# Observatoire
# AfriquEst
## de l'
### Enjeux politiques & sécuritaires

# Armed work and state reconstruction in South Sudan: beyond the peace deal
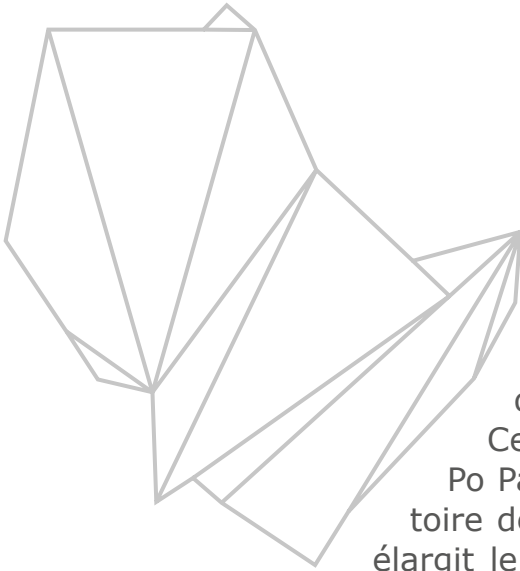
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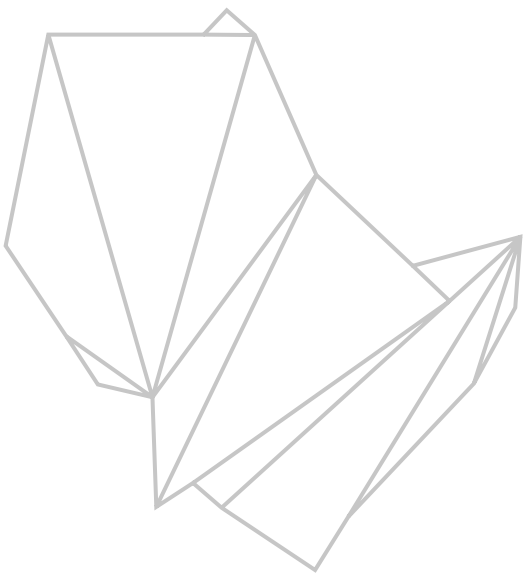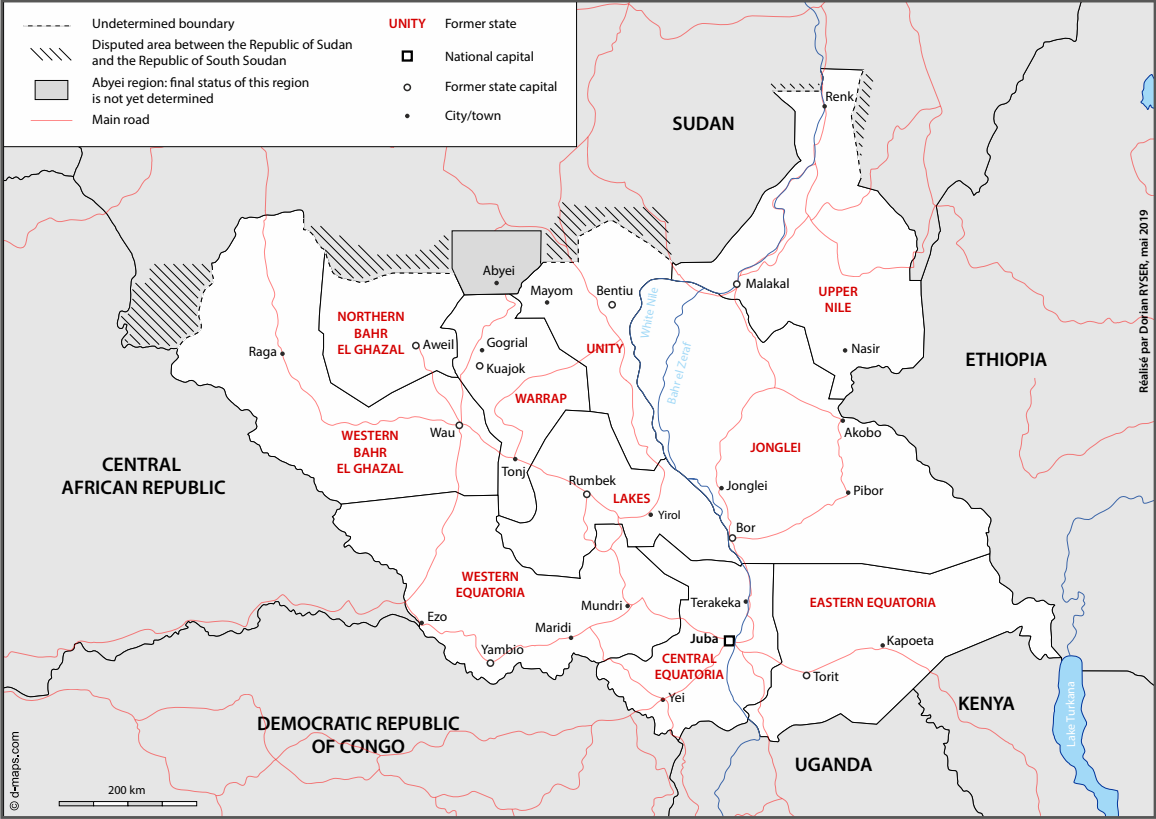
Coordination
Jean-Nicolas BACH
Roland MARCHAL

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# South Sudan



| | |
|---|---|
| - - - Undetermined boundary | **UNITY** Former state |
| Disputed area between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Soudan | ▫ National capital |
| Abyei region: final status of this region is not yet determined | ○ Former state capital |
| Main road | • City/town |

SUDAN

Renk

Réalisé par Dorian RYSER, mai 2019

Abyei

Mayom  Bentiu  Malakal

**UPPER NILE**

**NORTHERN BAHR EL GHAZAL**

Raga  Aweil  Gogrial  **UNITY**  Nasir

Kuajok

**WARRAP**  Akobo

**WESTERN BAHR EL GHAZAL**  Wau  **JONGLEI**

Tonj  Pibor

Rumbek  Jonglei

**LAKES**  Yirol

Bor

ETHIOPIA

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

**WESTERN EQUATORIA**

Ezo  Mundri  Terakeka  **EASTERN EQUATORIA**

Maridi  Kapoeta

Yambio  Juba

**CENTRAL EQUATORIA**  Torit

Yei

KENYA

White Nile

Bahr el Zeraf

Lac Turkana

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

UGANDA

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200 km

# Abstract

This paper examines the state of demobilization and security sector reform in South Sudan's current fragile peace. It outlines the military-security reconstruction work of both the South Sudan government and its armed opposition, which is currently happening outside (and in defiance of) the peace agreement's terms and control. The paper also sets out current critiques of the peace deal's security and military provisions: that a 'payroll peace' that is structured around buying out military factions is incentivizing rebellion-for-profit and further recruitment; and secondly that this peace through brokerage between military leaders undermines civil state power and authority.

This paper does not disagree with these criticisms but seeks to move beyond them. Current analyses of South Sudan's military-political system – focused as they are on payrolls and state dividends – do not explain why men across the country are seeking incredibly small and unpredictable financial gains through armed work, in exchange for extreme personal and family risk. This paper seeks to put the 'payroll peace' in this deeper context.

Exploring these fundamental structures of South Sudan's military economy allows a better understanding of drivers of continued societal militarization and mobilization. The paper details how and why work in armed forces gives a few possibilities for most people beyond scratching a bleakly 'resilient' subsistence; and how communities organize military recruitment because of actual societal and economic crisis, specifically the impact of commodification and expropriation of land and resources, and resulting injustices and gross inequalities.

Any real response to these structural issues necessitates fundamental economic and political reform within and beyond the state. But this raises several fundamental questions: Other than armed work, what opportunities do men and women have to support their families, to strive for a better life, and to construct real futures for their children? How can trust in governance, ideas of citizenship, and mutual political community be rebuilt, and what mechanisms are there within South Sudan that can be supported to do this?

Answers to these questions require civil space and fundamental reform, which cannot be made from the top down through more agreements or strategic reviews. This paper emphasizes the need to make space for, and listen to, these fundamental conversations which are already happening within societies across South Sudan.

To find this space, the paper recommends that the precipitous progress of the same partially-made, barely-implemented elite deal (as led to the last crisis in July 2016) must at very least be slowed down and reworked insofar as possible. Reformist proposals focused on monitoring and implementation of the current agreement are too limited and impracticable within this momentary, monetary peace. Their success also relies on a level of trust in state power, and in the near-future ability to create a united military, that are both deeply unrealistic.

