

Ethnocide as a Tool of State-building: South Sudan and the Never-ending War¹

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Abstract

This working paper documents the strategy of the Dinka-led government of South Sudan to achieve dominance over the state's instruments of power and claim the land of non-Dinka peoples. The findings are the outcome of extended ethnographic fieldwork in war-affected regions of South Sudan. This strategy, years in the making, began with the destabilisation of regions bordering traditional Dinka lands and was followed by the forced displacement of non-Dinka populations. As the title states, "ethnocide" has been employed as a tool of state-building. This ethnocide, led by the country's "organised forces" (the national army, police and irregular militarised groups), is characterised by the indiscriminate killing of civilians based on ethnicity and the systemic use of rape against women and men. The state has targeted Nilotic-speaking populations of Nuer and Shilluk, along the borders of Ethiopia and Sudan; Bantu speakers from the Equatoria region, bordering Uganda and Kenya; and the Fertit, Balanda and Luo peoples of Greater Bahr el Ghazal region, northwestern South Sudan. Having achieved mass displacement in large parts of the country, the president then put into law measures that disenfranchise non-Dinka peoples, including the re-mapping of the country into gerrymandered states and counties that ensure a Dinka monopoly over national and regional decisionmaking. The paper examines the complex drivers — both from the state and, whether intentional or not, the international community — that have brought this plan for Dinka supremacy to fruition.

Keywords: South Sudan, ethnocide, civil war, ethnic nationalism

¹ [Credits to come]

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Introduction

They asked me to take out the words “ethnic cleansing”. And I said, “But the UN has said it’s ethnic cleansing.” And then they said, “It’s too controversial.” And so they took it out.

— UNMISS staffer on preparing a public document on the PoCs³

The ideology of the Dinka is to move all the people out. They know how to deal with the internationals. The regional countries, there is no way they will stop this. These are corrupted people.

— A South Sudanese in Wau, Greater Bahr el Ghazal⁴

The title of this paper, “Ethnocide as a Tool of State-building: South Sudan and the Never-ending War”, speaks to the rise of ethnic nationalism among South Sudanese from the majority Dinka ethnic group. For almost five years, the country’s Dinka-led government and national army, the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA), have engaged in a brutal war against non-Dinka civilian populations and armed groups. Within this state of “never-ending war”, and the consequent humanitarian crisis, the international humanitarian community has shifted its policies towards two priorities: “peace building” and the “normalisation” of ethnically cleansed towns and territories now occupied by the Dinka-led state or its aligned forces.

The quote that opens this paper speaks, I believe, more to a somewhat misguided culture of caution at some levels of the UN rather than institutional policy. But it does remind one of the power of language and the choices made when events are described. The staffmember who was told to remove the words “ethnic cleansing” was justifiably troubled by the supervisor’s decision. The individual speaking in the second quote is a national of South Sudan: “The ideology of the Dinka is to move all the people out.” It is simple and clear. The truth of the second sentence — “They know how to deal with the internationals” — cannot be denied. As members of the Dinka elite have shown for the past three decades, they are adept at managing their relationships with the internationals, whether diplomats, NGOs, or academic researchers. Whether by neglect or design, the UN, humanitarian organisations, and western nations are shoring up and even

³ Interviewed in Wau, Greater Bahr el Ghazal, on 7 May 2018.

⁴ Interviewed in Wau on 28 February 2018.

accelerating the campaign by Dinka interests to control all aspects of the country and to depopulate areas of non-Dinka habitation.

Background

Since the outbreak of war in December 2013, up to two million people have left South Sudan, abandoning their homes and crossing the nearest border to safety. More than 200,000 people now live in the UN-protected camps inside South Sudan. Millions more are internally displaced. The state has waged a brutal war in civilian areas, burning huts, destroying foodstuffs, raping and massacring. The fighting has seen unprecedented levels of mass killings and sexual assault, including the rape of women, girls and men, and the violation of bodies.

The strength of this paper is my insight into the thinking of the Dinka community, both the elite and people living in the regions. In some quarters my observations will be considered unduly harsh. I would point out that I have quoted extensively from on-the-record interviews in which a wide variety of Dinka people state clearly what their objectives are. This includes members of the elite, the self-declared Jieng Council of Elders, clergy and the SPLA. They do not hide their sentiments towards their fellow co-nationals, and they, more than anyone else, know the extent of criminality by state actors that is now the norm, and the ever-present threat of violence to control not only the non-Dinka population but also their own people.

I have the benefit of a long view, having first lived in Sudan for eight years in the 1980s, during which time I came to know some of the key individuals who are most intimately connected to the ongoing ethnocide. I also lived in South Sudan for several years, beginning in 2006, primarily in the Dinka heartland of the former Lakes State, and have continued to spend up to half of every year in South Sudan in the years since. While my research focused on the Dinka community, it was necessary to understand the international engagement. It is not within my remit to analyse the policies of the UNMISS or other international agencies. I can, however, make observations about the ways in which these policies appear, in many instances, to be furthering the aims of the state, rather than protecting those whose lands has been seized, their villages razed and properties stolen.

I would also note that attitudes within the international community appear to have shifted as the war approaches its five-year mark. Prevailing humanitarian narratives now stress the need to “go forward”, implicitly suggesting that individuals who raise concerns about the state’s military actions are somehow failing to support what they consider to be a constructive engagement with “peace building”. There is also evident fatigue surrounding engagement with those who are affected by the war — the several million internally displaced and the more than 200,000 people

living in the UN's Protection of Civilian (PoC) sites. It is not uncommon to hear internationals make disparaging remarks about these populations, casting them as malingerers and even criminals. There is also a disturbing lack of understanding of the extreme risks faced by non-Dinka citizens within the borders of South Sudan, including people who are employed by the UN and other international organisations.

This working paper is the outcome of three six-month periods of research, beginning in 2015 and ending in mid-May 2018, for the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). During this time I travelled extensively in Greater Bahr el Ghazal and Greater Upper Nile, visiting the main towns. This included Rumbek, Wau and Aweil in Greater Bahr el Ghazal; Bor, Malakal and Bentiu in Greater Upper Nile; and, where they were present, communities of IDPs resident in UN-protected camps and within church facilities. I also spent extended periods in Juba, the capital. My initial organising principle for the most recent period of research, 2017-2018, was the question of land. I wanted to better understand the changing demography of large parts of the country. The displacement of millions of South Sudanese, including more than one million now living in Uganda, has been documented. Less well understood is the state-directed shifting of Dinka civilians and state operatives, including military and personnel from the National Security Services (NSS), into non-Dinka territories. From this starting point I was able to better define what I would argue is the central driving force within the South Sudan conflict: ethnic nationalism among the Dinka community. Coupled with a long-planned campaign to redraw the state boundaries of the country, Dinka supremacy has been achieved. Fuelling these efforts, and legitimising the grievous violence against non-Dinka peoples, is an orchestrated campaign of disinformation intended to instil a sense of grievance and victimisation among the wider Dinka population.

I would emphasise here that I do not use the more benign descriptions of what is occurring that have become commonplace — descriptions referring to “inter-ethnic tensions”, “intercommunal violence” or historical enmity between the country's two largest ethnic groups, the Dinka and Nuer. I am speaking about a well-organised campaign that dates back to the closing years of the 1983-2005 North-South civil war. This campaign sought to ensure that one ethnic group — the Dinka — would control all political and military power. The drafters of the 32 states, which has shifted control of most of South Sudan into Dinka hands, claim to have initiated the plan as early as 2012, as will be discussed in greater detail later in this paper.

Mobilisation of the wider Dinka population in support of a sustained and brutal military offensive has resulted in untold numbers of dead and the wholesale disruption of communities throughout

the country. If the leaders of this campaign succeed in their stated objectives, the people who have fled to neighbouring countries will never return to their homes. The condition for their return, as I was told, was their acceptance of Dinka rule. In their representation, the “Dinka nation” is under threat. This logic reaffirms the supposedly defensive, rather than offensive, nature of the military campaign against civilian populations in western Bahr el Ghazal (Fertit, Balanda, Luo), in the Equatorias (Madi, Bari, Zande, Kuku), and in Greater Upper Nile (Nuer, Chollo, Anuak). I would note here that the now-established practice of referring to waraffected areas as “opposition” or “IO” (as in the Riek Machar-led Sudan People’s Liberation Army-In Opposition), rather than viewing the areas as targeted by the state, has reinforced the Dinka/state narrative.

The systemic use of rape against civilian populations in South Sudan as a weapon of war is the direct outcome of the ethnic nationalism driving the now four-year civil war. Both male and female victims are being targeted by soldiers of the Dinka-led SPLA, and their allied forces. While some prominent human rights groups have referred to a “breakdown in the rule of law,” the use of rape is a strategy employed by SPLA commanders as part of their scorched-earth policies in the home territories of minority ethnic groups (Mednick, 2017; UN General Assembly, 2018; UNMISS, 2018).

Among the Nuer, the main targets of the current war, rape has also been used by armed groups against civilian populations and, like the SPLA-led violence, has included grievous acts committed against victims. But the state-led offensives against non-Dinka regions in the Equatorias, western Bahr el Ghazal and Greater Upper Nile are responsible for the vast majority of sexualised violence. The use of sexualised violence in conflict areas of South Sudan is consistent with a strategy of total war, in which the economic foundation of pastoralist communities — the labour provided by women and girls and the wealth accrued by male relatives upon their marriage — is considered a legitimate and important target for debasement and assault by combatants.

The representation of SPLA actions as being defensive, rather than offensive, is a major thread in the Dinka-led state’s campaign to rationalise or justify its actions. Preparations for the creation of additional, gerrymandered, states began shortly after independence in 2011. But it was well before this, upon peace in 2005, that prominent Dinka raised the alarm about the ethnic composition of the SPLA following the absorption of Nuer militias at the end of the North-South

civil war. The large number of Nuer was seen as a long-term threat to Dinka control of the state security forces. As the war veteran and Jonglei State MP Brig. Gen. Abiel Chan Anyang told me:⁵

I think [the Nuer] realise they cannot overcome the Dinka. When they wage war, when they were hoping to overcome Dinka, it was a sort of coup [in 2013]. They were counting themselves within the SPLA. They calculated they were 70 per cent. ...

What happened in 1991 made people alert that [Riek Machar] is not giving up. And they were preparing for protection, and these people had even started targeting Dinka. We knew, after 2011, it was coming. When Nuer gathered in different factions, they were allowed to [return to] the SPLA and then with their ranks in order to buy peace. But individual Nuer were recruiting.

He added, “What the Dinka were trying was to protect themselves. Dinka were not meaning they would finish Nuer. That cannot happen. You cannot destroy a tribe. But you can have a hope that you can defeat this tribe.” Abiel’s words echo those of Ambrose Riiny Thiik, chairman of the Jieng Council of Elders, in 2015, when he told me that that Riek Machar (and the Nuer) must be defeated, but that the loss of life shouldn’t be too great, that the Nuer must not be completely destroyed.⁶

The July 2018 developments in the Khartoum-led negotiations between the South Sudanese government and the SPLA-IO do add another layer of complexity, that layer being the relationship between the president and his inner circle with Khartoum (Radio Tamazuj, 30 June 2018). Any agreement reached between the two sides — the state and the SPLA-IO — is unlikely, however, to alter facts on the ground. Early reports about a negotiated security framework suggest a return to provisions found in earlier failed agreements (Reuters, 6 July 2018). These provisions include demilitarisation of urban centres, reunification of forces, and cantonment of opposition forces.

Given the country’s economic crisis and the state’s control of the “organised forces”, implementation of these provisions will be difficult if not impossible. It appears that the reset button has been hit, the emerging agreement returning South Sudan to the pre-December 2013 status quo. But South Sudan is today a very changed country. In less than five years, regional capital cities have been destroyed and populations removed from their home territories. If the new agreement does not deal with issues of land and habitation, which is most probable, then it signals

⁵ Interviewed in Bor, Jonglei State, on 30 March 2018.

⁶ Interviewed in Juba on 20 June 2015.

the surrender of non-Dinka ethnic groups. Nor has the president indicated a willingness to step down. On 2 July 2018 the South Sudan government proposed a bill to extend President Salva Kiir Mayardit's term by three years (Reuters, 3 July 2018). Just 10 days later, on 12 July, the bill was unanimously passed by the Transitional National Legislative Assembly, extending the mandate of the president and the assembly to 12 August 2021 (Reuters, 12 July 2018).

What a peace agreement could do, however, is open the door to significant external financial support, including through security sector reform (as stipulated under the provision calling for creation of a "national army"), and humanitarian relief in connection with the return of displaced peoples. The terms of the emerging agreement, however, appear to offer nothing to the Equatorian region or western Bahr el Ghazal. While there is some optimism that security could improve in Nuer-inhabited areas of Greater Upper Nile, there are well-founded fears that minority Dinka populations in these areas (Padang Dinka of Upper Nile and Pariang Dinka of Unity State) will face a "backlash" from Nuer people seeking revenge for the loss of life and land over the past five years.⁷

The international community will face enormous challenges in the coming period, as South Sudan begins another "phony peace", the terms of which are being negotiated by the same cast of characters that has dominated the region for the past 30 years. There will be pressure to walk back on the reporting of human rights violations, to end talk of identifying mechanisms for ensuring accountability and even some form of justice for atrocities committed during the war. Individuals who are implicated in the committing of mass atrocities have been promoted and installed in senior positions by the president. The exception is Gen. Paul Malong Awan, the former SPLA chief of staff, now in exile in Kenya, though there are moves afoot to bring him back to South Sudan. The question remains how the UN and its organisations will define their role during a period when the state is expected to press on with its programme of ethnic nationalism while claiming to have achieved peace.

⁷ Personal communication on 5 July 2018 with a prominent former member of the SPLM/A-IO, a Shilluk from Malakal, Greater Upper Nile.

The Mechanics of State-building by Ethnocide

The Nuer are going to be organised and armed to invade South Sudan. The Equatorians will be made to invade South Sudan. And this is where the Dinka massacres will take place.

— Joshua Dau Diu, co-chair, Jieng Council of Elders⁸

There's one thing interesting about #southsudan conflict and its [sic] also troubling. Everyone whom we may have expect [sic] to have good though[t] on how to solved [sic] this crisis is having his #bread interest which is holding her or him back from saying the #truth.

— Tweet by Marko Dako, @DrMarkodak332⁹

Introduction

In this section I examine the measures instituted to fulfil state ambitions of dominance by the Dinka. Over the research period I attempted to determine when the policies were first developed. I now believe that the seeds of the Dinka elite's plan were sown during the latter years of the North-South civil war. The starting point would be the 1991 split in the SPLA, following the attempt by Nuer leader Riek Machar to replace Col. John Garang, a Dinka, as commander of the rebel movement. Despite the later detente and rejoining of Machar to the SPLA in 1997, the wounds and suspicions have remained. Scores of Dinka officers were executed or beaten to death by Machar's loyalists in the immediate aftermath of his declaration that he was assuming control of the movement. Relatives of many of Dinka who were murdered are today among the most

⁸ Interviewed in Juba on 2 April 2018.

⁹ Twitter post by Marko Dak, tagged for the attention of the US-based South Sudanese academic Jok Madut Jok, on 18 June 2018.

senior members of the Kiir government. But there were also killings of Nuer by Dinka; retaliatory killings saw the wholesale massacre of villages.¹⁰

These communities have a shared history of extreme violence. In every story of past killings, of historical moment, there is a currency to be used, a power to be deployed through the claim of memory. Over the past four years of the war, these histories of violence have been revisited and reframed to fuel and legitimise the targeting of civilians and militarised groups. Similarly, efforts by South Sudanese in the diaspora and sympathetic westerners to document atrocities in South Sudan committed by northern Sudanese during the long North-South civil war are feeding into the ruling elite's unfounded claims that the Dinka were the main victims of the war and also the ones who fought and won the independence of South Sudan. This valourisation of the 1983-2005 civil war and the SPLA is happening at a time when South Sudanese live in extreme fear of the actions of this very same army, now deployed as a tool for the Dinka elite.

This speaks to the theory of collective memory as being competitive (Rothberg, 2009). The creation of collective memory is subject to ongoing negotiation. Senior figures within the Dinka elite have never spoken so much about these events of the early 1990s as they have in the past few years, as the war against the territories of Nuer and other ethnic groups has intensified. The Dinka have brought to the fore of public memory the murder of Dinka officers on the orders of Machar after his 1991 split from the SPLA, and the massacre of civilians in Bor. In the promotion of this collective memory, there is an attempt to attain a moral high ground, a position above reproach that, in effect, creates a position below consideration, without merit; in this case, that of the Nuer.

I would note, in this context, that attempts to represent the conflict as between two men — Machar and Kiir — are misguided or, even, purposeful: the intent is to promote the idea that two men are competing for power and to understate the ethnicised enmity between South Sudanese peoples. The conflict, now including several minority ethnicities, is the outcome of years of incitement, of creating the conditions for what the state has presented as defensive, rather than offensive, military actions in support of ensuring the Dinka community full control of the state.

