RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Disintegration of the Military Integration Process in South Sudan (2006–2013)

Lesley Anne Warner

This article argues that military integration served a critical purpose in 2006, arguably preventing large-scale conflict within South Sudan and ensuring a level of stability prior to the CPA-mandated referendum on self-determination in 2011. Nonetheless, integration was poorly-conceived and implemented, and received limited support from third party actors that were more focused on rightsizing the SPLA and transforming it into a conventional, professional military. The *de facto* open-door nature of South Sudan's integration process created incentives for armed rebellion, while failed rightsizing initiatives increased pressure on the military integration process as the most expedient way of mitigating the threat these groups posed to stability. Integration thus became an end in and of itself rather than a transitional measure to contain former combatants while the government worked out a more long-term solution for South Sudan's security sector. Consequently, the SPLA was in a state of arrested development, preventing efforts to transform the military from gaining traction, and making the force more likely to fragment along factional lines during periods of heightened political competition.

Introduction[1]

Since its inception in 1983, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) had been integrating other rebel groups operating in what was then southern Sudan during the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983–2005). Even so, by the time the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed ending the war with the Government of Sudan, over 50,000 men were members of up to 50 armed groups that included rivals to the SPLA, which came to comprise the military of South Sudan (Young 2006; ICG 2006). Faced with both legal and practical imperatives to address non-SPLA armed groups, the

Government of South Sudan could either attempt to fight them, accept that it did not possess a monopoly on the use of force in the South,[2] or attempt to reach a political-military accommodation with them. For the most part, the government chose to accommodate armed groups, formalized through the Juba Declaration on Unity and Integration in January 2006, which granted these groups amnesty for all war-related activities in exchange for their loyalty to the government and integration into the SPLA ("Juba Declaration" GRSS 2006). Through military integration, the SPLA thus became the primary vehicle for political-military accommodation in South Sudan (Hutton 2014).

This article examines the role of military integration during what was supposed to be

King's College London, GB
warner.lesley@gmail.com

South Sudan's transition from war to peace, culminating in the outbreak of civil war in December 2013. The insights herein are based on interviews with current and former SPLA officers, Ministry of Defense officials, United Nations officials, and consultants on South Sudan's security sector, conducted between August 2012 and December 2014. This article argues that military integration served a critical purpose in 2006, arguably preventing large-scale conflict within South Sudan and ensuring a level of stability prior to the CPA-mandated referendum on self-determination in 2011. Nonetheless, integration was poorly-conceived and implemented and received limited support from third party actors that were more focused on rightsizing the SPLA and transforming it into a conventional, professional military. The *de facto* open-door nature of South Sudan's integration process created incentives for armed rebellion, while failed rightsizing initiatives increased pressure on the military integration process as the most expedient way of mitigating the threat these groups posed to stability. Integration thus became an end in and of itself rather than a transitional measure to contain former combatants while the government worked out a more long-term solution for South Sudan's security sector. Consequently, the SPLA was in a state of arrested development, preventing efforts to transform the military from gaining traction and making the force more likely to fragment along factional lines during periods of heightened political competition.

Context of Military Integration in South Sudan

Military integration is a peace-building strategy in which armed groups are incorporated or amalgamated into a statutory security framework (Licklider 2014; Hoddie and Hartzell 2003; Glassmyer and Sambanis 2008; Knight 2009; Colletta 2012). Employed during transitions from war to peace, it is a process that can be an outcome of a negotiated settlement following a political/

military defeat or a stalemate (Colletta 2012; Knight 2009). Military integration is often utilized in conjunction with political power-sharing arrangements in which political positions, such as ministerial posts and seats in the legislature, are distributed in the aftermath of a conflict (Glassmyer and Sambanis 2008; Hoddie and Hartzell 2003). While it is distinct from disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR), military integration can take place prior to, or even concurrent to DDR, as well as the provision of livelihoods opportunities and broader social, political, and economic assistance to former combatants (Hall 2009). Generally, the process includes negotiation, cantonment and verification of parade, fitness screening, rank assignment, and division assignment.

In practice, military integration in South Sudan was not a particularly standardized process; there was no clear strategy or guidelines for how armed groups should be integrated.[3] This may have been attributed to the fact that between 2006 and 2013, South Sudan faced concurrent and competing imperatives in its governance, economic, and security sectors, and arguably had limited bandwidth to design and implement a military integration process that would address the threat posed by armed groups.[4]

Between 2005 and 2006, the SPLA was transitioning from a non-salaried, *ad hoc* guerrilla army into a more conventional force with military formations (Rands 2010). Further complicating this transition was that there were three statutory military forces in Sudan/South Sudan – the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), the SPLA, and the Joint Integrated Units (JIUs).[5] Per the CPA, there was to be a formal process of military integration between the SAF and the SPLA, and the JIUs were intended to demonstrate national unity and serve as a nucleus of a future national army should South Sudan vote for unity over independence in 2011.[6] However, JIUs were characterized more by the collocation of SAF and SPLA troops than by their true integration, which was unsurprising

given the expectation that South Sudan would indeed vote for independence in 2011 (Sudan HSBA 2008a).

The CPA had ended half a century of civil war in Sudan but there remained concerns that the agreement was merely a ceasefire, prompting South Sudan to remain on wartime footing. Indeed, skirmishes along their common border in the spring of 2012 raised concerns that a new conflict would erupt. The security environment was continually non-permissive in the Greater Upper Nile region, which witnessed multiple instances of ethnic conflict and cattle-raiding, the SPLA's fight to disarm the White Army militia in 2006, and a succession of Khartoum-supported armed groups in 2010 and 2011.

