



Fertit ethnic identity: A reflection on political struggle in Western Bahr-El-Ghazal, South Sudan

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Abstract

The paper endeavors to strenuously unpack the prima facies catalysts pertaining to the construction of the Fertit Ethnic Identity in the former Western Bahr el Ghazal State. However, the pervasive issues of the formulation of the Fertit's Ethnic Identity politically broached in the leeway of the 1970s. When it was vehemently expressed as persecution, marginalization and unequal distribution of power and resources, as well as the disrespect of the Fertit, after Addis Ababa Agreement in 1972. Consequently, the Fertit's groups who culturally, share distinct, cultural traits that were helpful in articulating and sloganeering their own ethnic identity in the dexterous and assiduous political situation. As such the Fertit Ethnic Identity is a response of steadfast indemnifying for their political and economic representation and staunchly exaggerated by elite's fiery ambition for power and abominable application of identity politics by the state in Sudan. Furthermore, in the leeway of 1980s, the nitty gritty of the Fertit's ethnic identity, we could find the pre-eminent and overarching issues, substantially, subsume imbalance in power-sharing, economic dividends, lack of respect for the Fertit's tribes, exclusion from the security sector. Moreover, the land grabbing around Wau town which culminated in encroachment to the land belongs to Fertit and pugnacious alienation of the areas which were previously, owned by the Fertit's community. However, the situation turned catastrophic and violent owing to the division of the South into three subregions and misrepresentation of the Fertit from power-sharing in Wau, the killing and looting of Fertit's territory by the group using the name of SPLA and continued attacking of Fertit's area and the policy of the State which was based on arming of minor tribes as a counterinsurgency through supplying arms to that militia in the South. Meanwhile, the Fertit ethnic identity fervently and firmly resuscitates and revitalizes itself after the independence of South Sudan and the region is drawn willy nelly, into internecine conflict due to the following issues, political Struggle amidst the three ethnic groups the Dinka, the Lou and the Fertit, marginalization of Fertit in the State government, the ruling SPLM party and its previous loggerheads with the Fertit, the decision of relocation of Wau County without the Fertit's consent, indiscriminate nabbing of the Fertit's elites, misrepresentation of the Fertit from the security of the area, exclusion of Fertit from Government's houses and administration states, the movement of pastoralists and their subversion of Fertit's farms and finally, empathic political unrest in South Sudan, incredibly led into gruesome conflict in the area with displacement of thousands of people, some of them sheltering in UN bases in Wau.

As alluded above the repercussion of Fertit's Ethnic Identity to their citizenship which is a ramification of grievances owing to an unequal allocation of political power and resources ceded to them as a minority group in the region. Substantially Fertit ethnic identity led them to have a feeling of uncertainty and skepticism of being respected citizens of South Sudan. Consequently, it was conspicuously ushered in the leeway of the referendum, when a significant number of Fertit voted for unity which made Wau one of the centers with a considerable vote for the unity. However, owing to Fertit disquiet and discontent of political uncertainty in South Sudan, an enormous number of Fertit ethnic groups continuously reside in Sudan. Furthermore, some of Fertit people have acquired Sudanese Nationality and preferred to be Sudanese rather than South Sudanese. Additionally, Fertit people traditionally share cultural traits such as religion, and language with Northern Sudanese especially western Sudan which makes it easier for them to integrate, feel certain and accepted amidst Sudanese Societies. As such South Sudanese citizenship necessitates both ethnicity and territory of applicants as a precursor of granting citizenship. This evinces ethnic affiliation in the process and applicants have to portray their ethnic communities which means the importance of belonging to one of the indigenous communities in South Sudan. Such conditions make it arduous for people of cross-border ethnic communities or one of their parents is a member of a cross-community to easily access citizenship, nationality and other documents. As such Fertit as a group with a cross-border cultural heritage flounders some difficulties in accessing citizenship which requires strong witnesses. Moreover, Fertit ethnic identity which owes to grievances negatively tarnishes or negates their understanding of being respected South Sudanese citizens and people of South Sudan. This is very explicit from the presence of large Fertit community in Sudan due to political unrest and unresolved of their grievances. Which requires a political will to painstakingly address Fertit's grievances and to bring about a permanent peace into their area.

Keywords: conflict, ethnicity, land, identity politics, pastoralists, resources, citizenship, culture, power

1. Introduction

The issue of ethnic identity became a vexatious issue, many schools strenuously tried to thoroughly analyze ethnic identity's issues in the twentieth-first century especially, after the end of the Cold War. In the leeway of the Cold World conflicts revolved around the ideological struggle.

However, in the aftermath of the Cold War, conflicts had erupted in Africa, Asia, Balkan and part of the former communist world (Richards, 2005) ^[19]. Furthermore, the controversial catalysts behind ethnicity generally subsume ethnic and religious issues unfinished issues of the colonial era, poverty and population pressure (Richards, 2005) ^[19].

Furthermore, ethnicity formally demoes any form of differences such as religion, language, race, class, and minority groups in any community in all human societies (Schlee G, 2008) ^[21]. Moreover, ethnicity or ethnic groups are defined by descriptive difference, whether, in the form of color appearance, language, religion, norms, and some other indicators of common origin. Also, ethnicity is operational, defined, to include all racial, tribal, religious, linguistic groups, caste, nation, and communities minority (Hanlon, 2006) ^[1]. Ethnic criteria used by these groups to define themselves usually, subsume common descent, shared historical experience, and valuable cultural traits.

