A Curse from God? Religious and political dimensions of the post-1991 rise of ethnic violence in South Sudan

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ABSTRACT
Southern Sudanese civilian populations have been trapped in a rising tide of ethnicised, South-on-South, military violence ever since leadership struggles within the main southern opposition movement – the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) – split into two warring factions in August 1991. This paper traces the devastating impact of this violence on a particularly volatile and fractured region of contemporary South Sudan: the oil rich heartlands of the Western Upper Nile Province. Foregrounding the historical experiences and grassroots perspectives of Nuer civilian populations in this region, the paper shows how elite competition within the southern military has combined with the political machinations of the national Islamic government in Khartoum to create a wave of inter- and intra-ethnic factional fighting so intense and intractable that many Nuer civilians have come to define it as ‘a curse from God’. Dividing Sudan’s seventeen-year-long civil war (1983–present) into four distinct phases, the paper shows how successive forms and patterns of political violence in this region have provoked radical reassessments of the precipitating agents and ultimate meaning of this war on the part of an increasingly demoralised and impoverished Nuer civilian population.

INTRODUCTION
A political movement’s strength is limited by the clarity of its objectives. Without such clarity, any movement remains perpetually vulnerable to internal division and external manipulation. Nowhere is this more painfully evident than in contemporary South Sudan, where the Sudanese People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) has been fighting since 1983 to overthrow a northern-dominated, national, Islamic state in Khartoum. While the popular desire in the South is to secede from the North, the stated policy of the SPLA is to liberate Sudan from tyranny and to create a democratic, secular state. Despite the absence of any

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unanimity on this issue, the SPLA succeeded in winning military control over nearly two-thirds of southern territories during the first eight years of fighting. By mid-1991, the SPLA appeared poised to launch a triumphant assault on the regional capital at Juba. But then, on 28 August 1991, the SPLA suddenly split into two warring factions. The precipitating event was an unsuccessful coup mounted by Dr Riek Machar, a Nuer from the Western Upper Nile, and several other high-ranking SPLA officers, against their long-standing commander-in-chief, Dr John Garang, a Bor Dinka. Rejecting the SPLA’s declared political agenda, the coup leaders broke away to form an independent rebel movement – known initially as the ‘SPLA-Nasir’ faction – under the banner of ‘political independence for the South’. Although confined at first to the highest ranks of the SPLA leadership, this political rift soon sparked off a full-scale military confrontation between the two largest ethnic groups in the South, the Dinka (Jieng) and Nuer (Nei ti naath), respectively.

During October and November 1991, Nuer forces allied with Machar drove deep into Bor Dinka country, Garang’s home area, killing hundreds of civilians and displacing up to 70 per cent of the Bor population in what became known as the ‘Bor Massacre’ (Human Rights Watch 1994: 96–9). Garang’s ‘SPLA-Mainstream’ forces retaliated by levelling scores of Nuer villages. Soon the entire region was caught up in a morass of South-on-South violence which has continued to gain momentum into the present. These tragic developments marked the beginning of a new phase of an already lengthy civil war, in which North–South conflicts had previously predominated (cf. Daly & Sikainga 1993; Deng 1995; Harir & Tvedt 1994; Human Rights Watch 1999; Petterson 1999; Ruay 1994). More recently, processes of political fragmentation have accelerated in Nuer regions of the Western Upper Nile, where the presence of vast oil deposits has concentrated the military attentions of both the national army and rival southern military commanders and warlords (Human Rights Watch 2000). The cumulative result has been a dramatic shift in the regional balance of power in favour of the government of Sudan during the 1991–2000 period.

Viewed from afar, this post-1991 shattering of southern military unity appears completely counter-productive and hence, perplexing. Why has this fratricidal violence continued for so many years? What has prevented southern military leaders from transcending their political differences so as to re-establish a united front against continuing Northern and Islamist attacks? What role has the
government of Sudan played in the progressive unravelling of the SPLA? And what prospects, if any, remain for a future southerner-wide reconciliation? These questions form the motivational core of this paper. Although the unresolved nature of Sudan’s war and the sheer geographical breadth and diversity of South Sudan preclude any definitive answers, I offer here some preliminary insights into these issues through an analysis of a particularly volatile and fractured region of the South: the oil-rich heartlands of the Western Upper Nile Province.