There was a six-year Interim Period of the peace agreement (2005–2011), during which the CPA's protocols would need to be implemented in cooperation with the government in Khartoum. After decades of marginalization, South Sudan also had to create structures and procedures to govern the autonomous region that it had been granted in the CPA and prepare governing institutions in case the region's citizens voted for independence in the 2011 referendum. Complicating matters, South Sudan shut down oil production for several months in 2012 due to disagreements with the Government of Sudan regarding oil pipeline transit fees. For an economy that was 98 percent dependent on oil revenues, this meant that many of the processes that required financing, including military integration, were short of funding.

Military Integration Disintegrates

In December 2013, South Sudan's military integration process faced its most serious challenge, as a political crisis that had been developing throughout the year within the ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) suddenly escalated, dragging the country into civil war. In July of that year, President Salva Kiir issued Republican Decrees 50/2013 and 51/2013, dismissing all ministers and deputy ministers, respectively, in effect sacking his entire cabinet (HSBA for Sudan and South Sudan 2014b). Included in this effort to marginalize potential challengers within the SPLM was Kiir's Vice President, Riek Machar. With Machar having attempted to wrest control of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) by force during the Second Sudanese Civil War, many feared that his dismissal might catalyze a new rebellion – this time against the government of a newly-independent South Sudan. However, Machar, who had spent the past decade since returning to the SPLM/A attempting to repair his tarnished image and promote himself as a potential successor to Kiir, accordingly chose to try to gain power through legitimate means.

With the SPLM's powerful brand as liberation-movement-turned-political party, political competition occurred within a *de facto* one-party state, thereby making a fight within the ruling party a fight for national power (The Sudd Institute 2014). Therefore, throughout the remainder of the year, Machar and other prominent members of the SPLM, whom the President had marginalized, continued their attempts to unseat him as party Chairman. Their calculus was that by replacing Kiir as Chairman of the SPLM through internal party mechanisms, the new party leader would, according to the SPLM constitution, become the party's presidential candidate in the 2015 elections and would then become the next president of South Sudan by default.

In November, Kiir announced, and later retracted, his intention to dissolve all political structures of the SPLM other than the Chairman's office, thus threatening the political futures of former party insiders (The Sudd Institute 2014). On December 6, senior SPLM leaders who had been sacked by the president held a press conference calling for the long-delayed meeting of the SPLM Political Bureau to be held to discuss differences over the management of the party (HSBA for Sudan and South Sudan 2014b). These individuals subsequently boycotted the meeting

of the SPLM's National Liberation Council (NLC) on December 14 and 15, protesting that the meeting had not been delayed to allow additional time for dialogue. Suspicious that a Machar-led, SPLA-supported coup was imminent, Kiir reportedly ordered the disarmament of the Presidential Guards, some of whom included the personal forces of his former Vice President.

During disarmament on the evening of December 15, fighting erupted between Dinka and Nuer members of the Presidential Guard, allegedly over selective disarmament, and quickly spread to SPLA Headquarters at Bilpam. The following day, Kiir announced on national television that Machar had attempted a coup. While Machar escaped Juba, eleven senior political leaders were detained and accused of complicity in the coup attempt. Within days, Nuer elements of SPLA Division 8 in Jonglei state, Division 4 in Unity state, and Division 7 in southern Upper Nile state had defected and formed an armed opposition – the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition (SPLM-IO) (HSBA for Sudan and South Sudan 2014a). These units had been comprised of armed groups, such as the South Sudan Defense Force (SSDF), that had been integrated into the SPLA following the Juba Declaration nearly eight years prior (Johnson 2014; The Sudd Institute 2014). Many of the original SPLM-IO commanders and the men they led could also trace their lineage to the SAF or to Anyanya II; the latter had fought the SPLA in the 1980s for control of the southern rebellion (Young 2015). By February 2014, South Sudan's parliament estimated that up to 70 percent of the SPLA had defected to the opposition (Sudan Tribune 2014).

Why South Sudan Pursued Military Integration

Despite the fact that the catalyst of violence in December 2013 was a political dispute within the SPLM, the subsequent fragmentation of the SPLA may imply that military integration was the wrong approach in South Sudan. On the contrary, by allowing South Sudan to temporarily overcome its history of factionalism and ethnic conflict in order to consolidate political-military power, integration contributed to a marked decline in insecurity during the Interim Period of the CPA (De Waal 2014; Young 2012). More importantly, the military integration process averted a potential civil war in the South and ensured that the region remained stable enough for the referendum on self-determination to be held, thus paving the way for South Sudan's independence from Sudan in 2011 (Young 2012; LeRiche and Arnold 2012). By reducing the manpower available for armed groups, the Government of South Sudan limited the extent to which the Government of Sudan could use its support of non-SPLA armed groups in the South to undermine CPA implementation and derail the referendum on self-determination (ICG 2006; De Waal 2014). Outbidding Khartoum to purchase the loyalties of armed groups in the South appeared to have been successful for some period of time, as members of Sudan's ruling party had complained that they had been priced out of the market (De Waal 2014).

