

Victims of Discourse: Mobilizing Narratives of Fear and Insecurity in Post-Conflict South Sudan—The Case of Jonglei State

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ABSTRACT

The sign along the border to South Sudan that reads—“Our peace, our land, our oil, our liberty”—is a testament to the struggles recently fought by the South’s Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) against the northern Khartoum Government. Such a seemingly apolitical expression of southern solidarity however obscures the often hostile relationships among the more than sixty ethnic groups in South Sudan and denies the SPLA’s continuing role as occupiers and oppressors even within southern territory. This article raises the question of ‘whose peace, whose oil, whose land, and whose liberty’ is reflected in the making of a new South Sudan. Drawing on a case study from Jonglei State, this paper examines how the formation of a victim narrative has served to legitimize Dinka control over and access to non-Dinka territories and resources within a complex struggle over livelihood and material accumulation in South Sudan.

Keywords: South Sudan; identity; natural resource conflicts; livelihood struggles

INTRODUCTION

A sign posted just inside the border to South Sudan reads “Our peace, our land, our oil, our liberty” (Figure 1) and is testimony to the recent political, economic, and social struggles that have been fought by the South’s Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) against the Khartoum Government in the north. In what has been termed the world’s longest running conflict (Jok 2007), Sudan’s civil war has widely been understood as a struggle for Southern Sudan’s self-determination against the north. The north has ruled the whole country through successive regimes characterized (see Abdel Salam and de Waal 2001) by varying degrees of oppressive and marginalizing tactics directed at the south since the country gained independence in 1956. As Deng (2005) asserts, the conflict in Sudan has its roots in a British system of rule which led to diverging identities and differential levels of access to development opportunities, resources, state powers and services which favored northern Sudanese over their southern counterparts. Drawing on Mamdani’s (1996) idea of ‘bifurcated citizenship,’ Britain arguably succeeded in creating a polarized Sudan divided geographically through simplistic racialized, ethnicized, and later religious categories of identity—that of an Arab, Brown, and Muslim North versus an African, Black, and Animist/Chris-

tian South. Problematic in such a telling of Sudan's civil war, however, is that it obscures the deep rifts and often hostile and antagonistic relationships among and between the various regional groups, including the largely Dinka led-SPLA's role as occupier and oppressor within South Sudan.

Figure 1: Our Peace, Our Land, Our Oil, Our Liberty.



Source: Author

This research builds on recent scholarship which challenges the assumed and apolitical assertions of solidarity and unity of the South Sudanese people as reflected in the above noted border signpost into the region. This is particularly timely given South Sudan's recent vote to secede from the North and become its own country—a decision that some speculate will unravel dangerous internal divisions with the loss of the North as a common enemy (Rice 2010).

In particular, this paper raises the questions of 'whose peace, whose oil, whose land, and whose liberty' are actually reflected in the making of a new South Sudan, and whose histories, claims, and experiences threaten to be overwritten and silenced under such discourse.

Precisely because land, identity, and citizenship are so interwoven in many African cultures (Derman, Odgaard, and Sjaastad 2007), and interests and agendas are frequently constructed around claims to land, any critical framework on natural resource conflicts must incorporate a discursive analysis of identity as well the

spatial and the material (Dunn 2001). According to Dunn (2001) narratives of identity provide the discursive frameworks through which the accumulation of the material is enabled, and justify the means through which accumulation is established. Linking the material aspects of natural resource struggles to their discursive production is critical to understanding how different actors draw on narratives of identity to justify natural resource claims. Any investigations into conflict must explore how identity has been mobilized for social and political purposes, as well as strategies to access material (natural resource) gains. Bridging the material and the discursive, this paper engages with the struggles over natural resources in South Sudan as a sociopolitical and spatiotemporal process of identity formation in which differentiated actors gain, lose, and ultimately fight over claims to natural resources within a spatially-structured political economy (Ribot and Peluso 2003). Where similar research linking natural resources, identity formation, and struggles over livelihood exists for Sudan, it is relegated either to discussions over natural resource contestations, particularly oil, between the North and the South or, in the case of Southern dynamics, to the internal struggle largely between Eastern and Central Equatorians and the Dinka of various origins.

