or the president) of buying weapons and to force the president either to step down or to take the peace negotiations seriously. In these statements, it is clear that the rebel leaders see that the government finances the war efforts with oil money, which makes oil fields legitimate military targets for them. Controlling the oil fields is not an end itself, but only a means to attack the president. The nexus between oil, conflict and economy is recognized.

*“We want to take control of the oil field,” said Machar, dressed in green military fatigues and wearing gold-rimmed sunglasses. “This is our oil. We must take control of Paloch to deny Salva Kiir revenue to buy more arms.” [Riek Machar, the leader of SPLM in Opposition, B, 31<sup>st</sup> March]*

### *Forced oil shutdown*

The first statement of this sub-category was published in February, and the rest in April. In the first statement, the rebels threaten to enforce an oil shutdown if the government forces continue attacking their positions (Sudan Tribune 16.2.2014). The rest of the statements dealt with the capture of Unity state by the rebels. After the capture, they asked the oil companies in the government-controlled areas to leave and evacuate their staff within a week, or face the risks.

*South Sudanese rebels seized the capital of oil-rich Unity state, demanding companies in government-held territory suspend crude production and evacuate staff within a week.*

*(...)*

*The insurgents urge “all oil companies still operating in government controlled areas to immediately embark on gradual and voluntary closure of oil production,” Koang said. “Failure to comply with this request, the oil companies risk forced oil shutdown*

*and the safety of their staff.” [Brig. Gen. Lul Ruai Koang, Rebel military spokesperson, B, 15th April]*

#### **4.2.3 International aspects of oil production**

*“Blood oil”*

These statements were published from February to October, and most of the speakers are high-rank soldiers of the SPLM in Opposition. They criticize President Kiir and his government of using oil money to hire foreign mercenaries, such as the Ugandan army and some Sudanese rebel groups, and buy arms in order to kill his own people. The weapons purchases and military expenses are contrasted with the people dying of hunger and diseases. The sharpest criticism is aimed at the Ugandan army, which has fought alongside the South Sudanese government since the beginning: the Ugandans are called as “mercenaries” and they are accused of using banned weapons and of keeping Kiir in power only because of benefitting from the oil money. This category can be linked with a de-legitimization discourse of Kiir used by the rebels in justifying their struggle against his government.

*The rebel officer accuses Kiir of using the country’s oil money to hire foreign troops – namely the Ugandan army (UPDF) and Sudanese rebels – to kill his own citizens on ethnic grounds.*

*(...)*

*“What legitimacy left to someone who is killing his own people with foreign allies? Salva [Kiir] has forgotten that these very people he is killing are the ones who had voted him into the office five years back”, he added. [Gen. Gathoth Gatkout, a commander of SPLM in Opposition, ST, 5<sup>th</sup> February]*

*Uganda, JEM and SPLM/A-N are now being paid by dollars that comes from the oil in Bentiu. Uganda is a war merchant in the region, they are in DRC Congo, in Central African Republic, Somalia etc, and would not want to see an end to this conflict soon and we are ready to battle it out with them.*

*(...)*

*Yes, they [the international community] should stop the flow of the oil because it is being used for financing mercenaries and war. There is blood oil now flowing in South Sudan. [Oyet Nathaniel Pierino, officer of SPLM in Opposition, ST, 27<sup>th</sup> March]*

#### *No foreign forces to oil fields*

The statements of this sub-category were published between the end of March and the end of May. The statements, by the military leaders of SPLM in Opposition, are about rejecting all proposed deployments of foreign forces to protect the oil fields. First, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Kenya propose to send forces. The proposal was rejected by Riek Machar, stating that these forces would be treated as enemy and deployment of them in the oil fields is colonization. Second, after the mandate of the peacekeeping mission UNMISS was extended to protect civilians around the oil fields, the rebel leaders argue that this means that the UN has taken a side of the government by ensuring the flow of oil money, and thus, by keeping President Kiir in power.

*The deployment [of Kenyan, Ethiopian and Rwandan forces] would be “hostile” and treated the same as Uganda’s army fighting alongside South Sudan’s military, Machar said.*

*“They’ve no right to deploy in our oil fields,” he said. “If they want to colonize us we will fight them.”*

*[Riek Machar, the leader of SPLM in Opposition, B, 31<sup>st</sup> March]*

*“By stepping in to protection Oil Installations on behalf of the government, UNMISS will have sided with one of the parties to the conflict and inevitably becomes part of the problem not solution,” he said. [Brig. Gen. Lul Ruai Koang, the rebel military spokesperson, ST, 29<sup>th</sup> May]*

#### *Role of China*

The statements of this sub-category were published between the end of June and the end of October. The statements reflect the paradoxical relationship between the rebels and China. In the first statement, Riek Machar describes China as “an important partner” in oil production

and calls for cooperation with the Chinese in dealing with the suspended oil operations in Unity state. Next statements, on the other hand, challenge the role of China in the conflict: according to the rebels, China is time providing loans to the government and selling weapons, oil as collateral, and providing soldiers to the UNMISS in order to secure oil fields (Sudan Tribune 18.7.2014). Thus, China fuels the conflict in the oil-producing areas, but at the same time, China sponsors the peace process. The criticism and concern over the role of China is expressed in relatively diplomatic language. Later, after the rebel delegation paid a visit in China requesting it not to sell arms to the government, the discussion turns to the safety of Chinese oil workers in South Sudan. It seems that while the rebels do not accept the assistance given to the government, they do not wish to antagonize China.