While the CPA had secured peace between its signatories – the National Congress Party (NCP) in the North and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) in the South – it left much unresolved. It did not address divisions within the South that were tied to competitions over leadership of the southern rebellion; perceptions of ethnic marginalization between the Dinka and the Nuer; or personal animosities towards SPLM/A leader John Garang's style of leadership and his conceptualization of the SPLM/A as a revolution aimed at transforming a united "New Sudan" through the replacement of the ruling NCP (formerly the National Islamic Front) regime in Khartoum with a secular, democratically elected government.[7]

Amid these contentious divisions, non-SPLA armed groups – such as the South

Sudan Defense Force and local self-defense militias, referred to in the CPA as Other Armed Groups (OAGs) – were required by the CPA's Protocol on Security Arrangements and Agreement on Permanent Ceasefire and Security Arrangements to either be incorporated into the security forces of Sudan or South Sudan (i.e. Army, Police, Prisons, and Wildlife) or be reintegrated into the civil service and civil society institutions (CPA 2003; CPA 2004). Like many OAGs, the SSDF had been excluded from the peace process, yet possessed the size, weapons, military capabilities, and strategic locations to become spoilers and may have controlled up to 20 percent of the territory of South Sudan – including some of the areas vital to oil production (Young 2006).[8] Although Garang had stated the SPLM's willingness to integrate the non-SPLA armed groups into the security sector and the civil service, or to allow them to participate in the DDR process, the issue of accommodating armed groups had limited traction until after his death in July 2005 – possibly due to divergences as to how integration would work in practice (Garang 2005).

Given the civil war-era divisions in the South, political-military power-sharing was a means by which to signal a genuine commitment to peace and a willingness to compromise. After Garang's death, Kiir held a series of informal meetings with SSDF leadership in Khartoum in August 2005 to indicate his willingness to reach accommodation between the SSDF and the SPLM/A (Young 2006). He subsequently appointed several SSDF members as ministers, commissioners, and members of regional assemblies and state legislatures (Young 2006). By bringing OAGs into the governing structures of the South, the Government of South Sudan was allowing these armed groups an 'insurance policy' to help assuage fears about their role in the post-CPA South. Integrating them into the SPLA through the subsequent Juba Declaration offered them a mutually reinforcing power-sharing arrangement that was

arguably necessary due to the exclusion of OAGs from the CPA negotiations. While the CPA was popular in the South, its protocols in fact stipulated the dissolution of OAGs, and these groups accordingly had to find a way to mitigate their isolation from the peace process, as they could not be perceived to be opposed to the long-awaited peace (Young 2006). Political power-sharing granted these groups a share of the new political dispensation in the South, while military integration made the forcible disarmament of OAGs largely unnecessary.

Means & Modalities of Military Integration in South Sudan

In South Sudan, the Office of the President and the Ministry for National Security initiated the military integration process, making the political decision to offer amnesty to armed group commanders and negotiating the terms of the integration deals.[9] The currency of these negotiations took the form of military promotions, government appointments, cash, cars, houses, accommodation during the integration period, and promises of regular salaries once forces were integrated (McEvoy and LeBrun 2010).[10] The type of amnesty and integration package leaders of armed groups would receive was contingent on their specific 'threat potential,' which could be understood in terms of commanders' ability to secure external funding or to mobilize fighters (Lacher 2012).[11]

While the CPA's Protocol on Security Arrangements and Permanent Ceasefire and Security Arrangements Implementation Modalities and Appendices included specifications for integration between the SAF and the SPLA, it did not articulate the means and modalities to drive a military integration process among armed groups in South Sudan (CPA 2003; CPA 2004). The Juba Declaration, which formalized military integration in South Sudan, in theory articulated how the process would be implemented. SSDF Chief of Staff, the late Paulino Matiep, would assume the figurehead post of Deputy

Commander-in-Chief of the SPLA and, in consultation with Kiir as Commander-in-Chief, a High Political Committee would be created to oversee the implementation of the agreement. A Military Technical Committee was to be established, reporting to the High Political Committee, to handle the integration of the SSDF into the command structures and component units of the SPLA, harmonize ranks, deploy forces, and handle issues of demobilization and downsizing in accordance with the provisions of the CPA. Finally, an Administrative and Civil Service Committee was to be established to deal with the integration of the SSDF's non-military personnel into national and state government (GRSS 2006).

As there was no standing committee to manage South Sudan's subsequent integration processes, each of the committees established for the integration of various armed groups may have been different in their execution of the process.[12] Nonetheless, once negotiations with armed groups were concluded, the integration process generally had four stages:

First, the President issued a directive to the SPLA's Chief of General Staff to convene a committee charged with integrating an armed group into the SPLA.[13] Once the committee had been selected from the SPLA and the leadership of the integrating forces, the President signed off on its composition.[14] The Chief of General Staff then issued guidance to the committee on how the integration process should be executed, including rank adjustments, age and education requirements for integration, the limits on the number of soldiers accepted into the SPLA and other organized forces, budget and logistics for the movement of forces, and where to send those deemed unfit for service.[15] The committee itself would also begin to set out the budget and timelines for the integration process, as well as determine the screening requirements for integration into the SPLA.[16]

Second, the leaders of the armed groups would submit lists of forces to be integrated

into the SPLA and the committee would visit assembly sites to verify the parades of integrating forces.[17] During the integration process, the SPLA was responsible for housing and feeding armed groups as they awaited integration.[18] While these forces did not receive salaries, some were apparently given money and other tokens to demonstrate that the government was committed to integration.[19]

Third, the integration committee would interview members of the armed groups at their cantonment sites in order to determine their placements.[20] Often, due to time constraints, only officers would be interviewed by the committee while the remainder of the soldiers would just be checked for their physical fitness.[21] Those who were interviewed were asked their preference for which organized service (SPLA, South Sudan Police Service, Prisons, or Fire Brigade) they wished to join but due to the size restrictions of these services sometimes they had to be persuaded to pursue one track over the others.[22] During this stage, the committee would also screen integrating forces to determine their physical fitness and ascertain where they should be placed in the organized services or whether they should go to the civil service or through the DDR program.[23] The committee was then responsible for negotiating which of the integrating forces would be officers in the organized forces and which would not, but the ultimate decision is determined by the SPLA members of the committee.[24] Due to the continual cycle of integrations, after the initial round of post-Juba Declaration integrations the criteria for rank assignment was changed so that it would account for integrating forces having the appropriate number of officers per formation.[25] For example, an armed group integrating with 500 combatants would hypothetically be entitled to a Colonel with a Lieutenant Colonel as a deputy, while an armed group integrating with 3,000 combatants would be entitled to a Brigadier General with a Colonel as a deputy.[26] Yet in spite of the required

officer-to-soldier ratios for integrating forces, the President could still alter rank allocations during the subsequent stage of integration in an attempt to encourage the armed group leaders' compliance with the process.[27]