It is likely that at very least localised conflict, and the Kiir government's pursuit of military victory over factions outside the peace agreement, will continue. Stopping the hunt for a national-level solution around elite personalities would allow a re-focus on regional political economies, where there is more space for civil discussion of how grievances might be addressed and economic opportunities opened, and where local commanders have more invested in their communities than the personalities in Juba. There is local expertise about resolution-making, about risk mitigation and ways to seek morally powerful restitution, that might have more weight and power than the current status quo.
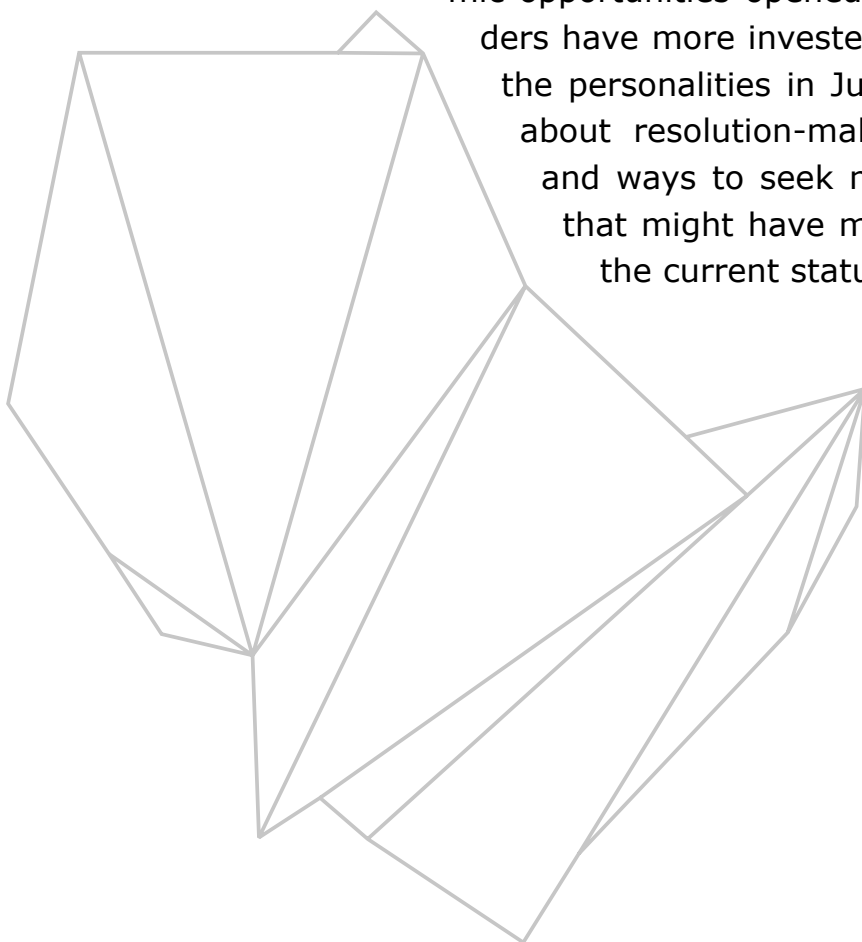
# List of acronyms

Bonn International Centre for Conversion (BICC)

Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)

Conflict Research Programme (CRP)

Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR)

International Crisis Group (ICG)

Non Governmental Organisation (NGO)

Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS)

Security Sector Reform (SSR)

South Sudan Opposition Alliance (SSOA)

Sudan People's Liberation Army In Opposition (SPLA–IO)

South Sudan Defence Force (SSDF)

South Sudan National Movement for Change (SSNMC)
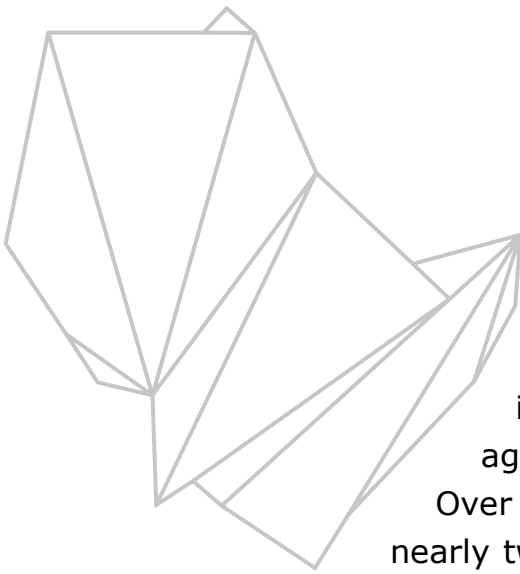
# Introduction

South Sudan's last civil war – formally ended in September 2018 with a 'revitalised' peace agreement[1] – has been catastrophic in many ways. Over five years, around 400,000 people died, leaving nearly two thirds of the population suffering food insecurity, and forcing just over four million people from their homes.[2] And the war has called into question the possibilities of the country itself: in the words of a refugee civil servant in 2017, 'South Sudan is gone as a nation and a state'.[3]

But there is little space within the revitalized peace agreement for the fundamental reconstruction work needed by South Sudanese society. The agreement's political settlement, and the post-conflict transition arrangements it lays out, are unlikely to hold in the mid-term. The agreement is at best a 'truce', unfinished, often-ambiguous, and sparse on details and routes to lasting peace.[4] The majority of its terms are the same as the original peace agreement signed in 2015 and broken in July 2016 with a new wave of violence and displacement. Its primary focus is on parceling out power at the centre of economic and military control in Juba. As such the current focus of implementation is – as in 2016 – on the negotiation of shared security control of the city in preparation for the 'unity government' of military elites, now delayed by six months to November 2019.[5]

There is a sense of urgency around this implementation. This is despite a lack of real progress on the fundamentals of the agreement, particularly around

1. The Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS).

2. Rose Gamble, 'South Sudan's Peace Agreement 'Fatally Flawed', Say Bishops,' *The Tablet*, March 1, 2019: https://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/11430/south-sudan-s-peace-agreement-fatally-flawed-say-bishops.

3. Ex-civil servant in regional government, now refugee in Kampala, 22 February 2017.

4. International Crisis Group, 'Salvaging South Sudan's Fragile Peace Deal', Africa Report, International Crisis Group, March 13, 2019): 12, 24.

5. 'South Sudan Determined to Form Unity Government in May', *Daily Monitor*, March 21, 2019: https://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/South-Sudan-determined-to-form-unity-government-in-May/688334-5034998-m6qvh9z/index.html; 'US wants to see movement towards unity government in South Sudan', *Deutsche Welle*, May 9, 2019: https://www.dw.com/en/us-wants-to-see-movement-towards-unity-government-in-south-sudan/a-48676022.

the core issue of creating a new unified military in South Sudan. The security provisions of the agreement are not just broken,[6] but are extremely dangerous, precipitating continued military mobilization and threatening to repeat the events of early 2016 by moving hostile forces into Juba's suburbs.[7]

The actual terms and timeline of the revitalized agreement do not necessarily matter to the signatories – it is generally understood that the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) will not be implemented in full, and that the new political settlement is being instrumentalised rather than implemented by those currently in power in Juba. Most people are in agreement that a wider settlement is immediately needed: one that moves beyond brokerage between nominal leaders of armed factions, and focuses in good faith on the structural foundations of South Sudan's insecurity.

One of these structural foundations is the nature of armed mobilization. Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) programming has been well-critiqued across post-conflict settings, but is still central to the revitalized agreement, and the questions at the heart of this programming are unresolved.

This report does not reiterate critiques of past DDR programming failures made better by South Sudanese analysts (see 'DDR: the critique', below). Instead, it adds to this critique by linking recent analysis of DDR failures to wider emerging research on mobilization, the reordering of wider society and popular culture around militarism (here defined as militarization), and the moral parameters and workings of violent action. This report also draws on interviews and meetings in the first half of 2017, firstly in north-western Uganda with recent refugees and supporters of the various armed factions in the Central Equatoria region of South Sudan, and later with supporters of armed factions and with pro-government individuals within South Sudan.[8]

This wider field of research demonstrates how armed mobilization and military work sits at the intersection of three fundamental and connected issues:

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6.  International Crisis Group, 'Salvaging South Sudan': 14.

7.  Conflict Research Programme, 'South Sudan: The Perils of Payroll Peace', Memo (London School of Economics and Political Science, March 2019): 9.

the need for people to seek armed self-defence and collective protection in circumstances of insecurity and complex risk; the configuring of South Sudan's conflict economy around armed labour as a livelihood route and a form of social security and government responsibility; and the impact of generations of murder and other violence on popular ideas of governance reform and moral order. These structural problems underpin the economics and practicalities of military mobilization and armed labour, and also the grievances of the majority of armed actors and their communities. There is no way to organize effective security sector reform, disarmament or demobilization separately from these systemic issues.
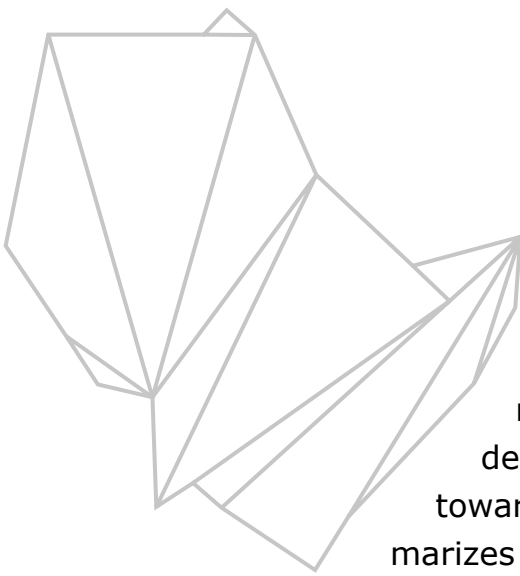
# Argument and structure

This paper turns first to a short review of the revitalized peace agreement's provisions for demobilization and security reform, and progress towards the agreement's provisions. It then summarizes the comprehensive critiques made of past and present disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, and security sector reform work in South Sudan. Criticisms of the current peace deal's security and military provisions centre on two main issues, detailed in this section: that a 'payroll peace' that is structured around buying out military factions is incentivizing rebellion-for-profit and further recruitment; and secondly that this neo-patrimonial cash-for-rebels system undermines civil state power and authority.

This report does not disagree with these criticisms but seeks to move beyond them. The majority of people in South Sudan are not arming and fighting themselves to gain access to military salaries or positions in the central state. This report's sections 'Real societal harms and economic injustice' and 'Protection, self-defence and community police' detail how many communities have organized militias and taken up arms because of actual societal and economic crisis, specifically the impact of commodification and expropriation of land and resources, and the resulting injustices and gross inequalities.