Using a case study between the Bor Dinka¹ and the Pibor Murle of Jonglei State (Figure 2), this study diverges from previous research on southern intercommunal politics in the area in three critical ways. Firstly, it examines how the formation of a victim narrative versus the more widely cited liberator narrative, is serving to legitimize greater Dinka control over non-Dinka regions. Secondly, this study considers a highly undeveloped region of the world that has previously been overlooked in the literature apart from early anthropological studies (see for example Lewis 1972; Arensen 1992). Thirdly, this research shows how local level political actors have drawn on moral networks of a sympathetic international audience to further legitimate their claims. By doing so, this paper clarifies how identity narratives contribute to the continuing insecurity in the region and thus offers a necessary precondition for an indubitable post-conflict period to begin in South Sudan.

METHODOLOGY

This research is the result of three months of fieldwork that I carried out between January and April 2008 in three states in South Sudan. In consultation with Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) staff members, I spent a period of four weeks each in Bentiu, Unity State; Bor Town, Jonglei State; and Nimule, Eastern Equatoria—areas of known high natural resource contestation over oil, cattle, and land respectively. For each case study, approximately forty semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants with knowledge of the issues and questions at hand, including teachers, South Sudanese government officials, SPLA officers, religious and civic leaders as well as local chiefs, and

personnel from local and international organizations and embassies. Based on the preliminary interview results, a subset of no less than twenty community members from diverse household situations in two-to-three rural field sites in each case study were chosen for open-ended interviews. Secondary sources, such as institutional documents, media reports, and research articles were used to substantiate and fill in gaps in the fieldwork data; gaps that primarily arose because logistical and temporal barriers prevented in-depth on-site data collection. The data were initially analyzed using grounded theory to identify overarching themes through the codification of transcribed interview and field notes. The data were then reanalyzed using selective coding based on the emergent themes of identity, livelihood security, and conflict (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

Figure 2: Map of Jonglei State



Source: Human Rights Watch (HRW) 2010

The implications of this study for elucidating the dynamics underpinning the still largely overlooked intra-Sudanese violence are vital, especially in an environment where justice for victims of intra-Sudanese violence is scarce not least because many of the Southern perpetrators of war-era violence are still in power (McEvoy and LeBrun 2010). Readers should nevertheless be aware that this is a ‘first cut’ examination of the case study presented here and that further on-site research is needed to deepen our understanding of its implications for localized resource conflicts.

THE MAKING AND UNMAKING OF SOUTH SUDAN

Despite the 2005 signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 between the SPLM/A and the Government of Sudan (GoS) that ended the nearly two-decade long civil war, some argue that the CPA has only marginally succeeded in safeguarding the post-conflict security of South Sudanese citizens (Branch and Mampilly 2005). For South Sudanese, this ‘war overhang’ (see IANSA et al. 2007) has meant a continuation of long-standing conflicts over livelihood resources even as new conflicts over claims to land and natural resources arise. Inattention to the numerous fracture lines within post-conflict Sudan’s political landscape has been cited as one of the major flaws affecting the efficacy of the CPA in practice and effect (Branch and Mampilly 2005), and the move towards any form of durable peace.

Known historically as the *Dar al harb* or “land of war” (Goldsmith, Abura, and Switzer 2002), South Sudan, which makes up about one third of the total land area of Sudan, is actually an amalgamation of over sixty ethnic groups with a history of varying levels of hostility and alliances (Akol 2007). That a greater number of lives were lost in “a network of internal wars” (Johnson 2003, 127), inclusive of the violent split in the 1990’s between the Dinka-dominated mainstream SPLA and various Nuer-dominated SPLA factions, than in the battle against the Khartoum government (Jok and Hutchinson 1999), poignantly attests to such antagonisms. Since its inception, the SPLA has been seen by various groups and at various times not as a unifying force (Davis 2008) but as an ‘anti-people military machine’ (Nyaba 1997) and a force for ‘dinka domination’ (Branch and Mampilly 2004).² General accounts of early Dinka hegemony within the South (Badal 1994) have gained increasing currency with more recent documentation of SPLA repression and intimidation, particularly among Equatorians (Johnson 2003; Schomerus 2008). As Leonardi (2007, 406) notes, “the word ‘liberation’ is increasingly used with bitter irony in reference to [SPLA] senior officers ‘liberating’ land, resources and even women from their rightful owners.” As rightly argued by Branch and Mampilly (2005), sustainable peace then is not simply a function of the formalization and implementation of an agreement between the SPLA and the Khartoum government. It is also a matter

of addressing the causes of the fracture lines in Southern Sudan. Overlooking these intra-Southern Sudan divisions and its ongoing latent conflicts, promises to undermine the current peace process. It also threatens to usurp the South's sovereignty and disrupt its socio-economic recovery. It is within this wider context that the implications of the following case study must be understood.