Moreover, in Africa, ethnicity is akin to what usually called tribalism a political woe that is controversially wrought by inequality, economic, political issues, and grievances. Political and economic grievances are vehement catalysts which staunchly triggered ethnic identities. Ethnicity in the course of a conflict is occasionally used in political mobilization. However, individual identity or group's identity is made through the amalgamation of several social elements such as community and person's identity can be formed through fluence of family, society, school, social interaction with others which enable interaction and identification with the members of the society (Malith W. C., 2018). There is a relation between the individual and his / her society in the formation of human sense, individuals accept the society and individuals are acknowledged by the society, and the interaction between the two is opined by (VANLALTLAN, 2007) ^[23] that identity formation, is an individual and a communal issue. Therefore an individual's identity depends on the identity of the group of the community to which one belongs (Malith W. C., 2018). Furthermore, ethnicity generally enmeshes people who have a common origin and ancestry, distinctive social characteristics and common interests (Malith W. C., 2018). However, to (Lewis, 2014) ^[4], ethnicity subsumes values, the system of belief and social characteristics that differentiate one group from another. Also, Jenkins, (Jenkins, 1998) ^[2] deemed that an anthropological concept for ethnicity is generated from ancient Greek "*ethnos refers to arrange of situations in which a collection of humans lived and acted together and which is translated today as people or nation*".

However, an ethnic group forms its own identity owing to the pressure of the powerful majority groups. As such an ethnic group is the inclusion of those who share common values and traditions which differentiate them from others with whom they are in touch (Malith W. C., 2018). Additionally, an ethnic group is considered as a minor group dominated by a powerful group (MALITH W. C., 2017). But the two groups have to be weighed in terms of power relations as such a group who is holding power is a majority while a powerless group is a minority group and it does not need to be defined in numerical terms (Lewis, 2014) ^[4]. Moreover, Schlee (Schlee G, 2008) ^[21] opined that ethnicity is any form of social identity, in the form of the definition of self and others. And nobody could have an ethnic affiliation which is unknown to themselves or to others. Therefore ethnicity could not exist unless people are aware of it. This could attest that ethnicity is something emerges in the leeway of a conflict or takes new functions, which evince the situation of the conflict should proceed with a formulation of ethnic identity. For (Markakis, 1994) ^[15] tribal identities are political products of a particular

situation, socially, defined and historically determined, ethnicity comes as an outcome of something else rather than a cause of it.

2. Ethnicity (Tribalism) and Elites Struggle over Power in South Sudan

Struggle over power and leadership steadfastly transpired after the Addis Ababa Agreement and the formation of Regional Government in southern Sudan in 1972 onwards (Malith W. C., 2018). However, the elites` whims for leadership culminated in a political rivalry in which traditional tribal animosities were manipulated or vigorously used by elites for mobilization and political support in local elections. (Malith W. C., 2018). Moreover, a fiery ambition for power led to the formation of tribal-based support which eventually became a tribal identity and wrought ginormous chasm amidst the communities, and the use of identity politics in South Sudan (Malith W. C., 2018). However, the differences were amidst elites and politicians and were about political issues but, they, unfortunately, turned their political differences into personal conundrums and eventually became hurdles amidst their people. Elites struggle and their blind ambition for power were among the issues which contributed to the demise of the Addis Ababa Agreement in 1983. Despite there were some political catalysts pertaining to the abolition of the agreement. Furthermore, (Malok, 2009) ^[13] opined that all coordination, turbulence, and mystifications which deplorably brought to an end the Regional Government were nurtured within the Regional Assembly and within the cabinets of the High Executive Council.

However, for the elites`s roles in the formulation of tribal antagonisms and divisions amidst them and their insensitivity in addressing national interest and the unity among the people of South Sudan, Adweek Nyaba (Nyaba, 2000) ^[17] added that: "*Despite many years of common historical development including fighting together for common nationhood, many intellectuals now, more than ever, before, still identify themselves first as Dinka, Nuer, Moro, Shilluk, Zande, etc and then South Sudanese, even when they are interacting with each other. This alienation was accentuated by the experience South Sudan went through in the Southern Regional Government in Juba following the Addis Ababa Agreement in 1972. The political elites who took over the power structure in the South emphasized their attributes and unity with the north at the expense of and against the South Sudanese nationalism which started developing on the eve of the independence of Sudan.*" Also, Nyaba asserted that "*Although the elite in the South presented a façade of unity along with their perceived political parties, this did not stand the test of times ethnic and sectional tendencies overwhelmed many of them to the point of neglecting the southern national concerns and aspiration.*" (Nyaba, 2000) ^[17]

However, the elites struggle over the leadership vigorously occurred in the formation of the SPLM/SPLA in 1983, which abominably culminated into the gruesome conflict between the Dinka and the Nuer. The main catalyst was solely elites struggle over the leadership of the movement. The political rivalry was between, Dr. John Garang and former ministers of the Regional Government under General Joseph Lagu, Samuel Gai Tut, and Akuot Atem de Mayen (Malith W. C., 2018). The political rivalry over the principles and objectives of the movement led to deadly