This report also notes that many current analyses of South Sudan's military-political system – focused as they are on payrolls and state dividends – do not explain why men across the country are seeking incredibly small and unpredictable financial gains through armed work, in exchange for extreme personal and family risk. The section 'Military livelihoods' seeks to put the 'payroll peace' in this deeper context. With few opportunities for waged labour, and little investment capital for small businesses, there are few possibilities for most people beyond scratching a bleakly 'resilient' subsistence. There is little hope within the fragmented educational sector. But many residents believe that armed service for military authorities involves fundamen-

tal responsibilities of social service in return, as salaries are paid to old and disabled servicemen, and to widows as compensation. These are established and important forms of state reciprocity that have been jeopardized in the last civil war and economic crisis.

This deeper view of the military economy raises more fundamental questions about the nature of government in South Sudan, and what political community can and should be reconstructed. This is the third point of this report. Most political analyses in the last few months assume that the state must reassert its power over military factions and a divided country. But South Sudan's current state – like successive regional governments since the colonial period – continues to be both weak and violent. There is barely any civic trust in the government and a relatively comprehensive fear of the security and military services across the country, essentially because of their ability to act with impunity. As a group of refugees in northern Uganda emphasised, this fundamental fear and distrust 'creates a gap between the government and the civilians – there is no unity' and no practical sense of citizenship in these circumstances.[9]

In this context, should – as Majak d'Agôot asserts – 'the monopoly of legitimate means of coercion… meaningfully revert to the state'[10] at the moment? What role can the South Sudanese state realistically have in protecting citizens when it does not have a social compact or trust from the majority of the population? Is it realistic, or desirable, for South Sudan's often-brutal and fundamentally authoritarian state apparatus to achieve a real monopoly on violent order in current circumstances?

This report finally suggests that – rather than DDR programmes, elections, or state institution-building – any real response to these questions necessitates fundamental economic and political reform within and beyond the state. Other than armed work, what opportunities do men and women have to support their families, to strive for a better life, and to construct real futures for their children? In a new federal, devolved government system, how would localized powers and funds be fairly used for the collective public good, and how could people be actually held to account? How can these societal contracts, ideas of citizenship, and mutual trust be rebuilt, and what mechanisms are there within South Sudan that can be supported to do this? Is it therefore realistic

9.  Refugee camp group, northern Uganda, 28 February 2017.

10.  Majak D'Agôot, "Taming the Dominant Gun Class in South Sudan" (Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, May 29, 2018), https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/taming-dominant-gun-class-south-sudan.

to attempt to disarm and demobilize at all unless these more fundamental questions are answered?

To have these critical conversations, as Majak notes, requires 'the existence of a civil space' in the first place; without civil space, South Sudanese-driven civic institutions, open governance reforms, and economic change cannot take root.[11] The final section 'Closed civil space and acts of defiance' details a highly risky but important critical political culture across South Sudan. Becoming a soldier or a rebel is a way to gain space to speak, including through video diaries of defected soldiers on Facebook, for example. Many of these men demand real structural reform, and fundamental change. Without open civil space, many people will continue to seek the ability to speak through armed mobilization or through flight into exile elsewhere.

This civil space cannot be made from the top down, via Majak's suggested UN protectorate or by another round of strategic reviews, and it cannot be made by an allegedly 'apolitical' and economy-blind peace-building sector. This can start with, but must reach beyond, church-led reconciliation forums, and this report agrees with the South Sudanese bishops' recommendation that 'the state of emergency should be lifted to ensure freedom of speech and other democratic rights'.[12]

These needs are immediate, should not be overlooked in the stressful mediation of Juba's securitization and in inflammatory debates over internal 'ethnic' borders. This report does not necessarily aim to strike a pessimistic note, but seeks to emphasise the need for these more fundamental conversations – which are already happening within societies across South Sudan.

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11. Majak D'Agoôt, 'Taming the Dominant Gun Class in South Sudan'.
12. Gamble, 'South Sudan's Peace Agreement 'Fatally Flawed', Say Bishops'.
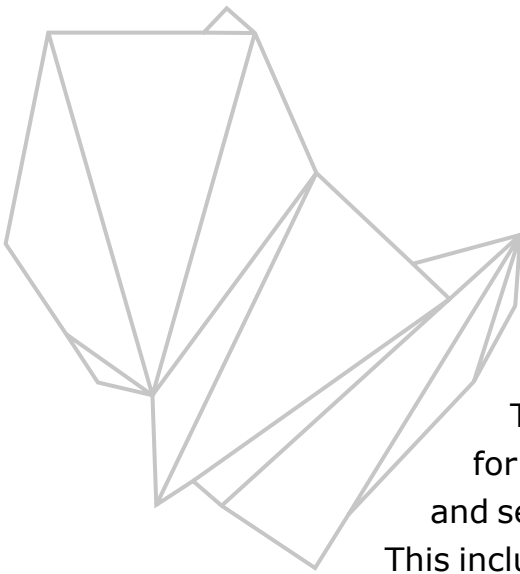
# R-ARCISS's military provisions: a brief summary

The revitalized agreement sets out an agenda for a new national army and a full strategic defence and security review within the first year of the peace.[13] This includes the end to recruitment and training of security forces (2.1.8); the declaration of force sizes and their cantonment, registration, and screening for recruitment into national armed service or into demobilization programmes (2.1.11, 2.2.2, 2.2.3.3, 2.2.3.5); the immediate demilitarization of civilian areas (2.2.3.1); and a full defence and security review (2.5). The parties agreed to train a new 300,000-strong security sector and a unified national army before May 2019 (now delayed to November); the Salva Kiir government has made it clear that it sees this process as an integration of other troops into the existing government army.[14]

By May 2019, there has been no real progress towards these provisions.[15] Instead, the peace fund and other potential financial dividends of the agreement are being mined for the benefit of top-tier politicians, including the renovation of houses of the now five vice-presidents. Martin Elia Lomuro, the Minister of Cabinet Affairs, emphasised that this is a legitimate investment in 'the people coming to run the country'.[16]

Despite this, both government and opposition groups complain of a lack of funds, particularly for cantonment.[17] A major difference in the revitalized agreement is the inclusion of other anti-government factions in the provisions beyond the main rebel group, Riek Machar's Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army In Opposition (SPLM/A–IO). These other factions are now

13.  Andrew Edward Tchie, 'Why the Latest Peace Deal in South Sudan Won't Hold', *The Conversation* (blog), March 13, 2019: https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/why-latest-peace-deal-south-sudan-won-t-hold.

14.  International Crisis Group, 'Salvaging South Sudan': 16.

15.  International Crisis Group: 4, 16.

16.  The Government of South Sudan allocated $1.4m to the peace fund, although apparently not all of this has been transferred. Sam Mednick, 'South Sudan Peace Deal Funds Spent on Renovating Politicians' Homes', *The Guardian*, February 13, 2019, sec. Global development, https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/feb/13/south-sudan-peace-deal-funds-spent-on-renovating-politicians-homes.

17.  'South Sudan Determined to Form Unity Government in May'.

grouped as the South Sudan Opposition Alliance (SSOA). The SSOA's armed factions often have barely any military capacity, but now have cantonment places to fill, a useful way to pay off debts through giving cantonment places in exchange for possible government security jobs, and to build some further support. This is leading to mobilization-for-cantonment across the country.[18]

This recruitment is not just about pay-offs and cash, however. The SPLM/A-IO is using this extended interim period as an opportunity to reorganize their weak and exhausted forces through the quiet rainy season, when it is hard for either side to organize offensives.

Similarly, the Kiir government is undertaking the reconstruction of state military forces and national security service control, in what is effectively a 'security sector review' outside the control and scope of the R-ARCSS. The most visible signs of this reconfiguration and power-rebalancing include the recapturing of the former Northern Bahr el Ghazal region's economic and military apparatus, with the new Governor of Aweil East State Deng Deng Akuei taking control of border revenues, training bases and the regional mobilization apparatus from the ousted former Chief of General Staff Paul Malong, in cooperation with another opponent of Malong, General Dau Aturjong, who was made commander of the region's SPLA Division 3 in January 2018. This re-established military-political authority has been cemented by a recent tour of the region by President Salva Kiir with Dau Aturjong, and the re-opening of training camps such as Pantit along the borderland, although it appears that Kiir is rebalancing the SPLA forces towards his own Dinka sections through recruitments in Warrap and Gogrial areas since late 2018, including the press-ganging of thousands of young men in Twic State in January 2019. This internal 'security sector reform' is discussed throughout the rest of this report.