“Unfinished Business”

Ethnicised policies and practices were encouraged by prominent Dinka politicians and the military at the community level as long ago as the final years of the North-South civil war, many

¹⁰ Prominent member of the Nuer community, now working as a humanitarian in the UNMISS Malakal base, interviewed on 15 April 2018.

years before the start of the conflict in 2013. With the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, there was a general understanding among competing interests (including the Dinka and Nuer) that the goal was now independence from Sudan. In an interview, Chol Tong Mayay, the former governor of Lakes State and the current ambassador to Russia, referred to the “unfinished business” of that period:¹¹

We needed to have independence. That’s why any wrangles inside were suspended, and that’s why it didn’t take more than two years to explode. It was not an issue of Riek and Kiir, exactly. The bulk of Nuer were with Riek [Machar], the bulk of Dinka were with [Salva] Kiir.

As another South Sudanese put it, “First we told ourselves, ‘Let us get our independence, and then we will regulate our internal accounts.’”¹² I asked Philip Aguer Panyang, the Dinka governor of Jonglei State, for his comment. As he told me, “You are not mistaken. For the discipline for the independence, you are correct. That discipline was there, no doubt about it.”¹³

It was important to maintain a semblance of peace within the borders of the new country until the referendum had returned a “yes” vote for separation. Once independence was achieved, the Dinka elite could return to its larger ambitions of establishing dominance over South Sudan. The Nuer were also making preparations for what they knew was an impending confrontation.

But unlike the Dinka, they did not have the tools of state to wield.

Upon independence in 2011, President Salva Kiir began to militarise his wider ambitions. To do this, he relied on a core group of long-serving officers in the SPLA and South Sudan Police Service (SSPS). These men were put in command of mobile forces that were used to sow disorder in territories bordering Dinka lands. It was not by chance that several of them were infamous for their use of brutal means against civilians. Prominent among these individuals was Lt. Gen. Bol Akot Bol of Tonj, Greater Bahr el Ghazal. In 2011 he was the commander of the SPLA’s Commandos and carried out operations against civilian populations in a wide area, from Greater Bahr el Ghazal to the Equatorias. Particularly in the immediate post-CPA period, from 2005 onwards, he was responsible for carrying out disarmament campaigns. It was widely understood, however, that these were opportunities to loot and terrorise local populations.

He was present for the start of the current war. Bol Akot is alleged to have either given the order, or followed orders from others, to massacre hundreds, possibly thousands, of Nuer in Juba in

¹¹ Interviewed in Juba on 6 April 2018.

¹² Interviewed in Juba on 27 April 2018.

¹³ Interviewed in Juba on 28 April 2018.

December 2013 (Berger, 14 May 2014). In 2017 Bol Akot was promoted from major general to lieutenant general and named head of SSPS operations in Greater Bahr el Ghazal.¹⁴ His removal from the SPLA and transfer to the SSPS highlights the state's structuring of all security arms as "organised forces," with little distinction being made on the operational responsibilities of the SPLA, SSPS, Prisons and Wildlife forces. To further confirm the president's reliance on Bol Akot, as of late June 2018, he has been promoted once again, this time to the SSPS's head of operations for all of South Sudan (Radio Tamazuj, 25 June 2016).

Returning to the trajectory of the state's plans, the president began, in 2015, to enact laws to disenfranchise non-Dinka populations, including redivision of the country from 10 states into 28 and, finally, 32, as I discuss below.

Map Making

I opened this chapter with the words of Joshua Dau Diu, a Dinka from Bor: "The Nuer are going to be organised and armed to invade South Sudan. The Equatorians will be made to invade South Sudan. And this is where the Dinka massacres will take place." In this apocalyptic vision, those who were displaced over the past four years will return to kill the Dinka people. While the statement appears entirely unfounded, Dau Diu, still spry at 76 years of age, cannot be ignored. He was part of a special committee struck by the self-appointed Jieng (Dinka) Council of Elders to redraft the state borders of South Sudan in 2012, within months of independence in 2011. He took credit for the creation of the states in an interview with me in April of this year, and spoke of his "archive" that documents the map-making process.

Dau Diu has a long history of incitement. In his words, he was only being responsible when, years ago, he spread warnings within the Dinka community of Nuer intentions. Dau Diu claims to have spoken with a group of Nuer during a visit to Toronto, Canada, in 2010. During that meeting, he says that he learned that the Nuer were planning to launch a war against the Dinka. Somewhat coyly, he declined to name the individuals he met with in Canada, saying he was concerned about protecting their identities. His claim to have knowledge of Nuer plans, and the enthusiasm with which he spread the supposed plans, marks the beginning of an organised campaign of incitement aimed at mobilising the Dinka community against the Nuer.

The second quote, a tweet by a South Sudanese, speaks to the silence among South Sudanese surrounding events within their country. As he writes: "Everyone whom we may have expect [sic] to have good though[t] on how to solved [sic] this crisis is having his #bread interest which is

¹⁴ The naming of Lt. Gen. Bol Akot Bol to head of operations for the SSPS was not, to my knowledge, publicly announced. I learned of it from one of Bol Akot's sons on 5 July 2018.

holding her or him back from saying the #truth.” The handful of prominent individuals who regularly speak about South Sudan in western fora, whether in informal briefings with western diplomats or at conferences and with the media, are predominantly Dinka. They have been accused of providing cover for the state by not speaking candidly about the internal workings of the government and the motivations of the Dinka elite. The tweeter of this comment tagged Jok Madut Jok, a US-based academic, and also a Dinka from the former Warrap State, the home region of President Kiir. By tagging Jok, the tweet implicitly accused him of being among those who are not entirely open in their public statements. Jok was formerly undersecretary in the Ministry of Culture and Heritage. He was also among those who claimed that the December 2013 fighting in Juba was part of an attempted coup by Riek Machar. In recent years, he has openly criticised the government and President Kiir but has largely refrained from discussing the ethnic dimensions of the state’s policies.

There is, however, one prominent South Sudanese, an insider and war veteran, who has shown himself willing to speak truths that have long been suppressed. The writer and politician Peter Adwok Nyaba, a Chollo from Greater Upper Nile, fought the North-South civil war alongside many of the men now in power. He was arrested following the December 2013 massacres in Juba and later joined the SPLA-IO. Adwok was a minister in the short-lived Transitional Government of Unity. He now lives in exile in Nairobi, Kenya. He recently left the SPLA-IO, accusing its leader, Machar, of having no other aim than to return to Juba in order to rejoin the Kiir government. Adwok’s account of the origins of what he calls the “Dinka ethnic ideology” bears reading:

The withdrawal of the SPLM/A into southern Sudan after the defeat of the Ethiopian Derg [in 1991] witnessed the circulation in the liberated areas of such messages as “*Awich ku ajich ku*,” which translates [from the Dinka] literally as “We know what we want.” The sudden appearance of such utterances, suggesting that the Dinka comrade knew what his comrades from other nationalities did not know, was a precursor of what was to come in South Sudan once it became independent. This was perhaps to signal the complete ideological shift from revolution and the vision of “New Sudan” to Southern Sudan and its secession.

The idea of projecting Dinka ethnic ideology over South Sudanese patriotism and fraternity comes in the context of protecting personal power. The Dinka political elite developed the idea into a comprehensive programme of constructing a Dinka state in South Sudan. This came following the tragic death of Garang and Kiir’s ascension to the helm of the SPLM and the government of Southern Sudan, along the lines of the Arab-dominated northern political elite,

the *kayan al shamal*, that dominated the Sudanese state. President Kiir defined its features as the political and economic empowerment of the Dinka people (Nyaba, 2018).

The redrafting of South Sudan's state boundaries to ensure Dinka dominance throughout the country was begun in 2012. It is interesting to note that several of the prominent figures who have portrayed the Dinka as under threat, thus legitimising the incitement against minority peoples, were never members of the SPLA. More importantly, they chose to remain in northern Sudan throughout the 21-year civil war. This includes Bona Malwal and Joshua Dau Diu, both Jieng Council members and advisors to President Salva Kiir. Malwal has an international profile, and is a visiting academic at St Antony's College, University of Oxford. I will refer to this Khartoum connection later in the paper, in the context of the apparent ceding of control of the disputed region of Abyei by the South Sudanese government.

Three years after the Jieng Council committee began its work to divide the country into gerrymandered states, President Kiir, on 2 October 2015, issued an executive order increasing the number of states from 10 to 28. Establishment Order No. 36/2015 reorders the country along ethnic lines, but with an important twist: wherever possible, territory including Dinka communities has been annexed to regions of non-Dinka habitation. This has ensured Dinka control of up to half of all states. Areas in particularly western and northern Bahr el Ghazal and Greater Upper Nile that were formerly non-Dinka in ethnic composition now have Dinka communities within their borders. It has also granted parcels of land traditionally held by non-Dinka peoples to Dinka communities.

In just one region, Greater Upper Nile, the executive order gave Chollo (Shilluk) land to the Padang Dinka. Joshua Dau, co-chair of the Jieng Council of Elders and early drafter of the new states, first initiated claims on Chollo territory back in 1979, demanding that the Chollo move to the west bank of the Nile and allow the Padang Dinka to claim the territory. In the mid-1990s, Padang Dinka even petitioned the Sudanese president, Omar el Beshir. But in every case, the claims were rejected. It was only with the presidency of Salva Kiir and the rise of the Jieng Council that Dau's long-time ambitions were achieved. The same has occurred in other areas where senior Jieng Council members had agitated, years before, for the lands of neighbouring peoples. The Chollo community has protested the move and disputed Jieng Council claims that the lands were long in dispute, saying that the only dispute was that the Dinka were claiming Chollo land (Oyay Awin, 2016).

Similarly, members of the Twic Dinka have been accused of seeking to annex some parts of the Abyei Area to the newly created Twic State (Radio Tamazuj, 2016). This includes Dinka Ngok land that lies south of the River Kiir. In particular, Charles Majak, the chair of the special Jieng Council committee struck to revise the states of South Sudan, has been named as being responsible for the attempts, which he has denied. Bona Malwal, a Twic Dinka and also a member of the Jieng Council, is said to be behind the lobbying to claim Ngok Dinka land. Further to the unresolved status of Abyei, Malwal has even published a book on the matter, *Abyei of the Ngok Dinka: Not Yet South Sudan* (2017). For decades he has claimed that Abyei belongs to Sudan. Additionally, the Twic Dinka are claiming part of Mayom, home of the Bul Nuer, in the former Unity State. Also in the former Unity State, the new state divisions conveniently shift parts of Rub Kona; Mayoum, at the extreme northwest of Ruweng, renaming it Abiemnom; and Pariang into the new Ruweng State. This gives the Dinka population dominance in an area that was formerly majority Nuer. The reason is clear. As one source said, “Between Rub Kona and Mayoum, there is oil, so they are taking oil to Ruweng [State].”¹⁵

At the local level, separate and apart from executive orders, there is another way that interlopers can claim ownership of land: by burying their relatives on disputed land. When I asked Joshua Dau about the “ownership” of Wau in western Bahr el Ghazal, he replied: “Wau belongs to three communities: Dinka, Fertit and Luo.”¹⁶ I questioned him further, saying that Dinka have not had a historical presence in Wau. “They claim to have their ancestors buried there,” he told me. The issue of burial is an important one. Once a relative has been buried on a plot, this strengthens the interloper’s claim to ownership of the land.

There is also the simple act of seizing property, as has been happening in Juba for several years. It is believed that the practice accelerated in late 2017 and early 2018. If you drive through Juba, knowledgeable people can point out which buildings have been claimed by Dinka SPLA officers. Properties belonging to the exiled politicians known as the Former Detainees, Nuer, Equatorians, and even East Africans have been taken. This has included restaurants, unfinished apartment blocks and retail premises. In recent months, the method of seizure has been for heavily armed soldiers to arrive in number and enter the premises. All staff, often non-South Sudanese, are arrested, as is the business owner, unless he has already fled. The soldiers are then detailed to remain on the premises, keeping guard. On Christmas Eve 2017, soldiers entered one property

¹⁵ Interviewed in Malakal on 14 April 2018.

¹⁶ Interviewed in Juba on 2 April 2018.

and set about beating the staff, “slapping and caning” them, according to an East African source. As he said, “These people come and arrest you, say you are a criminal, say you are supporting IO. To stay with life you would rather give the property and go.”¹⁷

Transfer of Land to Dinka Populations

In Greater Upper Nile, Malakal residents, Chollo (Shilluk) people, who are now displaced are convinced that attempts to shift control of Malakal to the Dinka began before the CPA ended the 21-year North-South civil war in 2005. Said a prominent Nuer who lived in Malakal before the current war:

It has been a long long plan for them, before the signing of the peace. Before the CPA could be signed, just six months before, all the Shilluk elders and Dinka elders were called from Malakal to Nairobi to meet with [SPLA leader] John Garang. Those who went, everybody has to be taken from his area.

The Dinka stood up when the Shilluk were called to speak for Malakal, and then they started quarrelling. It was John Garang who told the Dinka to sit down. [He said:] “The Shilluk should speak for Malakal.” Jieng Council, they were the ones making the plan, the Padang Dinka. When John Garang died these Jieng Council said, “This is our chance to implement our plan.”¹⁸

The Chollo Kingdom has historically been divided into two parts: the western and eastern banks of the White Nile. Now those on the east bank are being pushed to the west. “The Dinka are not prepared to give these people [the Chollo and Nuer] any space to exist,” said a UN staffer in Malakal.¹⁹ The redivision of the country into 32 states, and the purposeful inclusion of Dinka communities in states that were formerly not Dinka-majority, will have ramifications well into the future. It means that all government policies and legislative decisions will have the necessary political support at the state level.

Said a Nuer from Malakal:

The 32 states divide the country into two — half for Dinka and half for everyone else. Whatever laws needed to be passed, they will have the necessary votes. Whatever motions they raise, they will convince the

¹⁷ Interviewed in Juba on 27 April 2018.

¹⁸ Interviewed in Malakal on 16 April 2018.

¹⁹ Interviewed in Malakal on 11 April 2018.

rest of the tribes, some other few, and they will win. This is the longterm way of defeating the Nuer.

They just want the land [from other tribes]. It is only the Nuer who will say no. They want to silence them. And if Nuer fight they will say, 'The Nuer are violent.' When they violate the ceasefire, they are okay. When the Nuer accept to be killed, it is okay.²⁰

If the current Khartoum-led peace agreement does not deal with the loss of communal lands in particularly Greater Upper Nile it is hard to imagine that the Dinka security forces and civilians now resident there will voluntarily leave the area and allow the return of the original, now-displaced, inhabitants. A provision to hold a referendum on the 32 states is seen as affirming the Dinka-led state remapping: given the state's control over the country, any referendum would be unlikely to return a fair representation of residents' views on the matter.

National Security and the "Organised Forces"

In this section I approach the question of how the country is being managed from a security perspective. It is important to first acknowledge the somewhat static nature of the SPLA, its adherence to war-time practices of perpetual recruitment, the failure to pay salaries, regularise troop movements or make distinctions between the various security organs. I use the word "static" in relation to the national army because the military continues to operate in a regional or fragmented way. Local commanders operate with impunity and have control over all matters in their respective territories. Just as it was during the 21-year North-South civil war, command over a particular area gives the named officer control over all resources, including humanitarian relief efforts.

What appears to be changing is the more public use by senior officials of the collective term "organised forces." This acknowledges the state's view that the different forces — SPLA, SSPS, Wildlife, Prisons, National Security Services (NSS) — are seen as one institution. For all practical purposes, individual soldiers, policemen, wardens, guards and officers are part of a single force, their deployments shifting between the different entities without much concern. I will return to the use of "organised forces", and what I believe is the longer-term intention, later in this section. The term "organised forces", referring to all security forces in uniform, is

²⁰ Interviewed in the Malakal UNMISS base on 15 April 2018.

consistent with the more public embrace of what were once considered war-time practices. This includes the open forced recruitment of underaged soldiers along ethnic lines. The youth are then organised into militia-like forces that are given local names that resonate with Dinka culture. Importantly, they are indeed part of the SPLA and are commanded by SPLA officers.

The best known of these irregular forces are referred to as “Mathiang Anyour.” The name, taken from the Dinka, can be translated as “brown rat” but means, more precisely, “scorched earth”, the said rats being known for their rapaciousness. These forces, on the orders of regional SPLA commanders, are used in military campaigns that target civilian populations. Some observers would use the creation of these ill-disciplined youth forces to bolster their claims that the SPLA has somehow, since 2012-2013, become undisciplined. I would use the deployment of the Mathiang Anyour (and a number of other recruitment drives that followed the Mathiang Anyour, similarly given local, Bahr el Ghazal Dinka names) as evidence not of the SPLA’s lack of discipline but of the SPLA’s open return to guerrilla-era strategies. These strategies have, to my mind, done two important things: use of the untrained, unpaid and brutalised youth has given the SPLA marked “successes” in its overall long-term aims: primarily, the depopulation of large parts of South Sudan that were formerly inhabited by non-Dinka peoples. Second, the untrained nature of these forces has made the actions of the Mathiang Anyour somehow outside the responsibility of the SPLA. To sympathetic or ill-informed outsiders, claims that these forces were acting outside the control of the SPLA are plausible.