clashes and atrocities between, Dr. John's group and Gai and Akuot's group. Finally, the rupture between the two groups was brought to an end in 1988 when the Anya-Nya II leaders joined the SPLA/M (Malith W. C., 2018). The gruesome ramifications of that conflict were the loss of thousands of lives amidst the Dinka and the Nuer in an internecine conflict which was not directly sparked by communal or traditional issues. Solely traditional issues were used in a quest for mobilization and support (Malith W. C., 2018). Meanwhile, the second phase of a power struggle over leadership transpired in 1991 when Dr. Riek Machar and Dr. Lam Akol announced their stupendous coup against the leader of SPLM/SPLA Dr. John Garang. Consequently, traditional issues were manipulated in the 1991 attempted coup by Dr. Macher and Dr. Lam Akol (Malith W. C., 2018). The repercussions of the incident were very subversive and catastrophic for the movement and for both the Dinka and Nuer in the conflict which had nothing to do with the two communities, but solely was over power in the movement. The power struggle and contractions amidst the elites in the movement had been there for a long time as Adowk Nyaba thoroughly enunciated it as: *"The Nasir Declaration was a reflection of the internal contraction within the SPLM/A, but inadvertently implemented for opportunistic ends by elements that did not really believe in those ideals. However, like any other tragedies, it has some redeeming sides which should be exploited for the purpose of reversing its negative impacts. For instance, the Nasir coup caused serious military setbacks for the SPLMA and the oppressed people of Sudan but these have created a basis for the eventual SPLM/A political victory. The Nasir leaders have already surrendered to the government, paving the way for the unity of the people of South Sudan. Dr. Lam Akol and Dr. Riek staged a coup for what they had not prepared enough, leave alone having the material basis for it. And Dr. Garang's contempt for that adventure as a theatrical coup which was doomed to fail has been vindicated. Lam's assertion that: The struggle for democracy within our movement has intensified and we have decided to jettison Garang out of the leadership of our movement. The necessary steps on the ground have been undertaken and it will not be long before the whole thing gets into the open"* (Nyaba, 2000)^[17].

Moreover, the issue as Dr. Adowk unpacked was ambition for power and what was mentioned as intensification of democracy was only imagination and was not clearly shown on the ground and which made it plain that the movement was for self-defend or achieving personal ends and many SPLM officers remained loyal to the mainstream led by Dr. Garang, but the conflict horrendously annihilated many properties and thousands of lives were lost owing to that abysmal conflict (Malith W. C., 2018). Lastly the ongoing corrosive and detrimental conflict which, unfortunately, betided in 2013, was wrought by the power struggle between the president and vice president, Dr. Machar. Such a rivalry led to an attempted coup which culminated in deadly ethnic violence between the Dinka and the Nuer (Malith W. C., 2018).

The violence shortly permeated across the country many innocent people were brutally mown down and others were seriously maimed in such appalling situation. The power struggle which has betided in December 2013, was despicably occasioned by elite's greed for power and was

about two issues under the leadership of the SPLM party and the 2015 presidential elections. In the leeway of the conflict, communities' traditional conflict were exaggerated which flopped the dimension of the conflict from being merely a conflict over power into an ethnic conflict flanked by heinous violence and atrocities against innocent people. The smear of the violence and unscrupulous interpretation of these political issues in the context of a tribal rivalry led to turbulence and bewilderment between political, personal and communities issues. Moreover, elites are very acquisitive and narcissistic in articulating their personal differences into community differences. Owing to their good knowledge about tribal issues, they could easily ignite or instigate a situation into violence, these local cultures became imperative tools for unscrupulous and selfish elites. This, however, led to many atrocities being committed across the country in the name of a tribe, in a conflict which has nothing to do with a tribe. The local communities are made to believe that there is an Achilles heel between them but in fact, there are no conspicuous conundrums between communities in the country. The only problem of the country is the failure of the ruling elites to pursue and bring about good governance, national and political program that, could bring on board all people, regards of their tribe, community, region, religion and so on, this is the basic principle of SPLM party, which the ruling elites flunked to achieve it at the movement and led to the current situation in the country. The priority now is to heal wounds, ensure peace and for the elites to work for people and not for themselves, therefore certainty and consensus would be reached amidst the local communities in the country.

3. The Farmer Western Bahr el-Ghazal State

Western Bahr el-Ghazal was is one of the ten states in South Sudan. Formerly, It was known as the Greater Bahr el Ghazal which comprised the states, Warrap, Lakes, Northern Bahr el-Ghazal (NBGS) Western Bahr el-Ghazal (WBGS) after the signing of Compressive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, the WBGS was constituted and organized under three new administrative units of Wau county, and Jur River County and Raga County (Malith W. , 2017). Western Bahr el Ghazal State is a total area of, 93,900 km² (36,255 qs. m) and was the least populous state in South Sudan. According to the controversial Sudanese census conducted in 2008, with the total population of 517,210 according to South Sudan National Bureau of Statistics / United Nations (web). It is located in the north-western part of South Sudan and lies between latitude 6.31degrees and 10.29 degrees north of the Equatoria and between longitude 23.59 degrees and 28.22 degrees East of the Meridian (State Ministry of Agriculture, 2008)^[22]. However, Western Bahr-el -Ghazal State shares international borders with the Central Africa Republic to the west, and it borders Western Equatoria State to the south, Northern Bahr el-Ghazal to the north, and Lakes and the Warrap State to the east. The State lies predominantly, on the ironstone livelihood zone, while the northern tips are covered by western flood plains and green belt zone, respectively.

4. Ethnic groups of Western Bahr el Ghazal

Ethnic groups in Western Bahr el Ghazal, subsume the Luo, the Dinka of Marial Bai, the Bongo, and the Fertit in Wau and Raga County. However, most of these tribal groups are sedentary farmers and their livelihood activities

traditionally, immerse farming, hunting, bee collection, fruit collection, edible roots, poultry, small herding, and fishing. Recently youths migrate from rural to urban areas, seeking good job opportunities and better wages. This is in addition to Dinkas an agro-pastoral group who depend on cattle rearing with self-subsistence farming. Substantially the Fertit group incorporates tribal groups who inhabit in Western Bahr el Ghazal from Wau to Raga County (Malith W, 2017). The Fertit tribes subsume Golo, Ndogo, Sere, Tagbu, Bai, Belanda Boor, Belanda Bviri, the Forge, Indri, Togoyo, Ngale, Manayth, Bandala, Dango, Kersh, Binga, Kara, Yulu, Banda, Mangayath, and Aja. The group which historically, subsumes Golo, Ndogo, Sere, Tagbu and Bai groups live around Wau and Deim-Zubeir (Malith W, 2017). This in addition to Bongo who is not socially, a part of the Fertit and they are found in Tonj in Warrap and Bussera in the former Western Bahr el Ghazal State (Juma, 2005)^[3].