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18.  Conflict Research Programme, 'South Sudan: The Perils of Payroll Peace': 8–9.
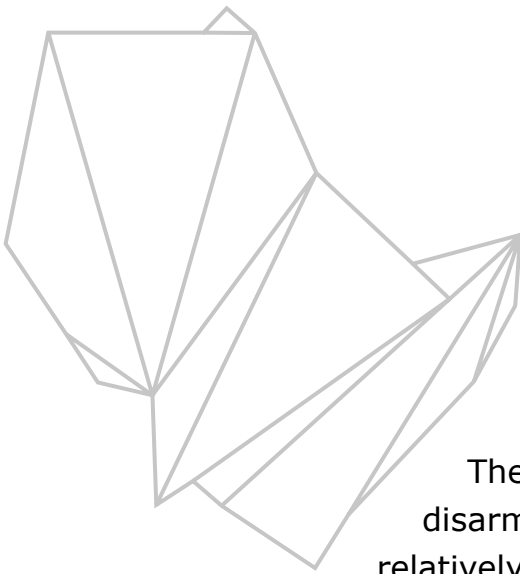
# Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration: the critique

The provisions of the revitalized agreement for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration are relatively standard in post-conflict programming, but they do not reflect the above realities, and their terms have also been heavily critiqued by practitioners and researchers.[19] As Kasaija Apuuli emphasises, 'previous failures to reform the security sector are at the heart of the most recent chaos'.[20]

DDR was central to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005.[21] The programming's history has been well-documented, and well-criticised. The early phase of DDR under the CPA attempted to identify 90,000 combatants to demobilize, but the process was derailed by (and involved) continuing violence, particularly in Jonglei with the extremely violent disarmament

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19. See, for example, Brian McQuinn, 'DDR and the Internal Organization of Non-State Armed Groups', *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 5, no. 1 (March 16, 2016): https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.412; Anup Phayal, Prabin B. Khadka, and Clayton L. Thyne, 'What Makes an Ex-Combatant Happy? A Micro-Analysis of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration in South Sudan', *International Studies Quarterly* 59, no. 4 (December 1, 2015): 654–68, https://doi.org/10.1111/isqu.12186; Jairo Munive, 'Invisible Labour: The Political Economy of Reintegration in South Sudan', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 8, no. 4 (October 2, 2014): 334–56, https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2014.964451; Jairo Munive, *Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration in South Sudan: the limits of conventional peace and security templates* (København: Dansk institut for internationale studier, 2013); Jairo Munive and Finn Stepputat, 'Rethinking Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programs', *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 4, no. 1 (October 26, 2015), https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.go; Robert Muggah and Chris O'Donnell, 'Next Generation Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration', *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 4, no. 1 (May 21, 2015): 1–12, https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.fs; Jonathan Fisher and David M. Anderson, 'Authoritarianism and the Securitization of Development in Africa', *International Affairs* 91, no. 1 (January 1, 2015): 131–51, https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12190; Timm Sureau, 'How DDR Shifted Its Face in South Sudan', *Emerging Orders in the Sudans*, 2014, 271–98; Lilli Banholzer, *When Do Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Programmes Succeed?*, Discussion Paper / Deutsches Institut Für Entwicklungspolitik, 2014,8 (Bonn: Dt. Inst. für Entwicklungspolitik, 2014); Lydia Stone, 'Failures and Opportunities: Rethinking DDR in South Sudan', Sudan Issue Brief (HSBA Small Arms Survey, May 2011); Robert Muggah, 'Innovations in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Policy and Research', *Reflections on the Last Decade (NUPI Working Paper No. 774)*, 2010: http://www.issafrica.org/armsnetafrica/sites/default/files/WP-774-Muggah.pdf.

20. Phillip Kasaija Apuuli, 'Durable Stability in South Sudan: What Are the Prerequisites?', (Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, May 29, 2018): https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/durable-stability-south-sudan-what-are-prerequisites.

21. Phayal, Khadka, and Thyne, 'What Makes an Ex-Combatant Happy?', 658; Alex de Waal, 'Peace and the Security Sector in Sudan, 2002–11', *African Security Review* 26, no. 2 (April 3, 2017): 180, https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2017.1297582.

campaigns, and the looming threat of inter-state war with Sudan.[22] With slow implementation, mismanagement and corruption including within UN and international agencies,[23] uneven engagement and poor design,[24] the process ground to a halt in April 2011 with only 12,525 people technically demobilised, about a third of the target of a $50m budget.[25] Other armed services including the police, fire, and wildlife services were (and still are) a 'dumping ground'[26] including for the roughly 207,000 various militia fighters integrated into the SPLA.[27]

More recent DDR planning has underlined the necessity of close links with security sector reform (SSR); but SSR also has a bleak history, with reviews and reform plans left repeatedly unimplemented.[28]

These problems are not unique to South Sudan. Most research on DDR programming is deeply critical of the sector, with one group of scholars noting in 2015 that in general 'we know very little about the effectiveness of DDR'.[29] Research has recently focused on issues of spoilers and sequencing, with arguments focusing on whether economic growth, demilitarization, elections, or state institutions need to come first.

For South Sudan, most critiques of DDR programming from the last decade emphasise two core problems: firstly the problem of building a 'payroll peace', buying out military factions and thus incentivising both further recruitment and rebellion-for-profit; and secondly, how this neopatrimonial buy-out system is made possible by the militarization of governance in the country, and its undermining of any civil power and authority.

22.  See John Young, 'Sudan People's Liberation Army', 2007: http://kms1.isn.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/ ISN/98925/ipublicationdocument_singledocument/9AAD6559-4D0B-4FAB-AA89-75947A088EB2/en/PAPER137. pdf; Adam O'Brien and Sudan Human Security Baseline Assessment, *Shots in the Dark: The 2008 South Sudan Civilian Disarmament Campaign* (Geneva: Small Arms Survey, Graduate Institute of International Studies, 2009).

23.  Waal, 'Peace and the Security Sector in Sudan, 2002–11': 188–89.

24.  Julie Brethfeld, *Unrealistic Expectations: Current Challenges to Reintegration in Southern Sudan* (Geneva: Small Arms Survey, 2010).

25.  Guy Lamb and Theo Stainer, 'The Conundrum of DDR Coordination: The Case of South Sudan', *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 7, no. 1 (April 27, 2018): 10, https://doi.org/10.5334/ sta.628.

26.  Kuol Deim Kuol, 'Confronting the Challenges of South Sudan's Security Sector: A Practitioner's Perspective', *Africa Center for Strategic Studies* (blog), May 29, 2018, https://africacenter.org/spotlight/ confronting-the-challenges-of-south-sudans-security-sector-a-practitioners-perspective/.

27.  Kasaija Apuuli, 'Durable Stability in South Sudan'.

28.  Transitional Demobilisation and Reintegration Program, 'Republic of South Sudan National DDR Programme 2013-2014 Pilot: Pilot Reintegration Project - Project Management Documentation' (Transitional Demobilisation and Reintegration Program, October 31, 2014): https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/ republic-south-sudan-national-ddr-programme-2013-2014-pilot-pilot-reintegration.

29.  Phayal, Khadka, and Thyne, 'What Makes an Ex-Combatant Happy?': 655.

This lack of civil authority is a fundamental issue within power structures in South Sudan over the last few decades. Many scholars and researchers point to the 'age-old militarization of all facets of life and society'[30] as the root of continued mobilization and violence. But what does this mean in practice? It is not *just* that the army was never properly integrated,[31] but as Kasaija Apuuli notes, 'the distinction between civilian and military authority has never existed' in the region,[32] and all key administrators from the county upwards have military ranks, and generally also military experience, often within the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army's (SPLM/A) wartime rebel government. State infrastructure has been hastily built around older SPLM/A wartime command systems and regional military economies. This has perpetuated a fragmented military-civil service that operates dependent on personalities and personal efforts – including governors who control locally-organised revenues and defence forces, often built on the old brigades and battalions that they led during the last civil war. 'Bodyguard' groups for ministers and other key advisors expanded in competition, and with growing political tensions over 2012–2013.

A key example of this continuation of military recruitment and reshaping of the South Sudan army over this period is the drafting of militia forces at Pantit training ground in the former Northern Bahr el Ghazal state from about 2011, initially as protection forces for the disputed border against Sudan; these troops engaged alongside formal SPLA brigades in skirmishes with Sudanese forces at Heglig in 2012. In mid-2013 these forces became the Dut ke Beny, and then Mathiang Anyoor, some being moved into Juba and a few integrated into the personal 'bodyguard' Tiger Battalion of the President Kiir.[33] These forces became instrumental in both the fighting in Juba in December 2013 and during the resulting civil war, partly due to the defection or desertion of a large part of the pre-existing national army.[34]

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30.  D'Agoôt, 'Taming the Dominant Gun Class in South Sudan'.

31.  See the National Salvation Front declaration of rebellion, March 2017.

32.  Kasaija Apuuli, 'Durable Stability in South Sudan'.

33.  Lesley Warner, 'The Disintegration of the Military Integration Process in South Sudan (2006–2013)', *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 5, no. 1 (September 27, 2016): 12, https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.460; Waal, 'Peace and the Security Sector in Sudan, 2002–11': 188.

34.  The Mathiang Anyoor is understood by Central Equatoria IO troops (as well as within Northern Bahr el Ghazal) as a militia, recruited partly through promises of education. Many recruits have defected, including within Juba and in Central Equatoria, and returned to Northern Bahr el Ghazal or have become 'civilian' refugees within northern Uganda. Personal observations, 2017–18; and discussion with IO organizer and spokesman, Arua, 25 February 2017.

There have therefore been several different government armies since independence. Since 2016, pro-government forces have again been reformulated around the internal national security services.[35] National security service personnel have been increasingly heavily engaged on front lines in the Equatorias and Upper Nile, particularly after the Mathiang Anyoor suffered heavy losses and defections over 2016.[36] Akol Kuur's internal security services are now equipped with military weapons, ranks, and discipline, and also work to discipline new SPLA recruits for instance in Yei in 2017 and 2018,[37] acting (in the words of an Equatoria IO organiser) as 'political police' within military units.[38] There is very little distinction between security and military sectors. Majak d'Agôot summarises this as 'the fusion of security leaders with political power, class, and ethnicity.'[39]

Recent international attempts to stop fighting have focused on attempting to buy people into peace, a 'payroll peace' in the words of the Conflict Research Programme: 'the practice of putting large numbers of soldiers and civil servants on the state payroll as an incentive for them, and the belligerent parties, to accept a peace agreement'.[40] This is essentially a neo-patrimonial analysis, where integration into civil-military service is a reward for loyalty, and armed rebellion is the key route to renegotiating status and access to funds. These principles were established in the Juba Agreement in 2006, which allowed for the integration of anti-SPLA militias under the umbrella of Paulino Matip's South Sudan Defence Force (SSDF) into the national army and other armed services. Many men joined their local SSDF militias in 2005 and 2006 in the hopes of benefiting from this integration process. This was not a bad career option; in 2005, salaries were the equivalent of about $150 per month, raised to around $220 in 2011 – a good income in comparison to equivalents from agricultural smallholdings or manual labour. In 2006, 80% of defence spending was on salaries and allowances.[41] Recruitment continued, in response to tensions with Sudan over secession and the border, to manage competing and armed political factions through patronage, and for personal gain.[42]

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35. I suggest that, from personal observations, there is a further reconstruction of President Kiir's central military-security apparatus underway currently in South Sudan, particularly around the figure and power of Akol Kuur, outside of the scope or line of sight of the international community and implementing partners to the peace agreement.