JONGLEI AND THE CASE OF THE 'ABANDONED PEOPLE'

Jonglei is the largest and most populous of South Sudan's ten states. It has a population of 1,358,602 people, an area of approximately 122,479 km², and is among the most underdeveloped regions in the world (ICG 2009; Young 2010). Dominated by swampland and treeless plains, Jonglei is home to six Nilotic ethnic groups practicing various levels of subsistence agro-pastoralism. As symbolized by the cattle centered flag flying in front of the government building in the capital of the state, Bor Town, cattle form the currency of many ethnic groups in this region where wealth continues to be accounted in terms of heads of cattle (see Fahey 2006). Due to the prominence of cattle in the local economy, cattle are an integral part of conflict dynamics in Jonglei state. Thus, wars between ethnic groups are often prompted by the acquisition and protection of cattle and the ongoing struggle to gain access to water and grazing points for the herds. The ever-present rustling of cattle particularly among the Nuer, Dinka, and the Murle, represents one of the greatest security challenges in the area (Sundnes and Sahn-mugaratnam 2008). To illustrate, between March and December 2009, intense inter-communal fighting in South Sudan claimed some 2,500 lives (OCHA 2009)—a higher figure than the number of lives lost in Darfur in the same period (Rolandsen 2009). Moreover, 340 children were abducted and 847,000 cattle raided. Similarly, between January and April of 2010, more than 21,000 people were displaced in Jonglei state alone due to cattle related fighting (Mines Advisory Group - MAG 2010).

While conflicts between pastoral communities are not new, there is a sense among community members that clashes over cattle raids and disputes over grazing pasture and water are occurring more frequently than in the past as competition for grazing and water resources increases—a situation that promises to escalate further with the growing incidence of food insecurity due to poor rains (OCHA 2009). In addition to the increasing frequency and intensity of clashes, the nature of inter-communal violence has shifted from the targeting of armed youth typically involved in raiding, to attacks on communities, including the elderly, women, and children (ICG 2009).

Many cite the continuing proliferation of small arms, despite government attempts at disarmament, as well as the disintegration of local leaders' authority particularly over the now easily armed youth groups as the main reasons for the increased violence. For the residents of Jonglei state, such on-going insecurity

even in the aftermath of the CPA holds serious implications for regional development and livelihood security in the area. Pervasive poverty, combined with continuing insecurity, lack of infrastructure, and limited market opportunities have combined to create a general landscape of deprivation, discrimination, and marginalization; a landscape in which local conflicts often result in ethnically-defined casualties.

This is particularly notable in the Murle dominated Pibor County, where entrenched perceptions hold the Murle to be a 'backward,' 'hostile' and 'aggressive' people (PACT 2006; see also Mackenzie and Buchanan-Smith 2004). These denigrating perceptions combined with Pibor's County's history as a site of Northern Government support during the civil war, as well as a suspected alliance with the Khartoum Government in the post-conflict period has largely impeded the implementation of government and NGO services such as health care centers, schools, and roads. For instance, only one primary school, run by the Diocese of Torit, existed for South Sudan's largest county in 2001 (Deng 2001). In 2006, only three International NGOs³ were present in Pibor County and one of them was in the process of moving out of the area.⁴ Because of Pibor County's status as one of the most geographically marginalized and poorest counties in the country, one NGO staff member from the Norwegian People's Aid coined the term 'abandoned peoples' to describe the Murle's political, social, and economic isolation from the rest of South Sudan.⁵ This situation, which has been noted elsewhere as well (see Young 2010), is a factor in the conflicts involving the county and Southern Sudan in general. One prominent Murle figure's retort in an interview with the International Crisis Group (ICG 2009) on the continuing marginalization of Murle from peacetime benefits in the post-war period situates the Murle's discontent with the effects of their socio-political devalued status: "No education, no health, no water, no roads. How would you react?"