*“The People’s Republic of China is also providing arms that are fuelling the conflict in South Sudan through its arms manufacturer, China North Industries Corporation (NORINCO). These loans and arms are guaranteed with oil as collateral,” Mabior said in the statement. (...) The government has armed militias using these arms to persecute its barbaric war in South Sudan especially in the oil producing areas,” he further stressed.*

*(...)*

*He said the SPLM-In Opposition is concerned by the role that China is playing in the South Sudanese conflict. [Mabior Garang de Mabior, the chairperson of the national committee for information and public relations of SPLM in Opposition, ST, 18th July]*

### *Oil as a possible sanction*

The statements of this sub-category were published in the summer, during July and August, and most of them cited Riek Machar. Machar criticizes the sanctions targeted at the military leadership of the parties by the USA and the EU as inefficient and argues that the regional sanctions by the IGAD countries would be more effective. He points out that blocking the oil flow from South Sudan would bring peace to the country soon, and asks the government of Sudan and Kenya to be courageous enough to deny the access to the ports.

*“If Khartoum would take the courage and say the oil from South Sudan is not going to flow through its pipelines, this would be very effective indeed,” said Machar at the*



*press conference to mark the third anniversary of South Sudan's independence from Sudan. [Riek Machar, the leader of SPLM in Opposition, ST, 10<sup>th</sup> July]*

### **4.3 Conclusion**

Judging by the statements by the conflict parties, it seems that at least the conflict parties think that oil has a role in the conflict. The central role of the oil in the South Sudanese economy makes oil as a strategic resource which both of the parties intends to control to win the war. The main message of the government is that it tries hard to keep the oil fields under control and keep oil flowing, and when it fails, the representatives of the government admit that the damaged oil industry has serious consequences to the economy. On the other hand, major part of the rebel statements consists of plans to capture the oil fields, either to take over oil production or just to prevent the government using the money for war efforts.

It was particularly distinctive how the rebels complemented their anti-government propaganda by the oil-related statements. The rebels used oil as a propaganda tool in de-legitimizing the government and especially the president by claiming that he uses oil to hire foreign “mercenaries” and buy weapons abroad to kill his own people. This propaganda is most likely aimed at the South Sudanese themselves, to create a picture of the president as a ruthless, corrupted warlord who has to rely on oil money and foreign troops to keep him in power. The government did not use oil that much in the war propaganda, but instead, tried to assure the investors to continue the production and investing in South Sudan and prevent the unsure ones from leaving.

The international aspects of the oil production were also visible in the statements, as were a sense of sovereignty and ownership: economic cooperation was welcomed, whereas almost all proposed military interventions were rejected by both conflict parties. Especially the rebels criticized vehemently all possible interventions to protect oil fields, arguing that this would mean taking sides or even the colonization of South Sudan. Even though the government had received military assistance from Uganda, it declared for months that it is capable of defending the oil fields and rejected all the rumors about military interventions by Sudan and other East African nations.

## **5 DISCUSSION**

It seems that the South Sudanese conflict parties consider oil as an essential part of the conflict. Among other meanings, it is a strategic resource for the government and a legitimate target for the rebels. In addition, the South Sudanese oil industry is dependent on several foreign actors whose interests the South Sudanese belligerents have to take into account.

According to the resource curse theory, the impact of natural resources on civil wars is indirect: abundant natural resources encourage corruption and patronage politics, which weaken state institutions and make the state vulnerable for political upheavals. The “greed vs. grievance” model suggests, however, that natural resources are one of the ways in which the conflict is financed. What do my findings mean from the point of view of these theories? In this chapter, I discuss the role of oil in the South Sudan conflict in the context of the resource curse theory, the “greed vs. grievance” model and the political situation of the Horn of Africa. As the South Sudan conflict and the role of oil are also linked to the broader debate about what is state and legitimacy, I discuss briefly the interpretation of the conflict as a negotiating statehood and the role of oil in this process.

### **5.1 Before the conflict**

South Sudan is, without doubt, an extremely oil-dependent country: the government receives 70 % of its revenues from oil (African Economic Outlook 2014, 2). Oil industry and the related investments are the drivers of economic growth in the otherwise poor country (ibid). Therefore, it is difficult to underestimate its centrality to the South Sudanese economy and politics.

Large reserves of oil are not necessarily a positive issue, because according to the resource curse theory, natural resources can have adverse effects on economy and politics. Dependence can weaken the state institutions and encourage corruption and patronage politics, and thus, indirectly cause conflicts (Humphreys, Sachs & Stiglitz 2007). In the South Sudan case, it is clear that institutions are weak, corruption is rampant and politics is based on patronage networks (e.g. Radon & Logan 2014), but whether the resource curse is reason for the current conflict, needs to be discussed in more detail.