Finally, the integration committee would submit a list of recommendations to the SPLA Chief of General Staff with the integrating forces' names, ages, previous ranks, education, training, proposed ranks, and remarks on prospective assignments (i.e., infantry, signal corps, engineering corps, police force).[28] For final approval, this integration report was sent to the President, who would then make alterations to rank assignments if he saw fit before issuing a decree announcing the outcomes of the integration to SPLA units.[29] At this point, the committee's work would be complete and it would then fall to the SPLA Deputy Chiefs of General Staff for Administration, Training, and Operations to calculate the salaries of integrating forces, arrange their transport to training centers, and assign them for deployment across various SPLA Divisions.[30] Although the work of the integration committee had been completed, the SPLA had no metrics to indicate when members of an armed group could be deemed 'integrated'.[31]

The decision to pursue an open-ended military integration process was a political one. Accordingly, some SPLA officers believed they had not been sufficiently consulted as to the wisdom of integration, and thus had little ownership of the process.[32] Throughout the process, some officers maintained reservations that integration was compromising the strength and cohesion of the military and was therefore not serving the interests of the SPLA.[33] Military integration was costly and the SPLA was concerned that too much money was being spent on salaries at the expense of operations and transformation.[34] With the government spending almost 50 percent of its budget on the SPLA and the Ministry of Defense and Veterans Affairs (of which over 80 percent went to salaries), the opportunity cost

of this expenditure was investment in military professionalization (Snowden 2012).[35] Moreover, some of the SPLA senior leadership was opposed to the President's decision to bring armed groups into the military due to what they perceived to be the relatively low quality of such forces, amid concerns that integrating forces would eventually betray the SPLA.[36] Integration had essentially overtaken recruitment, which precluded the force from bringing in qualified soldiers who may have been younger, more physically fit, and devoid of the baggage of past defections.[37] Finally, the SPLA believed that integration should have been done according to SPLA rules and regulations – with the appropriate number of officers per military formation – rather than allowing the Commander-in-Chief to manipulate the SPLA integration committees' rank allocations and increase the ranks of armed group leaders in order to make peace.[38]

Regardless, the aforementioned trade-offs the government made in order to 'buy peace' in the immediate aftermath of the CPA were worthwhile, as military integration succeeded in averting large-scale conflict between the government of South Sudan and the OAGs in the period that immediately followed the CPA.[39] However, the flawed implementation of the integration process affected its success as a long-term stabilization measure and eventually contributed to its disintegration in 2013.

Concurrent Defense Sector Reform

In order to understand the role that military integration played in South Sudan's transition from war to peace, it is important to understand the context in which integration was occurring. Concurrent to the process of bringing disparate groups under the banner of the SPLA, South Sudan was undergoing a process of defense sector transformation, which included reducing the size of the military from a force of up to 230,000 down to one of 120,000,[40] and transforming the SPLA from a guerrilla force.

Written in anticipation of the military's post-independence strategic challenges, the 2008 SPLA White Paper on Defense articulated the need for the SPLA to transform into a professional, conventional, modern military, while consuming a declining proportion of the national expenditure budget over time (SPLA 2011a). Transformation, however, was contingent on the SPLA's ability to undertake a sizeable reduction in force, as the presence of non-essential personnel was both a constraint on the force's operational capabilities and a drain on its resources (SPLA 2011a).

During the Interim Period, a handful of initiatives were conceptualized to reduce the size of the SPLA. One such initiative involved reforming the Wounded Heroes program to deliver benefits to those who had sustained injuries during the civil war so that the existing program would cease being a dumping ground for able-bodied personnel deemed non-essential to the military.[41] Another initiative involved the creation of notional civil works brigades so that the military's excess manpower could contribute to the development of the country's infrastructure. Under this hypothetical program, 50,000 able-bodied former combatants were to be trained in specialized, income-generating skills such as agriculture, carpentry, construction, livestock management, mining, petroleum, plumbing, and river dredging (Sudan Tribune 2012a; Sudan Tribune 2012b). The government also considered the establishment of a Pensions program to gradually age out soldiers of retirement age; however this plan was held up by the need for actuarial analyses that would help determine the affordability of the program, given the actual size of the SPLA.[42]

A majority of the excess manpower of the SPLA, however, was to go through the DDR process, which had been unsuccessfully attempted in 2009 and 2012. Originally mandated by the CPA's Agreement on Permanent Ceasefire and Security Arrangements, both the SPLA and the SAF were to send 90,000 soldiers each through the DDR process during the Interim Period of the CPA (CPA 2004).

However, DDR Phase I was largely regarded as a failure, as only 12,525 individuals out of the SPLA's original caseload entered the program (Nichols 2011). DDR Phase II, which had an ambitious caseload of 150,000, likewise failed to get off the ground due to the 2012 oil shutdown and subsequent austerity measures, border skirmishes with Sudan, and disagreements with the donor community as to the execution of the process. As a result, DDR did not play a significant role in rightsizing the SPLA or in its transformation (Rands 2010).