Despite the reality of a politically and economically marginalized Murle, they are often cast as the aggressors and perpetrators of the continuing insecurity of Jonglei—a narrative that has been upheld by media agencies, prominent figures in government, NGO staff, and local citizens. While violent attacks are perpetrated by each of Jonglei's pastoralist groups, Bor County commissioner Abraham Jok and previous Jonglei state governor Philip Thon Leek have both been cited saying, "there are no other tribes causing insecurity in the region apart from the Murle" (see Mangok 2007). Warnings which were expressed by several NGO staff members based in Bor Town to the author to not "bother" traveling to the region on account of the "trouble making Murle" which would result in "a negative experience," perpetuates their perceived negative status and their actual socio-political and geographical isolation. Several similar statements made to me by residents in Jonglei's capital, Bor Town, sustain the ethno-centric coloring of Murle as "highwaymen"⁶ whose continued aggression threatens to destabilize the

possibility of a united South Sudan. As the former governor of Jonglei State remarked, “With the Murle there is no relationship, only the black relationship.”⁷

Narratives of the Murle as a ‘fierce’ people are further solidified and passed down through fear as well as local and foreign stereotypes of the region that are often exploited by grassroots diaspora networks. For instance, one Minnesota university-sponsored group with a Dinka student lobbied the American government to redress Murle aggression (Human Rights Program – HRP 2010). In contrast, the Dinka have produced a peace-loving’ narrative of their own as the victims of such abuses—a position that has recently been taken up by various international human rights groups, thanks in part to the ability of the Dinka diaspora in the United States—in particular, to capture the attention of the international audience through the lens of child protection.

Unique to Jonglei state however, have been the additional instances of child abductions during cattle raids that occasionally result in the deaths of women and children. Blame for these abductions largely falls on the Murle ethnic group, fueled by unsubstantiated claims of widespread infertility among the Murle as the reason for their need to acquire children from other ethnic groups.⁸ This claim stands in contrast to clear evidence of abduction of children and women among other ethnic groups, including the various Dinka groups.⁹ Evidence for a not so recent trade in children notably by Dinka for the acquisition of cattle¹⁰ (see also Garfield 2007; Young 2007a) also exists, including more contemporary court cases involving Dinka traders selling young girls in Bor and Pibor markets. Yet these aspects of the story are rarely told, in part due to the fact that few Murle have access to the very same networks of international moral communities that the Dinka have called upon to assert their victimization against Murle aggression.¹¹

The recently created Save Yar Foundation started by a group of University of Minnesota students illustrates this point well (HRP 2010).¹² On October 3rd 2007, three year old Yar Achiek and her sister were abducted from their home in Bor County. The Murle, as the usual suspects, were blamed. Yar’s extended family, had additional resources to draw on for assistance in responding to this abduction, including Yar’s uncle who was a student at the University of Minnesota. After hearing the story of their colleague’s nieces’ plight, members of his class mobilized to lobby the U.S. government to effect the disarmament of the Murle and organized press releases and public events centered on the issue of child abductions in Jonglei State. That this political activism took place among a group of university students with no prior visitation to the region and limited contact with the Murle people demonstrates how easily actors can mobilize and manipulate narratives towards political action, particularly in the case where western moral values and social networks of powerful actors (e.g., American students) are drawn upon.¹³ In this instance, a member of the Dinka diaspora was able to draw on the embedded narrative of the Murle as hostile and fierce people in or-

der to elicit the moral sympathies of a western audience. This discursive tactic therein disallowed other explanations or truths to emerge toward understanding this highly-localized phenomena.

The purpose of drawing attention to the child abductions in Jonglei state is not to rehearse accounts of child theft in the region. Rather, this is to show how under multiple and conflicting stories and ambiguities surrounding child abductions in Jonglei, certain histories, experiences, and truths are legitimized, creating facts upon which social and political practices and policies are created and then acted upon at national and international levels; often at the expense of more marginalized and less powerful actors such as the Murle. More importantly, such accounts deny the Murle the opportunity to claim their own truths, and glosses over atrocities committed against the Murle in the name of vengeance against their aggression. For instance, one of the heaviest tolls on human lives, accounted for in terms of the number of *bomas* (local administration units) attacked, head of cattle stolen, and persons displaced since the end of the North-South war, took place against the Murle over a period of eight days in March 2009 (HRW 2010). Previous historical scholarship provides ample evidence of Murle victimization, including the infamous Bier (meaning enemy in Dinka) patrols mandated by the colonial state in which countless Murle lost their lives (Lewis 1972). Creating and sustaining the narrative of ‘the Murle problem’ further overshadows the complexity of cattle raiding as a historically important part of the region’s society and economy (see Turton 1991; Deng 2001) and denies a 150-year history of mutual cattle raiding among all the agro-pastoral peoples (including the Murle, Dinka, and Nuer) in Jonglei State (Young 2007a; Garfield 2007).