Meanwhile, the Forege group inhabits Raga area and share the boundary with the Dinka in the East. The Kersh and the Aja are found to the west of Raga County and in the Raga town. Yulu and Kara and Binga are found in the middle of Raga Area (Malith W, 2017). The Banda group are found between Deim-Zubeir and Raga, and they are deemed to be the last immigrants to Bahr el-Ghazal region, and they were in contact with merchants, slave raiders, and colonial rulers (Malith W, 2017). The Western part was the corridor through which most of the tribal people migrated into Bahr el-Ghazal. However, before the year 1800, these tribes were not known to the world (Juma, 2005)^[3]. Moreover, the word *Fertit* means Fruit Eaters, it ushers people who collect wild fruits, in arduous and precarious times of wars and slave-trade. However, Fertit people had managed to survive through feeding on wild fruits, which were available in enormous quantity in the bushes and the forests of their land (Juma, 2005)^[3]. The Fertit people were known as *Fruit eaters* and collect wild and domestic fruit, such as the Lulu, Mangoes (Malith W, 2017).

However, in 1983, the aftermath of the re-division of southern Sudan into three provinces, Bahr el-Ghazal, Upper Nile and Equatoria. That period portrayed a flashpoint of political struggle over power and positions amidst the main ethnic groups in the region in, the Dinka the largest ethnic group, the Luo, and the Fertit. In such a political struggle in the region. The Fruit as a group of small tribes who share common cultural traits, experiences, and interests, politically used the common name *Fruit* as a political position for confronting and withstanding what they called Dinka domination of socio-political and economic power (Malith W, 2017). Consequently, Fertit political identity became a symbol for self-identity for the small tribes of Western Bahr el-Ghazal. The name Fertit is used as a political identity in order to rally all these tribes into a close harmony, inclusiveness, and cohesiveness amidst themselves with an aim of achieving their economic, political aspirations, maintaining their cultural distinction and identity (Malith W, 2017). Moreover, the name "Fertit" makes them as a homogenous group, differentiates them from another ethnic group, with whom they are in contact.

4.1 The political situation in Western Bahr el Ghazal from 1972 to 1983

In the leeway of Colonial-era ethnic antagonisms were abeyance or dormant in the region, up the time of the Torit

mutiny in 1955 which had culminated in plethora ramifications on the ethnic groups in the region and had the period for the patriotism amidst Southern Sudanese. However, South Sudanese tribal groups, joined the rebellion to fight against Sudanese governments, there were no conspicuous and direct communities' animosities up to the signing of Addis Accord in 1972. Moreover, the rivalry over power instantly brought tremendous chasm amidst South Sudanese people which unfortunately ushered advent of the ethnic animosities in South Sudan and was a politically triggered communities' disputes (Malith W, 2017).

When some Fertit people complained of being dominated by Dinka. However, the disputes were about, allocation of services, employment in the government, Fertit people felt marginalized and not well represented. There was no violence or rupture between Fertit and Dinka at that time (Malith W, 2017). However, Fertit bellyached about not being well represented, in the organized forces. Moreover, some Fertit's elites due to such grievances politically supported the groups who were demanding the re-division of the South into three semi-autonomous regions in 1983. Substantially, Fertit's grievances were due to the unequal distribution of power, resources, services, land issue, political domination. Meanwhile, despite the political rivalry in South Sudan amidst the elites and politicians, there was some sort of tranquility and peaceful coexistence amidst the Dinka, the Luo, and the Fertit. And there was no pervasive ethnic violence among these three ethnic groups. That was on the ground that Fertit's grievances were not politically, triggered, therefore, there was remarkable equanimity among these ethnic groups (Malith W, 2017).

4.2 Political Situation in Bahr el Ghazal from 1983 to 1985

The era was the highest climax of struggle over power amidst southern Sudanese' elites when politicians broached staunchly to disparage the working of regional government at that time. Consequently, some politicians mainly from Equatoria were disappointed by the government under Mulana Abel Alier (Malith W, 2017). That situation emboldened some politicians from Equatoria for demanding the division of South Sudan to jettison what they called Dinka domination in regional government in South Sudan. That political scenario stimulated some politicians to call for the re-division of South Sudan (Malith W, 2017). As such president, Mohammed Numeiri in May 1983 abolished the Addis Ababa and re-divided of the South. However, the abolition of the agreement led to frustration and embarrassment amidst politicians and elites and eventually culminated in the resumption of civil war in South Sudan in 1983. However, the ramification of the re-division of the South on the ethnic conflicts in Bahr el-Ghazal was that when some Fertit politicians from Western Bahr el Ghazal upheld other groups who were supporting the re-division imitative (Juma, 2005)^[3]. Moreover, elites of Western Bahr-el-Ghazal had continued their struggle for resources and power-sharing with the majority. Owing to the re-division of the South, Bahr el-Ghazal regional government was formed and headed by Dr. Lawrence Wol Wol as the governor. Who made appointments to key positions in the civil services and recommendations for appointments to the constitutional posts, but Fertit felt marginalized for some issues as follows (Juma, 2005)^[3].

- Distribution of constitutional positions in the regional

executive, the regional assembly, and the regional secretariat in 1983, top civil services posts of directors general departments. Also, newly created powerful positions of directors of finance and administration in the ministries and the departments were not equally distributed which was an area of Fertit's disparagement.