36. IO spokesman, Arua, 25 February 2017.

37. Personal communications in Juba, mid-2018.

38. IO spokesman, Arua, 25 February 2017.

39. D'Agôot, 'Taming the Dominant Gun Class in South Sudan'.

40. Conflict Research Programme, 'South Sudan: The Perils of Payroll Peace', 1.

41. Warner, 'The Disintegration of the Military Integration Process in South Sudan (2006–2013)', 12; Waal, 'Peace and the Security Sector in Sudan, 2002–11': 188.

42. Conflict Research Programme, 'South Sudan: The Perils of Payroll Peace': 5.

The definition of civil authority (and of a civilian) in South Sudan is complicated by this history of military authority and governance. Defining a 'civilian area' according to the revitalized agreement is difficult when so many families include military and security sector workers. Many people are working on the fringes of this armed labour market: as unpaid, semi-retired soldiers, 'community police', informers, training ground workers and supply line staff (see 'Military livelihoods' section below).[43]

This recent history underlines, as Alex de Waal notes, that security and military reforms must start from a political analysis.[44] But it also emphasises other wider questions around the militarization of South Sudan. South Sudan's population is bound up in an economy rooted in conflict and armed work. Most residents also need to protect themselves against the risks of an over-extended and violent military-security sector (even if they, or their relatives, work within it). Moving from a focus on demobilizing individual soldiers to this wider community economy complicates the idea of demobilization.

Secondly, there are real grievances involved in mobilization and conflict at both local and national levels that are not captured by a straightforwardly rent-seeking analysis of patronage and cash flows. The real politics of localised exploitations, abuses, land alienation, an unresolved history of seventy years of historical war crimes, and the collapse of a consensus around South Sudanese citizenship and common government, are all bound up in why people are fighting, on all sides.

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43.  For a full discussion of this issue, see Kindersley and Rolandsen, 'Who are the civilians in the wars of South Sudan?' *Security Dialogue* (2019, forthcoming).

44.  Waal, 'Peace and the Security Sector in Sudan, 2002–11': 195.
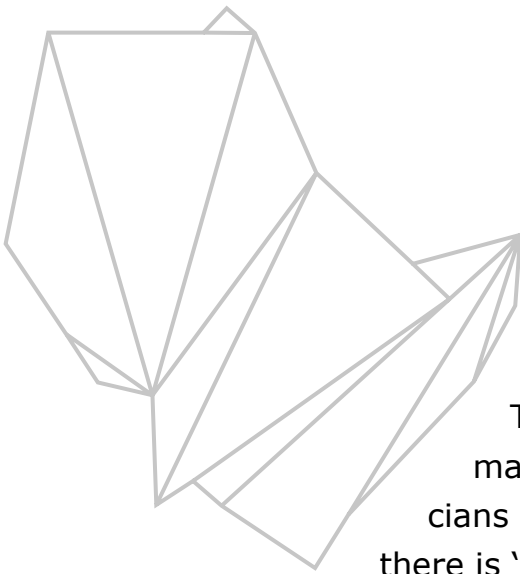
# Real societal harms and economic injustice

The general international focus is still on the machinations of the 'top' fifty or so armed politicians in South Sudan. As Mairi John Blackings notes, there is 'a strong case to be made against the politics of personality'.[45] This focus continues to limit real understanding of the multiple forms of conflict across the diverse political landscape of South Sudan, not least because it somewhat implies that the majority of the South Sudanese population are duped by, and thus in hock to, the base tribalist incitement of 'their' regional politicians. As Noel Stringham and Jonathan Forney emphasise, 'a focus on national politics of 'warlords' has led some commentators to either miss or misconstrue the interests of 'parochial' groups,' who often have more 'community-centred' grievances and motivations.[46]

Many communities have taken up arms in the wars since 2013 because of real societal economic harms. These vary across South Sudan, but centre generally on the impacts of commodification of land and resources, and their alienation or appropriation from local residents. This of course includes mineral resources, for instance of gold in Eastern and Western Equatoria, and of oil in Upper Nile. Residents across the country have also (over the last fifteen years or so) seen international corporations and investors partner with local politicians in leasing large areas of land for various forms of speculation and future large-scale agriculture, including apparently appropriating established coffee plantations in Central Equatoria.[47] Local conflicts and injustices have prolife-

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45.  Blackings, 'Why Peace Fails: The Case of South Sudan's Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan': 23.

46.  Noel Stringham and Jonathan Forney, 'It Takes a Village to Raise a Militia: Local Politics, the Nuer White Army, and South Sudan's Civil Wars', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 55, no. 2 (June 2017): 178–79, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X17000064.

47.  See Peter Hakim Justin and Han van Dik, 'Land Reform and Conflict in South Sudan: Evidence from Yei River County', *Africa Spectrum* 52, no. 2 (2017): 3–28; Peter Hakim Justin and Lotje De Vries, 'Governing Unclear Lines: Local Boundaries as a (Re)Source of Conflict in South Sudan', *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, March 9 (2017): 1–16, https://doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2017.1294497; David K Deng, 'Housing, Land and Property Disputes in South Sudan', (March 2019): 40; David Deng and Rens Willems, 'Justice and Conflict in South Sudan: Observations from a Pilot Survey' (November 2015).

rated around peri-urban land racketeering, market taxation, and controls on border trades and movement.[48]

Anger and collective losses from this expropriation have been compounded across the country by the deep inequalities of wealth, not only between elite warlords in Juba and the rural poor, but locally between most village residents and regional urban centres, as economic inequalities have expanded. Development projects and aid – which generally end at regional distribution hubs and larger villages – have created islands of investment and development.[49]

Across South Sudan, there is a common understanding that aid, tax, and investment wealth, good education, and social services are concentrated and hoarded in these centres. This is often tied in to longer narratives of marginalization and exploitation over the last few generations. This fundamental geographic inequality was part of the organisational discussion of the White Army youth leaders in 2013, and apparent in the pattern of large-scale violence against urban centres, in Bor in 1991, Nasir in 1993, and Malakal, Bor and Bentiu in 2013.[50]

This conversation is increasingly bound up (though not uncritically) in the toxic ethnic language promoted across the country. This reductive tribalism has been compounded by President Kiir's government's successive attempts to map 'ethnic territories' to local government boundaries. This is perpetuated by the current Independent Boundaries Commission's remit, 'which was tasked with defining and demarcating the tribal areas of South Sudan as they stood on 1 January 1956'.[51] Local expropriation and land alienation has been articulated as occupation by ethnic outsiders (despite, usually, local politicians and investors' complicity). This logic has been encouraged by both the Kiir government and by Riek's SPLM/A-IO political work, both announcing new states and new boundaries around supposed ethnic majorities: for the SPLM/A-IO, as a form of promissory politics to their local factions, and for Kiir's government, as a useful way to distract and divide local politicians and communities against each other over new boundary disputes and land claims.

48.  See Gabriella McMichael, 'Land Conflict and Informal Settlements in Juba, South Sudan', *Urban Studies* 53, no. 13 (October 1, 2016): 2721–37, https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098015612960.

49.  Stringham and Forney, 'It Takes a Village to Raise a Militia': 184; Øystein H. Rolandsen, 'Small and Far Between: Peacekeeping Economies in South Sudan', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 9, no. 3 (July 3, 2015): 353–71, https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2015.1070024.

50.  Stringham and Forney, 'It Takes a Village to Raise a Militia': 197.

51.  IGAD, 'The Work of the Independent Boundaries Commission Gets Underway in Juba' (March 19, 2019): https://www.igad.int/programs/115-south-sudan-office/2081-the-work-of-the-independent-boundaries-commission-gets-underway-in-juba.

In response, many Equatoria communities have turned to an often-vague demand for federalism.[52] The content of this federalist demand is sometimes forms of separatism, or demands for devolution or for actual regional governments, or more simply a demand for the power to expel 'colonising' forces, whether corporations, army units, or large private cattle camps. This demand has been articulated most aggressively by Peter Cirillo Swaka, defected SPLA deputy chief of general staff leading the umbrella group of militias the South Sudan National Democratic Alliance; and the former independent governor of Western Equatoria state, Bangasi Joseph Bakosoro, who leads the South Sudan National Movement for Change (SSNMC). Both men demand a political settlement beyond power-sharing, that addresses these fundamental inequalities and expropriations of local lands and resources.[53]

Both of these groups' manifestos also emphasise the killing of youth by government forces across South Sudan. Government repression is another core reason for armed mobilizations across the country since 2013. Again, this violence and repression has taken different forms and timelines in different regions.