Again, consistent with long-term SPLA strategy, regional forces appear to be acting in a fragmented way, without a national or centralised military command. And yet this is by design. Throughout his presidency, Salva Kiir has relied on a handful of veteran SPLA commanders to carry out his orders. These include Lt. Gen. Santino Deng Wol (formerly in command of Division 3 in Aweil, now head of SPLA Ground Forces). Then-Maj. Gen. Santino Deng Wol was named by the UN Security Council for sanctioning on 1 July 2015 (he was later promoted by President Kiir to lieutenant general). The “reasons for listing” reads, in part: “Deng Wol’s forces killed children, women and old men, burned property, and stole livestock as they advanced through Unity State towards Thorjath oil field during May 2015. Additionally, early that month, Deng Wol reportedly pushed for the execution of captured opposition soldiers” (UN Security Council, 2015).

Other key figures include Lt. Gen. Bol Akot Bol (from Tonj, formerly in command of the Commandos in Lakes and Eastern Equatoria, and now SSPS Operations for all of South Sudan) and a handful of other men from Greater Bahr el Ghazal Region who served under Bol Akot and

Santino Deng during the North-South war and in the post-CPA period. They largely originate from Tonj, Yirol and Rumbek.

Returning to the more open deployment of and reference by senior figures to “organised forces” (including Wildlife, Prisons, and Police), it is important to remember that international organisations and regional interests, for more than a decade, have made a distinction between the SPLA and the other security entities within South Sudan. This allowed for the provision of training and materiel in support of public security services. The myth of there being any separation between these forces should be acknowledged and addressed accordingly. There is no separation between these security entities: all are under the command of the SPLA. The longerterm intentions then, in the use of “organised forces”, is to enable the state to deploy all its security arms in support of military objectives and protection of the presidency.

Internal Dinka Tensions

Following the 2017 removal of SPLA Chief of Staff Paul Malong Awan, men seen as close to him were arrested on suspicion of anti-Kiir sentiments. This included people from Malong’s home area of Aweil who were resident in Juba; three Aweil men were kidnapped and murdered in Juba in January 2018 (Sudan Tribune, 26 January 2018). During the same period, individuals from northern Bahr el Ghazal who were working within National Security and Military Intelligence were relieved of their duties. More recently, state employees from Yirol, seen as being disloyal following the failure of officials there to kill Malong when he attempted to return to his home area Aweil by road, have been targeted. I would note here that in this purge of Malong loyalists, even individuals who can claim connections to officers still in favour have been arrested and held for months in sites in the Juba area. Among them is the husband of a niece of Lt. Gen. Bol Akot Bol. Originally from the Aweil area, he is related to Malong. He was held for six months in a military prison, then, without so much as seeing his worried wife, deployed to the front line in Greater Upper Nile.²¹ It can be assumed that two years earlier, at the time of the marriage, when Malong was still chief of staff, that the woman’s uncle, Lt. Gen. Bol Akot, saw the union as advantageous.

The state’s targeting of Dinka sections or clans follows perceived threats to the Kiir regime from the wider Dinka community (having neutralised, for all intents and purposes, the Nuer leader Riek Machar, and facing no tangible challenge from the political and military figures who have gone into exile). At present, the identified Dinka threat is Gen Paul Malong of Aweil, but this list

²¹ Interviewed in Juba on 6 May 2018.

is expected to expand to other targets, individuals from possibly Yirol and Bor, in the coming months. The shift in power dynamics towards veterans from Tonj is the work of the head of National Security, Akol Koor Kuc. Among his allies is Lt. Gen. Bol Akot Bol. NSS forces stationed in Rumbek in late 2017 appeared to be under the command, in fact, of Bol Akot. The lieutenant general was deployed to Rumbek in December 2017 to lead the SPLA-ordered campaign to disarm civilians in the former Warrap and Lakes states. Such actions by the security forces are gutting the interior. Under the guise of disarmament campaigns, the SPLA are seizing livestock from the local communities to both feed and enrich themselves, depleting already scarce resources.

The state's embrace of "organised forces", as opposed to a national army, means that officers on the ground in the regions are constantly recruiting, building their local forces. In the case of Lakes, the "organised forces" now includes militarised cattle keepers, who in reality are little more than armed forces under the direction of powerful men now living in Juba and even further afield. Under the guise of a civilian disarmament, the state can redistribute weapons, and disadvantage particular civilian groups. Because the SPLA has deputised militarised cattle keepers as "community police" they are in effect no longer civilians. The tent that is the SPLA only grows larger. But it is a tent that includes only those of Dinka ethnicity.

The SPLA's Irregular Forces

Returning to the irregular force known as Mathiang Anyoor, the removal of Gen Paul Malong as chief of staff and re-posting of Lt. Gen. Santino Deng Wol to Juba may have slowed its growth. In the town of Wau, Greater Bahr el Ghazal, Mathiang Anyoor appeared to have been somehow cut loose by the SPLA after Malong's fall from favour. There were also reports that the arrival of NSS forces in Wau in November 2017 helped to curtail Mathiang Anyoor excesses. But it did not mean that the youth had left Wau. Rather, they had just disappeared into the fabric of the town. While some still wear uniforms and carry guns, many move as civilians. But everyone knows who they are. Without any means of support, they have taken up petty jobs, hawking goods in the markets, polishing shoes on street corners. They also continue to engage in illegal activities: residents told me that the Dinka youth selling charcoal in the town markets would have stolen the charcoal from Fertit transporting the commodity into the town; similarly, youth selling cassava likely stole the harvest from Fertit fields.

Wau residents are conscious that the Mathiang Anyoor have nothing and that they are hungry. It is understood that the youth could be reactivated, ordered to carry out military actions against civilians, at any time. In January 2018, there were reports that some 200 of the youth were taken by National Security for training at Mapel garrison. This points again to the SPLA and National Security's deployment of what would be considered irregular forces.

"Most of them now, I see them in the market," said a non-Dinka, part-Arab Wau merchant.²² "There is nothing in their towns to go back to. The means of living are too difficult. Nobody returned. They're in the market." He continued, "The youth, the teenagers, were all engaged in this problem. They took it as something ethnical, tribal — 'Go and kill, loot.' There is hatred, without anything [without any reason].

"Most of them, they are used to what they are doing [committing violent acts]," he said. Gesturing towards a Dinka teenager seated nearby polishing shoes, he added, "Like this man who is there with us. He can leave again at any time to do these things." He confirmed that there were children, both girls and boys, among the marauding groups of Mathiang Anyoor "singing war songs" during the 2016 violence in Wau. There is a widespread perception that even children have been indoctrinated to support attacks against non-Dinka. When I asked what he and his family will do if violence inside the centre of Wau town breaks out again, he said, "We hide ourselves in our houses. We don't want to show ourselves. Nobody targeted the Arabs. They looted nothing. They were very safe."

While the arrival of the NSS in November 2017 saw some restraint on the Mathiang Anyoor, it is evident that they are considered part of the "organised forces," to be deployed where necessary. I was told by several sources that a contingent of Mathiang Anyoor was occupying the area of Bringi, to the west of Wau, formerly home to the Balanda people. There are said to be no civilians left in the town, just the youth fighters. The town has become a forward position for the SPLA.

²² Interview in Wau, Greater Bahr el Ghazal, on 16 January 2018.

The President's Speech

If you want to cut my neck, come and try it.

— President Salva Kiir, Wau Stadium, 24 December 2012

On 24 December 2012, thousands of people assembled in the Wau National Stadium to hear a speech by President Salva Kiir. The occasion was to mark the official opening of the newly asphalted airstrip. The event came only days after several Dinka men had been killed, allegedly by Fertit, in the Wau area. Tensions were high after local residents protested the state's decision to relocate the Wau County offices to Bagari. In that month alone, 24 people were killed and more than 60 injured in Wau. The violence occurred during protests and reprisal attacks following the decision. On the day of the speech, and in the weeks that followed, people considered critical of the government, based in part on their ethnicity, were arrested (Amnesty International, 2013).

Fertit people who live in the UNMISS Protection of Civilians (PoC) site in Wau tell foreign visitors that the 2012 speech by Kiir revealed the intentions of the state and foretold the slow but undeniable infringement on non-Dinka land, followed by the violent displacement of 2016, when tens of thousands fled from Wau town. Curiously, I have been unable to find an English translation of what is considered an important marker for what has followed. The audio was, however, uploaded onto an online site.²³ I asked a Sudanese living in Cairo to translate the audio for me. When he had finished, he asked me to tell no one that he had done the translation, such are the sensitivities surrounding the speech's contents (See the full translation in Appendix I).

The 15-minute speech in the Wau Stadium tells us several important things. The first, and most important, is that the violent intent of the state has been understated and downplayed for many years. The speech was made in a rough form of Arabic, laden with northern Sudanese expressions and what I consider coded expressions. This makes it difficult for an outsider to fully comprehend the president's words. In the speech, Salva Kiir directly threatens the people of Wau, telling them that city will be destroyed — “in an hour” — if there is violence directed against Dinka people. Using an analogy referring to lions and hyenas, he alludes to the ability of the Dinka to “mobilise” in defence of one of their number. He says, pointedly, that Wau, home to the Fertit and Balanda, is also home to the Dinka. He warns that if the police of Wau, recruited from local ethnic groups, are unable to do their jobs, he will replace them with the army; that he could, if he so chose, transfer the police of Bahr el Ghazal to Upper Nile, and bring police from Upper Nile to the streets of Wau.

The president refers, as he often does, to “slaughter” and, more directly, to cutting necks, at one point challenging anyone who is brave enough to try to cut his. He claims that Dinka victims were mutilated, that parts of their bodies were removed, that some were crucified. This was an apparent reference to the killing of 26 Dinka outside Wau earlier that month, in the midst of protests against the Wau County relocation (Sudan Tribune, 5 January 2013). He says:

I'm standing in front of you and I am not happy, I am not happy because there is no reason for people to kill each other. And then killing in a way that's not right. You slaughter a person like a goat? And now you have killed him, and if you killed him and he died, why do you

²³ An audio recording of the speech, titled “S. Sudan President Salva Kiir Speech from Wau: Need for Peaceful Coexistence Between Dinka & Fertit,” was uploaded by GreenAcuity Media to Mixcloud, a digital audio streaming platform (<https://www.mixcloud.com/GreenPowerRadio/s-sudan-president-salva-kiir-speech-from-wau-need-for-peaceful-coexistence-between-dinka-fertit/>).

mutilate the body? You cut out a part of the body parts and do what and what.

You have killed him. Leave him so he can be buried with all his body parts. Some people have been slaughtered. I heard that some people were found with a nail hammered into their head. And I also heard that some people were crucified as when Jesus was crucified. What is all this? The death of a human is not a good thing. Let people stop doing this.

These claims of mutilation and crucifixion appear to be untrue. I say this having attempted, back in 2013 and up to this year, to verify Dinka claims. I could not. Nor could the local medical examiner, who contested state accounts and later went missing. He is presumed dead. But it follows a pattern of disinformation about the mutilation of Dinka men and boys, including reports of castrations and the chopping of ears and lips. These claims have been made for several years by a wide range of Dinka sources, including the author and former politician Bona Malwal, long connected to St. Anthony's College at Oxford University, military officers, politicians and ordinary people. Beginning from 2014, the claims were that Dinka people were being killed in grievous ways and their bodies mutilated. Dinka officials continue to perpetuate the belief that Equatorians and others are committing atrocities. A senior SPLA officer in Kuajok told me in March 2018:²⁴

As you know, we [the Dinka] are the majority. Wherever you go you will find us. When they move in Equatoria, they say, "I need 'heavy goods'" ['heavy goods' apparently used as slang for 'Dinka']. When they get them they take them and slaughter them. They cut. If it is a man they cut the private organs and put in the mouth. If it is a lady, they cut the woman and put things inside. They say, "You Dinka, you say you are the man. Today we are the man. We will fuck you with wood."

The president, in his speech, also refers to the much-used slogan, attributed to the late SPLA leader, Col. John Garang, "taking the town to the country," which I now believe is a coded directive to the Dinka people to move outside their home territories and settle in non-Dinka areas. I discuss this further in the section that follows, "2.4: The Power of Words: Dog Whistles and Coded Language."

He accuses the people who protested the shift of the county headquarters out of Wau of being supporters of Sudan, saying:

²⁴ Interviewed in Kuajok, Greater Bahr el Ghazal, on 4 March 2018.

Don't forget one thing: [Sudanese President] Omar el Beshir — who you are calling to come here — has no army here in Grinty [SPLA Division 5 headquarters in Wau]. These people with hangovers think that there is still *jellabah* army here in Grinty or in Gebel Khair, or anywhere.

No, they are not here. The army here is black and South Sudanese like me, like you. And I don't think the *jellabah* will go and get you ammunition and arms so you come and fight your brothers, if you think that *jellabah* will come back here and govern you.

No, *jellabah* are not coming back again. They will not come. Let them come fighting, and see if they going to arrive or not. They will not cross the border to come to Wau here. So if there are some people who still have these ideas, let them, let them put their ideas down [forget about it]. If some people see that they don't want to be Southern, they want to be Northern, and be in the old Sudan which we ran from, they are welcome to go, and leave the land.

And they have left, in the tens of thousands, whether to Kampala, Khartoum, the DRC or into the bush. But the starting point for their departure was not a desire to be northern Sudanese. It was because of the worsening violence wrought by the deployment of the SPLA's Mathiang Anyoor. While the president refers in his speech to the "*jellabah*" (the pejorative term used for Arab or northern Sudanese) and accuses Wau residents of being aligned with Sudan, I would caution against interpreting his words as the words of a patriot. Rather, it is the insult that is thrown at non-Dinka peoples when they challenge Dinka actions. This is despite the fact that the Kiir government has shown itself to have relatively good relations with Khartoum, and has, for several years, promoted individuals within the security services and ministries who remained in Khartoum throughout the long North-South civil war.

The content of the speech made by President Kiir in Wau is not reflected in the title used in an online post of the audio recording: "S. Sudan President Kiir Speech in Wau: Need for Peaceful Coexistence Between Dinka & Fertit." Nor is the content of his speech reflected in the site's brief comment:

According to Jok Madut Jok, Executive Director of the Sudd Institute, the conflict started when a few Fertit leaders angered by a recent decision of the Local government to move Wau County Administration from Wau Town to an area called Bagari. Apparently some elements of the Fertit with political agendas and tribal gripes saw this move as motivated by Dinka in the State government and decided to incite and arm youth and teenagers to massacre their fellow countrymen. This in turn led to many homeless Dinka youth in Wau Town burning Fertit homes and seeking revenge on their occupants. Please refer to frontiersofpeace.com for more info.

A news report by *Gurtong*, published on 25 December 2012, also makes no mention of the threats made by the president, other than a line that quotes the president saying, “The governor has not committed any crimes at all. The policy of governor to transfer the headquarters of the county outside town is good. I support this transfer. I want to tell you people of Wau County who were told to go to Bagari and you created problem to fight — I want to tell you that if I were here, I would have fought you” (Mayoum, 25 December 2012).

The Power of Words: Dog Whistles and Coded Language

Wherever you want to live, you are free to go. Go where you want to look for a job.

— President Salva Kiir Mayardit, Wau²⁵

At an UNMISS meeting in Juba, an expatriate analyst was giving a briefing on the security situation in the town of Wau, Greater Bahr el Ghazal. He had been in the country only a matter of months but was considered serious about his work. After saying that there was relative calm in

²⁵ The president made the remark during his speech at Wau National Stadium, Wau town, Bahr el Ghazal, on 24 December 2012.

Wau, he told his colleagues that it was important for local authorities to maintain an appearance of security in the town because Wau is “Dinka heartland.” When queried about this, asked who had told him this was the case, he was momentarily flustered and then claimed to have misspoken, that in fact he knew Wau was not Dinka. He was apparently not aware that use of the term “Dinka heartland” is part of the campaign to change the way that the town of Wau is viewed by the international community. Wau, is not at all “Dinka heartland,” at least not historically. But since the mass displacement of Fertit, Balanda and Luo in 2016, the majority of people in the town are now Dinka.

The subtitle of this section — “Dog Whistles and Coded Language” — refers to the state’s use of expressions or terms that appear to mean one thing to a general, or foreign, audience, but have a very different meaning for the targeted audience. One of the coded expressions that is often used by President Kiir, and others officials, is “We can live wherever we want.” While it is true that the transitional constitution of South Sudan gives every citizen the right to choose where he or she wishes to reside, this is meant to be conditional on respecting traditional communal property rights. When the audience is composed of non-Dinka peoples the words can be interpreted as a threat, a reminder that the Dinka can move into their areas with impunity.

Given that Dinka civilians are allowed to carry weapons throughout most of South Sudan, while non-Dinka are not, the imbalance in power, with the state controlled by Dinka interests, has meant a systemic encroachment on minority peoples’ lands for well over a decade. As I have written in previous reports, the incursions begin with the movement of cattle herds beyond their traditional grazing areas, which results in the damaging of crops cultivated by indigenous peoples, and is followed by the arrival of security forces to protect the herds and, eventually, to displace the original inhabitants.

But perhaps the most powerful coded expression is “take the town to the country” or, as it sometimes appears, “take the town to the people.” On the evening of 1 March 2018, the South Sudan Broadcasting Corporation (SSBC) aired a discussion between three men, all of whom were Dinka, and including Minister of Defence and Veteran Affairs Gen. Kuol Manyang Juuk, a Bor Dinka. The topic was the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM), the political arm of the SPLA, and popular support. One of the men said that after 2013 it was no longer possible to have popular rallies for the SPLM, as had been done in the past.