In 2011, the SPLA Chief of General Staff signed additional strategic guidance – Objective Force 2017 and the Transformation Programme 2012-2017. The purpose behind Objective Force 2017 and the Transformation Programme 2012-2017 was to guide the development of the SPLA between 2012 and 2017, inform national security/defense policy implementation, and help prioritize and provide a framework for security assistance to be provided by foreign donors (Emmanuel 2014). SPLA Transformation thus involved four major activities: enhancing operational capabilities, education and training of SPLA personnel, improving SPLA values and standards, and rightsizing the parade of the SPLA to 120,000, per the force requirements articulated in these documents (SPLA 2011b).

Having recognized the need to develop a cohesive military with national character, the SPLA sought to transform infantry battalions through a standardized 'Reset' program of instruction at one of three training centers in Mapel, Pariak, and Owinykibul (SPLA 2013). Through this Reset, SPLA units would be screened over the course of three to five months to ensure soldiers were fit for service and be oriented with the SPLA Act, Rules and Regulations, and the Rule of Law, thereby addressing the military's ballooning parade and enhancing its warfighting capabilities (SPLA 2013). When the civil war broke out in December 2013, plans to 'reset' the force were being finalized.

Design Flaws in South Sudan's Military Integration Process

The successful implementation of military integration within five years of the termination of a conflict is believed to increase the prospects for lasting peace (Hoddie and Hartzell 2003). Yet, as military integration is implemented concurrent to other peace-building measures, it is difficult to isolate its specific effects in order to determine the success or failure of the process (Glassmyer and Sambanis 2008; Krebs 2014). Nonetheless, the structure of military integration is believed to hold the key to the successful implementation of the process, as some integration agreements fail because they are poorly structured and not fully implemented (Glassmyer and Sambanis 2008). The flaws in the design of the military integration process in South Sudan will be discussed in additional detail in the following paragraphs.

Integration overlooked in foreign assistance

Many states are weak in the immediate aftermath of conflict and integration can be a costly, technically demanding, and turbulent process. In this context, third party actors can act as mediators during peace negotiations; as providers of financial or logistical assistance; as guarantors of security in the form of peacekeepers or a ceasefire monitoring force; or to provide teams of trainers to increase the professionalization of integrated forces so they may eventually qualify for senior ranks in the reconstituted military (Glassmyer and Sambanis 2008; Hoddie and Hartzell 2003; Burgess 2008; Hall 2009; Licklider 2014). The government of South Sudan did not ask for, nor was it offered significant foreign assistance for the negotiation, cantonment, and verification of parade, fitness screening, rank assignment, and division assignment that were part of the integration process.[43] There are several explanations for why this was the case. Prior to 2007, there was a gap in foreign engagement with the SPLA and many decisions had already been made with regard to the security sector, which set the course for the foreign engagement that followed.[44] By this time, post-Juba Declaration integrations were underway and it is possible that neither the government nor the international community believed that the process warranted external assistance. Moreover, while the donor community had pushed the concept of military integration between the North and South in terms of the JIUs, South Sudan's status as an autonomous and not yet independent region prior to 2011 made it awkward for international donors to get involved in the SPLA's military integration process – lest they be accused of implicitly supporting the dismemberment of Sudan.[45] Alternatively, both the South Sudanese and the international community may have seen integration as a purely internal military affair, or the process may have been too expensive for the international community to fund from start to finish.[46]

Aspects of the military integration process received limited support from the UN. The United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) and its successor, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), provided logistical assistance for some of the ceasefire negotiations with the late George Athor and during David Yau Yau's first rebellion during the 2010–2011 time period. However, due to its inability to stem the tide of communal violence across much of South Sudan during the Interim Period, as well as in the aftermath of independence, the UN missions were unwilling or unable to assume roles as guarantors of security between the government and armed groups during the amnesty and integration process. Rather, the focus for the UN missions was on establishing rule of law, strengthening the security and justice sectors, offering training on small arms management, and managing the DDR process between Sudan and southern Sudan, and eventually within an independent South Sudan (UNMISS 2013; UNSC 2013a; UNSC 2013b; UNSC 2013c; UNSC 2012).[47] Even when parts of the SPLA did receive foreign

security assistance, it was not specifically directed towards assisting with the integration process. Instead, for leading contributors to developing South Sudan's security sector, like the United States and United Kingdom, the focus was on transformation of the SPLA.[48]

While foreign assistance may generally be helpful in the implementation of a military integration process, it may also be insufficient to prevent failure (Licklider 2014). Yet, in light of the concurrent post-CPA challenges, foreign support for integration could have facilitated the implementation of the process in South Sudan. Instead, despite foreign engagement in parts of South Sudan's security sector – from mediating ceasefires to DDR to SPLA Transformation – there was limited foreign support to the military integration process. Consequently, efforts by the international community to transform South Sudan's security sector were built on the unsound foundation of a fragmented military.

Open-ended structure without accountability

Despite the benefits that military integration can provide during war to peace transitions, the process is a political quick fix that runs the risk of creating a 'demonstration effect', showing that violence and disobedience can be translated into benefits (Baaz and Verweijen 2013). In South Sudan, the government's response to the armed groups that proliferated during the April 2010 elections demonstrated its continuing post-Juba Declaration commitment to use military integration to address armed opposition. As a result, the military integration process became *de facto* open-ended.

During the candidate selection process that preceded the elections for the presidency, the legislative assembly, governorships, and state assemblies, the SPLM was accused of handpicking parliamentary and gubernatorial candidates who had not been chosen by the people residing in various constituencies.

During the elections themselves, there were also allegations of fraudulent and exclusionary practices, and of intimidation and vote-rigging (ICG 2011; LeRiche and Arnold 2012). Some candidates that had been unsuccessful at the ballot box began armed rebellions against the government in the aftermath of their defeat. Although some of these armed group leaders were motivated by opportunism and greed, others, such as the late Lieutenant General George Athor, the late Colonel Gatluak Gai, and David Yau Yau also had grievances directly linked to their electoral failures. By the end of 2011, the government was able to neutralize these armed groups through a combination of co-option and coercion, and many of their leaders had either been killed, placed under house arrest, or were in the process of responding to the government's offers of amnesty.