In Yei, after the beginning of civil war in December 2013 and the flight of Riek Machar's remaining forces across the Equatorias to the DRC – pursued by Kiir's SPLA, and leaving a scorched-earth path – the SPLA increased horrifically violent 'counter-insurgency' operations over 2014 and 2015, particularly in Morobo and Lainya counties. These were conducted as slash-and-burn, mass-displacement operations to corral and cow residents, in a military logic endemic to SPLA operations since the 1980s.[54]

In Yei town and surrounding Central Equatorian administrative village centres, counter insurgency over 2014-2016 included intimidation, harassment, detention and disappearances, as well as wholesale looting at market days. This targeted young men, on a zero-sum logic of military loyalty. As a young man in a Uganda refugee camp emphasised, students were coerced into military work:

52.  Lovise Aalen and Mareike Schomerus, 'Considering the State: Perspectives on South Sudan's Subdivision and Federalism Debate' (ODI, 2016): https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/10837.pdf; Douglas H. Johnson, 'Federalism in the History of South Sudanese Political Thought' (2014), http://www.cmi.no/file/2876-RVI---Research-Papers---Federalism-in-the-history-of-South-Sudanese-political-thought.pdf.

53.  Fred Oluoch, 'South Sudan: Fresh Fighting in Yei - Troika Warns of Looming Crisis', *The East African (Nairobi)* (February 25, 2019): https://allafrica.com/stories/201902250631.html.

54.  See Kindersley and Rolandsen, 'Who are the civilians in the wars of South Sudan?', forthcoming; Naomi Pendle, 'Contesting the Militarization of the Places Where They Met: The Landscapes of the Western Nuer and Dinka (South Sudan)', *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 11, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 73, https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2017.1288408.

'when government soldiers get you they say you are a rebel and take you to the barracks… so even if you don't want, you are forced to go.'[55] Workers in Yei radio stations, churches, NGOs and community associations were threatened on phone for suspected sedition, and colleagues disappeared. Many refugees in northern Uganda explained how an informant system allowed locals to accuse personal enemies of 'mobilising town resources for rebels' to security services, with people beaten, burned with melted plastic, or disappearing.[56] The local judiciary were intimidated into either leaving for Juba or limiting court work.

After civil war re-started in Juba in July 2016, the situation in Yei significantly worsened. A refugee NGO worker, speaking in northern Uganda in early 2017, explained how National Intelligence set up a cordon around the town, appropriating vehicles and diesel, and holding cars full of women and children ransom in the sun until bribes were paid. The Mahad barracks near the airport expanded as a barrier around the airstrip. The NGO worker emphasised the shifting nature of government military order: 'it's become so confusing that you can't know who is who and who is what', with National Security and Military Intelligence working with Mathiang Anyoor battalions in operations against SPLM/A-IO posts in villages. He noted that the civil police service had been undermined: '"ita police saki", you are only police.'[57]

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55. Refugee camp group, northern Uganda, 28 February 2017.

56. NGO radio station worker from Yei, northern Uganda, 27 February 2017.

57. NGO radio station worker from Yei, northern Uganda, 27 February 2017.
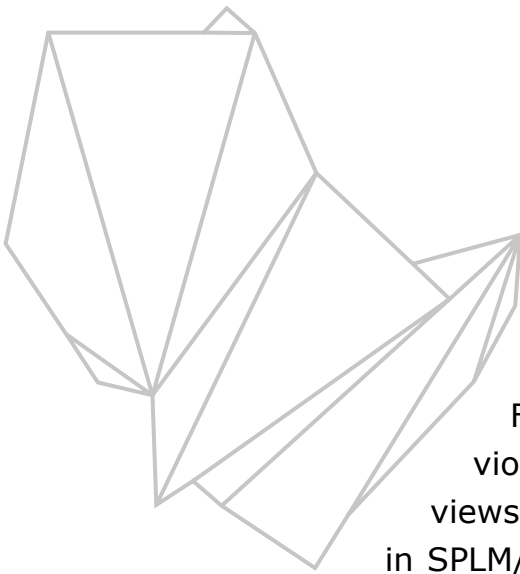
# Protection, Self-Defence and Community Police

For many residents the obvious response to this violence is armed self-defence. Throughout interviews in 2017 and 2018, men and women involved in SPLM/A-IO mobilisation and supply work in northern Ugandan refugee camps, and men in the SPLA and the Mathiang Anyoor, all explained that they were involved in their community defence and protection.

This understanding of self-defence is most basically apparent in the continued use of 'defence' in the naming of various militias in South Sudan since the 1960s. This includes the South Sudan Defence Forces, the Sudan People's Defence Forces, and the Equatoria Defence Force, in the second civil war; the Dut ku Beny (Defend the Leader) forces formed in 2012, made up of 'militarised, former cattle-keeping Dinka men' recruited from Warrap and greater Bahr el Ghazal;[58] and the Dut Baai (Defend the Homeland) Northern Bahr el Ghazal-origin militia operating in southern Darfur since 2016.

Residents across South Sudan have organised community 'guards' (and forms of 'community police') in successive conflicts since the 1960s, including as scouts and village defence.[59] These often poorly-armed local 'guards' have been used as ancillary forces, carriers, and lookouts by rebel groups and by the Sudan government throughout the southern civil wars,[60] including the Sudan government's use of 'national guards', the Aras Watani, in 1963-1972, and the SPLA's co-option of community-organised cattle guards, the dut and gel weng in Warrap and Northern Bahr el Ghazal, in the 1990s. These mobilizations are built on shifting older systems of organising militia defence;[61]

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58.  Naomi Pendle, 'They Are Now Community Police': Negotiating the Boundaries and Nature of the Government in South Sudan through the Identity of Militarised Cattle-Keepers', *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 22, no. 3 (July 17, 2015): 411, https://doi.org/10.1163/15718115-02203006.

59.  See Kindersley and Rolandsen, 'Who are the civilians in the wars of South Sudan?', forthcoming.

60.  Pendle, 'Contesting the Militarization of the Places Where They Met': 67.

61.  Marjoke Oosterom, 'Gendered (in)Security in South Sudan: Masculinities and Hybrid Governance in Imatong State', *Peacebuilding* 5, no. 2 (May 4, 2017): 186, https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2016.1277015.

in Eastern Equatoria, communities still sing songs of armed resistance and historic battles against the forces of the Mahdiya in the 1880s.[62] This fundamentally blurs the line between combatant and armed resident: many men moving between Central Equatoria and northern Uganda in 2017, for instance, were as much involved in maintaining homes, farms, and honey trading across the border as they were armed members of, and arms-smugglers for, local SPLM/A-IO factions around their villages: they are 'just protecting their land.'[63]

This self-protection work is not a phenomenon of periods of 'war' (i.e. 1983-2005, 2013-2018). This armed organisation is subject to local timelines and histories of conflict across the country. 'Many communities say that independence has only ended a certain kind of war, but has left sources of insecurity most relevant to them unmitigated'.[64] The Jonglei wars escalated after 'peace' in 2005; and in Northern Bahr el Ghazal, recruitment escalated from 2008 because of an apparently imminent border war with Sudan.

These continuities of insecurity, localised violence, stress and fear are crucial to any analysis of the militarization of societies and men's work and self-understandings in the country. Understanding how this insecurity and violence is unevenly experienced across the country is also vital, even if these regional inequities in access to arms and targeting (by violent SPLA disarmament campaigns, for instance) is expressed in violently inflammatory language: for instance a 2016 blog post, written from central Equatoria, emphasising how post-CPA disarmament had not targeted Dinka communities, but instead built 'a plethora of Jieng [Dinka] militias, armed youth groups and armed pastoralists'. So

'You should arm yourselves as individuals and as village communities. Vigilante groups or well organised militias are the answer to the insecurity brought upon our communities… There could have been different stories to the attacks that took place in Mundri, Yambio, Wonduruba and Lo'bonok, had the locals been well armed for self-defence'.[65]

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62.  Interviews in Juba and Kampala, June 2017.

63.  Refugee camp group, northern Uganda, 28 February 2017.

64.  Wild, Jok, and Patel, 'The Militarization of Cattle Raiding in South Sudan', 7.

65.  Lako Jada Kwajok, 'The Bari Community Is At A Crossroad: Time For Self-Defense!', *SouthSudanNation.Com* (blog), March 26, 2016, http://www.southsudannation.com/the-bari-community-is-at-a-crossroads-time-for-self-defense/.
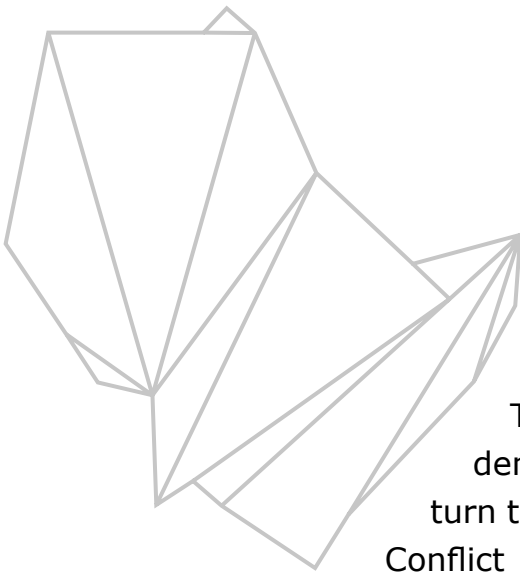
# Military livelihoods and the economics of mobilisation

There is a common idea in DDR work that if demobilizing fighters are not paid off, they will turn to crime or further rebellion for self-support. The Conflict Research Programme (CRP) rightly notes that this is a dangerous logic, expanding 'peace' payrolls and patronage politics.[66] But it is also based on a lack of detailed analysis of how these armed men and their families can afford to live and survive in South Sudan's collapsing economy. Beyond a macro-economic focus on state budgets, corruption, and oil production, analysis and data on the popular economy is extremely limited.