The conversation proceeded, in a somewhat aimless fashion. Manyang spoke of the need for the party to become unified. And then he referred to the late SPLM leader Col. John Garang’s oft-quoted call for people to move from the town to the country. Importantly, the conversation,

seemingly unscripted, was almost wholly in English. The intended audience, then, was not nationals but internationals, who are unlikely to comprehend the coded language being used. Who wouldn't agree that the people should go into the countryside, to cultivate, to build their country? And yet, this is the code for claiming non-Dinka lands. This is the call to the "people" — Dinka people — to move beyond their lands into the lands of others.

Following the president's 2015 decree establishing 28 states, the Jieng Council of Elders issued a statement signed by co-chairman Ambrose Riiny Thiik and Joshua Dau Diu. It read, in part (Nyamilemedia Press, 8 October 2015):

The SPLM vision of "taking towns to the people" which, the presidential order fulfills is anchored on the need to devolve political, administrative and economic power so as to improve livelihoods of the rural communities, reduce the size of the national government to free up more resources for use by state and local governments, promote economic and social development in the rural communities and encourage and attract national based expertise and deploy it in the states and counties.

Years before, use of the slogan was called out as justifying the state's abuse of power. In 2012, in a lengthy editorial, an unnamed Equatorian called for a high-level judicial commission of inquiry, writing (South Sudan Nation, 27 December 2012):

Evidently, the killing of political commentator, Isaiah, followed by the ruthless gunning down of peaceful protesters in Wau by the bloodthirsty National Security agents, and the deadly shooting down of a clearly marked UN helicopter killing all four Russian pilots by a trigger-happy and unrestrained army, are acts of a regime that's desperately sliding downhill on the road to dictatorship and failed governance. . . .

[A]s in more civilized nations, this judicial commission constituted would explore all views and grievances raised by all sides and the roles played by the state authorities in exacerbating the situation but more importantly, the commission's mandate would be to re-examine in its entirety the so-called 'taking-the-towns-to-the-people' concept.

Undoubtedly, this contentious and badly misunderstood SPLM/A doctrine has greatly engendered a lot of opposition and controversy for the simple fact that the ruling tribalists in the Kiir's regime with the passive or active support of the president himself, took advantage by exploiting this policy to aggressively embark on massive land grabbing.

Similarly, public officials appearing on the state broadcaster have spoken, in both Arabic and English, of the need to hire qualified nationals for government positions, people who hold diplomas or degrees. This as well has a somewhat hidden meaning. In the post-CPA period, universities were established throughout the country, but their credentials are highly suspect. A significant number of SPLA generals have gone into business with investors from East Africa; one area of quick profits is higher education. The universities were established in Juba and other towns in South Sudan without meeting even the most basic requirements for accreditation. A quick search online finds 11 private universities, only four of which are believed to have been licenced by the government (Hot in Juba, 10 May 2017).²⁶ These “universities” register people who have never been to school, or have only a primary-level education, for degree courses. In 2016, Peter Adwok Nyaba, the minister of higher education, science and technology during the Transitional Government of National Unity, ordered the closure of these bogus universities. He was forced to back down after been threatened by SPLA officers who had invested in the unlicensed universities (Nyaba, 2018).²⁷

In recent years in South Sudan, I have on many occasions met young Dinka men who are enrolled in regional universities but have only the most basic level of literacy. In most cases, they are being sponsored, their tuition and costs paid, by senior members of the government or SPLA who originate from their home areas. The former chief of staff, Gen. Paul Malong Awan, sponsored hundreds of young men from Aweil at the University of Juba, going so far as to purchase land to build them their own dormitory. Because of the displacement of hundreds of thousands of South Sudanese, these universities are benefitting an almost wholly Dinka student population. The end result will be that these young men will be considered “qualified” and thus eligible for government employment, further skewing state employment towards Dinka candidates.

²⁶“Government Licensed Only Four Private Universities in Juba,” *Hot in Juba*, 10 May 2017 (accessed at <http://hotinjuba.com/government-licensed-four-private-universities-juba/>).

²⁷ Nyaba, Peter Adwok, “The Republic of South Sudan: Elites, Ethnicity, Sociopolitical Duplicity and the Stunted State,” unpublished manuscript, 2018.

State-led Population Shifts

The Dinka are under threat. They have no borders with other countries. They have no border with Ethiopia, with Kenya, with Uganda. They are in the centre of South Sudan.

— Joshua Dau Diu, co-chair of the Jieng Council of Elders²⁸

²⁸ Interviewed in Juba on 2 April 2018.

They said ‘The Dinka will not rule us.’ That’s why they ran away. The Dinka are just paying back what was done to them. I am talking as a Catholic priest, as a man of God. What was done to Dinka, and even today the Dinka are not putting into practice, they are not revenging. They know what all has been done to them. The Dinka are not for revenge because they say “Who is going to rule this country?” If we revenge on them then who will liberate this country? Who are the soldiers?

— Father Benjamin Madol Akot, Head Chaplain of the SPLA²⁹

Introduction

When Joshua Dau Diu first made the above remark to me, I was somewhat confused as to its meaning. Surely, the Dinka must see themselves as ruling all of South Sudan, which means that they do, in fact, have borders with neighbouring countries? But later, after learning more about the ongoing shift of Dinka population into border areas, I understood his meaning better.

In the extreme representation of Dinka, or Jieng, supremacy, the habitation of non-Dinka in the border regions is part of the supposed “threat” to the Dinka, whose home territories are in the interior of South Sudan. By this logic, non-Dinka living in the border regions should be pushed into neighbouring countries and replaced by Dinka populations, hundreds of kilometres away from their traditional, interior, lands. For the past five years, this logic has been put into action. Beginning in 2012, the SPLA began sending the all-Dinka Mathiang Anyoor force into the Equatorias, bordering Uganda and Kenya; and western Bahr el Ghazal, bordering the Democratic Republic Congo.

The second quote, made by the head chaplain of the SPLA, reinforces the supposed blamelessness of Dinka-led forces. Father Benjamin Madol Akot is the parish priest of Marial Lou, Greater Bahr el Ghazal, and a veteran of the SPLA’s war-time Kazouk Battalion. After a long discussion about the supposed wrongs committed against the Dinka, I asked him why the peoples of Equatoria have fled to neighbouring Uganda. His reply: “They said ‘The Dinka will not rule us.’ That’s why they ran away.”

In this chapter I focus on the shifts of population within the regions. But not of war-affected civilians and militarised youth opposed to the government. Rather, I look at the purposeful relocation of Dinka civilians and members of the “organised forces” into areas where the original inhabitants have been forced to flee, whether to UNMISS PoC sites, church compounds or across

²⁹ Interviewed in Juba on 10 May 2018.

the border to neighbouring countries. From the town of Nimule, 197 km southeast of Juba, on the border with Uganda, a member of the clergy reported in April that the primary school she teaches at now has 90 per cent Dinka pupils.³⁰ This would have been unthinkable only a few years ago, the original inhabitants of this area being the Madi. But they have been forced off their land and into refugee camps in Uganda by scorched-earth SPLA attacks. Armed Dinka and herds of cattle have moved into the area and now, as the school enrolment would attest, civilians (Aju Kanyara, 1 October 2017).

State-led attempts to destabilise the area began years earlier: in September 2013, months before the massacres in Juba, Chief John Ajugo, the head chief of Nimule, was murdered, reportedly because of land issues (Tongu Swaka, 14 September 2013). Two years earlier, in 2011, the Madi community attempted to have a dialogue with Dinka elders over the question of Dinka IDPs who had settled in the area returning to their home areas. The talks were cancelled after the Dinka community leaders failed to attend (Sudan Tribune, 18 August 2011). This came after years of encroachment by herds of cattle from territory to the north, from Bor and region. The weaponisation of cattle as a tool to expand Dinka territory was orchestrated by powerful men in Juba, including Minister of Information and Broadcasting Michael Makuei Lueth Makuei and Minister of Defence and Veteran Affairs Kuol Manyang Juuk, both of whom are Bor Dinka. They ordered their kin groups to enter new grazing areas as part of larger plan, sowing conflict as they moved.

On the eastern border with Ethiopia, the destroyed town of Malakal, the traditional homeland of Chollo (Shilluk) people, is now occupied by predominantly young men from the Rek and Agar sections of the Dinka from the interior, the former states of Warrap and Lakes. When I visited in April 2018, I was assured that it was safe to walk to the centre of Malakal, where the market has been reduced to no more than one street of shops and sellers. I quickly realised that all the men, whether seated under trees or loitering near the shops, were Dinka speakers from Lakes State. The shopkeepers, meanwhile, were predominantly northern Sudanese, including Darfurians, long-time allies of the Kiir regime.

There are reports that planes loaded with young Dinka men have been landing in Malakal since late 2017. It is assumed that they are either soldiers or part of National Security. In this way, the state is replacing the population and pursuing a claim that Malakal has been somehow normalised, that people are returning to live there. I met three young men, all Dinka, who claim to be volunteer teachers at a primary school. Given the town's militarisation, however, I would

³⁰ Interviewed in Juba on 27 April 2018.

assume that they are in fact with National Security. The international community, including UNMISS, has been encouraged to shift programmes of assistance into the town. Ration cards issued in Bentiu are now usable not only in the PoC but also in home areas, the hope being that people will return to cultivate.

Greater Bahr el Ghazal: Return of the Wooden Chair

Even we are planning to send our children out of here. The Dinka are all over Wau now. It has become their place.

— Ndogo man speaking at a cattle market outside Wau³¹

The title of this section — “The Return of the Wooden Chair” — speaks to the poverty of Greater Bahr el Ghazal, particularly the towns of Kuajok, Aweil and Rumbek, home to a predominantly Dinka population. Seven years after Independence, the once ubiquitous plastic chairs have become almost rare. They are broken beyond repair, their sun-bleached seats and buckling legs relegated to the ash heap. The visitor to Aweil is surprised to see that local craftsmen are making wooden chairs once more. There is next to no money in these towns, at least none to pay salaries or cover school fees. The failure of the state to cover salaries for months and months at a time has exhausted the resources of local people. Lines of credit with local lenders, with their exorbitant interest rates, are history. Faced with no prospect of change, large numbers of people from Aweil, Kuajok and Rumbek have gone to Wau or crossed the border into northern Sudan. This has occurred over the past two years, since 2016.

The residential area on the north side of Aweil is called Khartoum Gedeed (New Khartoum). This is where the returnees came to live after Independence in 2011 and the Sudanese government sent them “home”, withdrawing their right to live in Sudan. It is now abandoned. For months, residents readying to leave brought their small possessions, their unused TV sets and beds, to the Aweil market. And then they were suddenly gone. Up to a quarter of the residents have left Aweil. The same is believed to be true of Kuajok.

National politics in South Sudan are most often expressions of local or regional imperatives. The region that appears to be gaining in importance, in relation to “national” imperatives (as represented by Rek and Agar Dinka elites in Juba) is northern Bahr el Ghazal. This is not,

³¹ Interviewed at the Dalala cattle market, east bank of the River Jur, Wau, Greater Bahr el Ghazal, on 19 January 2018.

however, merely because of any perceived threat to President Kiir's rule by former Chief of Staff Gen Paul Malong Awan. It is important, of course, for the state to install officers who will suppress relations and allies of Malong. The removal of Malong has created a power vacuum in Aweil.³² But there are other reasons for northern Bahr el Ghazal to be controlled.

There are territorial disputes between Dinka sections in northern Bahr el Ghazal, including Twic and Ngok. Twic native Bona Malwal is openly calling for Abyei to be declared Sudanese rather than South Sudanese, while the Twic Dinka are claiming part of Abyei territory for themselves; similarly, in neighbouring Warrap, Rek Dinka clans are at war over land grabbing by prominent members of the Kiir regime; within Lakes, state-connected individuals are using the continued unrest there to build their assets and marginalise less powerful Dinka Agar clans. There is also the apparent reliance of the president on high-profile members of the elite Ngok Dinka community, including former UN special advisor Francis Mading Deng and, until recently, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Deng Alor Kuol.

If we accept that the state has largely neutralised organised armed threats in western Bahr el Ghazal, Greater Upper Nile and the Equatorias, then our gaze should perhaps turn to the NorthSouth border and the location of a number of militarised forces, including the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Nuba Mountains' SPLA-N. When I write "location", it is to acknowledge that significant numbers of men connected to these forces are now permanently based within South Sudan and could be considered part of the SPLA's "organised forces." Internal Dinka relations will continue to fragment. The predatory nature of the security forces is gutting the interior, seizing livestock from the local communities and depleting already scarce resources. Disarmament campaigns are being used to feed the troops. There have also been reports of indiscriminate violence during recent disarmament campaigns. A Dinka from Tonj posted on Facebook:

My appeal to Yar community at large: If the troops come looking for everything just give them. If they want your wife for a night please comply. We have been sold.³³

The individual had earlier posted a warning to the governor of Tonj State, saying that the disarmament would expose his clan to the Gok clan in neighbouring Cuiebet. "Let us do things strategically," he wrote.

³² Interviewed in Aweil, northern Bahr el Ghazal, 25 January 2018.

³³ Facebook posts by a Tonj resident on 26 March 2018.

With conditions deteriorating in the interior of Greater Bahr el Ghazal, the push to come to Wau grows. But even there, times are hard. On a trip to Wau in February 2018, the town felt more mysterious than ever. There were mad men in the markets, half-clothed and even naked. Some squatted in the middle in the road. Abandoned boys from far away villages wearing oversized suit jackets appeared before dawn to set garbage fires to warm themselves, to look through the rubbish piles for something to eat before the feral street dogs awakened.

There was a strange quiet, an uneasiness. On one journey to Wau, I found that no one would speak with me, not about anything of substance. On a Wednesday morning I sat for a time with a group of Fertit/Balanda men at the east side of the IDP-filled Catholic Cathedral. They were all middle-aged or older, men who are considered less able to take up arms and go into the bush. And then a tall Dinka man arrived. I have known him for more than ten years, a Dinka Agar from Rumbek, the son of an important man. A laminated badge identifying him as an NGO worker hung on a cord from his neck. The men seated around me shifted their eyes to the ground. They were afraid of him.

I expressed surprise that he was working for an NGO inside the camp, home to 10,000 people. “How is this possible?” I asked.

“I am helping people.”

“But is this okay, given why the people are here?”

“They are here because of insecurity.”

“Yes, but who is responsible for this insecurity?”

“There are my tribes here and sometimes they do not get along. Even, there are small things that they fight about.”

Wau Town

A South Sudanese from Western Equatoria told me: “Everyone knows there are no peace talks. The South Sudanese know. All the internationals know. Why are we wasting all this time, wasting all this time in Addis Ababa? People are being killed. People are being disappeared. Everyone knows it is finished. No one is defending us.”³⁴

He continued: “There is no government. There is no national army. This is not a country. Eventually, everyone in this country will be an IDP, or a rebel. Those who have a stake will go to Kampala, or Nairobi, or Addis Ababa. There will be all this land and no people.

³⁴ Interviewed in Wau, Greater Bahr el Ghazal, on 28 February 2018.

“The ideology of the Dinka is to move all the people out. They know how to deal with the internationals. The regional countries, there is no way they will stop this. These are corrupted people.”

In addition to poverty, insecurity in both Warrap and Lakes has worsened over the past several years, leading large numbers of Dinka to move further east, to the town of Wau. The demographic shift is stunning. Throughout the town, whether in the northwest or southeast, the majority of residents are now Dinka from Greater Bahr el Ghazal. Each neighbourhood of Wau is now home to a specific section or clan of Dinka: Daraja and Aweil Gedeed (New Aweil) in the northwest are predominantly inhabited by people from Aweil; Nazareth, in the south, once home to the Luo, is now filled with people from Tonj and Yirol; Rumbek Gedeed (New Rumbek) has been claimed by Agar Dinka from Rumbek. Even the beggars around the churches in Wau — lepers with stumps for hands, men in wheelchairs — are now from places like Gogrial East and Kuajok.

The Dinka residents enjoy the relative peace of Wau. In some cases, individuals have fled particularly Lakes State because they are from prominent families or educated, thus making them targets for revenge killings. They appear oblivious to the displacement of Wau’s original inhabitants. While Dinka youth walk freely in the town, tens of thousands of Balanda and Fertit have been forced out of their homes.

On the south and west sides of Wau, there are next to no civilians. Soldiers are based there and the houses are abandoned. Doors hang open, roofs are gone, split-bamboo fences lie broken. On the margins of these destroyed neighbourhoods, small Dinka markets have sprung up. They are in the style of the village, with no permanent structures, just low crude tables offering charcoal, raw tobacco, dried meat and fish, and the most basic commodities.

People are not returning to their homes. In fact, there is a great sense of hopelessness. Most of the displaced are women and children. Inside the crowded camps set within the compound walls of Wau’s churches you can feel the weariness, the exhaustion, of people who have no resources.

Said one resident: “Most of these IDPs are the ones who have lost all their property. Sometimes at night hours there are gunshots outside. They don’t even think of going back home. Most of the men are in the bush because if they stayed they would be killed.”

While late 2017 was relatively calm, shortly after Christmas a Fertit woman was raped and beaten by three uniformed soldiers in the area of Aweil Gedeed. The woman was returning to the PoC after checking on her property. Such attacks would be widely known by the displaced community and serve as a warning for anyone intending to return to her home.