The resource curse suggests that the resource-dependent countries have weak institutions because they do not have to tax their citizens, which leads to lack of connection between the ruling class and the citizens, lack of accountability and lack of a social contract (Karl 2007). In South Sudan, the state institutions, such as legislative, judiciary and the army, are without doubt weak (e.g. ICG 2014a; Radon & Logan 2014). Oil wealth has probably contributed to this situation, but it is not the only reason: the problems South Sudan faces are enormous (e.g. Minale 2012; Blackings 2012).

Blackings (2012) argues that the failure of state-building by the South Sudanese government is caused because of inability of the SPLM/A to transform itself from a guerrilla movement into a political party; according to him, the SPLM/A has reaped all the benefits of the independence in the form of power, prestige and corruption at the expense of the rest of the population. In this sense, oil has most likely contributed to the situation. Because of the reliance on oil money, the SPLM/A has never had to form a social contract with its citizens, and the citizens are unable to hold their government accountable (Radon & Logan 2014, 160–161). Therefore, it can be assumed that reliance of oil wealth and the related corruption can be linked to the fragility of the state institutions in South Sudan.

The weak institutions increase a conflict risk by enabling the politicians basing their power on the patronage networks (McFerson 2010), by decreasing the ability of government to interfere in social and political conflicts (Ross 2003, 25) or by weakening the government's administrative control of the whole country (Fearon 2005). In South Sudan, almost all of these aspects have contributed to the outbreak of the conflict.

The reason for why a simple competition on political seats could escalate so dramatically can be found in the weak state structures. The executive, or the president, has unreasonably amount of power in relation to the legislative and the judiciary, which makes the office of president prone to competition, and also, leaves the legislative and the judiciary little options to balance the power of the executive (Radon & Logan 2014). For example, the parliament of South Sudan was unable to intervene in when President Kiir replaced most of his cabinet in July 2013 (Radon & Logan 2014, 157), and also the judiciary, independence of which is questioned, has failed to resolve the internal disputes of the SPLM (African Economic Outlook 2014, 8).

The South Sudanese politicians base their power in ethnic patronage networks, and in the current conflict, the affiliation of certain ethnic groups with the leaders was one of the reasons why the conflict broke out (LeRiche 2014; Radon & Logan 2014, 150–151). President Kiir’s “big tent strategy”, a military patronage system, also contributed to the onset of the conflict. The SPLA was weak and divided, because different armed groups were “bribed” to join the SPLA with amnesties and high-rank positions and thus, root causes were ignored and rebelling was unsanctioned (ICG 2014a, 5–6). Thus, when strife between Kiir and Machar and the incidence in Juba in December 2013 provided a spark, the system based on ethnic loyalties and a fragile coalition of armed groups and militias collapsed.

In theory, patronage networks can work, if the authorities “buy peace” by “bribing” the key segments of the society into compliance, for example through large-scale distribution or high military spending (Fjelde 2009). The problem is the expensiveness of the functioning patronage system, and not many resource-dependent countries can afford to it (Basedau & Lay 2009). In South Sudan, this was one of the problems: after the oil shutdown 2012, the economy was in a poor condition, which meant that the government had difficulties to buy the loyalty of its army (Radon & Logan 2014, 160–161). In this sense, one might argue that the bad economic situation create conditions for conflict (Auty 2004; Ross 2003).

One possible resource curse mechanism, which seems unlikely in South Sudan, is the grievances in producing regions. Grievances in producing regions, whether the health or environmental problems or claim of the local population to own the resources, can lead to violence or even secessionist claims (Humphreys, Sachs & Stiglitz 2007, 13; Ross 2003, 27–28). Statistical evidence supporting this kind of mechanism is mixed (e.g. Humphreys 2005; Ross 2004a). Neither the historical analysis of the conflict nor the results of my analysis of the conflict parties’ statements indicate that the motivations of the rebels would be secession of oil areas or defending suffering communities living in the producing regions. Thus, the results support the findings of Ross (2004a): most likely, there are real grievances in the producing regions, but they are not a cause of a conflict.

One of the possible mechanisms of resource curse causing conflicts is capturing the state apparatus in order to get access to natural resource wealth (Humphreys, Sachs & Stiglitz

2007, 13–14). Because this mechanism is similar to the “greed vs. grievance” model mechanisms, I discuss it below.

## **5.2 Oil during the conflict**

In this section, I discuss the role of oil during the conflict, especially from the point of view of “greed vs. grievance” model and of the process of negotiating the state.

### **5.2.1 “Greed vs. grievance” model**

“Greed vs. grievance” model suggests that civil wars emerge when there are low costs for rebellion and when there is a chance to generate income (Collier & Hoeffler 2001). In theory, this is the case in South Sudan. The costs of enlisting rebels are low because the economy is ruined, most of the population is illiterate and does non-wage work (World Bank 2014a; World Bank 2014b) and there are plenty of uneducated young males (African Economic Outlook 2014, 10). The low population density (World Bank 2014b), undeveloped infrastructure (African Economic Outlook 2014, 6) and availability of the conflict-specific capital (Small Arms Survey 2014a) give a strategic advantage to the potential rebels. Oil gives a chance to generate income through booty futures (Collier et al. 2003, 77).