However, the amnesty and integration processes that followed these rebellions were open-ended and there were no credible disincentives for repeat defections. Accordingly, the costs associated with military integration remained low, while the potential rewards for repeat defection (i.e., financial benefits, impunity for past crimes, high ranks, good positions, and lucrative deployment locations) were persistently quite high. Knowing how much the government was willing to compromise for the sake of stability, armed group leaders could continually use force or the threat of violence as an instrument of bargaining, as a means of resolving political grievances, and as a way to forestall compliance with integration and remain deployed in their home areas (Young 2012; Rands 2010; Small Arms Survey 2008b). This open-ended defection-reintegration cycle, also described by De Waal (2014) as 'rent-seeking rebellion,' created a perverse incentive for members of the SPLA to defect in order to advance their positions or increase their wealth.

In addition, the lack of ethnic or regional quotas in the integration process created a loophole whereby the ethnic composition

of the force did not match the country's demography. With only 16 percent of South Sudan's population, members of the Nuer ethnic group were believed to comprise 65 – 70 percent of the SPLA by the time the civil war broke out in South Sudan (CIA World Factbook 2015; ICG 2014). This was due to both the integration of OAGs that had been predominantly Nuer following the Juba Declaration and the open-ended integration of the mainly Nuer armed groups operating across Greater Upper Nile from 2010 onwards. Accordingly, this approach resulted in a numerical imbalance in favor of the Nuer in the SPLA, which contributed to a sense that the SPLA lacked national character and diversity (AU 2014; The Sudd Institute 2014).

Ineffective rightsizing efforts

With a dearth of alternative livelihoods in the midst of war to peace transitions, former combatants have economic incentives to seek benefits from integration into a statutory security framework or reintegration into civilian life. Containing former combatants in transitional security mechanisms such as military integration and civilian reintegration programs can often buy time for political and economic development and help prevent the resumption of armed conflict (Colletta 2012). The problem, however, is when either of these mechanisms fails to provide a 'release valve' for the security sector and the system becomes overwhelmed trying to accommodate armed groups. In the case of South Sudan, the process for bringing armed groups into the SPLA through military integration outpaced the SPLA's efforts to reduce the size of the military.

Efforts to rightsize the SPLA should have reduced the cost the SPLA imposed on South Sudan's budget and allowed the SPLA to focus on transformation. However, efforts to demobilize ex-combatants and reform the security sector fell victim to several security dilemmas. Due to the ever-present threat of renewed north-south violence and 'enemies of the peace' within South Sudan, the

government was reluctant to undertake the required reduction in force. Furthermore, after decades of marginalization and conflict, the southern economy did not provide alternative livelihoods that could absorb the soldiers that the SPLA needed to demobilize and the government was wary of the threats that unemployed ex-combatants would present to sustained peace. With South Sudan's postwar economy providing limited livelihoods for demobilized soldiers, there was a fear that soldiers were being reintegrated into poverty and that the government and the donor community had not managed expectations *vis-à-vis* civilian life as an alternative to the SPLA.[49] This was exacerbated by the inability of civilian reintegration initiatives to compete economically with the level of pay in the security forces, particularly given the decision to pay the SPLA after the CPA was signed.[50] While the one-time DDR reinsertion grant was the equivalent of USD 360, the South Sudan Legislative Assembly voted to double the SPLA's salaries to USD 150/month shortly after the Juba Declaration, and later raised it to USD 220/month by the time of the 2011 referendum (De Waal 2014; Rands 2010). Thus, the government's open-door amnesty and integration policy combined with ineffective demobilization initiatives increased pressure on the military integration process to address the actual and potential threats posed by armed groups.[51]

Development of Parallel Security Structures

In 2012, during a tense period in Sudan-South Sudan relations, General Paul Malong Awan, the former governor of Northern Bahr al-Ghazal state, reportedly assembled a militia referred to as 'Mathiang Anyoor' (AU 2014).[52] This armed group fought against the SAF in the disputed border area of Heglig/ Panthou in 2012 (Pendle 2015).

From the Mathiang Anyoor, as well as from cattle protection *titweng* forces from President Kiir's home region of Greater

Bahr al Ghazal, a predominately Dinka security force was established and referred to by a Dinka phrase 'Dut ku Beny', which reportedly translates to mean 'Protector of the Boss' (Pendle 2015; Radio Tamazuj 2015). The ethnic and regional composition of these forces may have indicated a lack in confidence on the part of the ruling elite towards what was suspected to be the Nuer-dominated composition of the SPLA and its ability to protect their interests (AU 2014; Panel of Experts on South Sudan 2015). Malong, who replaced SPLA Chief of General Staff James Hoth Mai in April 2014, subsequently denied complicity with establishing this group, stating that 'no one can recruit an army apart from the national army' (Radio Tamazuj 2015). Adding to the tense political environment that had been building up prior to the outbreak of conflict in December 2013, there was concern that these new recruits essentially operated outside the formal military command (Johnson 2014; African Union Commission of Inquiry 2014). Organized entirely outside the Ministry of Defense and the SPLA's General Staff, these forces reported directly to the President and accordingly received support for salaries, training, and equipment directly out of the Office of the President, as the Ministry of Defense refused to fund them (ICG 2014; Radio Tamazuj 2015). A majority of these forces were not integrated into the SPLA although a few were eventually integrated into the 3000 soldier Tiger Battalion (Presidential Guard). The Presidential Guard, which was composed of troops loyal to various figures, including President Kiir, former Vice President Machar, and the late Paulino Matip, had previously been an example of integrating Dinka, Nuer, and other ethnic groups into a functional unit (Sudan Tribune 2013).