In early January 2018, Wau-based priests were allowed to visit congregations to the west of Wau, in rebel-held territory. The priests told me that they have no confidence that the access will continue, or that the relative calm will last, saying that commanders on both sides could order their fighters/soldiers to attack at any time.

There was also the violence of April-May 2017. “Many many houses” within the Baggari Payam, to the south of Wau, were burned and up to 10,000 people displaced.³⁵ “There was nothing remaining,” said a source who visited the area. The rebels had been prepared to counterattack but they were betrayed from among their own ranks. As the story went, the rebels were then forced to retreat.

But before they did so, an ambush of government troops was carried out and several officers killed. The next day, revenge was carried out on the Wau neighbourhoods of Nazareth, to the south, and Jebel Khair, on the west side. Starting from 4:30 am, uniformed soldiers went into homes, called people out, asked their names and, when their names were not Dinka, killed them. “They killed some with bullets, some with pangas,” my source told me. In all, 26 people, including children, women and men, were killed.

“Recruiting” for the State

While I was in Wau I met with two men now working for the state-sanctioned Nuer forces led by the Nuer Vice President Taban Deng Gai. The force, known informally as TDB-IO, is the state’s attempt to recruit fighters from the Nuer and other minority tribes to fight against the rebel force led by Riek Machar, the SPLA-IO. Brig. Gen. Sebit Archangelo Yeba and Lt. Col. Stephen Goro Gabriel had spent the previous month at the River Lodge, a hotel along the River Jur in Wau.³⁶ Stephen Goro is a former member of the Sudan Army and only returned to South Sudan in 2010. Both men are from the Ndogo people. They had three armed guards and did not move within the hotel property, taking their meals just outside their rooms, which were separated from the main portion of the hotel.

They claimed that around 200 former SPLA-IO from the Wau area had joined the TDG-IO and were now at the Mapel garrison. They talked about joint training and plans to have a unified force of SPLA and SPLA-IO, akin to the post-war Joint Integrated Units that followed the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between northern and southern Sudan. They said that “white men” were expected to be among the trainers. The men repeatedly used the word

³⁵ Interviewed in Wau, Greater Bahr el Ghazal, on 22 January 2018.

³⁶ Interviewed in Wau, on 18 and 21 January 2018.

“recruit” in connection with the supposed ingathering of rebels willing to join the state forces. They appeared unaware of how the word reflected — accurately — the actual activities of the TDG-IO.

Brig. Gen. Sebit was jailed in 2012 for his role as “team leader” in the 2012 crisis in Wau sparked by the government’s relocation of a county office into non-Dinka territory. After two years in prison in Wau, Sebit was pardoned by President Kiir and released on 8 July 2014. Following his release he “went into the bush,” going first to Juba and then Khartoum. From there he made his way to Gambela, in Ethiopia, and then joined Riek Machar at his headquarters in Pagak in 2015. In April 2016 he was part of the advance team for Machar’s return to Juba. On 9 July 2016, after the J-1 attack, Sebit fled on foot with Machar. When they left Juba, according to Sebit, they were a force of 2,500; when they reached the borders of the Congo, they were only 527. He attributed the death toll to thirst, hunger and bullets.

At the end of their odyssey, near the border with Congo, Machar parted ways with his entourage. Said Sebit: “Riek, Angelina [the wife of Riek] and three others were taken in the helicopter. They left us behind. Then the UN came again to make an assessment. Fourteen days later. The UN saw us under the tree. No feeding, the rain. They brought small food, sardines.” And this is how Brig. Gen. Sebit became part of Taban Deng Gai’s programme to “recruit” SPLA-IO to the government side.

Speaking with indigenous priests, I was given a clear picture of mounting resistance to state efforts to create the impression that rebels are willing to join the TDG-IO.³⁷ “This thing of TDG-IO, here in Wau, western Bahr el Ghazal, they are not there,” said one priest. “They want to recruit some young men in the state and say they belong to TDG-IO. But it is not true. They are not there.

“They are complicating the things. And later on they say these are people of TDG-IO, that they are part of the peace process. It is nonsense. I went outside, to the western part, last week [mid-January 2018]. They [the rebels and displace civilians] are really bitter about those who went there to confuse things, with this peace process, with this revitalisation.”

On the matter of Brig. Gen. Sebit Archangelo and Lt. Col. Stephen Goro, the TDG-IO agents resident in Wau: “For them there is no where to go but to join Taban Deng Gai. They were stuck in Juba. They had no choice. Riek [Machar] was taken to Khartoum from the Congo. They [Brig. Gen. Sebit and Lt. Col. Stephen] had no choice but to stay with Taban Deng Gai. “There is fear.

³⁷ Interview conducted with four local, non-Dinka, priests in Wau, Greater Bahr el Ghazal, on 21 January 2018.

If they didn't stay with Taban Deng, to have protection and to survive, they say 'Yes' to Taban Deng, [otherwise] they would be killed."

Said another priest: "The reason why they take arms against the government, they have no connection with Taban Deng. They came under Riek because they needed his support. Any man in the state who says he is TDG-IO, he is not of this state.

"Everyone hears all the news, that people are taking young men from Wau town, claiming to be under Taban Deng Gai. They are confusing these young men."

The priests said that one of Brig. Gen. Sebit's relatives, a 16-year-old called Rizir, had joined up with the TDG-IO following a promise that he would receive a rank and a salary. Later, his father called him to return to school.

"For Sebit, because he needs to survive, this is the only thing he can do to survive." Said another, "Sebit had got himself in a mess. Now Taban Deng Gai is making use of him to succeed in his goal." Later, the priest added, rather ominously: "He will pay."

Another priest said the father of another teenager had come to the church asking for help to return his son to Wau from Mapel garrison, where he had been taken by the TDG-IO, some time in mid-December 2017.

The priests said the recruitment was carried out on an individual basis, with agents contacting young men with an invitation to go to Mapel. Said a priest: "They send them to Mapel. But they have no connection with IO in the bush. They're just collecting young men from here. And before that they were trying to confuse young men in the bush."

His latter remark — "trying to confuse young men in the bush" — refers to the reported offers of cash by Taban Deng Gai agents to rebels outside of Wau. It was in September 2017 that TDG-IO agents are said to have gone to the bush with cash. Their mission was to use the money to attract IO officers to the government side. Commanders were targeted, with the intention of splitting the ranks. Four rebel commanders (all but one of whom was Balanda) were put on trial by the rebels after they were accused of having taken cash from the Taban Deng Gai agents. All were found guilty and executed by firing squad. The executions were carried out in rebel-held territory near the village of Farjalla.

"Those who were with money were arrested," the priest said. "Four of these commanders were killed by their own men."

It was interesting that the priests did not give me the full names of those executed, and instead gave me only first names or nicknames, though I assume that they know the correct names of all those involved. But it is understandable: the people in the bush are members of their

congregation. The priests are themselves essentially part of the resistance against the state-led Dinka claim to the lands of western Bahr el Ghazal. The four executed by firing squad were: Unagno (said to have a high rank); Gen. “Takian” (a nickname), someone referred to as “Congo” (also a nickname); and Ali, from Rajaf.

On 1 January 2018, IO fighters to the west of Wau turned three prisoners over to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The prisoners were reported to be the agents for Taban Deng Gai who had entered the rebel-held territory with large amounts of cash the previous fall. The prisoners were Angelo Bisensio and someone who goes by the name of “Jebekana” or Anthony. I was unable to get the name of the third man. All are Balanda. They had been held prisoner since their arrest in September 2017.

In a related incident, a prominent member of the Wau community, Al Fadi, 48, was lured out of the Wau UNMISS PoC in January 2017 and taken away in a car by two men. Al Fadi, a national working with the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM), was alleged to have been working with Taban Deng Gai. His body was later found dumped near the Loyola Secondary School in Jebel Khair, an area on the west side of Wau that was formerly inhabited by Balanda. Jebel Khair was targeted by the SPLA/Mathiang Anyoor in 2016. His throat had been cut and his body was partially burned. His head was never found.

It is widely assumed that the actual death toll from the killing of suspected collaborators and rebel sympathisers in Wau and area is much higher than reports would suggest. In early January 2018, an Ndogo SPLA officer, a first lieutenant, was killed at night in his home. He was said to have worked with the SPLA’s security services; his father had been a major general in the SPLA. He is believed to have been targeted as a collaborator.

Said a church official: “There are others we don’t hear about. The only news is ‘he has disappeared.’ You think maybe he he is on the other side. But maybe he is dead.”

The decapitation of alleged collaborators has also been reported in recent months from rebel-affected areas of Equatoria. I do not, however, have specific dates or locations for these killings.

Abyei: Cattle Sales and Putting Down Roots in Disputed Lands

The effective ceding of territory in the disputed Abyei region to Sudan, northernmost Greater Bahr el Ghazal, is not unrelated to the wider campaign to depopulate non-Dinka areas and shift Dinka populations into those areas. As discussed in this paper, key individuals within the Jieng Council of Elders, and President Salva Kiir himself, have strong ties to Khartoum. Their apparent surrender of control over Abyei is consistent with the favouring of Dinka from Greater Bahr el Ghazal, particularly the Twic, who have been lobbying to take part of the Abyei territory from Abyei's historic residents, the Ngok Dinka

Among the questions I was not able to fully answer is the role of elite Ngok Dinka (Abyei) in the president's program. For several years now, Juba has sidelined prominent Ngok Dinka. And yet we now see several big-name individuals assuming important diplomatic roles. There is speculation that these individuals are being given plumb positions in exchange for their acquiescence or complicity in the occupation of northern Abyei by Sudan's Missiriya cattle herders. While they continue to espouse the usual demands for resolution of the final status of Abyei, it is apparent that they are supporting the president's policies, the outcome of which is the effective abandonment of the Abyei community and consolidation of Sudan's control over the disputed region.

The appointment of Dinka Ngok from Abyei to high-level state positions is consistent with three trends: Kiir's embrace of fellow Dinka who either remained in Khartoum throughout the North-South civil war or have spent extended periods in Sudan; promotion of Dinka who received their higher educations in Egypt; and, thirdly, his reliance on members of minority Dinka sections to legitimise his policies. President Kiir has filled a number of foreign ministry positions and advisory roles with members of essentially one family — descendants of the late Deng Kuol Arop (popularly known as Deng Majok), a former paramount chief of the Abyei Ngok Dinka.

Francis Mading Deng, the former UN special advisor, scholar, diplomat and advisor to President Kiir, is a son of Deng Majok. In the past year, Francis has emerged as a high-profile emissary for the president, both domestically and regionally. His earlier diplomatic career was with the Sudanese administration. Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Minister Deng Alor Kuol is a relative of Francis Mading Deng. He previously held the post of foreign minister in the Sudan government (2007-2010) and, before that, minister of cabinet affairs in Khartoum's national unity government. Deng Alor's position is currently, however, unclear following reports that he had either resigned or refused to resign; the government has named an acting foreign minister in his place (Sudan Tribune, 24 April 2018).

Another of their relatives, Kuol Alor Kuol, was named as ambassador to Switzerland in April 2016. He died on 27 December 2018. His body was flown from Geneva to Juba on 2 January, en route to burial in Abyei. Foreign Minister Deng Alor was prevented from travelling to Abyei, reportedly by UNISFA, to attend the burial (Radio Tamazuj, 4 January 2018). Gen Pieng Deng Kuol, another relative, accompanied the late ambassador's remains.³⁸ Kuol Alor Kuol Arop (yes, he has the same name as the late ambassador to Switzerland), is the head of the Abyei Administrative Area and resides in Juba. His wife, Christine Kuol Abet Met, is the third secretary in the South Sudan Embassy in Cairo.

Having established the apparent privilege of Ngok Dinka within the South Sudanese government, the question that then arises is: Why is control of the disputed territory of Abyei being relinquished by South Sudan? As with other regions within South Sudan, facts on the ground have shifted. Arab Missiriya are continuing their encroachment into Abyei territory in part through the booming trade in cattle between Greater Bahr el Ghazal and the market of Amiet, just north of Abyei.

On the southern side of Wau town, across the bridge to the eastern bank of the River Jur, is a place known as Dalala, the largest cattle auction in all of Greater Bahr el Ghazal. Seven days a week sellers and buyers gather to trade hundreds of cattle and other livestock. The sellers are almost exclusively Dinka, though I did meet a Fertit man who had come to sell a cow in order to pay for his son's tuition at a school in Kampala. It was here, at Dalala, that soldiers of the irregular SPLA force known as Mathiang Anyoor brought the household property they looted in 2016 from Fertit homes in Wau and area for sale. The people who run the cattle auction and market that has grown up around it are all Dinka from the neighbouring areas of Gogrial, Tonj, and beyond.

The "common market" in Amiet was established two years ago, ostensibly as an exercise in building confidence between the Missiriya and Ngok Dinka in the disputed territory of Abyei. The UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) has described the market "as a crucial community-initiated effort, [that] will hopefully bridge the gap between the two tribes in Abyei."³⁹ The post continued: "Aside from ensuring security, the two communities have sought

³⁸ Gen. Pieng Deng, an important SPLA commander during the North-South war and Ngok Dinka, was removed from active military service and named as head of the South Sudan Police Service in 2013; he was removed from his position in 2016.

³⁹ Post on the official Facebook site of UNISFA on 15 August 2016.

support from UNISFA for market improvements such as fencing, and provision of water supply as well electricity.”

Since then, the sale of cattle has gone from strength to strength. There have been closures due to insecurity, including the killing of people, but the market is considered a success (UNISFA, 20 July 2017); Radio Tamazuj, 22 March 2017). Peacekeepers deployed with UNISFA are said to even provide security for herders bringing cattle from the south into Abyei and the Amiet market. But this is where things get strange: The market prices are grossly inflated, and huge profits are being made by Dinka cattle owners in Greater Bahr el Ghazal.

I first went to the Dalala cattle auction in late 2016, arriving aboard a motorcycle driven by a young Dinka. After some minutes on the ground, a plainclothes policeman directed my driver to take me back to Wau, saying that I was not allowed to be there. I was disappointed but reassured that the policeman had dealt with my transgression in a discrete way. I returned there in January 2018 for two consecutive afternoons. This time I had no problems. In fact, when I did not go there on the following day, a young man came to my riverside hotel to ask me why. Cows purchased in Dalala are being sold for huge profits in Amiet, suggesting that the Missiriya are paying over the odds. One source told me that members of the Sudanese state security are, in fact, the ones paying the inflated prices with state funds.

Several things appear to be happening because of the links between the Greater Bahr el Ghazal markets of Dalala and Amiet. First, Missiriya are settling in the area around Amiet, changing facts on the ground with their semi-permanent residence there; not surprisingly, they are now suggesting the market be shifted further to the south, into the town of Abyei itself. Second, it is not a stretch to imagine that this vibrant sale of cattle, at inflated prices, is fuelling the theft of cattle in the former Warrap and Lake states. Both regions are seriously affected by intercommunal clashes and cattle theft. Despite assurances that the Dalala auction is scrupulous in not allowing the sale of stolen cattle I am not convinced. Given the power of individuals who are monopolising the use of weapons to protect and enlarge their herds within Warrap and Lakes it stands to reason that they are also the ones shifting cattle into the Amiet market.

Third, while quick profits are being made, a new development is that Dinka sellers are taking their cash and using it to buy plots within Wau, further changing the demography of the town. For the past two years the original Balanda and Fertit inhabitants of the town have been largely constrained to the UNMISS PoC site and IDP sites within churches. An unknown number have left for Khartoum and the DRC.

Finally, if we consider the long-term aims of the Missiriya, the purchase of Dinka cattle does two important things: when compared with the traditional cattle stock of the Missiriya, the Dinka cattle are more suited to the climatic conditions found in Abyei and further to the south. Investment in the Dinka cattle suggests that the Missiriya are building herds that are better suited for grazing to the south of their traditional range. And, importantly, as time passes the Missiriya herds, now stocked with Dinka cattle, will be indistinguishable from the Dinka herds, thus making it more difficult for Dinka cattle owners to identify which Missiriya have raided Dinka cattle.

Greater Upper Nile: “Going Forward”

We are standing on one foot. We are not sure where we can settle.

— Shilluk expression referring to insecurity⁴⁰

The bitter harvest is already here. Anybody found in the IO area is considered an enemy.⁴¹

— Western member of the clergy, resident in Greater Upper Nile

In the first week of April 2018, on four consecutive nights, the 2,000 souls living in the Bor PoC heard the clank and grind of trucks and heavily equipment moving northwards. They know that the only transport at night is the military. It began, each night, around 10 pm, and continued until 1 am. And they know the materiel and men are being moved into forward positions in preparation for an assault on Nuer territory, possibly Akobo, on the border with Ethiopia. The men and vehicles were most likely bound for Yuai, to the south of Akobo and southwest of Pibor. This was the epicentre of fighting one year earlier, when the SPLA captured Waat, an important base for the SPLM/A-IO (Médicins Sans Frontières, 2 June 2017). There were reports of at least two tanks in the convoy. That week I came upon an empty tank transporter moving southwards through Bor town, apparently on its return journey to Juba.