Although the numbers support the “greed vs. grievance” model, one has to take a closer look at the dynamics of the conflict and the mechanisms of the “greed vs. grievance” model in order to draw conclusions. For example, all the theoretical assumptions about the impact of the resource on the conflict type, based on the “greed vs. grievance” model, do not match with the empirical data. According to Le Billon (2001), point and distant resource, such as the South Sudanese oil, should lead to a secessionist war, but at least in my sample of the statements of the rebels, there were no single mention of secession. Similarly, interpreting the conflict risk assessment by Auty (2004), oil is paradoxical: while it is a point resource, extraction of which does not require forming socio-economic links, which would increase the conflict risk, but at its weight/value ratio indicates that it is not very lootable, decreasing the risk.

The most prominent mechanism by which natural resources are assumed to affect to the onset of civil war is looting: that the rebels finance the start-up costs of the rebellion by the sales of natural resources (Ross 2004a). According to Ross (2004a, 40–41), in order to prove this mechanism one has to find evidence of pre-war extraction and sales of the natural resources by the rebels, and in his case study, he found no such evidence (ibid, 50–51). In the South Sudan case, it would be difficult or even impossible to find such evidence, too: the outbreak of conflict after clashes in Juba took everybody by surprise (Gordon 2014, 1). Since the army unraveled and the fighting started days before the existence of the SPLM-IO (Small Arms Survey 2014b, 5–6), the rebellion was hardly well planned in advance.

On the other hand, as Ross himself (2004a, 50–51) admits, this definition of looting mechanism is not conclusive: in many cases, looting by the rebels started after the conflict began. Thus, the additional resources would lengthen the conflict by giving chance to the weaker party, or shorten it by giving the edge to the stronger party (ibid, 42–43). The underlying assumption is that the rebels are to ones who loot and they are the weaker party (ibid).

The South Sudan case is somewhat more complex than that. It is clear that the government, which receives most of its revenue from oil (African Economic Outlook 2014, 2) and received loans from oil companies (Bloomberg 28.5.2014), has better economical chances to wage war because of oil. But, it is unclear that which side is actually the weaker one: during the first months of the conflict, 70 % of the soldiers defected to the rebels' side or deserted (ICG 2014a, 8), and while the government received military assistance from Uganda (ibid, 22–23), the conflict has not ended with a military victory of either side. The underlying assumption that the rebels are weaker than the government may not be accurate in the South Sudan case.

Second, it is the government which is “looting” the natural resources, which are not just “additional resources”, but the very base of the economy and vital assets to the government. The word “looting” also raises the question who actually owns the resources in the first place. It is frowned upon to use oil to finance the war efforts (e.g. Sudan Tribune 18.7.2014; Global Witness 2014), but is it looting? Technically, the government uses the resources under its control to regain the monopoly of violence in its territory, which is far from illegal. On the other hand, if the owner of the oil is the South Sudanese people, should the rents be used to

improve the living conditions of the regular people instead of wasting it to the power struggle of the elites?

The similar type of reasoning can be found in one of the mechanisms of the resource curse: that the rebels intend to capture the state apparatus in order to gain access to natural resources (Humphreys, Sachs & Stiglitz 2007, 13–14). According to the report of the “Enough” project, this is exactly what is happening in South Sudan: the politicians who were dismissed by Kiir were also cut off from their access to oil wealth, and the main goal of the rebel leaders is to gain back that wealth (Fleischner 2014, 9–10). In theory, this is possible, and taking into account the rampant corruption of the ruling class of South Sudan, it is likely that the rebel leaders have economic motives in mind. As discussed above, the conflict was hardly started intentionally, but it might be possible that after the outbreak, the opportunistic leaders used the opportunity to fight for the control of oil wealth.

However, it is difficult to find solid empirical evidence about these kinds of hidden agendas and ultimate motives of the conflict parties and with the material I have, I cannot answer to this question. If the rebel leaders’ goal was the access to oil money, they would not say it in public; they would have to justify their actions to their soldiers and supporters in other ways. As the “Blood oil” category suggests, it is not irrelevant for the legitimization of the ruling elites how the oil money is used or how it is perceived to be used.

In my material, there were no signs that the rebels would have wanted to capture the state in order to get access to oil money. Interestingly enough, this mechanism was presented in the opposite way: the rebels intended to capture the oil fields in order to capture the state, for example the “Stopping oil production” category. In the most statements made by the rebels, oil had only instrumental value in achieving the main goal: capturing the state apparatus was the end, and capturing the oil fields was just a means to achieve it. It is possible that for the rebels, oil is just a strategic resource; it does not exclude the possibility of hidden agendas of the rebel leaders; they would have to justify the attempts to capture the oil fields without revealing their economic motives publicly. But, as discussed above, this subject needs further research.

Nevertheless, in the statements, it was the government that was criticized of using oil money to finance the war, not the rebels. The role of oil was extremely politicized in the rebel

statements. Using oil to finance war efforts was disapproved as ethically questionable (“Blood oil”) and was used to justify the attacks to oil fields as pre-emptive defense (“Starving military budget”) and thus, made oil an essential part of the conflict. This politicization can be seen also in the category of “No foreign forces to oil fields”: even the UN peacekeepers are treated with hostility when they are mandated to protect civilians around the oil fields. The main reason for this politicization of oil is probably the oil dependence of the government: if oil money was not that important to the government and its war efforts, oil would not have become as critical target for the rebels.