The parallel forces were reportedly trained at the Pantiit Military Training Center in Northern Bahr al Ghazal and subsequently transferred to Luri, approximately 16 miles west of the capital (Radio Tamazuj 2015).

Between 300 and 700 personnel were then transferred to Juba to be integrated into the Presidential Guard in the days immediately before the meeting of the National Liberation Council in mid-December (Panel of Experts on South Sudan 2015; Young 2015; AU 2014; Radio Tamazuj 2015). Some of these forces were allegedly involved in the killing of Nuer civilians in Juba between December 16 and 18, 2013 (Mamdani 2014). Bringing this new parallel security force into the Presidential Guard was seen by some as a betrayal of the force's multi-ethnic ideal, which had been one of the aims of the integration process (ICG 2014).

Conclusions

Military integration in South Sudan, formalized after the Juba Declaration, followed the SPLA's decades-long tradition of bringing armed groups into the fold and contributed to stability during the Interim Period of the CPA. For some period of time, military integration suited the equities of the government: the process allowed South Sudan to secure southern unity in preparation for the referendum on independence, allowed the government to outbid Khartoum's support to armed groups in the South, and demonstrated the government's conciliatory intent to bring armed opposition into the fold. With both legal and practical imperatives to address the threat posed by non-SPLA armed groups, the other alternatives – to fight or ignore armed groups – were not realistic during the period that immediately followed signing of the peace agreement.

Yet, considering the competing imperatives of the post-CPA period, military integration in South Sudan occurred in a challenging context. Due to the concurrent state-building tasks South Sudan was undertaking, and the persistent threat of return to war with Sudan, the country lacked the bandwidth, technical expertise, finances, and logistics to be able to design a more functional military integration process. In this context, the military integration process outpaced the institutional

growth of the SPLA and its thinking on how to address armed groups.[53]

While foreign assistance to South Sudan's integration process could have facilitated implementation, it may not have been sufficient to overcome the challenging context in which integration was being conducted. Rather than focusing on military integration as a building block for the consolidation of the SPLA, such assistance to South Sudan's security sector was limited to DDR and SPLA Transformation. Consequently, the SPLA was established on an unstable foundation.

The ethnic composition of the SPLA that resulted from an open-ended integration process without quotas did little to assuage fears that the equities of President Kiir's Bahr al-Ghazal political circle could be protected by the SPLA. This may have contributed to the recruitment of parallel security forces primarily from the Bahr al-Ghazal region starting in 2012. In turn, the establishment of regionalized and ethnicized parallel security structures undermined the premise of military integration as an insurance policy for integrated forces. Going outside the SPLA chain of command in the pursuit of ethnically loyal forces further undermined attempts at defense sector transformation, and undermined the notion of cohesion in the establishment of a professional national military.

The open-ended nature of integration created incentives for defection from the SPLA. The demonstration effect from the 2010 elections – that political failures and armed violence could be transformed into rewards when the government inevitably bought off armed group leaders – helped create a class of rebel entrepreneurs who benefitted from a lack of accountability within what became an open-ended integration process. Moreover, open-ended integration counteracted concurrent efforts to demobilize former combatants and prevented the SPLA from 'graduating' from the integration process and making progress towards professionalization. Compounding the implementation of this process, DDR and other civilian reintegration initiatives failed to get off the ground, increasing pressure on the military integration to address the threats posed by armed groups. As a result, integration outpaced demobilization initiatives, leading to the former process becoming overburdened as a means to address the threat of armed groups.

While the integration process itself was not responsible for setting off the political impasses that reached a boiling point in 2013, the acceleration of the conflict may be attributed to the fact that the national military was being built on a destabilized foundation. Due to the design flaws of South Sudan's military integration process, the SPLA was in a state of arrested development, which handicapped its efforts to transform into a more professional military force that could have been less prone to fragmentation in the face of political instability. The integration of armed groups into the SPLA should have been a short-term quick fix and a means by which to move beyond civil war-era divisions; instead, the military integration process became an end in and of itself.

Competing Interests

Notes

[1] Lesley Anne Warner is a PhD candidate in War Studies at King's College London. The views expressed here are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of her employer. The author would like to acknowledge the support of the Conflict, Security and Development Research Group (CSDRG) at King's College London and funding from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She can be contacted with comments at warner.lesley@gmail.com.

[2] Throughout this article, the author uses the terms "North" and "South" as

shorthand for Sudan and South Sudan, respectively.

3 Author interview with consultant on South Sudan's security sector, Juba, South Sudan, August 12, 2014; Author interview with UNMISS official, Juba, South Sudan, August 15, 2014; Author interview with former senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan, August 22, 2014.

4 Author interview with senior Ministry of Defence official, Juba, South Sudan, August 15, 2014.

5 Author interview with senior Ministry of Defence official, Juba, South Sudan, August 15, 2014.

6 Per the CPA's Protocol on Security Arrangements, equal numbers of Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and SPLA would comprise Joint Integrated Units (JIUs) with a total force strength of 39,000 soldiers during the interim period of the peace agreement. In addition, parties to the peace agreement were to establish a Joint Defense Board (JDB) under the Presidency of Sudan, comprised of the Chiefs of Staff of the SAF and the SPLA, their deputies, and senior officers from both forces. The JDB was responsible for coordination between the SAF and the SPLA and for command of the JIUs. The subsequent Permanent Ceasefire and Security Arrangements Implementation Modalities and Appendices spelled out the command and control, composition and organization, training, and detailed deployment for the JIUs.