- The regional commissioners of the organized forces, police, prisons, wildlife and their officers were believed to 99% Dinka. The Judiciary was 100% Dinka on the choice of the governor (Juma, 2005) ^[3]. However, in response to such a policy 56 elites and politicians of Western Bahr el Ghazal both Luo and Fertit had tendered the petition to the governor dated to 9th September 1983, rejecting unfair appointment and allocation of the portfolios. They requested the governor to reconsider and re-address some of his decisions in the collective regional interest, but he had declined (Juma, 2005) ^[3].
- In the economic sector Fertit believed that they were marginalized, and not well represented in the public sector which embroiled economic opportunities, facilities, participating in business, were allocated to Dinka youths through, giving business licenses, allocation of quotas of the essential commodities, credit facilities by the loans department and the provisions of local contracts for small works and supplies of provision to such institutions as the hospital and the prisons (Juma, 2005) ^[3].

4.3 Political Situation in Bahr el Ghazal from 1985 to 1989

The period represented the critical point in the Dinka and the Fertit conflict that was in the span of the war. There were some people who claimed to be SPLA soldiers and were called *Nygat*. The *Night* started to continuously assault Fertit's areas for looting and killing, in Busserei, Bagari, Mboro, Bisielia, Abu -Shaka, became exposed to be the target of onslaught violence by armed group infiltrated from the side of Dinka and Luo in the in early 1986 (Malith W, 2017). Due to that innocent citizens were killed in the raid, properties were looted and houses were razed down and set on fire. Consequently, Fertit's chiefs and elders made an urgent appeal to the regional authority for protection, in lieu the regional government ordered withdrawing of the small police force posted in Bussere, Bisselia, and Ngo-Tongo (Malith W, 2017). However, in such situation, Fertit's youth contemplated getting firearms to protect their areas. Owing to insecurity, they, formed their militia as the mean of protecting their villages in rural areas (Juma, 2005) ^[3]. The Fertit's militia coincided with the government of Sudan policies under President Numeiri who was adamant to defeat the SPLM/A. However, to counterbalance interagency, the manipulating of tribal animosities, as such the Fertit grievances which were revolved over power-sharing in the region's government.

The Fertit's militia was called Peace Force, *Kuat Islam*, the aims of the militia were the protection of their areas. Eventually, the militia was misused by the government against the Dinka and the Luo (Malith W, 2017). The Fertit, the Dinka, and the Jur had not involved in the direct ethnic conflict and tribal people of Bahr el- Ghazal fought against, invaders en masse. However, from this perspective and background, the conflict was about the power-sharing in the regional government which was previously, established in

Wau, plus the cataclysm of the war which extremely, broke out in the South (Juma, 2005) ^[3]. Moreover, the conflicting ethnic groups the Dinka-Luo and the Fertit continued for more than 7 years with the high death toll on both sides. Until the advent of Major General of Police George Kongor Arop. Governor Kongo had exerted humongous effort to peacefully achieve the peace through intervention and collaboration with the religious leaders, traditional leaders and intellectual (Juma, 2005) ^[3]. However, the peaceful intervention culminated in the reconciliation and forgiveness, tranquility and peaceful co-existence amidst the three ethnic groups (Juma, 2005) ^[3]. There were three main incidents contributed to the augmentation of ethnic atrocities amidst the Fertit and the Dinka and the Jur in another hand as follows:

- The re-division of the South into three subregions and in Bahr el Ghazal region the first government after the division was rejected by elites of Western Bhar El Ghazal from both the Fertit and the Jur.
- The beginning of the rebellion in South and spread of looting and killing by culprits using the name of SPLA and their continuation of attacking Fertit which led the Fertit to demand protection from the government and eventually claiming firearms for their Protection and formation of their militia.
- The policy of Sudanese Governments of divide and rule which was based on the formation of militia from minor tribes as counterinsurgency in the South through supplying the arms to that militia

4.5 Fertit Ethnic Identity in 2005 and After the Independence of South Sudan

After the signing of the comprehensive Agreement Peace on 9th 2005 and before the commencement of the interim period. The main ethnic group held the conference in Mapel in 2005 ^[14]. The aim of the conference was the need to prevail peaceful coexistence amidst the three ethnic groups of Western Bahr el-Ghazal region, the Fertit, the Luo and the Dinka Marial Bai, to peacefully extract wounds painfully, wrought by the protracted fighting between militia and other groups, to the development of the area, to resuscitate trade relations and other types of relations such as blood relations and intermarriage and to clinch the opportunities and power sharing. Moreover, the important issues were discussed at length during the conference, all three groups vowed not to return the past. All sides apologized for atrocities their respective subordinates might have committed in the leeway of the conflicts. The SPLA did apologize to the Sudanic group, the Luo, and the Dinka Marial Wau groups. All parties acknowledged that such atrocities were not intended, but the situation of the war brought inconvenience situation. All parties called on each other to forget the past and open a new page for ensuring cooperation and development in Western Bahr el-Ghazal (Mapel, 2005) ^[14].

However, the three ethnic groups signed a Covenant, comprehensively portrayed the core of coming together and leaving behind the past. The theme of the Covenant was: Cross Line Peace Recovery and Reconciliation Covenant between the Sudanic group the Fertit, the Luo and the Dinka of Marial Wau, the main ethnic communities of Western Bahr el Ghazal State. Hence, the conference was convened from 14-03-2005-23/03/2005 in Mapel town in Western Bahr el Ghazal. The Sudanic people Fertit, the Luo and the

Dinka of Marial Wau chiefs, elders, church, civic and community leaders, women and youth leaders, commissioners and commanders have met in a cross line Peace and Recovery Reconciliation conference in Mapel, Jur River County, Western Bahr el Ghazal, South Sudan under the aegis of the Hope Agency for Relief and Development (HARD); Pact-Sudan, and Christian AID. Furthermore, the meeting was attended by the 2nd Vice-chairmen of the SPLM, Dr. Riek Machar (Mapel, 2005)^[14]. The Covenant has achieved the objectives of Conferences which subsumes as follows:

- To reconcile the difference between the Luo and Sudanic communities of Western Bahr el Ghazal so that they live in harmony in Wau and Raga Counties.
- To identify and encourage useful ways of strengthening local and traditional Institutions such as peace communities, youth organizations, farmers unions, and Women's group. These are to help and to sustain peaceful co-existence between the two communities.
- To work out and recommend a plan of action for follow-up and implementation of resolutions of the Cross-Line Peace Conference between the Sudanic and Luo Groups.
- To work out and recommend a plan of action for safeguarding the rights of minorities in Western Bar le Ghazal.
- To identify and list actions that help promote government institution and the rule of Law.
- To identify and encourage useful ways of resolving conflict (Mapel, 2005)^[14].