The same ambiguity goes with the issue of booty futures, which are related to looting: in their statements, the rebels accused the government of using oil as collateral in ensuring loans (Sudan Tribune 18.7.2014), and the government admitted receiving loans from the oil companies (Bloomberg 28.5.2014). This suggests that although it is unclear whether the government really has sold extraction rights in advance, it has received financial support from actors whose interest is to extract oil under protection of the government. The rebel case is more complex. The statements of Machar about continuing oil production and protecting the oil companies can be interpreted as a call for financing, but it is unclear if it is succeeded or not. If the rebels have sold the extraction rights of oil fields in advance, asking oil companies to leave (Bloomberg 15.4.2014) and suggesting that oil should be sanctioned (Sudan Tribune 15.7.2014) would be against their interests.

There is evidence that the natural resources might have impact on severity of a conflict. According to Ross (2004a, 45) battles over resource-rich areas can increase the number of casualties, and according to Lujala (2010), existence of hydrocarbon production make conflicts more severe measured in the number of battle deaths. In South Sudan case, it seems that oil producing states Jonglei, Unity and Upper Nile have been severely affected by the conflict (e.g. UNSC 6.3.2014, 3–5; UNSC 25.7.2014, 3–5; UNSC 18.11.2014, 3–5), and in the categories of “Defending the oil fields” and “Stopping oil production” and even “Continuing oil production”, the conflict parties admit that they have been fighting over the control of the oil fields and producing areas.

The change of the rhetoric of both sides might also indicate the increasing severity. The government’s assurances (“Everything under control”) change gradually to the admittance of serious problems (“Damaged oil fields”) as the conflict continues. Similarly, in the beginning,



the rebels' aims change from using the oil fields for their own purposes ("Continuing oil production") to just stopping the government using it ("Stopping oil production") or even to put oil under sanctions ("Oil as a possible sanction"). One of the possible interpretations would be that as the conflict continued, the severity of the battles increased and thus, controlling the oil fields became more and more difficult. There is a good possibility that the South Sudan case confirms the arguments of Ross (2004a, 45) and Lujala (2010), but this subject needs further research.

### *5.2.2 Negotiating the state: oil in repertoires*

The state, legitimacy and the relationship between the ruling elites and the ruled have been at the center of the political philosophy for centuries. The South Sudan conflict and role of oil in it can be also seen as a part of this broader debate about what state is and how the leadership of state legitimizes its dominance. According to Hagmann and Péclard (2010), the state should be seen as a process in which the various actors negotiate the relations of power. The actors, some of whom have better resources and better opportunities to have their voices heard than the others, have to legitimize their claims of power by using symbolic repertoires, such as ethnic or religious identity or ideals of good governance and democracy.

Hagmann and Péclard (2010) are critical of the current discourse of state fragility and institutional weakness for being normative by judging the African states for not being successful in the Western standards. They argue that the African states are not fragile or failed but simply more complex and contested than the Western ideal, and in this context, the conflicts are merely phases in which the negotiations and changes in relations occur rapidly (Hagmann & Péclard 2010, 556). The alternative interpretation of the outbreak of the conflict within this context would be to see it as a continuum for a negotiation process in which the president and the critical politicians attempted to reorganize their power relations. During the conflict, the new players, such as the rebel organization SPLM-IO, arise in the negotiation arena in which the power relations are arranged (ibid, 551). Although the analysis of the typical African politics is reasonable, there is a serious problem within this approach: it presents the conflict, which has caused suffering to thousands of people, as natural and acceptable way to solve the political disputes, and it does not offer any possible solutions.

Normative as the state fragility discourse and the related resource curse theory might be, they at least portray civil wars as problems.

Despite the normative shortcomings, the notion of state as a process of power struggles between different actors is convincing. If the South Sudan conflict is seen as a negotiating process on what South Sudan is and who are legitimately in charge of it, then oil and oil money are extremely important resources for the main actors. The negotiating process is never inclusive or equal: those who have more resources, either material or immaterial, are in better position to shape the process (Hagmann & Péclard 2010, 546–547). Therefore, it is logical that the government aims to keep control of the oil fields and that the rebels intend to capture them: control over this resource might give an advantage in the negotiations, not just as practical leverage in peace negotiations, but also the stronger position in negotiating the power relations that defines the state.

Another important aspect is that the actors need a way to justify their claims to power by using different cultural repertoires (Hagmann & Péclard 2010, 547). The rebels justify their struggle by praising Riek Machar as a democratic leader who promotes good governance (Sudan Tribune 2.3.2014), using the currently popular repertoires in the African political context (Hagmann & Péclard 2010, 547). They contrast him with picturing Salva Kiir as a dictator and using foreign “mercenaries” to kill his own people (e.g. Sudan Tribune 16.2.2014; Sudan Tribune 17.2.2014). This propaganda is complemented by allegations of using oil money to hire foreign “mercenaries” and to buy weapons abroad. The idea is to use another cultural repertoire to create a picture of the president as a ruthless, corrupted warlord who “loots” the oil money and has to rely on the foreign troops to keep him in power. In this sense, the rebels use oil and the legitimate use of oil money as repertoires to justify their struggle, and thus, they politicize the meaning of oil in the conflict.