Furthermore, the attention focused on child abductions misdirects attention away from the wider socio-economic realities of the region’s cattle economy with which the phenomenon of child abductions is intimately linked. While child abductions have traditionally served to replace children who have died, or to equalize the numbers of boys and girls within families, a recent report shows how abductions have become a strategy for destitute youth to pay dowries¹⁴ and gain wealth in this impoverished environment by exchanging children for cattle (Young 2010).¹⁵ As one Murle informant noted, “Cattle is wealth. You need cattle to marry and you must marry.”¹⁶ The health policies advocated by international groups to address the issue of ‘Murle infertility’ then are unlikely to be a “silver bullet”¹⁷ in either reducing the abductions of children or addressing the roots of violence in the region. Thus, directing already limited state and international resources towards solving the issue of ‘infertility’ does not address the underlying causes of child abductions nor the deep poverty of the region nor the absence of health clinics and other infrastructure, all of which have “made abductions a lucrative business” (Young 2010, 8). By privileging the stories, memories, and truths of the Dinka over those of the Murle, the moral legitimacy

of the Murle and their claims to history and reality is overwritten. Such legitimacy subsequently provides the Dinka-led SPLA greater authority and agency to forcefully disarm and perpetrate violence against the Murle in order that the Murle, with the help of international NGOs and national settlement schemes, may then be shaped into ‘educated and trustworthy’ citizens. Referring to the recent [failed] attempts to disarm the Murle through voluntary means, for example, Salva Kirr, the President of the GoSS stated:

“If [the Murle] fail to bring all the guns, we’ll have to use force to disarm the community by force. Of course that will result in a lot of casualties . . . [but] either I leave them with the guns and they terrorize the rest of the people, or I crush them to liberate the other people from being always attacked by the Murle.”¹⁸

Similar statements made by the Deputy Governor Hussein Mar that “forceful disarmament is the only way out” (Aleu 2009; see also Young 2010) also help sideline the role that disarmament may play in eliminating wider threats to SPLA power and in reducing competition over vital natural resources by providing political entrepreneurs with considerable room to use violence or the threat of violence to ‘solve’ past resource disputes (Young 2010). Some suggest that the 2006 decision to initiate disarmament in the Murle and Lou Nuer areas of Jonglei state was motivated by such considerations (Rolandsen 2009).

As Keen (2000, 33) argues, “civil conflicts have typically seen the emergence of groups (often ethnic groups) who can safely and in a sense legitimately be subjected to extreme . . . violence. Some groups fall below the law, and some are elevated above it.” A petition published in the *Sudan Tribune* in 2007, entitled “Jonglei Students in Diaspora against Insecurity,” written by a committee composed largely of college and university students in the diaspora on behalf of “the citizens of Jonglei state,” cites the Murle militia as the sole source of insecurity in the region and advocates for extreme measures against their aggression, including the tracking of perpetrators by helicopter and the enactment of laws which would make the abduction of children and the raiding of cattle criminal acts punishable by death. No similar petition was published on behalf of Murle residents of Jonglei state. More telling, perhaps, is that in addition to the return of abducted children, the return of looted cattle and the prevention of future cattle raiding remained a central component of the petition to secure justice in the region. Within the incendiary environment prevailing in Southern Sudan in which the escalation of violence has deepened inter-community conflicts, the ‘tribal posturing’ (ICG 2009) that takes place against different ethnic groups in the region, whether justified or not, provides a source of continuing and future insecurity (McEvoy and LeBrun 2010). This is particularly relevant in Jonglei state where tensions between communities continue to be aggravated by perceptions of state (as well as Dinka) bias, and concerns over the virtual absence of roads

and infrastructure, widespread food insecurity, land disputes, and limited access to justice (ICG 2009). Many of the Murle interviewed, for example, spoke of their economic and political marginalization in relation to their dominant Dinka and Nuer neighbors (see also Arensen 1992). Such sentiments align with a more generalized perception by non-Dinka groups in South Sudan of the Dinka's domination within the government, the SPLM, and the SPLA, and their subsequent capture of "a too big slice of the resource cake" (Santschi 2008, 8). This perception equally holds in the Equatoria region where the SPLA/M has used a 'liberator narrative' to justify incidents of land grabbing and human rights violations against resident communities (Mackenzie and Buchanan-Smith 2004; Branch and Mampilly 2005).