While the Western Upper Nile contains some Ruweng and Ngok Dinka communities, it is populated overwhelmingly by the ‘Western Nuer’ (whose named sub-divisions include the Bul, Leek, Jagei, Jikany, Dok and Nyuong Nuer). How have these Nuer been coping with the post-1991 collapse of SPLA unity? To what extent has their experience of expanding waves of southern militarism and ethnicised violence forced them to reassess the political legitimacy of their nominal leaders? And how have they sought to understand and incorporate that experience in political and spiritual terms?

The ‘higher level’ political intrigues that preceded and followed upon the violent splitting of the SPLA have been documented in devastating detail by several recent commentators (Nyaba 1997; Jok & Hutchinson 1999; Johnson 1998; Human Rights Watch 1999, 2000). Here I offer more ‘grassroots’ perspectives on these developments in an effort to explain why recent attempts to mobilise the Western Nuer along ethnic lines during the 1991–2000 period resulted in increased political division, not increased political cohesion. I also foreground some of the ways ordinary Nuer civilians have actively resisted such mobilisation attempts, while simultaneously being dragged down into intensifying intra-ethnic conflicts.

VIEWED FROM THE WESTERN UPPER NILE

Shifting Political Fronts of Violence in the Western Upper Nile

Viewed from the Western Upper Nile, Sudan’s seventeen-year-long civil war may be divided into four main stages. The first stage covers the immediate pre-war years of 1981–83, when incipient bands of Nuer secessionist rebels first began mobilising in the Upper Nile. Operating independently at first, these groups gradually coalesced as the Anyanya II movement – a name adopted from the southern secessionist forces (Anyanya) that fought the government during Sudan’s First Civil War (1955–72). The second stage spans the 1983–91 period, when the SPLA
emerged as a powerful multiethnic fighting force in combat with both the Sudanese army and various government-sponsored northern and southern ‘militias’, including alienated segments of the Anyanya II. During this stage, the SPLA experienced major military advances against the national government, at the same time as contradictions internal to the movement were tearing it apart from within. The third stage begins with Machar’s 1991 ‘coup’ and ends with his signing of a formal peace agreement with the government in 1997. Escalating South-on-South violence dominated this stage, as rival southern military leaders and warlords turned their guns against one another’s entire civilian populations. There was nothing modulated or controlled about the violence of this period. Those in a position to exploit often did so, with little thought as to the longer-term consequences. The fourth and final stage coincides with the subsequent unravelling of the 1997 Peace Agreement and concomitant explosion of inter-Nuer factional fighting in the Western Upper Nile. These inter-Nuer confrontations were largely provoked and orchestrated by the government of Sudan in its determination to promote the rapid exploitation of previously untapped oil reserves in this region. Major civilian-based peace initiatives followed, which eventually succeeded in defusing earlier patterns of hostilities between the Western Nuer and their Dinka neighbours. Inter-Nuer factional fighting, however, has continued to accelerate in the Western Upper Nile into 2000. In my view, each of these stages brought to the fore particular forms and patterns of violence. Moreover, each of them stimulated radical reassessments of the precipitating agents and ultimate meaning of this war on the part of an increasingly demoralised and impoverished Nuer civilian population.

First stage: the birth of the Anyanya II

Following scattered hit-and-run attacks on northern merchants and local government agents during 1981 and 1982, converging bands of Nuer Anyanya II rebels established a base camp at Bilpam in southwestern Ethiopia. Among their most prominent leaders were Paulino Matiep Nhial, a western Bul Nuer, and Gordon Kong, an eastern Jikany Nuer. The Marxist regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam tolerated their presence but offered little material support. Fighting his own war against secessionist rebels in Eritrea and Tigray, Mengistu could hardly have been expected to support the main political objective of the Anyanya II.