What is underneath these repertoires and the debate of who is looting whose oil is the question of ownership of the natural resources and how to use the profits of the natural resources legitimately. Judging by the categories of “No need military assistance” and “No foreign fields to oil fields”, both of the conflict parties consider oil as a property of the South Sudanese. However, it seems that the debate on the ownership of the resources should be taken to the level of the peace negotiations, where the power relations are re-arranged and

negotiated. As one of the most important resources that any actor in South Sudan can have at their disposal, oil should be one of the top priorities of the negotiations.

### 5.2.3 *International aspects*

Although my research focused on the statements of the conflict parties, it was clear that the international aspects of the South Sudanese oil industry are important and that the leaders of the South Sudanese conflict parties have to take these international actors and their interests into account. Even though the South Sudan conflict is technically a civil war, several foreign actors are involved in it in different ways and for different reasons, which reflect the interconnectedness of the Horn of Africa region (Mesfin 2013) and the international character of the oil business. Even the oil companies, who have agreed to give loans for the government (Bloomberg 28.5.2014; African Economic Outlook 2014, 2), are in a way involved in the conflict by financing the war efforts of the other party. The situation might resemble a mechanism suggested by Ross (2004a, 56–57): possibility of gaining access to natural resources encourages international involvement, even though attempts to gain access or benefit from the South Sudanese oil do not necessarily mean strictly looting. However, the international involvement in the South Sudanese conflict and also the regional pipeline politics should be researched further.

Sudan and China are the most relevant foreign players of the South Sudanese oil industry: China is a major investor, and Sudan is the owner of the pipelines through which South Sudan transports its oil to the international markets. Their special status was reflected in the statements of the both sides in the “Cooperation with Sudan” and in the category of “Role of China” of the rebels.

Sudan supports the government, but it has been speculated that it might also covertly assist the rebels also (ICG 2014a, 24). Lacking other means of transportation of oil, both parties are dependent on Sudan and in their statements they – and especially the government – emphasize cooperative relations with the northern neighbor. In the rebels’ statements, however, the cooperation with Sudan vanished in the early phase of the conflict, and there have been reports of the rebels’ plans to build new pipelines, one via Djibouti and one via Mombasa, Kenya (Sudan Tribune 14.7.2014). This might indicate that the rebels are seeking alternative

routes for transporting oil to the sea instead of relying on Sudan and on more uncertain option, the planned LAPSSET pipeline (e.g. Patey 2014, 244–245). The pipeline politics in the Horn of Africa region will probably be a contested issue in the future years.

Like Sudan, China is one of the major actors that neither side of the conflict wishes to antagonize. Only the rebels commented on the role of China in their statements, by criticizing it – in very polite terms – of its paradoxical position in the conflict: at the same time, China contributed troops to the United Nations peacekeeping mission (UNMISS), participated in the peace talks and sold weapons to government (Sudan Tribune 28.7.2014). Later, the rebels requested it to stop the weapons trade, which China agreed to do (Sudan Tribune 24.10.2014). It is noteworthy, that when the Foreign Ministry of South Sudan announced of the deployment of Chinese peacekeepers in the oil fields (Bloomberg 10.9.2014) – was it accurate or not – there was no public outcry by the rebels, as had been in all the other cases of proposed military interventions.

China has faced the dilemma between pursuing its economic interests and with its traditional non-interference politics (e.g. Kuo 2012), and this contradictory politics regarding South Sudan and attempts to please both parties might be caused by the same dilemma. The current situation is similar to a difficult position of China after the independence of South Sudan, when China had to balance between the governments of the North and the South, which were at the brink of a war because of oil-related disputes, in order to benefit from its massive oil investments (ICG 2012). It can be assumed that while China is acting more proactively than ever before (Reuters 11.2.2014), by accommodating the demands of the rebels also, it attempts to avoid being stuck in the middle of the belligerents.

In addition, the regional states have their own economic and political interests in South Sudan, and thus, interests in the resolution of the South Sudan conflict. South Sudan is, economically and politically, inclined to the East Africa: it is planning to apply for the membership of the East African Community (LeRiche & Arnold 2012, 203). In addition, the SPLM/A have long relationship with the IGAD countries Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia, which are also important trading partners of South Sudan (LeRiche & Arnold 2012, 203–206). One of their common interests is the LAPSSET corridor, a pipeline and a railway and road network from Ethiopia via South Sudan to the Lamu port, Kenya, which is among the biggest infrastructure projects in Africa (Patey 2014, 244–245). Later, land-locked with relatively

recent oil discoveries, Uganda (LeRiche & Arnold 2012, 204), has joined the project (Aljazeera 13.10.2013).

The LAPSSET pipeline is a politicized issue in the Horn of Africa region, because it would change the regional dynamics. It would help the emerging oil industry of Kenya and give it an advantage in its pursuit of becoming a regional economic power (Obe 2012), end the dependence of the landlocked Ethiopia on the ports of Djibouti (Sudan Tribune 9.3.2013), as well as the dependence of South Sudan on the pipelines and the port of Sudan (Patey 2014, 245). In addition, it would cause serious damage to the Sudanese economy by depriving the oil transit fees paid by South Sudan (Aljazeera 13.10.2013). The construction of the LAPSSET pipeline might worsen the relations between Sudan and South Sudan (ibid), but otherwise, it would be advantageous plan for the government of South Sudan. Instead of being vulnerable to the problems arising from dealing with an old enemy, South Sudan would be able to cooperate with the governments with which it had good long-term relationships. However the conflict ends and whoever is in the government of South Sudan, it is likely that the LAPSSET project will be on the agenda of the South Sudanese government. However, the security problems have troubled the project since its launch in 2012 (Patey 2012, 224–245), and the current conflict of South Sudan worsens the situation even more (ICG 2014a, 19).