In this wider economy, it is important to understand armed work as a key form of paid labour.[67] Most people have very little opportunity to access the actually 'lucrative war economy' at the centre of power in Juba.[68] But with few opportunities for waged labour, and little investment capital for small businesses, there are few possibilities for most people beyond scratching a bleakly 'resilient' subsistence. Inflation continues to destabilise and destroy trade, small businesses, and other insecure and informal petty labour. As several refugees in northern Uganda, and residents in Northern Bahr el Ghazal and Juba all noted, angry and often-traumatised young people are bored and frustrated, and have extremely limited options for fulfilling their personal aspirations.[69] Armed work is obviously not ideal to many young men – 'being a military is the last work'[70] – but many young men are turning to private security company or state military work, to the call-ups for national security training made by radio, or to paid cattle-herding work for wealthy military men, and maybe

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66.   Conflict Research Programme, 'South Sudan: The Perils of Payroll Peace'.

67.   See Marielle Debos, 'Living by the Gun in Chad: Armed Violence as a Practical Occupation', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 49, no. 3 (2011): 409–428 on Chad; Louisa Lombard, 'The Threat of Rebellion: Claiming Entitled Personhood in Central Africa', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 22, no. 3 (September 1, 2016): 552–69, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.12446 on the Central African Republic.

68.   D'Agoôt, 'Taming the Dominant Gun Class in South Sudan'.

69.   Interviews in Aweil, Juba, and Arua, January–March and August 2017.

70.   Elias, young male refugee camp resident near Koboko, northern Uganda, 17 February 2017.

to rebel work as armed men, organisers or 'spokespersons'. As one man in a refugee camp emphasised, 'why should I waste my time in the camp [if] any group of youth with guns can promote me to a rank?'[71] As Marielle Debos observed in Chad, for many young men with no investment or social capital who are just working to keep themselves alive, going into rebel groups living in a forest is not a significant change in livelihood, and a viable socio-economic option.[72]

There are also significant, if irregular and uncertain, benefits to joining armed employment. This goes well beyond the extremely limited and unpredictable possible dividends of a DDR programme. The military and security sector are still paid more often than the state civil sector, and local detachments have been encouraged to self-fund through market monopolies and price-fixing on key goods. These take various forms, such as the national security sector's monopoly on fuel distribution across Juba; SPLA and SPLM/A-IO sale and taxation of teak plantations and artisan gold-mining across the Equatorias; and the armed control of charcoal production and/or trade and taxation across the country.[73]

This creates a kind of economic coercion to recruitment (alongside the more infrequent use of conscription and coercion, for instance in Warrap in December 2018 and January 2019). There are very few career options for the majority of young men in South Sudan, so recruitment – particularly of unpaid teachers, or of farm labourers with no access to capital for their own start-ups or education – is a decent chance for some possible ongoing security and opportunity through sporadic salary payments, balanced against the risk of being sent to the 'front line'.

But the overextension of the military-security sector since 2005 is not just about paying off, or finding employment for, a commander's local community. The CRP notes that there were far fewer fighting men actually called up in 2013 than were actually on the SPLA payroll, and says that this was because many soldiers had self-demobilized and reintegrated.[74] But this was also because being on the SPLA or security payroll of course does not mean you are on active armed service; most serving soldiers are generally already

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71. Male resident of a refugee camp near Arua, northern Uganda, 21 February 2017.

72. Debos, 'Living by the Gun in Chad', 416.

73. Blackings, 'Why Peace Fails: The Case of South Sudan's Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan', 22.

74. Conflict Research Programme, 'South Sudan: The Perils of Payroll Peace', 6.

'off duty'[75] and balancing their sporadic army wages with agricultural work and small businesses. It is therefore hard to draw the line between active and 'reintegrated' armed workers.

More importantly, maybe, many people on that payroll (as today) were (and are) retirees, disabled, and widows receiving salary benefits under their dead husband's name. Employment in military-security sector provides, or at least it is understood that it should provide, a form of social security. It is commonly understood, at least in areas of the country where government military service is still common for instance in greater Bahr el Ghazal, Warrap, and Lakes former states, that this is part of what the state should do, providing entitlements and security in exchange for service.[76]

Recruitment in this sense, into the civil, security, and military services, is a form of reciprocity between state and its population. This is part of the reasons for President Salva Kiir's tour of greater Bahr el Ghazal, and why his promises of reopening several military training camps, including Pantit again, have been met with some positive local response. This is not just to dispense, from the top down, some small cash benefits from the leaderships' 'political marketplace', but about fulfilling a common local understanding of what the government should be doing, as a form of reciprocity between state and citizens.

This state social security has been fundamentally affected by the economic crisis and civil wars, and the government's failing to properly fund and support this system is a major point of criticism in government-controlled territory outside of Juba. Many residents of Northern Bahr el Ghazal complain that the government has failed to keep proper records of the dead in this latest war, has not returned bodies for proper burial and remembrance, or even notify families, and has not supported widows, disabled servicemen, and orphaned children.

This criticism was even made by a group of Nuer youth in a northern Uganda refugee camp; they observed that the (Dinka) Mathiang Anyoor soldiers had no payment other than looting, and that many injured fighters had fled to the same refugee camps in poverty.[77] These are similar critiques of corruption and government failures to those made within the White Army groups,

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75. Koos, 'Why and How Civil Defense Militias Emerge', 12.

76. As observed in CAR by Lombard, 'The Threat of Rebellion', 556.

77. Group of Nuer young male refugees and students, Arua, northern Uganda, 26 February 2017.

and emphasise how this system of government salaries and payments is 'less about clientelism, and more about … ethical reciprocity between political elites and rural communities': 'In contrast to this perceived injustice, White Army militias strove to uphold principles of reciprocity as they elected leaders and redistributed wealth'.[78]

Listening to this South Sudanese conversation about government responsibility complicates the description of military employment as a cash patronage system based on greed.[79] This system has evolved since the CPA in 2005, but is rooted in longer histories of military work and armed governance across the region.[80] Successive military governments (of states, and of rebel groups) have entrenched both this armed economy and established a coercive, persuasive rhetoric built on shifting ideas of masculinity and responsibility.

These DDR programmes often assume that reintegration is an individual process, drawing men out of the military system into the civilian economy (which is, in South Sudan, an underdeveloped, exploitative, and limited market economy, or the risky and demanding 'subsistence' agricultural sector). But it is vital to see soldiers as part of these wider militarized socio-economic systems.

Skills and livelihoods programming will not change the fundamentals of this economy. Short-term training and small investment capital pots will not substantially change the prospects of the majority in saturated semi-skilled work markets. This is why, for instance, the National Salvation Front's declaration of rebellion in March 2017 involved a lengthy critique of how 'Kiir's government has overseen the steady decline of the production and wealth creation part of the economy'. Major economic change – as well as the more specific reforms needed at the centre of government finance – is at the heart of any change to this military-economic system.

78.  Stringham and Forney, 'It Takes a Village to Raise a Militia', 195.

79.  As noted by Munive and Stepputat, 'Rethinking Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programs', 8.

80.  See D'Agoôt, 'Taming the Dominant Gun Class in South Sudan'.
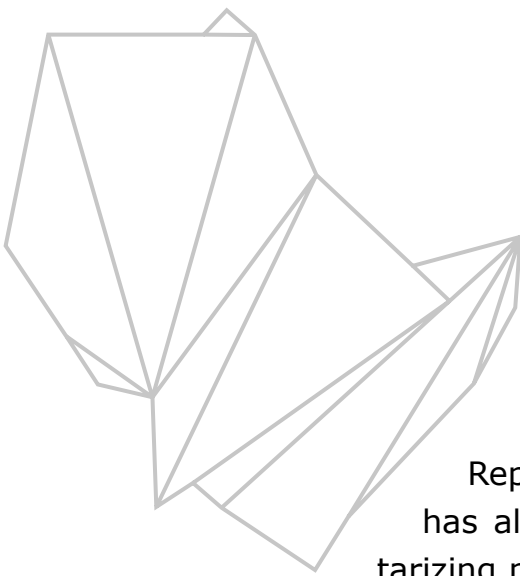
# Militarization is also politics: Closed civil space and acts of defiance

Repression and counter-insurgency by government has also involved closing down civic space and militarizing public life. As well as monitoring and controlling public and private conversations via national security clearance processes, Kiir's government has systematically undermined key civil institutions, including the judiciary, youth unions, universities, and other forms of public culture, through direct threat as well as strategic underfunding.

This has been useful for shutting down space for criticism, and thus for the development of alternative political ideas and movements. It is frequently forgotten by the international community that all male and female South Sudanese residents, including the apparently 'rational utility maximisers' of the military and security sector, are political beings.[81] In this sense, becoming military and security – or becoming a rebel – is a way of getting space to speak, and perhaps to be listened to. Militarization does not just give prominent politicians a seat at the negotiating table in Addis Ababa; it also gives ordinary residents voice, power, and influence in a way that civil action does not.