It is from Bor that UNMISS is establishing a presence in Akobo, flying in small teams of peacekeepers for several days each week. At the time of my research, it was the only such UNMISS presence in IO-held territory. While the initiative is framed within the UN mission of outreach, local inhabitants consider the patrols to be the “advance team for the SPLA.”⁴¹ The Akobo patrols could be seen as providing a pretext for UNMISS to improve road access to Akobo

⁴⁰ Interviewed in Juba on 5 April

2018.⁴¹ Interviewed in Juba on 5 April 2018.

⁴¹ Interviewed in Bor, Greater Upper Nile, on 30 March 2018.

on the basis of the need to resupply UNMISS staff. There were also reports in early April 2018 of UNMISS helicopters carrying out aerial reconnaissance in the Pibor area, as far as Akobo.

When I asked the head of the Bor UNMISS base about the roadworks, she told me that the road to Pibor, completed in March 2018, had greatly improved access to markets, with prices dropping by 50 per cent. But she rejected concerns that the roads would be used by the SPLA to wage its offensive against the SPLM/A-IO: “We only extend the roads. We have our mission priority for supplying UNMISS. We’re not here to provide logistical support for the military. We have the goal of connecting people with markets.”⁴² She denied that UNMISS plans to extend road access to Akobo. I later learned, however, that de-miners had been tasked with mine clearance in the Akobo area in early 2018.⁴³ Nationals told me that the governor and the vice president have repeatedly asked UNMISS to build roads to the garrisoned town of Ayod.

Regardless of UNMISS’s stated intentions, however, any work done on roads — whether maintenance or de-mining — is seen as favouring the government’s side, providing the SPLA with the means to access SPLM/A-IO areas. Said one national working for UNMISS, “They [the SPLA] want to use the road to take the weapons to Ayod, and facilitate their movements to northern Jonglei.”⁴⁴

Bentiu, Former Unity State

The town of Bentiu, the capital of the former Unity State, is going back to the bush. Vegetation is growing on the untravelled roads, the roofs of buildings are broken. There are almost no vehicles and the only people moving are on foot, either soldiers or the women who earn their income from brewing tea and making food for them.

Just a few minutes’ drive from the town is the UNMISS base. It is here, inside a UNprotected camp, that the largest single population of Nuer in all of South Sudan now reside. The population is some 90,000 to 110,000 people.⁴⁵ Upon arrival at the base, the visitor is suddenly struck by the fact that most everyone — residents of the PoC, UNMISS national staff, day labourers inside the base — is Nuer. It is with a shock that the visitor is reminded that there is a large population of

⁴² Interviewed on the UNMISS Bor base on 4 April 2018.

⁴³ Interviewed on the UNMISS Malakal base on 9 April 2018.

⁴⁴ Interviewed on the UNMISS Bor base on 4 April 2018.

⁴⁵ Some humanitarians report that the upper limit, 110,000, is inflated and that the actual number in early 2018 was closer to 90,000. I would also note, however, that there were new arrivals in April as the state’s military campaign spread throughout Unity State, 900 in the first two weeks of April, according to humanitarian sources.

Nuer in South Sudan, besieged and without prospect in the near future for a return to their home areas. The disappearance of Nuer throughout the rest of the country has become somehow normalised.

While I was staying at the Bentiu UNMISS base, I travelled into Bentiu town twice. Neither trip was without incident. On the first outing, on 19 April 2018, I was travelling with UNPOL on a patrol. While we were en route, the base radioed the lead peacekeeper and ordered him to speak with officers at the Division 5 headquarters. Three injured Nuer had been abducted, or arrested, from the airstrip by the SPLA. The lead peacekeeper had been in the country for less than a month. This would be his first time to address a sensitive issue with the SPLA. It did not go well. The officer in charge threatened to arrest him, and “hold him for four days.” He accused the UN of assisting rebel forces. The peacekeeper returned to our vehicle shaken.

On the second trip, I accompanied two Nuer UN staffmembers who were to meet with the state governor. The men insisted that I sit in the front seat for the journey. Knowing Nilotic-speaking social mores, I knew that this was not because I, as a woman, should have the privilege of sitting in the front seat: the person sitting in the front passenger seat is the most likely person to be shot in an outbreak of violence. They were ensuring their own safety, making me the visible passenger, and protecting themselves by sitting in the back seat.

Inside the town, a battered half-tonne truck with a heavy gun mounted in the back drove through what remained of the town centre’s market area, sometimes on the wrong side of the road, in a circular route: “manning” the heavy gun was a prepubescent boy in uniform, beside him an even smaller child of probably no more than eight years.

The town felt like a no-go area, with irregular troops and child soldiers having free rein. Herds of cattle passed through the town, escorted by men openly carrying weapons. With the offensive against what were described as “pockets” of SPLA-IO continuing, there were legitimate fears that Bentiu town and neighbouring Rub Kona could be targeted, either by the SPLA forces or anti-government militarised forces.

Throughout March 2018 there were eyewitness reports of civilian flights piloted by Russians landing in Rub Kona from Juba. The flights were bringing ammunition and rocket launchers. There were also sightings of T-62 and T-72 tanks and Soviet-made amphibious APCs. And yet the Juba head office of at least one NGO, Nonviolent Peaceforce (NVPF), had decided that the Bentiu staff would move out of the UNMISS base and relocate to the town. Only weeks later, one of the most-experienced expatriate staff gave up trying to convince his Juba office that moving into Bentiu town would put the staff in danger and resigned from his position. A staffmember told

me that the decision to move inside Bentiu was “somehow contingent on USAID funding” to the NGO. “Even the acting head of mission is saying ‘Do it,’” he told me. ““Everyone in Juba thinks it’s all okay.””⁴⁶

Efforts to shift humanitarian activities into the army-occupied towns appear linked to a wider international campaign to normalise the now-destroyed towns by moving services for IDPs out of the PoCs and into the militarised urban centres. The individual who resigned was recognised as one of the few internationals with a long history in the region and having a high level of knowledge, so much so that British peacekeepers were relying on his insight. Somewhat disturbingly, I came to learn that a senior member of the British contingent was relying on a daily Google search of “South Sudan news now” for his intel on the regional situation.

Tension was growing throughout the region after the government and allied forces launched an offensive against IO-held areas. News of fighting was reported from several directions, from Guit County, just 25 km away; Nhialdiu to the southwest; Koch, further to the south; and Gezira to the southwest. East African humanitarians working for an NGO arrived at the UN base filthy and exhausted after a six-hour off-road journey from Koch. They had evacuated, forming a hurried convoy, when they awoke to heavy shooting.⁴⁷ The government had removed a large number of shops along the road in Rub Kona and burned acres of long grass, clearing their lines of sight near the strategic bridge. Concertina wire was placed at one end of the bridge, ready for positioning.

As fighting spread in the immediate area surrounding Bentiu, the state’s offensive against territory further to the south, around Leer, was also getting under way. Reports later claimed a level of violence and destruction beyond earlier campaigns. Nuer civilians were reported to have burned alive inside their huts by the SPLA and its allied forces (Beaumont, 2018). In Juba, within the PoC, the first week of April saw prayers for the dead, news reaching them that relatives in Mayendit and Leer, in southern Unity State, were either missing, believed to be hiding in the swamps, or had been killed.⁴⁹

Inside the Bentiu PoC: Civilians and Rebels

By accident, I did not follow UNMISS protocol for visiting the Bentiu PoC. I entered alone, on foot, on 22 April 2018. If I had followed the correct protocol, I would have sought permission

⁴⁶ Interviewed on the Malakal UNMISS base on 14 April 2018.

⁴⁷ Interviewed on the Bentiu UNMISS base on 18 April

2018.⁴⁹ Member of the clergy interviewed in Juba on 5 April 2018.

from the UN and been given an UNPOL guide, the theory being that I would need to be kept safe. It was early on a Sunday morning and people were walking to their churches, stopping to have their shoes polished by small boys waiting at the camp's street corners. I proceeded to the far end of the camp: my destination, the Catholic Church. An unusual outcome of the extended residency of IDPs in the PoC is the high calibre of church choirs. There are choral conductors and choirs are accompanied by young men with drums and dancing troupes, usually girls and boys, wearing matching outfits and sometimes even hats. Sundays are filled with music and dance.

Within some minutes I had a companion as I moved through the PoC, stopping in on church services, visiting the market. It was only when we parted, two hours later, that he told me about his father, a major general in the IO, fighting in Koch County. He had rung his son the previous Friday. He reminded him to stay in school, "to leave this war to the older men." He told him, "Forget you have a father," and advised him to not tell others his father's name. As we walked, a thin man in his mid-thirties passed us. His left arm was in a clean white bandage and an IV port was taped to the back of his right hand. He was an IO fighter who had been in Nhialdiu during the fighting.

International Engagement

The UN is at a crossroads now, in terms of what is actually happening. We may be dealing with only symptoms. But to what extent are we addressing the root causes? How are we stabilising for normalcy. Is the UN suited to do that? Is the UN understanding the dynamics of this conflict?

— UN official in Malakal, Greater Upper Nile⁴⁸

The internationals are blind.

— Long-serving foreign member of the Catholic clergy⁴⁹

Introduction

In this section I attempt to show the ways in which the international community's engagement is being instrumentalised by the state in support of solidifying gains in territory and population displacement over the now four-year war. The international community appears to be pursuing a dual-track policy: publicly supporting regional peace efforts while, either by accident or design, accelerating state plans to defeat its militarised enemies, displace non-Dinka peoples from their land and then occupy the land with Dinka civilians and members of the "organised forces", including the SPLA, SSPS, Wildlife and Prisons. The international community, as requested by

⁴⁸ Interviewed in Malakal on 11 April 2018.

⁴⁹ Interviewed in Juba on 6 May 2018.

the state, is providing services, supporting schools, and maintaining and building roads in occupied towns and war-affected areas that are under state control.

The Perils of "Peace Building"

There is no space within South Sudan for social activism by the now-marginalised ethnicities. There is a high level of fear among nationals from state-targeted areas (the Equatorias, western Bahr el Ghazal and Greater Upper Nile). It is for this reason that there are few non-Dinka remaining in the capital of Juba. Supposed peace-building exercises are dominated by individuals from the Dinka community, giving the appearance of engagement by civil society but being of no effect, other than to give a small number of educated Dinka South Sudanese employment and provide a level of cover for the removal of all non-Dinka from public space. This is largely going unnoticed as few Westerners are able to identify the ethnic origin of individual South Sudanese.

As I found on my recent research, South Sudanese involved in these exercises, funded by international NGOs, are careful not to reveal their origins. If they suspect the Westerner is able to recognise their origins, they will even give a false name and say they are from "Juba," suggesting that they are Equatorian rather than Dinka.⁵⁰ Not surprisingly, the skills learned in these exercises are contributing to the silencing of claims of ethnocide against the Dinka. For the better part of two years a Dinka Bor woman, the daughter of an important SPLM member, was in charge of the highly publicised #defyhatenow campaign, funded by a Berlin-based NGO. While she is no longer working for the campaign, she continues to have an active presence on social media. Using an assumed, non-Dinka, name, she regularly tweets to complain when ethnic origin is mentioned in a news report on South Sudan, claiming that this is evidence of discrimination or incitement.⁵¹ The government has used the charge of "hate speech" to respond to criticism of its decisions. This has included everything from the justifying its rejection of visas for journalists to community protests over the loss of land to neighbouring Dinka communities. The head of South Sudan's Media authority, Elijah Alier, told *Eye Radio* that "most of the journalists prohibited from covering issues in the country have often reported stories that have the potential to incite hate and

⁵⁰ I met one such individual in Bor, where he was working for #defyhatenow, on 4 April 2018. He told me that his name was "George."

⁵¹ Using the name Acholita Morenita, she posted a Tweet on 27 May 2018 that criticised a *Radio Tamazuj* article for referring to the killing of "a Nuer chief", writing: "I think before our varies [sic] conflicts this type of headline would have been '...South Sudanese chief killed....' But now, think about it?" *Radio Tamazuj* replied to her post: "The intercommunal fight in Kakuma involved two clans of the Nuer tribe, so mentioning the tribe here is a fact and doesn't mean incitement at all. However, Radio Tamazuj respect [sic] your personal comment." Several others, all with Dinka names, supported her comment, one writing: "RT intention is not to report fairly or sensitively it's to report as you know already with bias and a sinister agenda."

violence among South Sudanese” (Danis, 2017). In northern Upper Nile, when the Chollo (Shilluk) protested the lost of land to Padang Dinka, a Jieng Council Elder “alleged that [the Chollo] appeal was “full of hate language, incitement rhetoric and war threats”, which was roundly denied by Chollo community leaders (Oyay Awin, 2016).

Similarly, there has been an increase in government-aligned youth unions or groups. The leaders usually come out of the University of Juba and are distinguished by their discipline and presentation. They speak English and are well dressed. Having established themselves, they then become part of the UNMISS-led peace-building outreach. They appear to have taken up their positions, in places like Bentiu, Yei and Bor, beginning from late 2016 and early 2017. In particular, the youth union in Bentiu is seeking to have a role as the youth community called for in the UNMISS-brokered Wanka Peace Agreement, covering Bul Nuer/government-controlled territory in greater Bentiu. The union is now planning to establish subunions in 11 counties. There is a strong likelihood that these students were sponsored by senior officials from their home regions (their tuition and living costs paid for) and that they have been recruited by National Security.

One of the more curious documents to be circulated by westerners in regards to the war was written by the historian Douglas H. Johnson, a fellow of the Rift Valley Institute, and posted online in 2017 (Johnson, 2017). Titled “If You Are Safe, I am Safe,” the article is centred around the need to promote peace between communities. It is representative of a particular thread of international engagement that ignores the state policies that have emptied the country of nonDinka ethnicities. It opens:

The ‘If You are Safe, I am Safe’ strategy for South Sudan proposes to turn the desire for safety from a competitive conflict-causing endeavour to a co-operative peace-building endeavour. Aimed initially at promoting peace between communities, it envisages an active role for both local administration and central government. To do so there must be an understanding of the factors driving conflict, as well as those factors supporting reconciliation.

The author appears to have misunderstood the role of “both local administration and central government”, which, for the past five years, has pursued ethnicised policies aimed at securing Dinka dominance. How these same state bodies could then become peacemakers is not explained. I include reference to the proposal as an example of the not uncommon efforts by some prominent western individuals to downplay the organised nature of the ethnocide in South Sudan.

“Normalisation” of Occupied Towns and Territory

We don’t call Malakal “occupied”.

— Senior UNMISS official⁵²

Even my chief of field office made a statement saying that he has been pushing in Juba that Upper Nile is now safe and it is good for recovery projects.

— Nuer humanitarian residing in the Malakal UNMISS base⁵³

There is growing pressure on people living within the UNMISS-protected sites to return to their home territories. Consistent with the failure to acknowledge the organised nature of the ethnocide, the UN appears to be using a flawed logic to determine the safety of potential returnees: “relationships between different ethnic groups.”⁵⁴ This points to a wrong-headed notion that the way to turn the tide in the national conflict is to focus on the local, the supposed “grassroots.” This removes from the discussion the role of government and its officials in implementing policies that have stripped basic rights from and jeopardised the long-term survival of millions across the country.

⁵² Interviewed in Malakal UNMISS base on 16 April 2018.

⁵³ Interviewed in Malakal on 14 April 2018.

⁵⁴ Interviewed in Malakal on 11 April 2018.

Details of the PoC “decongestion” programme are understood to differ from place to place. Nuer in the Juba PoC site do not have land to return to. If they decided to leave, it would mean either returning to their houses in Juba, or leaving South Sudan. The likelihood is that their houses in Juba are now occupied. In Bentiu, former Unity State, the Nuer have the possibility of returning to their land, depending on where it is and whether or not there is a government offensive shifting populations out. For the Shilluk of Malakal, their land is either occupied or heavily militarised by Dinka-led state forces.

In the case of the Bor PoC, in Greater Upper Nile, the mostly women and children who have been relocated to the Ethiopian border town Akobo are certain to face extreme danger; this is due to the state’s ongoing scorched-earth campaign in the region, Akobo being one of the last IO-held locations. IDPs in the Wau PoC, in Greater Bahr el Ghazal, are unlikely to resettle in their original home areas, which continue to be unsafe or are occupied by Dinka residents who have moved from their impoverished neighbouring regions. It is more likely that the IDPs, if they have the means, will go to Khartoum, Sudan, or cross the border into the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The UNHCR is reported to be supporting the Relief, Reintegration and Protection (RRP) section of UNMISS, the mission’s focal point for management of PoCs, in its plans to move all of the Bor PoC to Akobo. “This is despite the full knowledge that it is only a matter of time before Akobo is attacked,” a well-informed western source told me.⁵⁵ In December 2017, a group of Nuer left the Bor PoC and were transported to Fanjak by barge. “It was in the middle of the night, mainly women and children, and they were sending them across two front lines,” the source said. As part of the policy to reduce numbers in the PoCs, there is a push for humanitarians to provide services to IDPs in the towns, rather than in the PoCs. UNMISS contingents are also engaged in outreach programmes. One example of these efforts is the donation of the time and skills of Rwanda peacekeepers to support a school in Malakal town (Adongo, 2018).