Although the interests were not explicitly stated, this economic inter-connectedness might explain why the East African countries (Bloomberg 31.3.2014) have offered to protect the South Sudanese oil fields. Since South Sudan is a “vital link of the regional economy” (ICG 2014a, 18), it is in none of the countries interests to let South Sudan collapse completely. Even the UN Security Council expanded the mandate of the UNMISS to protect civilians in high-risk places, including the oil installations, and urges all the parties to guarantee security of the economic infrastructure (UNSC 27.5.2014). In this sense, it can be assumed that even the UN sees the oil industry as a vital part of the South Sudanese economy to be protected from fighting. However, the resolution as well as the other protection offers were rejected vehemently by the rebels with the category of “No foreign forces to the oil fields”. Hence, the different meanings given to oil can cause misunderstandings: because the rebels have politicized the meaning of oil as a strategic resource which gives an advantage to the party controlling it, from the rebels’ point of view, protection of oil fields was seen as taking sides or even colonization. It is noteworthy that even though the government denies all the rumors

of requesting assistance for protection of oil fields, it does not object suggestions by the international organizations.

In the statements of both parties can also be seen a certain sense of sovereignty and ownership of the oil fields in South Sudan. For example, the government keeps assuring for a long time that it is not asking any military assistance regarding to the oil fields (“No need for military assistance”) and that it is capable of defending them from the rebels (“Defending oil fields”). Even when there are clear signs that the rebels threaten the oil fields, the government reassures the international community and investors that it will be able to overcome all troubles. In similar fashion, the rebels oppose vehemently and in strong words all the proposed foreign military interventions. All this can be interpreted as a sign of that the conflict parties share an idea: even though the economic, peaceful cooperation is welcomed, the oil belongs to the South Sudanese. The South Sudanese leaders have made this clear for a long time ago: the oil shutdown in response to the unreasonable demands of Sudan was not only a risky move, but it was also clear message that the South Sudanese are in charge of their own oil (Patey 2014, 229). The statements of my material reinforce this message.

The issue of oil seems to be very international and its role in the conflict comes up in the international contexts, such as in the debates on the protection of oil fields or in the news articles of Bloomberg. It would be worth of further research to find out what the people of South Sudan think about oil industry and its connections to the conflict. Is oil problem only to the elites and the international actors or does it concern ordinary people as well?

### **5.3 Oil after the conflict**

According to UNEP (2009, 22), natural resources can play a role in post-conflict recovery if they are used to support the economic growth or to develop sustainable livelihoods. High-value commodities, such as oil, usually yield high revenues and rapid economic growth, which is essential for the recovery of the post-conflict society (ibid). Because natural-resource related conflicts have a high risk to relapse into a new conflict, it is essential that after peace is restored, the natural resources are managed transparently and sustainably to prevent the relapse (ibid, 19).

Achieving peace does not seem to be easy in South Sudan, and even though the durable peace agreement would be signed and implemented, the question of the fair distribution of oil wealth will be difficult. This far, most of the peace talks have focused on the repeated ceasefires and power-sharing agreements, and even if oil has been in the agenda, the debates have not reached the public at least during the period I collected my material. It is questionable whether the possible peace agreements will change the actual situation: the laws regulating the South Sudanese oil industry are advanced, but the implementation is weak (Global Witness 2012), which enables the massive corruption in the country. If the conflict parties are the only relevant stakeholders in the peace talks, the management of the oil industry will hardly change, because the main belligerents, if given the positions in the transitional government, will benefit from the status quo.

The amount of the South Sudanese oil reserves is another issue to discuss. There are different estimates of how much there is oil left and for how long South Sudan can rely on its oil wells. For example, according to LeRiche and Arnold (2012, 171), oil wells will be sustainable only a few years; Radon and Logan (2014, 163) estimate that oil wells will dry in the next ten years. This matter was completely ignored in the conflict parties' statements, but it should be taken into account, as well as the destruction and damages of oil fields caused by the conflict. This question should be taken seriously, especially because of the oil dependence of South Sudan.

However much or little oil reserves South Sudan has the country is and will be dependent on those reserves. Oil brings most of the government revenues, GDP and exports (African Econ Outlook 2014, 2); manufacturing sector is non-existent, most of the people live on subsistence economy and only 27 % of adult population is literate (World Bank 2014b). The most potential non-oil sectors are agriculture and mining gold and copper, but no sufficient steps to develop and improve these sectors are taken (LeRiche & Arnold 2012, 180–184). In addition, the insufficient infrastructure, persistent insecurity and weak institutions are efficient barriers that prevent South Sudan to develop its economy into more global-oriented and non-oil dependent direction, if not addressed in a meaningful way (African Economic Outlook 2014, 2). In sum, in near future South Sudan is in no position to diversify its economy, and at the moment, it seems that South Sudanese conflict parties are destroying their future hopes of economic recovery. All of these problems are exacerbated even more by the current fall of crude oil prices, which will put the oil dependent producer countries to a difficult position

(US Energy Information Administration 10.2.2015). What the conflict parties should realize is that the prize of the fighting will be a destroyed country with ruined economy and diminishing resources.

