

Security in Ungoverned Spaces and the Oil Find in Turkana, Kenya

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Abstract:

In this paper I examine the recent oil find in Turkana, northern Kenya, considering how it may affect patterns of conflict and insecurity. The largest county in Kenya, it is occupied mainly by pastoralists, is remote, loosely governed, and suffers chronic insecurity. Approximately one in three Turkana are armed, obtaining guns that enter the county mainly from conflict rife neighbouring countries, and use these weapons in livestock raiding and conflict over pasture and water resources. The discovery of oil in Turkana in 2012 brought hopes of economic growth, but also fears of conflict, and the demise of pastoralists due to encroachment upon their communal land and resources. Currently 80% of Turkana's land has been unlawfully leased for oil prospecting. This work focuses on security and safety in this context arguing that the oil find might not benefit pastoralists, and could bring new types of armed resource based conflict and crime, which could destabilise the region.