At the end of the meeting, all participants from the three ethnic unanimously agreed upon that the post of the governor in the coming interim period to be given to the Luo since the Fertit had been in power in most of the time during the war. However, Mark Nypoch who hails from the Luo ethnic group was appointed by the president as the Governor of Western Bahr during the interim period. Hence, during the governorship of Mark Nypoch, there was peace and tranquility with minor problems which transpired from time to time. However, in the election of 2010, Rizig Hassan Zachariah was nominated as SPLM candidate for Western Bahr el Ghazal and had won the 2010 election and became the governor of Western Bahr el Ghazal. During Rizig governorship, the main conundrums (Malith W, 2017) which instantly sparked the ethnic conflict and violence in Western Bahr el Ghazal could be subsumed as follows.

- Beginning with the distribution of portfolios in the government. When former politicians who had been in power were excluded after the reshuffle. The move was made by the governor brought political tension between the governor and some of these veteran politicians.
- Moreover, some Fertit's elites felt marginalized which led to frustration and embarrassment among some politicians and elites. The situation was deemed to be marginalization in their own state and town which they believed to be, taken by another powerful tribe as one the teacher in an interview, *"Monopoly, Wau has been monopolized by some other powerful ethnic groups who think that they have the right to live and rule so these groups have taken Wau State hostage, occupying all the key posts in the state and even the land. Wau cannot be run by outsiders while the owners are there without power to run the state. This is of course quite clear, the cause. The state is allocated in such a way that people of*

the state to run their affairs. But this is not found in Wau, whereas the affairs of state are run by other people from other tribes". This attests disquiet and discontent about the situation in the state and Fertit found themselves as a grieved and disadvantaged group in their state.

- The current ongoing conflict was, triggered by the decision taken by the former governor to relocate Wau and Jur River Counties outside Wau town. The relocation of Wau County was, rejected by Fertit's community in Wau. Owing to that politicians started to mobilize the youth for an urgent strike which culminated in deadly incidents in 2012.
- The indiscriminate arrest of Fertit's politicians, chiefs, and elders without an incontrovertible arraignment or proof of involvement in atrocities in the state, such a policy haughtily ignited animosities between Fertit's elites and the former governor.
- Fertit believed that they are excluded from the security sector and not well-represented in organized forces such, police force, prison, wildlife, civil defense, immigration, security agencies and arduous access to the citizenship document.
- Government's services and houses in the town which Fertit strongly believed that they are occupied by people from the neighboring states and they find difficulties in claiming these houses.
- Lack of respect and unfair treatment towards other minor tribes, inequality in the representation and lack of good will in addressing issues of the minor tribe.

5. Conflict over land In Western Bahr el Ghazal

The conflict over land started in Western Bahr el-Ghazal beginning in the wake of the formation of the regional government. The government adopted a policy of taking the neighborhoods in Wau town and the surrounding area. That was considered by Fertit as a forceful occupation and re-naming of the places in Wau such as the neighborhoods of Gbor-Korong was renamed Rumbek Jadid, Hila Mukta was renamed Aweil Jadid, Hila Fhal was renamed, Hila Dinka and Momoi village was renamed Majak (Juma, 2005)^[3]. Furthermore, the land issue became a serious sort of conflict in 1984-1985 when some villages and agricultural lands extend to the south of Wau along the western bank of Jur River were demarcated into cattle ranges and distributed to senior officials and traders starting with the governor at the top (Juma, 2005)^[3].

The decision to bring cattle to the areas of the Fertit was taken as a policy following the abandonment of Marial Bai cattle range established by the former Ministry of Agriculture of Regional Government in Juba. Momoi area was strenuous, anointed as an alternative site so that the owners of the range cannot be raided by cattle gangsters or cattle raiders (Juma, 2005)^[3]. However, new settlers and IDPs occupy lands in the area, which led to another conflict between the host community and these settlers who are seeking land for resettling, cultivation, and grazing for their cattle.

The land issue was behind the Fertit's rejection of the transfer of Wau county into Bagari as alluded before, by saying that move may give away their town to other people and the issue of town ownership, eventually triggered the current conflict between the Fertit and the Dinka and move the situation into a cul-de-sac in the state. In Western Bahr

el Ghazal conflict over land obviously, occurred in the issues of land ownership or usurpation of land from the owners through government sanctions. However, after the independence land issue became a snag which is reflected in the current conflict. Furthermore, in history, Wau was a cosmopolitan which was established by French forces in 1897 and lastly selected by the British as the capital city of Bahr el Ghazal region in 1905. Moreover, in the wake of a power struggle between politicians among the people of Wau. Some people began to say that Wau is a town of six tribes which are the main tribes of the Fertit ethnic group, therefore political struggle sparked the land problem. Furthermore, conflict over land reached its climax when the former governor of Western Bahr-el –Ghazal established municipality in Wau and the government's intention was that the Municipality should be in Wau and the County could be relocated.