Therefore, durable peace agreement and its effective implementation is what South Sudan needs most urgently. This far, the attempts to negotiate peace have been ineffective at best: it seems that IGAD and the international community either do not have political will or capacity to pressure the belligerents to peace, and without any pressure, the conflict parties do not have incentive to change their behavior (Fleischner 2014; Akol 2014). Effective sanctions, such as travel bans, asset freezing and trade embargoes, are needed desperately, and the only countries that can do it with sufficient force are the Horn of Africa countries, China and other oil importers. Most of the assets of the South Sudanese leaders are in the neighboring countries (Fleischner 2014, 6), and as discussed above, halting oil imports from South Sudan would put at least the government on their knees. In addition, the responsibility of private oil companies in financing the conflict should be discussed.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

Oil has several roles in the South Sudan conflict. It has, most likely, indirectly contributed to the outbreak of the conflict, it is a strategic resource for the government and thus, by politicizing the role of oil, it became a legitimate target for the rebels. Politicization was enhanced by the use of oil to complement anti-government propaganda and to reject the proposed military interventions. In addition, oil probably increased the severity of the conflict and possibly increased the interests of the foreign involvement in the conflict. Whether gaining access to oil wealth was the reason for the rebel leaders to engage in the war, needs to be researched further. The South Sudan conflict and the role of oil in it can also be linked to the debate of what is state and legitimacy: oil is an important resource for the actors who negotiate statehood and the related concepts are useful repertoires to justify their claims.

Oil should be one of the main issues on the peace negotiations and the post-conflict reconstruction agenda, because of the relevance of oil in the conflict context and in the South Sudanese economy and politics in general. South Sudan needs durable peace in order to take advantage of its oil wealth as long as there will be oil to rely on, and manage it sustainably to



avoid the resource curse in the future. Diversifying the economy and economic development should be the priorities of the future governments of South Sudan.

## 6 CONCLUSION

The aim of this research is to find out whether oil plays a role in the South Sudan conflict, fought between the forces of Salva Kiir and the rebels of Riek Machar, in the time period 2013–2014. The research can be divided into two parts: first, the historical account of the conflict and its origins, and second, the analysis of the propaganda of the conflict parties. The analysis of propaganda was done by collecting oil-related statements of the conflict parties from two news websites, Sudan Tribune and Bloomberg, and they were analyzed with qualitative content analysis. The underlying idea has been to follow Aspinall's (2007) idea of focusing on the perceptions of the local actors about the role of natural resources. My research has been limited to the main belligerents, but analyzing perceptions of the regular South Sudanese as well as the interests of the international actors would give a more accurate picture of the conflict.

Judging by the results of the analysis, it seems that oil has a role to play in the South Sudan conflict in several ways: indirectly before the conflict, as a strategic resource during the conflict, as a part of the cultural repertoires to justify the rebellion, and also possibly increasing the severity of the conflict, as a target of resource-battle and possibly increasing the interests of the foreign involvement in the conflict. Whether gaining access to the oil wealth is a root cause of the conflict, needs to be researched further.

This case study gives support to the resource curse theory and its assumptions that natural resource dependence can contribute to the weak state institutions, and hence, to outbreak of a conflict. The support for the “greed vs. grievance” model is more complex. The economic and social conditions of South Sudan are almost exactly like described in the “greed vs. grievance” model, but the exact mechanisms by which natural resources can contribute to the conflict onset are more obscure. It is clear that the government uses oil wealth to finance the war, which has made the oil fields legitimate targets to the rebels and politicized their meaning in the conflict context. This situation is more complicated than the simple assumption that the party which loots natural resources has an advantage and depending on whether that party is the stronger or weaker side, this advantage either lengthens or shortens the war. However, it is possible that constant fighting in the oil producing states has made conflict more severe, but this needs to be researched further. In addition to the debate of natural resources and conflicts, my research contributes to the debate of state and legitimacy

by suggesting that for the South Sudanese actors, oil is an important resource and the related propaganda is a useful repertoire to justify their claims on power when negotiating the statehood.

The results implicate that the economic importance of oil industry is probably a reason why oil has become so important resource for the actors to fight for. Therefore, diversifying the economy and diminishing the oil dependence should be a priority to the political elites of South Sudan, as soon as the peace is restored. South Sudan will need to take advantage of its oil wealth as long as there will be oil to rely on.

The oil industry of South Sudan is very international and various players in the region and beyond have interests in it. The international actors have influenced in the dynamics of the conflict in different ways by defining the environment in which the conflict parties have to operate. Inter-connectedness of the Horn of Africa countries and an impact of a major investor China are examples of this. Therefore, the Horn of Africa countries and the oil importers are in the key position to put pressure on the belligerents of South Sudan in order to achieve durable peace.

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