In Malakal, I was told by western humanitarians that there was a need to “go forward.” Implicit in this direction is the need to work with the state. UN organisations have launched several initiatives that appear to be aimed at affirming the state’s claims that people can return to Malakal. In the second week of April, British engineers installed basketball hoops and carried out basic improvements to the Malakal Stadium. A bus service began operation in March, transporting people from the PoC into the town. Tickets are SSP 70. It is assumed that this is an

⁵⁵ Interviewed in Juba on 4 April 2018.

initiative of the state. It conforms with attempts to present the PoC inhabitants as no longer requiring UN protection. While I was on the Malakal base, I several times heard foreigners, both UN staff and clergy, say that “2,000 people go into Malakal every day.” But the movement of mostly women and old men between the PoC and the town is more about basic survival than it is a sign of the restoration of peace. The women and old men take the risk to go into the town to do petty trading. Young men do not go into the town, knowing that the SPLA and NSS would give them problems.

“Ninety per cent of people going to Malakal are women and they go there for business reasons, to buy charcoal, fish — the fish they are selling is the resource of the Shilluk, even the mangoes,” said one national.

I visited Malakal town for the better part of a day. Local priests of St. Joseph’s Cathedral were hosting a peace-building exercise with clergy and laypersons. Two government officials arrived at the church not long after our bus had delivered us from the UNMISS base, and introduced themselves. They were warm and friendly. Later, as I stood near the compound gate, an elderly local man on a bicycle was stopped by these same men and interrogated for several minutes: What was his name? Where was he going? What business did he have in Malakal? The man was thin and wearing clothes several sizes too large. He was visibly frightened as the two officials queried his reasons for being in Malakal town.

There are no dogs in Malakal. Nor are there birds. The streets, other than a few main roads, are overgrown. Everything is broken. Everything was looted. Burned-out cars fill the compounds of abandoned properties. A cannibalised motorcycle sits parked on the side of a road, as if it had stopped there only the day before. In the immediate aftermath of the December 2013 massacres of Nuer in Juba, Malakal was plunged into war. Claims to control of the town changed at least a dozen times as local Shilluk, Nuer and Dinka fought over the town along the White Nile.

In the centre of the destroyed town, the simple tin-roofed house that Catholic nuns from Italy have called home for decades was emptied by successive waves of occupiers. The sisters and fathers, foreigners and nationals, are only now slowly returning to the compound. Graffiti and the names of Dinka soldiers cover the interior walls, scrawled in charcoal. On the wall of one room were the words: “What is your name? My name is Khmisa Ngok Riak.” Two nights before my arrival a man had been moving around the bungalow, looking for a way to enter. One of the Nuer priests was hot and had moved his bed outside. As he told me, “A thief came. He took small things. But what he wanted was food. He ate and left.”

I was assured that it was perfectly safe to walk from the church to what remains of the market area, some streets away. I quickly saw that all of the men in the centre of the town were Dinka. In conversation with several of them, I learned that many were from the former Lakes State. This is consistent with what I have seen of NSS recruitment for the past several years. Because my rudimentary Dinka was learned in the Rumbek area, this is recognised by men from Lakes, and their origins are quickly established.

As the day wore on, dozens of raptors descended on a large tree behind the main church building. This is where the women cook. Because the church had hosted an event, feeding several dozen people, the women had been busy. Now, as they washed the tin trays and battered pots, the birds had gathered in the hopes of feeding off the bones of the day's meal. A local man told me he had never seen such a thing before, so great a number of raptors on one tree.

Despite the best intentions of humanitarians keen to do outreach in the deserted town of Malakal, it is unlikely that the SPLA has plans for the town to come back to life again, or of even making it habitable. It will serve as an army outpost. Shilluk and Nuer women from the PoC will enter during the day to make small money from the soldiers posted far from their wives and families. The few shops with finished goods for sale will be run by northern Sudanese, most of them Darfurian soldiers. There will be a minimum of activity at the church, just enough to suggest a return to normalcy, so that the international NGOs can deliver some form of support that inevitably benefits the soldiers and intelligence agents who now live there.

While I was in Malakal, on 11 April 2018, five women from the PoC were taken by the SPLA. They were carrying fish and returning to the PoC at around 11 am when they were stopped by Dinka soldiers at a checkpoint. They were forced to return to Malakal town where they were held at the Bulukat Police Training Centre until 4 pm. "They were threatened with killing. They cried and begged for pity," said a man who had spoken with the women.⁵⁶ The women said that one man at the centre had spoken up, telling the others, "If we kill these people, it will be a problem." I asked if the women had been raped during their ordeal. Said the man, "If it happened, they will not say."

He continued, "These Dinka are not happy when they see Shilluk in Malakal. The women themselves, when they were coming [back to the PoC] decided whether to report to the protection desk in the PoC. They decided that if they report, it will block their return to Malakal."

⁵⁶ Interviewed in Malakal on 12 April 2018.

There is a wilful misrepresentation of the security situation both inside Malakal town and the PoC. Because of the momentum surrounding the “going forward” mantra, IDPs will be conscious that the tides of humanitarian intervention are shifting towards the normalisation of relationships with local authorities.

Disturbingly, there are deaths inside the PoCs that may have been classified as suicides when in fact they were murders. By chance I met an African peacekeeper who works as a police officer in criminal investigation in his home country. He was part of an UNPOL team sent to do an “assessment” of one such suicide in March in the Malakal PoC. As he told me, “Six suicides [inside the PoC] came in a row. But what I can say is there isn’t enough effort being done to establish [the cause of death]. Here, investigations are just done barely. They call it ‘assessment’ not investigation.”⁵⁷

Of the “hanging” he was sent to assess, he said: “The man was tall, and the hut was not high. Somebody hanged himself with a short rope. When we visited the rope had been cut and the body was down, half was hanging from the bamboo, and the other remained around his neck.

“I refused [to accept it]. I still refuse. He was Nuer, 35, he had children. The wife had gone out to fetch something. I’m telling you, I’ve seen suicide by hanging. That person will soil himself. This man was clean.”

A marathon was scheduled in April, organised by the UNHCR, to be run the several kilometres between the PoC and the town. UN staff I spoke to appeared to have not considered the ramifications of staging an event that assumed that IDPs who were forced to abandon their homes inside Malakal would want to run into the garrisoned town. When I asked a senior UNMISS official, his first response was, “Are you saying they won’t be safe?” But this was the wrong question. It is in the interests of the state to appear to be willing to allow IDPs to be in Malakal, shoring up their claims of having normalised the town.

National UN staff I spoke to were appalled by the plans. Said one, “The only people who will run from here [in the marathon] will be the humanitarians from UNMISS, and if they will take anyone [from the PoC] they will take young girls and boys.”⁵⁸ She noted that there had been football matches organised inside Malakal town, also by internationals, but she stressed that the only people participating were international humanitarian staff.

Meanwhile, there are restrictions on what activities are allowed inside the Malakal PoC. There are prohibitions on building supplies and motor vehicles, including motorcycles. For a time there

⁵⁷ Interviewed in Malakal UNMISS base on 16 April 2018.

⁵⁸ Interviewed in Malakal UNMISS base on 15 April 2018.

was even a ban on diesel until it was realised that the fuel was needed to operate the machines grinding sorghum and millet. Over Christmas 2017, women left the PoC to gather quantities of clay to decorate the floors of their huts. This was not allowed. UN security ordered the women's baskets be emptied outside the PoC gates. UN staff are discouraged from entering the PoC when they are off-duty, particularly if their plan is to purchase vegetables or meat, both of which are sold inside the PoC.

With the SPLA and NSS controlling Malakal, there are also reports that the state has stipulated that only Dinka can be hired by the international NGOs. The total number of national staff working through the NGO Hub on the UNMISS base is believed to be around 500. NonDinka South Sudanese working inside the UNMISS base are feeling increasingly anxious about their security, both in their work and as nationals in a conflict-affected area. State officials, when meeting Nuer and Shilluk humanitarian staff repeatedly ask, "When are you coming to Malakal?" The nationals feel that the officials are taunting them, rubbing in the fact that the town is occupied by the state, and also looking to make some propaganda points once the Nuer and Shilluk UN staff are seen to be working or even just visiting the town.⁵⁹

Senior UN policy decisions suggest to some nationals that the UN is attempting to "create a picture that does not exist," a picture of life returning to normal in towns like Malakal.

Further to attempts to "normalise" occupied towns and territories, UNMISS is increasingly involved in infrastructure and creation of a UN "presence." When I asked a South Sudanese about UN-supported roadworks in Greater Upper Nile, his response was swift: "It is a tool of war."⁶⁰ He continued, "In a time of war, infrastructure are sensitive." I note here that I had some difficulty getting confirmation from UNMISS officials on many of the details I include in this section. There was hesitancy to speak on the record about a number of UNMISS-supported projects recently undertaken or planned that would improve state access to areas that are not under SPLA control. In Greater Upper Nile, this includes the clearance of mines in the area to the west of IO-controlled Akobo; "maintenance" of the Bor-Pibor road by South Korean peacekeepers deployed to the Bor UNMISS base; construction of an UNMISS base at Kodok; repair or upgrading of the Akoka bridge. In early 2018 South Korean peacekeepers based in Bor completed maintenance of the Bor-Pibor road. The peacekeepers requested that the WFP provide food assistance to area

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Interviewed in Malakal UNMISS base on 12 April 2018.

residents as part of arrangements to protect the heavy machinery that was left at the work site during non-work hours.⁶¹

In the case of the Kodok base, the Shilluk governor of Fashoda is supporting the establishment of a UN mission in Kodok. “He wants NGOs, services,” said one local resident.⁶² There was no harvest in Kodok in the last year and the people’s cattle were looted. Establishing a base will encourage NGOs to go there, drawing IDPs to return. If violence breaks out, there will be protection by the UN. As a source in Malakal town told me, “All the area is inhabited by people who have been displaced by the war.”⁶³

Regarding Akoka, the land here has also been shifted from the control of the original inhabitants by the state. Akoka was just a payam with a population of 400 people when President Salva Kiir, in 2014, named Akoka as a county (despite its small population). He then named Malakal as the capital of Akoka County (Akoka being Dinka in population). The Akoka Bridge connects the road from Renk in Sudan to Malakal. As one East African told me, “It’s a big advantage of the government. If there is a war in Malakal they can get reinforcements and supplies from Paloch [air base].”⁶⁴

Perception of International Complicity: “Are You With Kiir?”

In early May 2018 a priest from Malakal contacted me and asked if we could meet during his visit to Juba. I agreed and went to the church where he was staying. When I arrived, I found him deep in conversation with two Nuer who live inside the PoC in Juba. I quickly learned that both men had narrow escaped being killed during the December 2013 massacres of Nuer in Juba. We sat inside the church complex, around a table in a kitchen area. The men spoke in whispers. Although we were inside a church compound, no one feels safe in Juba. There are spies everywhere. When a young woman entered to deliver some dishes, everyone stopped talking.

The massacres of December 2013 are rarely spoken of in Juba, such is the fear surrounding the subject. But given the opportunity, I wanted to hear what they had witnessed. They spoke of

⁶¹ WFP source interviewed in Juba on 4 April 2018.

⁶² Interviewed in Malakal on 12 April 2018.

⁶³ Interviewed in Malakal on 12 April 2018.

⁶⁴ East African NGO staffmember interviewed in Bentiu on 22 April 2018.

petrol poured on homes before they were set alight, with people inside, of men with knives.⁶⁵ I asked about the role of Lt. Gen. Bol Akot Bol, the current head of operations for the South Sudan Police Service (SSPS). Said one of the men: “He was the one in charge.” But then the conversation came to a halt, the men reverting to Nuer rather than using English. Unable to follow what they were saying, I asked if everything was all right. It was then that one of the men looked at me and said, in English, “Are you with Kiir?”

He told me that he had recently asked a British researcher the same question when she spent time inside the Juba PoC. He said that she “ran away” after he asked the question. He continued, “I don’t know you. I am afraid. There are many foreigners with the president.”

Bringing the “State” Inside the UN

The UN’s ability to gather unbiased information is increasingly constrained by two factors: the loss of goodwill and trust among non-Dinka South Sudanese staff who now view the UN as complicit in the state’s ethnocide and, relatedly, the employment of known members of the SPLA and South Sudanese intelligence services in both low-level and policy-level positions within the UN. The presence of these individuals is spreading a chill throughout the institution.

Policy changes aimed at acknowledging heightened suspicion and intelligence gathering within the UN may have unintended consequences: recent policy at state-level UNMISS operations is to not circulate reports on security matters to national staff. While it is understood that this measure is intended to ensure greater confidentiality, the reality is that South Sudanese, better than anyone else, know what is going on. Nor is the policy being applied across the board: individual heads of mission are choosing which national staff can have access to this material. Not surprisingly, the exceptions to this rule tend to be a) Dinka; b) former state officials; or c) are related to key state decision makers. This speaks to the relative isolation of mission heads and their attempts to gain access to local authorities, and reinforces the distrust of UN intentions among non-Dinka UN staff.

⁶⁵ Interviewed in Juba on 1 May 2018.

Humanitarians and Erasure of the Conflict's Ethnic Dimensions

The Shilluk will come back to Malakal, but they will not own Malakal. The Fertit will come back to Wau but they will not own Wau.

— Joshua Dau Diu, co-chair of the Jieng Council of Elders⁶⁶

They will come up with a very bad peace agreement, just to revitalise the president's term. The Dinka are not ready to leave power. Their

⁶⁶ Interviewed in Juba on 2 April 2018.

intention is to destroy us physically and economically. They are saying “Let the fighting continue in Upper Nile but not in areas occupied by Dinka. The areas of the Dinka should be peaceful, children should go to school.” But in all the Nuer and Shilluk areas there should be constant war.

— Nuer humanitarian residing in the Malakal UNMISS base⁶⁷

Further to the benign representation of the ongoing conflict, the humanitarian community is uncritically accepting the invalid idea that peace can and should be made at the local level. This means that the internationals need not engage with state policy or its sanction of ethnic nationalism. Rather, money and time will be spent encouraging local communities to get along. This is deeply insulting to local peoples whose lives have been torn asunder by years of incitement against them by the Dinka-led state and the more recent militarised campaign of displacement.

But it does make local authorities happy. They will be the ones to choose where NGO resources are directed, which communities will benefit from an NGO presence with budgets and staff, vehicles and programmes, staff needs in far-flung places for accommodation and food. And because the government, through the SPLA, controls everything, the aid will be disbursed to those people that the government deems worthy of receiving support.

When I asked a senior UN official about pressure for people to leave the PoCs, he replied: “The UN is playing around it. ... It’s not a question of safe return. Conditions of safe return, it’s all about relationships between these different ethnic groups.”⁶⁸ His reply removes the military and the state from the equation, reducing the past four years to some sort of local, community-level, problem. It is in the state’s interest for this representation to hold sway.

Given the quick turnover of international humanitarian workers, basic understanding of what has occurred in South Sudan is disappearing. New arrivals to Juba see a multi-ethnic city; a Spanish woman told me she was briefed by colleagues, during her first week in Juba, that the city’s population was “diverse”. In reality, Juba is almost wholly Dinka now, following the departure of virtually all Nuer, Shilluk and Equatorians, not to mention East Africans from Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. The dominance of one ethnic group in support roles within western NGOs and embassies will accelerate this loss of institutional memory. Internationals with no prior

⁶⁷ Interviewed in Malakal on 14 April 2018.

⁶⁸ Interviewed in Malakal on 11 April 2018.

experience in the region are unable to distinguish the origins of South Sudanese and will be unaware of the dominance of one ethnic group.

During the research period I was a bit taken aback by attempts by several Dinka in Wau to pretend that they were Fertit or Balanda. Their expectation was that I, a visiting foreigner, would not recognise them as Dinka. In each case, the individuals were trying to gauge my opinion of events in Wau and, more specifically, my feelings about Dinka people. Similarly, as discussed earlier, a South Sudanese working with a European-based NGO working to end hate speech lied to me about his name and origins in order to appear to be Equatorian rather than Dinka.

I ran into staff of the activist NGO #defyhatespeechnow in Bor, Greater Upper Nile. The group had booked space at one of the town's few functioning hotels to launch a new film on 4 April 2018. The hotel was Garden Resorts, owned by Deng Dau Deng Malek, a prominent member of the Jieng Council of Elders, the very group that has for years spread incitement against particularly Nuer and, more recently, other minority ethnicities. The westerner who was leading the group, on a short visit to South Sudan, was unaware that his NGO was spending money at a hotel owned by one of the architects of the state's efforts to marginalise minority peoples within South Sudan. His South Sudanese staff, well aware of who the owner was and the poor optics, had chosen not to tell their well-intentioned boss.

The international community, led by UNMISS heads of mission, will continue to try to improve their access, which means cooperating with local authorities. In their efforts to establish good working relationships, UNMISS will continue to offer goodwill gestures, expanding programmes into occupied towns and supporting state imperatives (i.e., Kodok UNMISS base construction, Akoka bridge, mine clearance programmes, services to towns). It is noted that there is social capital to be gained in claiming a relationship with senior government members. This is consistent with the hierarchical nature of the UN, where great efforts are made to establish status and privilege. I have never heard a high-level humanitarian boast of his or her relationships with common people; rather, they lay claim to special relationships with senior government figures.

Instrumentalisation of "Peacemaking" Programmes

Throughout South Sudan, NGO budgets are being spent to encourage peacebuilding. Whether hosting peace talks or holding workshops for "traditional" leaders, efforts by international actors are aimed at encouraging local actors to stop the violence between communities and ethnic groups. But because the state controls everything, these efforts are being turning to other, unintended, ends.