DISCUSSION

As Bøås and Dunn (2007) argue, war is not only an economic drama over the distribution of resources but a social drama over ideas, identities, and social positions as well. This article has demonstrated how through a politics of identity, networks of actors lay claim to and/or limit and deny others' access to natural resources. In the competition for land and access to resources in South Sudan multiple forms of identity have been called upon to gain access (Derman, Odgaard, and Sjaastad 2007), as demonstrated by the Dinka's ability to negotiate two seemingly contrary identities; that of victim and that of liberator to exercise control of valuable resources. Such narratives parallel recent work by Hagmann and Peclard (2010) whose work in Mozambique and Namibia highlights the linkages of memory, identity, and the politics of belonging in which what is at stake, in addition to obvious economic entitlements, is the power to write and tell the 'grand narrative' of the war, in this case, in South Sudan. Yet because rights are in flux and negotiable, the access of Dinka to traditionally non-Dinka lands and resources depends upon their ability to maintain and reinforce such claims while continuing to exclude those groups simultaneously claiming rights to those resources (see Falk Moore 1994).

The mobilization of political action along a certain identifying character subsequently relies on the actions of local political actors and the contextual issues at stake (Clark 2001). Such entrepreneurs of instability and insecurity are enabled by various external and internal processes to exploit the possibilities offered under the chaos and confusion of war, statelessness, and/or social and economic reorganization (Retnyens 2009)—a condition similarly expressed in work by Chabal and Daloz (1999) on the 'instrumentalization of disorder'. Within Jonglei State, the Dinka have been able to draw on a victim narrative together with entrenched stereotypes of a fierce and hostile Murle to gain access to international moral sensibilities and values in order to potentially safeguard access to important natural resources. The Dinka's ability to successfully negotiate multi-

ple discourses, as victims as well as liberators, for similar material gains aligns with Jackson's view (2005, 153) that a protracted period of conflict and war "destroys many assets on which economic life is based, and it redistributes and mutates others. It destroys property, but also alters its ownership; it despoils but also provides profit. . . ." More so than just legitimizing natural resource access for the Dinka of Bor County, such discourses have also served the wider SPLA community that is dominated by them.

Discourses serve not only to gain control over resources, they legitimate the violent means through which such appropriation of tenure and resources may be sought (see Hagberg 2007). Some argue that outside organizations such as UNHCR, are complicit in allowing the SPLA/M to ignore its internal exclusivity for over a decade by accepting responsibility and taking care of South Sudan's exiled and vulnerable populations, thereby relinquishing the need for government to build a representative and inclusive civil authority. Humanitarian organizations are explicit in compromising the security of certain groups over others by having "taken sides in the potpourri of good and bad in southern Sudan" (Larsen 2007). As early as 1997, for example, international organizations were accepting claims of the SPLA as the only legitimate organization representing South Sudanese (Riehl 2001) at the expense of other opposition groups and in lieu of previous peace agreements, including the Khartoum peace agreement between Nuer Rieck—a Lou Nuer—others and the NCP. As noted earlier, SPLA rhetoric has been used to justify forced disarmament of not only the Murle, but of another rival group, the Lou Nuer, in the 2006 disarmament campaign (Riehl 2001). This holds serious implications for self-identified hybrid Arab-Indigenous communities such as the Malakiya community in Malakal whose claims for separate political representation has been resented by indigenous groups such as the Dinka calling them northern Arab sympathizers (McCallum and Okech 2008).

The political ambitions of the SPLA may impede greater inclusive policies particularly as the continuing instability in the region may be providing "a license to take advantage of particular groups of civilians" (Keen 2000). For example, Riehl (2001) documents how the SPLA largely viewed civilians as a resource for plunder during the war through the expropriation of taxes, food, and labor. The continuation of many of these socio-spatial practices of local regulation by both current and retired SPLA operatives through illegal and repeated taxation of IDPs and traders (see also ICG 2009) as well as general harassment of the civilian population (HRW 2009), for example, causes one to wonder whether the SPLA/M-led governing body values civilians as a resource to exploit or as authentic and rightful actors in a developing society.