7 For a discussion of Garang's efforts to reconcile his belief in a 'New Sudan' with the demands of many southerners for independence, see Collins 2005 and Johnson 2012. Garang had hoped that the South's participation in a government of national unity after the overthrow of the regime in Khartoum and an interim period before a referendum on self-determination, would allow time to heal the wounds inflicted by the war, and allow the South's future to continue to be tied to that of the north.

8 Author interview with consultant on South Sudan's security sector, Juba, South Sudan, August 15, 2014

9 Author interview with UN DDR, Juba, South Sudan, August 20, 2012; Author interview with senior Ministry of Defence official, Juba, South Sudan, August 30, 2012.

10 Author interview with consultant on South Sudan's security sector, Juba, South Sudan, August 25, 2012.

11 Author interview with UN DDR, Juba, South Sudan, August 20, 2012; Author interview with consultant on South Sudan's security sector, Juba, South Sudan.

12 Author interview with senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan, August 21, 2014; Author interview with senior Ministry of Defence official, Juba, South Sudan, August 15, 2014; Author interview with senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan, August 19, 2014.

13 Author interview with senior Ministry of Defence official, Juba, South Sudan, August 15, 2014; Author interview with senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan, August 13, 2014; Author interview with senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan, August 20, 2014; Author interview with senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan.

14 Author interview with senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan; Author interview with senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan; Author interview with former senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan; Author interview with senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan, August 21, 2014; Author interview with former senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan, August 21, 2014.

15 Author interview with senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan.

16 Author interview with senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan; Author interview with former senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan.

17 Author interview with former senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan, August

15, 2014; Author interview with senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan; Author interview with senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan; Author interview with former senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan.

[18] Author interview with senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan.

[19] Author interview with former senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan.

[20] Author interview with senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan; Author interview with former senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan.

[21] Author interview with senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan.

[22] Author interview with former senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan; Author interview with senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan.

[23] Author interview with former senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan; Author interview with senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan.

[24] Author interview with senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan; Author interview with senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan.

[25] Author interview with former senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan. Author interview with former senior SPLA officer A, Juba, South Sudan.

[26] The SPLA believed that integrating forces should match the officer-to-soldier ratio of SPLA formations, in which a Squad (8ppl) is led by a Corporal, a Platoon (20ppl) has one Sergeant and is led by one 1st or 2nd Leftenant, a Company (80 – 150ppl) is led by a Captain and a Major, a Battalion (300 – 1300ppl) is led by a Colonel and a Leftenant Colonel, and a Brigade (3K – 15K) has a Brigadier General with a Colonel as a deputy.

[27] Author interview with former senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan; Author interview with former senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan; Author interview with senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan; Author interview with former senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan.

[28] Author interview with senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan; Author interview with former senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan; Author interview with senior Ministry of Defence official, Juba, South Sudan, August 15, 2014.

[29] Author interview with former senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan; Author interview with senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan.

[30] Author interview with former senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan; Author interview with senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan.

[31] Author interview with senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan. Licklider (2014) attempts to highlight some indicators of success/failure to watch, which include: military efficacy (the extent to which the new military can perform tasks or remain integrated in peacetime); whether the new military is subject to civilian control on budget and personnel issues, or when ordered into use against foreign adversaries or domestic opponents; and whether military integration makes the resumption of large-scale violence less likely.

[32] Author interview with senior Ministry of Defence official, Juba, South Sudan, August 15, 2014.

[33] Author interview with consultant on South Sudan's security sector, Juba, South Sudan.

[34] Author interview with former senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan.

[35] Author interview with consultants on South Sudan's security sector, Juba, South Sudan, September 1, 2012.

[36] Author interview with consultant on South Sudan's security sector, Juba, South Sudan, August 21, 2014; Author interview with consultant on South Sudan's security sector, Nairobi, Kenya, August 31, 2014.

[37] Author interview with former senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan.

[38] Author interview with former senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan.

[39] Author interview with former senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan.

[40] The precise parade of the SPLA is not known, but is estimated to be as high as 230,000 soldiers Author interview with consultant on South Sudan's security sector, Juba, South Sudan.

[41] Author interview with consultants on South Sudan's security sector, Juba, South Sudan.

[42] Author interview with consultants on South Sudan's security sector, Juba, South Sudan.

[43] Author interview with former senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan.

[44] Author interview with consultant on South Sudan's security sector, Juba, South Sudan.

[45] Author interview with UNMISS official, Juba, South Sudan, August 23, 2014.

[46] Author interview with Ministry of National Security official, Juba, South Sudan, August 22, 2014; Author interview with consultant on South Sudan's security sector, Juba, South Sudan.

[47] Author interview with consultant on South Sudan's security sector, Juba, South Sudan; Author interview with former senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan.

[48] Author interview with consultant on South Sudan's security sector, Juba, South Sudan; Author interview with former senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan.

[49] Author interview with UN DDR, Juba, South Sudan, August 31, 2012.

[50] Author interview with consultant on South Sudan's security sector, Juba, South Sudan.

[51] Author interview with former senior SPLA officer, Juba, South Sudan; Author interview with consultant on South Sudan's security sector, Juba, South Sudan.

[52] The African Union Commission of Inquiry was established in 2014 by the AU Peace and Security Council and headed by former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo to investigate human rights abuses in South Sudan since December 2013. Some find the contents of the report contentious, which is why the author has attempted to cross-reference its findings, where possible. The formation of non-SPLA Dinka armed groups is detailed in 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 (2015): 410–34.

[53] Author interview with former senior Ministry of Defence official, December 10, 2014.

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