In Rumbek, capital of the former Lakes State, local government and the SPLA adeptly manipulated UNMISS-sponsored peace talks in late 2016 to mobilise cattle keepers into the everexpanding “organised forces.” The peace talks were considered by the humanitarian community to be a sign that local officials were working to ease the violence within the region, between two clans of Agar Dinka, the Rup and Pakam. But the leaders of the respective clans involved were not present for the several days of talks. Their absence pointed to the true intent of the interclan talks: to bring the wider civilian population onside, under the command of the SPLA, for future confrontations with neighbouring Nuer communities. The state, under the guise of interclan peace talks, co-opted militarised forces from the cattle camps. The armed youth were brought under the state’s control. Authorities no longer attempted to control the movement of the cattlekeepers and allowed them to enter the town with their weapons.

Between 2017 and 2018, despite the supposed peace talks, the numbers killed in intercommunal violence in the former Lakes State reached unprecedented levels. In early December 2017, officials said that 170 were killed and more than 300 houses burned in just one clash between the Rup and Pakam clans, the very same clans that UNMISS had brought together for peace talks in 2016 (Sudan Tribune, 12 December 2017).

It can be assumed that similar peacebuilding efforts are also being used for ends other than those sought by UNMISS. Among them, the 2017 peace talks between the Murle and Dinka in Greater Upper Nile facilitated by Vice President Taban Deng Gai. I spoke with UNMISS staff who had no doubts that Taban used UNMISS to carry out his own mobilisation of forces. In early December 2016, a several-day peace conference between Murle and Dinka in Pibor ended with the representatives of Jonglei and Boma states signing an agreement to curb cattle raiding, child abduction and killing. The agreement failed to hold and further talks, sponsored by UNMISS, were launched in May 2017. Taban Deng Gai and his representatives took part. According to one UNMISS staffer who was involved, “Taban Deng Gai claimed he had forces in Pibor, and among them there were children. He reached out to the UN Child Protection Department. Representatives of Taban Deng Gai were flown to Pibor and Gumrik. They were there for two weeks. They said they were demobilising but they were mobilising” (UNMISS, 24 May 2017). He continued, “The UN, they just want visibility, [to say] ‘We have sponsored these talks,’ especially Civil Affairs really wanted this. Even the banner they put up [in Pibor during the talks], everyone was fighting over why the banner did not include them, even the NGOs.”

Targeted Killings and an Underground War

Throughout South Sudan, occupying forces scrawl their names across the walls of buildings in towns they have captured. Beginning in 2014, as the state intensified its war against Nuer territory, the target was Leer, the home village of Riek Machar, in Unity State. The Arabic words written across the walls in charcoal were “Sons of Darfur.”⁶⁹

Well before Independence in 2011, Darfurians from the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) were present in South Sudan. The state installed the Sudanese rebels in their garrisons, within prison administrations in Rumbek and elsewhere, and occupying territory near the border with Sudan, including Raja in northwestern Bahr el Ghazal. In the past four years, Darfurians have been used by the SPLA in scorched-earth campaigns in the former Unity State and in other parts of Greater Upper Nile.

I raise the issue of irregular proxy forces used by the SPLA to raise a warning about the coming period, whether or not there is any peace deal struck between the state and the SPLA-IO. The warning is that the violence between opposing forces is likely to take a more underground form, including targeted killings. The use of proxy forces by the SPLA in its war against territories of Nuer habitation has led to a secret war between the SPLA-IO of Riek Machar and the SPLA-North (SPLA-N), based in northern Sudan’s Nuba Mountains region. Following the end of the North-South war and the independence of South Sudan in 2011, the Nuba Mountains’ SPLA-N was effectively abandoned by the SPLA. A large number of officers from the SPLA-N were, however, absorbed by the SPLA. Many of these men were veterans of long standing and over the age of active service. The SPLA brought these men into Juba and put them on the payroll, employing them as trainers and in other support positions. Others were younger, in their early 30s, and known as activists for the Nuba Mountains cause. In several cases, they were enrolled at the University of Juba.

More than 20 SPLA-N officers and activists were targeted for assassination by SPLA-IO soldiers following the outbreak of Nuer-Dinka fighting in December 2013. Some were killed in late 2013-early 2014. There was then a lull before the killings began again, after the return of SPLA-IO soldiers who accompanied Machar to Juba in April 2016, following the first IGADbrokered peace agreement. During this period, from April to July 2016, a number of SPLA-N officers were killed in Juba. People were shot at night inside their homes, after gunmen called them by name, or when

⁶⁹ Member of the clergy formerly resident in Leer, interviewed on 6 January 2018 in Juba.

moving by motorcycle or vehicles within Juba. Among those shot and killed in Juba was a female officer, Amal Osman Gindeel, who held a senior rank within the SPLA.

For the SPLA-IO, the Nuba Mountains veterans are considered legitimate targets because of their collaboration with the SPLA. It is also widely believed, by the Nuba veterans, that the government of Sudan directed Riek Machar to order his forces to carry out the killings. Given the long conflict in the Nuba Mountains, it is in Khartoum's interests to order assassinations of SPLA-N officers now living in South Sudan. Some of those who were shot but survived with injuries are now in Cairo. But the majority of the wounded are in Nimule, 200 kilometres southeast of Juba. The SPLA gave orders that all Nuba Mountains fighters with injuries should be sent there. (Note that it was a SPLA policy during the North-South war to dispatch injured soldiers to specific locations. This was not necessarily in order for them to receive medical treatment but more to do with removing them from wider view.) There are more than 100 such men believed to be in Nimule. A similar campaign is believed to have been waged against Darfurians connected to the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and present within South Sudanese territory.

The state in Juba, of course, will not speak publicly about these killings because, officially, they do not have fighting forces from Darfur and the Nuba Mountains within their ranks. And nor will the Nuba Mountains men, given their vulnerable position within South Sudan and in Cairo, Egypt, where they have joined the ever-growing numbers of Sudanese and South Sudanese refugees. Sudanese intelligence is considered highly active within Cairo and refugees identified with opposition movements use caution in their activities and movements.

These targeted killings have a bearing on the bigger picture, and speak to the emerging character of warfare in South Sudan. They also serve as a warning for the coming period, which is expected to see more of these liquidations and involve intercommunal, Dinka, adversaries. In the common expression of South Sudan, "unknown gunmen" — dispatched by the state — will be targeting perceived enemies. This is in part why (in addition to the financial crisis) the populations of Juba and other main towns have fallen sharply, why more and more people, even those without financial means, are finding their way to Cairo, Nairobi, and other points in East and Central Africa.

31 July 2018

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Appendix I: English translation of speech by President Salva Kiir in Wau National Stadium, Greater Bahr el Ghazal, 24 December 2012

It is noted that the president's use of Arabic is colloquial and laden with expressions commonly used in northern Sudan, the fuller meaning of which I discuss earlier in this paper, "...". Some words were spoken in English, including "decentralisation" and "Why did you mutilate the body?" This translation cannot be considered definitive, but gives a better idea of why the speech is recalled today as an important signpost of the state's intentions in western Bahr el Ghazal. In the years since, the president, during public appearances in the Equatorias and Greater Upper Nile, has used threats and accusations of disloyalty that are similar to those found in the Wau speech.

Comrade Rizik Zachariah Hassan, governor of Western Bahr el Ghazal State, all the attendees and all Wau citizens, I say hello to you all. Merry Christmas and may you be well all the year. [Applause]

In fact I came to you in Wau on December the 24th in order to share with you the sadness over people who have died. For those who have lost a relative, accept our condolences because you lost your loved one. As for those who have lost their properties, we also say sorry for the things that they have lost.

I was supposed to come and celebrate with you. But I come here sad because of what happened. There is no reason that people should be dying in a time of peace. There are some people with hangovers. Alcoholic people when they drink a lot at night, then will have a hangover in the morning. They will not be conscious, and with this hangover they will be thinking why are people staying peacefully, why aren't they fighting like used to. Fighting is not a good thing. And if fighting occurs here in Wau, in just one hour no one will be here and no house will be standing. Destruction is a simple thing. People who are still holding thoughts that people should be fighting each other, I say to them "Enough," because we have witnessed this a lot, and enough. We should not lose another person in such a time.

We were coming to celebrate with you for the airport. Since God created this land, this Wau airport has not witnessed asphalt. An asphalted road hasn't happened at all. [Applause]. Hey folks, when you farm you hope that the rain will be good so you can harvest from these crops that you have cultivated, get the benefit. If this is a peanut, if this is a grain or this is what, you will later harvest and you take them to the market and you will get your money. With this money you can buy many things you need at home.

Why don't you congratulate yourselves and celebrate the fruits of your work? This is the airport you made. Who came and made it? English people were here, they did not make this airport with asphalt, and the *jellabah* [a pejorative term referring to northern Sudanese] themselves, our colonials came, and did not make it. Now you have done it, as I said. What's wrong with that, folks?

You know, the hyena is strong, maybe stronger than the lion, but it's a coward, fearful. [Applause] If its heart is strong like the lion, I swear to God, the lion will not walk near it, because [the hyena] knows how to mobilize themselves. If one of them screams, in a short time they will know there is a problem and they will come. They will all assemble within a very short time, at this place.

So folks, you have capabilities. We, the black people, have capabilities and have brains that can think. We have hands. We can work. Why have we left these good things and turned all these strengths we have against ourselves so the people kill each other? Why? People who have done this, of course there are people spreading rumours, and these people spreading rumours are drunk people who will say a lie and wipe their mouths [meaning to pretend to have not lied], so it will not be known that he is a coward, a fearful person. This fearful person is a drunk person.

What do they gain? What does he gain when people die? It is very painful. I'm standing in front of you and I am not happy. I am not happy because there is no reason for people to kill each other. And then killing in a way that's not right — you slaughter a person like a goat? And you have killed him, and if you killed him and he died, why do you mutilate the body? You cut out a part of the body and do what and what.

You have killed him. Leave him so he can be buried with all his body parts. Some people have been slaughtered. I heard that some people were found with a nail hammered into their head, and I also heard that some people were crucified as when Jesus was crucified. What is all this? The death of a human is not a good thing. Let people stop doing this.

I want to say that earlier the governor said this fight was started with the relocation of the county headquarters of Wau County. What's wrong with that? The SPLM vision says that we take towns to villages. How do we take towns to the villages? You cannot go and make a stadium there in the forest. No people will come and play in it. You cannot build offices in the forest. No people will come and work in them. Because of that, the services cannot be concentrated in one place like Wau.

Now this population in Wau is a lot. Why? Because it has services more than in the rural areas. The person who wants a hospital will come to Wau, who wants food comes to Wau, who wants work comes to Wau. But if the county has been taken outside, the work will be found there. The office worker who cleans the offices will be part of the people themselves over there.

The governor did not commit any crime at all. The policy of the governor, the policy of moving the county out of Wau is very good policy and I agree.

I want to tell you, people of Wau County, those who said, "You go to Al Bagari" and you refused to go, which created problems so that people have to kill themselves, if I had been here in Wau, I would have fought with you, so that you go back to your place.

Listen to this carefully. Whether those who made this problem are here or not, if you have your brother working in his field and he didn't come here to the stadium today, you go and tell him, or go and tell her, that the president said that Wau County has to go to Bagari.

And whatever you want, the things that you want, such development there, ask the government of the state and it will give you. If they don't have it, they will ask the central government where I am staying. They will come to me and say, "Mr. President, help me by this, this, this." And I will do that for the benefit of the people of the area. What's your problem? This is how people build and move forward.

So the talk of the county headquarters, it's the right decision from the governor and his government. We will stand with him in this talk, now that we have seen some people took the law into their own hands and worked by this way. Nobody will be allowed to take the law into his or her own hands. We will deal with them.

Now, when I went for the security briefing in the office of the governor I heard about all the issues that happened, and all the talk that happened. I didn't enter into it, but I gave instructions to the governor and the security base that exists here in Wau, including the army commander, Maj. Gen. Chol Thon Balok, the 5th divisional commander, in case of police failure and other organised forces. Because every one of you as a police, you don't want go along with others and fight against your families. This is not acceptable. If you want, if you continue this way, I will transfer all of the police in Western Bahr El Ghazal to Upper Nile and bring Upper Nile police here.

You are the people of the law. If you can't uphold the law, I will say now, "Close your offices and the army will run this entire place and I will give all the powers to the army." So I gave them instructions earlier, that Governor Rizik and the police base and prisons and all organized forces should work together. And if the police cannot do their jobs the army will immediately take over. Nobody else will give instructions. I gave the instructions today. [Applause] So we don't lose innocent lives again.

At Christmas, this is a time for forgiveness, even if you have some people killed, especially people of Dinka. This talk, I don't want retaliation from you, to revenge and take a retaliation. This is not good. You just forget about those who have been killed and wait and see what the government will do.

How will they bring the criminals who killed people? It's not a tribe that killed people. They are just criminals. Those criminals, we must look for them until we find them. So I don't want revenge. You Dinka people have someone killed. Please sit and wait for the law.

Let the law work with the people who did this crime. Anybody who has someone killed, whether from Balanda or wherever they are from, don't take revenge. In this way you will show that there will be tolerance in the region.

This is all about what we want. We don't want to hear again tomorrow that Dinka came from [indistinct] because their people died and they come and revenge. We also don't want to hear that people of Gogrial come in order to kill people here. Or people of Aweil to come and revenge for their people who have been killed.

People died, finished. But one thing that I told the governor, there are some people who took this flag above, the flag of South Sudan, tore it and burned it. This flag is not Salva Kiir. This is your pride. Now your head is up because of this flag. The person who tears it is our enemy, for all of us. He is not my enemy alone. We have to fight them all. And I ordered that people who burn the flag of South Sudan, they be must found and imprisoned.

Don't forget one thing: [Sudanese President] Omar el Beshir — who you are calling to come here — has no army here in Grinty [SPLA Division 5 headquarters in Wau]. [Applause] These people with hangovers think that there is still *jellabah* army here in Grinty or in Gebel Khair, or anywhere.

No, they are not here. The army here is black and South Sudanese like me, like you. And I don't think the *jellabah* will go and get you ammunition and arms so you come and fight your brothers, if you think that *jellabah* will come back here and govern you.

No, *jellabah* are not coming back again. They will not come. Let them come fighting, and see if they going to arrive or not. They will not cross the border to come to Wau here. So if there are some people who still have these ideas, let them, let them put their ideas down [forget about it]. If some people see that they don't want to be Southern, they want to be Northern, and be in the old Sudan which we ran from, they are welcome to go, and leave the land. [Applause]

Of course some people, when colonialism enters their blood, do you even know yourself? If somebody asked you "What's your name?" you doubt yourself whether this is the right name that you should give or not. You go like "Huh? What did you say?" This is the talk of someone who has been colonized until he forgot himself. We don't want to hear this ever again. Let everyone accept that we are Southern, Southern. We live in peace. Wherever you want to live, you are free to go. Go where you want to look for a job. The talk of decentralization shouldn't deceive people. If they say there is decentralization, decentralization is not made by people. Authorities in Juba will tell the states. The states will give authority to counties. And counties will go and give to payam. This is the decentralization. This is the people.

People say this is not our man [tribe]. After a while we will mix up all this government: one of the sons of western Bahr el Ghazal here can be working as a minister in Upper Nile. We can flip the scales [change the system]. [Applause] Because if you go work in a place where you don't have relatives, you don't have tribalism and you will do the right thing.

A long time ago inspectors running the centres were brought from everywhere. They would go and work there, the way we are now treating the army. This is how you can create nationalism. The spirit of patriotism comes this way, instead of having someone working in his own region. We don't accept that. We have to mix up [mix the people up]. Now I am moving with my advisor of decentralization. I am also moving with the minister of the interior, and I am moving with the deputy minister of the defence, I am moving with the chief of general staff of the army. I am walking with the minister of my office, and here he is. Michael Milly [Hissen] talked to you. He is a minister of health. These are the people who came with me.

Are we are all working there in Juba? Are all of us sons of Juba? If this is about working in your own region, I would come here and compete with Rizik here and Nyandeng Malek

[Deliech] so I could govern one of the states here. But what does it make? I come from above, the republic's president, to make trouble?

In Juba there are members of parliament, and ministers in Juba have a hand in this issue. The people who killed may have come from Juba. Let's see what the investigation finds out. If we find that one of the people in Juba came here and made trouble, I will beat him.

This is not something that you would tell me, this is something we are now learning, because, hey folks, there is no reason [for the killing]. If people in parliament in Juba or in parliament here come and make policy that brings problems, they should understand that the people who are dying are their voters. People who were voting and voted for them the other day are the same people who would vote for them tomorrow if elections come again. Now you, when you lose your votes, who do you blame later on? This is not good and we should not continue to do it. Responsibility means responsibility. People should not deceive themselves. You do a bad thing and then you are encouraged to continue. Let's go forward.

And this is a bad thing you are doing. I am not someone who can abuse people. If you do something bad I will tell you, "That's bad. Your work is bad." If you want to cut my neck, come and try it.

So my people, I came here to talk to you about this. I don't want this problem happening again. All tribes here in Wau — whether they are Luo or Fertit or Dinka — these people should become sons of one father and one mother.

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