This is visible on South Sudanese Facebook, for instance, as defecting soldiers or rebel young men post or video record their explanations of the current political system and their material context. Many of these men demand real structural reform, and 'fundamental change'.[82] Older SPLM/A-IO organisers in northern Uganda also emphasised this, discussing the unequal distribution of resources, intimidation and repression and a lack of freedom of expression, and the lack of rule of law over employment, opportunity, and land.[83] The group of Nuer youth in their refugee camp in northern Uganda also appre-

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81. Munive and Stepputat, 'Rethinking Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programs', 8.
82. IO organizer and fundraiser, Arua, northern Uganda, 26 February 2017.
83. IO organizer / combatant, Arua, northern Uganda, 3 March 2017; IO organizer and fundraiser, Arua, northern Uganda, 26 February 2017.

ciated their new space to speak: 'for us, we don't want Riek Machar, we don't just want to put him in power.' 'We want democracy, so we just can protest, peacefully.' They saw the current status quo as 'visionless leaders, who just want to be in power.'[84] 'We talk about good governance. The older think that if they are in power all the resources are yours and you can call yourself Beny [Dinka: big man].'[85]

These discussions in both South Sudan and northern Uganda often centered on questions of equality and belonging. A refugee camp resident emphasised: '[you] should be fighting for the civilians to be your people, not to destroy them. Some people tell themselves that they are 1st class people in South Sudan. Who is 2nd class then? And 3rd class?'[86] Several people over the last few years have invoked older SPLA ideas of liberation and democratic reform. '[People are thinking] we fought in vain. The vision Dr John [Garang] saw was in vain.'[87] The 'ideas and ideologies that people went to the bush to fight for are lost'.[88]

These conversations are part of wider efforts within South Sudanese communities across the region to discuss, and to try to re-establish, shifting moral standards and societal norms, in the face of incitement to ethno-nationalist divisions and mutual violence. Ordinary people across the country are engaged in common acts of defiance and resistance that often go unseen by outsiders: including pushbacks against recruitments, inter-ethnic mutual support and aid, and memorialisations (of recent and of 1960s wars and atrocities).[89]

In the face of disinhibited killing and common desires for retaliation and retribution, residents are exerting pressure to control behaviour and sanction misconduct, drawing on older local forms of ending conflicts and making restitution.[90] As Stringham and Forney note,

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84. Group of Nuer young male refugees and students, Arua, northern Uganda, 26 February 2017.

85. IO spokesman, Arua, 25 February 2017.

86. William, Rhino Camp resident, northern Uganda, 3 March 2017; echoed by IO organizer / combatant, Arua, northern Uganda, 3 March 2017.

87. IO organizer and fundraiser, Arua, northern Uganda, 26 February 2017.

88. Refugee civil servant, northern Uganda, 22 February 2017.

89. See Sharon E. Hutchinson and Naomi R. Pendle, 'Violence, Legitimacy, and Prophecy: Nuer Struggles with Uncertainty in South Sudan', *American Ethnologist* 42, no. 3 (July 2015): 415–30, https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.12138; Pendle, "Contesting the Militarization of the Places Where They Met"; Zoe Cormack, 'The spectacle of death: visibility and concealment at an unfinished memorial in South Sudan,' *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 11, no. 1 (January 2017): 115-32, https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2017.1288410.

90. Wild, Jok, and Patel, 'The Militarization of Cattle Raiding in South Sudan', 4; Koos, 'Why and How Civil Defense Militias Emerge', 13; Stringham and Forney, 'It Takes a Village to Raise a Militia', 179.

'most Nuer-speakers (and most South Sudanese) still live in rural areas where communities have resisted warlords' assaults on their cohesion in creative ways. Women have organised in order to control local men and local captains in the civilian militias, known as bunomni, have grown more influential.'[91]

Local communities are involved in intense discussions about how to deal with horrific abuses and incitement to violence. A group of refugees in northern Uganda explained how politicians and social media groups incited atrocious acts of violence in response to legitimate pain at, for instance, a baby's death by gunfire – 'what are you going to feel?!'[92] Revenge is by no means straight-forward, and residents across South Sudan frequently ignore (or act against) inflammatory rhetoric or individuals inciting violence.[93]

It is often emphasised that we must 'address the historical grievances of the people of South Sudan'.[94] This is not some kind of discrete psychological issue separate from the basic practicalities of cash and conflict. And these grie-vances are not just about this last civil war, but about three generations of unresolved violence and past wounds. These are exposed: people know where bodies are left unburied, where local atrocities occurred with no memorializa-tion or proper funerals.[95] In conversation over the last year or so, SPLM/A-IO soldiers in northern Uganda (and diaspora South Sudanese in Oxford) have both returned to events of the 1960s, including the famed Anya-Nya internal battle at Balago Bindi in south-west Equatoria, to explain the depths of unfi-nished restitution. As Naomi Pendle notes,

'young, armed men still take risks to visit and make sacrifices on the grave-sites of ancestors buried here. They go heavily armed. In preserving these material reminders of more peaceful pasts they are potentially providing an alternative imagining of the landscape.'[96]

As such, in contrast to increasingly short-term (and unnecessarily expeditious) international programming and political pressures, many South Sudanese people are engaged in these conversations about inter-generational suffering

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91.  Stringham and Forney, 'It Takes a Village to Raise a Militia', 179.

92.  Refugee camp group, northern Uganda, 28 February 2017.

93.  Including organizing political education within Central Equatoria IO units: IO spokesman, Arua, 25 February 2017.

94.  Tchie, 'Why the Latest Peace Deal in South Sudan Won't Hold'.

95.  Pendle, 'Contesting the Militarization of the Places Where They Met', 75; Cormack, 'The Spectacle of Death'.

96.  Pendle, 'Contesting the Militarization of the Places Where They Met', 75.

and long-term reform. IO organisers in northern Uganda worried that the continued wars and their own recruitments were 'losing a generation', and that if 'we are only toppling the government and status quo remains, we have not changed anything.'[97] The issue for many people is rebuilding a 'broken social fabric', with some IO supporters talking about a plan for 2030.[98] But they are also aware that those in power are invested in replicating and entrenching the system that maintains their position, 'creating a cadre of youth to protect their political and business interests. … [We] need to break this wall.'[99]

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97.  IO fundraiser and refugee camp school teacher, northern Uganda, 7 March 2017.

98.  Refugee civil servant, northern Uganda, 22 February 2017.

99.  Refugee NGO worker, northern Uganda, 21 February 2017.
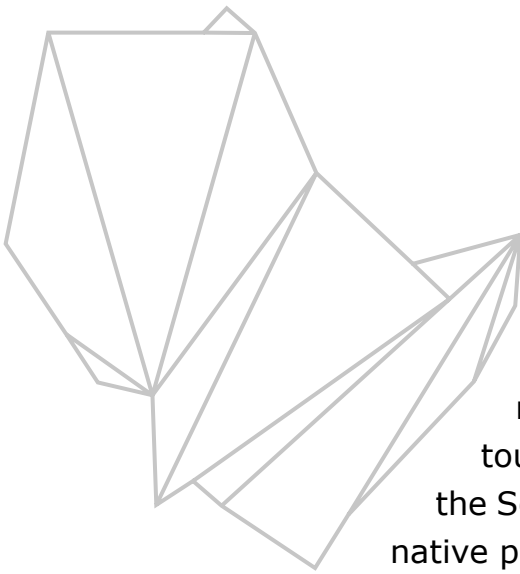
# Conclusion

Current discussions of the military arrangements in Juba and the cantonment process barely touch on these fundamental structural issues, and the South Sudanese debates around them. And alternative prescriptions for military reforms in South Sudan are also limited. In its deeply critical report 'Salvaging South Sudan's Fragile Peace Deal' in March 2019, the International Crisis Group (ICG) emphasised that

'South Sudan needs fewer men with guns, not more. Donors and all partners should encourage the parties to strike a realistic deal that accommodates active combatants while limiting new recruitment and concentrates soldiers outside cities.'[100]

Of course this is true. Despite deal-striking like this being morally, practically, and politically bankrupt in both popular South Sudanese discourse and in practice, the precipitous progress of the same partially-made, barely-implemented elite deal (as led to the last crisis in July 2016) must at very least be slowed down and reworked insofar as possible.

There are many current recommendations specifically on how to get 'fewer men with guns'. The ICG, like Deim Kuol,[101] want a realistic audit of existing forces, a cap based on actual military figures, and limited integration on this basis. This is echoed by the CRP, who recommend a cap on paid positions based on a realistic audit. A Bonn International Centre for Conversion (BICC) report recommends banning political party membership within the military, in the effort to separate military and political systems, and the use of biometric registration in this count of forces.[102] Kasaiija Apuuli also calls for a full review of the security sector.[103]

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100.  International Crisis Group, 'Salvaging South Sudan', 21.

101.  International Crisis Group, 17; Deim Kuol, 'Confronting the Challenges of South Sudan's Security Sector'.

102.  Claudia Breitung, Wolf-Christian Paes, and Luuk van de Vondervoort, 'In Need of a Critical Re-Think: Security Sector Reform in South Sudan', Working Paper (BICC, 2016).

103.  Kasaija Apuuli, 'Durable Stability in South Sudan'.

These reformist proposals are too limited and impracticable within this momentary, monetary peace. Their success also relies on a level of trust in state power, and in the near-future ability to create a united military, that are both deeply unrealistic.

This report has attempted to put these vital efforts at demobilizing and demilitarizing the political terrain in South Sudan in the wider context. We in the international community need to understand the complex field of armed work, its place within a rooted conflict economy, and the role of military employment within systems of social security and family protection. We need to see armed actors as (mostly) men in their political, economic, and social context, as family members, workers, and thinkers.

It is likely that at very least localised conflict, and Kiir government's pursuit of military victory over factions outside the peace agreement, will continue. Stopping the hunt for an alternative national-level solution around elite personalities would allow a re-focus on regional political economies, where there is more space for civil discussion of how grievances might be addressed and economic opportunities opened, and where local commanders have more invested in their communities than the personalities in Juba. There is local expertise about resolution-making, about risk mitigation and ways to seek morally powerful restitution, that might have more weight and power than the current status quo.