The Pastoralists and Farmers: clashes of two economies

Pastoralists during the 1980s used to seasonally, come to Western Bahr el Ghazal during the dry season when they experience shortages of water in their area and to stay with their cattle in Wau and Jur River County (Malith W, 2017). However, during those early days, there were no more clashes registered between farmers and pastoralists because the two groups benefited from each other. For instance, the farmers benefited from the herders when they sell their cows, milk, meat and also trade cow dung for access for their cows to the remnants of the harvest. However, since 2005, after signing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the peaceful coexistence was negated or tarnished and many disputes started to appear between pastoralists and farmers. Moreover, cattle keepers began to migrate to the area before the accomplishment of harvesting due to droughts, overgrazing, and insecurity which make them expand their geographic range at the expense of others, environmental changes have accrued the movement of cattle keepers in a quest for water and pasture (Malith W, 2017). The situation was worsened by changes in behavior and militarization, such, cattle keepers are young men and unable to take responsibility for the herds with firearms and they disrespect customs, such as gainsaying to meet with the hosting chiefs of the areas of passing through or arrival and respect of communities and their way of life. Substantiated by the mounting number of incidents of crop corrosive and killing of cattle without compensation being paid. For instance, Pastoralists and farmers in Mamoi area near Wau in Western Bahr el Ghazal State have witnessed rising tensions between their communities and cattle's keepers, with some reports of violence. The incident took place when cattle entered onto cultivated land and caused damage to crops, a matter which angered the local farmers. The fact is that one of the parties is armed to protect their property and the other party is not which reflects an imbalance between the two parties negotiating access and rules of behaving that cannot be bridged. The meeting of the two communities is traditional, left to themselves to regulate.

The local governments act as facilitators and observers unless the conflicting parties step out of the area of tradition, custom and into that the laws of the land and jurisdiction of the modern administration. Since 2011, the County governments of Wau, Jur River, Gogrial West, Gogrial East, Tonj South, and Tonj North together with their communities have convened the Community Peace Conferences between

migrating pastoralists from Warrap State and farmers from Western Bahr el Ghazal State. During the conference, hundreds of participants were portraying the two communities, incorporating Boma chiefs and paramount chiefs, local government and council representatives, discuss issues that require regulation and mutual understanding when the two communities meet during the dry season in Jur River and Wau counties. However, in 2013. The Bussere Conference agreement was made between the Warrap pastoralist communities and the Western Bahr el-Ghazal farming communities.

- Renew commitment of both parties to the implementation of the 2013 Bussere agreement
- Further, promote the spirit and peaceful co-existence between pastoralists from Warrap and agriculturists from Western Bahr el Ghazal during the annual cross-border cattle migration
- Review the resolutions agreed on during the 2013 Peace Conference.
- Promoting the implementation of the reviewed resolutions, conference participants identified the following issues that needed attention to further promote the spirit and peaceful co-existence between pastoralists and agriculturists from the two states during the annual cross-border cattle. Instate of all the initiatives which have been taken to curb the conflict between the farmers and pastoralist, the implementation remains major challenges that afflicting all efforts which are hardly exerted to bring about the peace in the area.

6. Fertit Ethnic Identity and the Question of Citizenship

Citizenship issue was one of the issues which supposed to be addressed after independent, the question of citizenship and the rules which determine a citizen of the new state. However, the legal issues were technical, the problem was lack of political will and objection of the Sudan government to still consider South Sudanese as Sudanese. There are several hundred thousand southerners living in the north for decades (Marko, 2015) ^[16]. However, Sudan and South Sudan have had endorsed laws to decide who could be considered the citizens of South Sudan and who could be deemed citizens of Sudan. The concept of citizenship presents a case of inclusion and exclusion from the political body which was a problem in South Sudan during the war (Malith W. C., 2017). The SPLM/A resorted to the slogan of human rights to achieve the vision of New Sudan was based on inclusive and equal citizenship. The vision of New Sudan was stipulated in SPLM/A Manifesto and the concept of the New Sudan has no racial, ethnic or separatist connotations (Malith W. C., 2017). It was considered the national project, for building sustainable citizenship, a state capable of accommodating the multiple diversities of Sudanese society (Marko, 2015) ^[16]. However, the SPLM vision portrays an intellectual contribution to the developing political discourse on the rebuilding of the Sudanese State, the mechanism required to providing an inclusive sense of belonging which elaborates that all Sudanese citizens have equal all rights of citizenship (Marko, 2015) ^[16].

Meanwhile, the SPLM deemed the pervasive catalysts of the civil war as a struggle against second-class citizenship. The Sudanese citizenship system was challenged with the egalitarian citizenship of the New Sudan (Malith W. C., 2017). However the outcome of the referendum of 2011 was deemed as a decision between equal, first-class-for-all

citizenship of New Sudan and the second-class Sudanese citizenship of marginalization, and used political posters quoted Dr. John Garang's statement shows: *"I and those who joined me in the bush and fought for more than twenty years have brought to you Comprehensive Peace Agreement in golden plate. Our mission is accomplished. It is now your turn, especially those who did not have a chance to experience bush's life. When the time comes to vote at the referendum, it is your golden choice to determine your fate. Would you like to vote to be second-class citizens in your own country? It is absolutely your choice"* (Marko, 2015) [16].