The failure of the less than Comprehensive Peace Agreement to consider the marginalization of different groups has caused some to speculate that its failure is imminent (Prendergast 2005). In addition to restricting the participation of the wider Sudanese population, the CPA negotiations were limited to the two groups

which controlled much of the power at the center and dominated their own domains: the NCP (representing the North) and the SPLM/A (representing the interests of the South) (Young 2007b). This exclusionary arrangement means that the material deprivations and structural inequalities faced by many ethnic groups in South Sudan will continue even as the SPLA transitions from a military organization into a governance institution. That the outcome of the 2010 elections across South Sudan was plagued by reports of vote tampering and intimidation of non-SPLA candidates as well as the arrest of various opposition leaders has drawn skepticism from some international observers and critics of the SPLA, while also fuelling anti-SPLA violence in some regions, including Jonglei State. The persistence of south-south grievances and the seeming absence of a durable post-conflict resolution and recovery process calls into question the sincerity of the rhetorical invocations of a new South Sudan based on democracy and equal rights, as encompassed in the highly-visible slogan (Figure 1) discussed in this paper's opening sentence.

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ENDNOTES

1 The author recognizes the multiplicity of clans and sub-ethnic groups that are often coalesced together under the banner of a wider ethnic group, whether the Murle, the Nuer, or the Dinka. References to ethnic groups will be distinguished when possible but in some cases, such detail was not forthcoming in the author's investigations.

2 In terms of numbers, Dinka, whom constitute more than 10% of the total population of Sudan and approximately 40% of South Sudan are the largest ethnic group in the south. In comparison, the Nuer who comprise the second largest group, hold one fourth the population of the Dinka. As Santschi (2010) points out, however, as have others (Johnson 2003), the concept of Dinka domination was politically motivated and engineered by the Northern government in order to fractionalize and thus weaken Southern solidarity against the North.

3 Vetenairies Sans Frontiers, Mediciens Sans Frontiers, and the Italian NGO COPPI.

4 To belabor the point, a recent report stated that among the eleven counties of Jonglei State in 2009, Pibor County had the highest primary school pupil-classrooms ratio of

1/293 and one of the lowest percentages of primary schools with latrines (29%) and with water (6%) (Intersoss 2010). In terms of access to safe water, Pibor County, along with Akobo County, are the top two most underserved counties in the state (PWJ 2010).

5 Interview, March 15, 2008.

6 Interview with Simon Chol Martin, Office Manager for the Deputy Governor and Minister of Local Government and Law Enforcement, Bor Town, March 8, 2008.

7 Interview, Bor Town, March 9, 2008.

8 As Young (2010) notes, the extent of infertility is most likely highly exaggerated due to the early age that young girls marry and subsequently miscarry.

9 Analysts argue that child abduction is growing even among groups that formally never entered into such activities. While described as retaliatory for previous attacks by Murle groups, the taking of 133 Murle women and children by Lou Nuer in March 2009, exemplifies this trend (HRW 2009; Young 2010).

10 Interview with Barnaba Okony Gilo, February 29th 2008.

11 Many of these moral networks grew from the well known Lost Boys Diaspora which occurred during the second Sudanese Civil War (1983–2005). Of more than 20,000 Nuer and Dinka displaced youths, largely males, who walked from their home region of South Sudan to refugee camps in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda, approximately 4,000 were resettled to the United States (a smaller number were also resettled in Europe and Australia) many with assistance from church organizations. Today, a number of novels, films, U.S. based charity organizations, and even facebook groups formed from these connections work to gain greater attention towards the plight of South Sudanese, namely, Dinka in the U.S. and abroad in Sudan. The Murle, on the other hand, were not part of this Diaspora, never experienced a similar movement of its population abroad, and therefore do not have similar relationships/connections to draw upon.

12 While I mention this incident only briefly, it draws undeniable parallels to Mamdani's (2009) recent critique on the Save Darfur foundation.

13 It should be noted that since its inception at least some contact with Murle representatives from the region have been contacted and in response to understanding the history of the issue more holistically has responded by moving towards a general child protection framework that does not directly indict the Murle.

14 Dowries have increased in recent years and can reach well over 100 head of cattle (ICG 2009).

15 According to Schomerus (2008) a boy is tradable for around ten head of cattle.

16 Interview with Kuol Bol Ayom, Civil Administrator, Anyidi Payam, March 2nd 2008.

17 Comment made by an anonymous member of the Save Yar Foundation.

18 Interview with Jack Rice on behalf of the Save Yar Foundation. The clip can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FhsQb8UR7AQ&feature=related> (last accessed December 20, 2010).

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