Furthermore, South Sudan needs the right definition and conspicuous boundaries to indicate its own population, and they have opted for an ethnic understanding. The New Sudan Nationality Act was approved by the SPLM/A in 2003, to establish the legislation in the areas controlled by the SPLA/. The Act acknowledged that a person shall be a New Sudan national by decent (i) if he/ she was or his/ her parents, his/ her grand, and great-grandparents were born in the New Sudan and (ii) he/ she belongs to one of the tribes of the New Sudan (Malith W. C., 2017). The ethnic definition mentioned in the National Act did accentuate a result owing to the lack of identity cards which was not furnished by SPLM /A in the leeway of the war and the tribal affiliation remains an utmost issue. The legal definition of who is Southern Sudanese was highly demanded in the leeway of the referendum of South Sudan in 2011 it was a precursor that only Southern Sudanese had the right to vote (Malith W. C., 2017). However the Referendum Act of 2009 was based on the New Sudan Nationality Act, with the legal definition, mentioning that a voter should meet the following requirements: born to parents both or one of them belonging to an indigenous communities staying in South Sudan on or before 1st January 1956, or whose ancestry is traceable to one of the ethnic communities in Southern Sudan. However, the main difference between the two acts was that the Comprehensive Peace Agreement demarcated the boundaries of South Sudan, and the changing category of the ethnic group of New Sudan was officially superseded with the more broader belonging to one of the indigenous communities staying in Southern Sudan (Malith W. C., 2017). The use of ethnicity as a legal category was a politically motivated move by the movement. The two criteria which were to be achieved in the referendum are, the majority of the votes and a turnout rate of above 60% of the adult population was provided according to the 2008 census. The SPLM/A intention was to register a big number of voters to ensure the turnout rate, and to exclude anyone who could vote for unity. For that ethnic community believed to be cooperating with the government of Sudan, like pastoralists who are Muslim groups such as Misseriya and Baggara Arabs and Fulani herders in Greater Bahr el Ghazal had not been considered as part of indigenous ethnic communities of South Sudan.

However, Fertit ethnic Identity is a repercussion of political and social grievances which have been there until the independence of South Sudan in 2011, ethnicity has not excluded an ethnic group from a civil right and citizenship. Ethnic affiliations are used as a basis for demanding citizenship in some cases. Which make it more arduous for members of cross-border ethnic groups to obtain nationality's certificates of citizenship which are based on parental nationality with a link to ethnicity. However,

citizenship was to separate populations and to marginalize people of the peripheries of the state. Moreover, Fertit ethnic identity politically ushers political and economic grievances and inequality allocation of services in the regions. But Fertit's issue has been triggered by political unrest in South Sudan beginning from the re-division of South Sudan in 1983 and the second Civil War in Sudan from 1983 to 2015. The impact of the political unrest in the region led to Fertit's incontrovertible claims and led to violence and atrocities. Owing to political exaggeration of their problem which culminated in a lack of trust and dilemma with a political situation in the country. However, the impact of Fertit ethnic identity is reflected in their discontent and skepticism with the political system in South Sudan. This was very plain during the referendum when plethora number of Fertit's citizens voted for unity in South Sudan referendum in 2011 and Wau was a big center for those who vote for the unity of Sudan.

Moreover, due to Fertit's grievances and political unrest in South Sudan still, there are larger Fertit people opted for staying in Sudan even after the independence of South Sudan. Additionally, a significant number of Fertit people have demanded Sudanese Nationality and to remain as Sudanese citizens. However, Fertit shares cultural heritage and traits such as religion, with Sudanese societies especially western Sudan which helps them to integrate amidst Sudanese Societies. However, South Sudanese citizenship warrants the availability of ethnicity and territory of applicants as the quid pro quo of acquiring citizenship. This, however, attests that ethnic affiliations of applicants with their ethnic communities are required which accentuated mandatory of belonging to one of the indigenous communities in South Sudan. That conditions make it more difficult for people of cross-border ethnic communities to easily acquiring citizenship, nationality. However, such Fertit as a group with a cross-border cultural heritage face some challenges in accessing citizenship. Fertit ethnic identity which is due to grievances, unfortunately, negates their situation as South Sudanese citizens. Fertit's ethnic identity and their uncertain with the political situation in South Sudan is very pervasive from the presence of large Fertit's community in Sudan due to political unrest and unresolved of their grievances.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the tribal identities are politically triggered or manipulated in a particular situation, they are important for rallying support and mobilization in a political rivalry over power and resources. As in South Sudan elites articulate and exaggerate traditional issues and used them in their vying and struggle for leadership. This has been a major problem, South Sudan is facing and sparked the ongoing conflict in the country. However, Fertit ethnic identity is a reflection of grievances which were wrought by disputes over power, allocation of resources, and lack of respect and had been expressed in the early 1970s. The political and economic misrepresentation, elites' blind ambitions for power and the application of the identity politics by the successive Sudanese governments, atrocities, and violence which has been going on in South Sudan led to the formulation of ethnic identities. However, the conflict over land in Wau town subsuming land around Wau and some villages and led to disputes between Fertit and the regional government. The Fertit's grievances which remained unresolved after the

independence of South Sudan were triggered by political struggle amidst the three ethnic groups, the Dinka, the Lou, and the Fertit. The transfer of Wau County, the indiscriminate arrest of the Fertit's elites, misrepresentation of the Fertit in the security sector, Fertit's disparagement about government's houses and administration, the advent of new settlers and seasonal migration of pastoralists in the area.

Meanwhile, Fertit's Ethnic identity is owing to unfair allocation of political power and land disputes. Fertit ethnic identity let them remained skepticism and worried about their future as citizens of South Sudan. Their disquiet and uncertain led some of them to remain in Sudan. Furthermore, some of Fertit opt for Sudanese Nationality and preferred to be Sudanese. The territory and ethnicity are importance for South Sudanese citizenship and applicants have to imply to that as a precursor for granting citizenship. Which means ethnic affiliation is imperative and applicants have to belong to the main ethnic communities in South Sudan. As such acquiring nationality remains an exigent task for the people of cross-border ethnic communities in accessing citizenship, nationality. As such some Fertit as a group faces challenges in accessing citizenship. Fertit ethnic identity, unfortunately, negates their citizenship as South Sudanese citizens. It has been reflected in the availability of many people in Sudan owing to the political unrest and unresolved grievances.

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