In early 1983, a Nuer named Kuany Tut defected from the Sudanese
army. One of thousands of ex-Anyanya I fighters incorporated into the national military after 1972, Kuany travelled to Bilpam. Although not educated, Kuany soon proved an able and inspiring military leader. A mutiny of southern troops at Bor in May 1983 brought a fresh infusion of southern rebels to Bilpam, led by Col. John Garang and Maj. Kerubino Kuanyin Bol, a Dinka from Western Bahr el Ghazal. Leadership struggles ensued, with John Garang claiming supremacy on the basis of his former military rank and advanced education. These claims were flatly rejected by Nuer Anyanya II leaders, including a certain Gai Tut.

Garang also introduced a new political agenda for what was to become the SPLA, in which political independence for the South was jettisoned in favour of liberating the entire Sudan. While this objective was more palatable to Mengistu and other potential international supporters, it provoked considerable confusion and resistance among southern civilians and military recruits alike and, ultimately, undermined southern feelings of nationalism that had been maturing since the start of the first civil war. Forging a tight alliance with Mengistu, Garang adopted the heavy-handed militarism and autocratic leadership style of his Soviet-supported hosts. He proceeded to hunt down his Anyanya II rivals, who swiftly fled back into Sudan.

As the violence spread during 1983 and 1984, Gai Tut eventually sought reconciliation talks with Garang, but was ambushed and murdered on his way to meet Garang by SPLA forces commanded by Kerubino (Nyaba 1997: 35). Kerubino refused requests by Gai Tut’s supporters to bury the body, ordering instead that it be exposed to the birds and lashed 80 times a day until it decomposed (ibid.: 45). This unprecedented insult so embittered Paulino Matiep, Gordon Kong and other Anyanya II leaders that they soon turned to the Sudan Army for additional arms to fight against Garang and the SPLA.

Second stage: the consolidation of the SPLA

After 1983, the main energies of the Anyanya II were directed towards ambushing Dinka and Nuba SPLA recruits passing through Nuer territories on their way to SPLA training camps in Ethiopia (Nyaba 1997: 46). Since Nuer territories extended into southwestern Ethiopia, Anyanya II units had considerable room for manoeuvre. Meanwhile, Garang solidified his control over the newly emergent SPLA. He sent letters to Riek Machar and other members of the southern educated elite living abroad or in the North, and invited them to join the
movement. Many of these southern intellectuals and politicians were subsequently marginalised by Garang, who proved intolerant of any internal dissent and rapidly concentrated all decision-making powers in his own hands. As time passed, the militaristic mindset of Garang and his close advisors began to saturate the entire movement.

During this same period, northern Baggara Arab militias from southern Kordofan began attacking Nuer and Dinka civilians located in the northern Western Upper Nile (Mohamed Salih & Harir 1994). Mounted on horseback and wielding government-supplied AK-47s, these cattle- and slave-seeking raiders declared a jihad against a southern civilian population armed with little more than spears. Trained in counter-insurgency methods by the Sudanese army and entrusted with the task of depopulating the oil fields north of Bentiu, these Baggara militias began to kill, rape and enslave hundreds of unarmed Nuer and Dinka women and children in a dramatic breech of previously respected ethical limits on inter-tribal warfare in this region.

The intensity of these attacks was such that fleeing Nuer and Dinka survivors were often forced to abandon wounded and dead relatives to the claws of vultures. One can imagine the psychological distress this caused. Indeed, the scale of this calamity was so great that many Western Nuer concluded that it could have only come from God (kuoth nhial), as the ultimate source of life and death. Specifically, Western Nuer men and women began to equate ‘bullet victims’ with ‘lightning victims’ as a special category of spirit – known as col wic – which could potentially be transformed, when properly honoured and propitiated, into a guardian spirit and a reachable manifestation of an otherwise distant ‘creator’ God. Lightning victims were not mourned by Nuer like other deaths. Rather, people saw them as positive signs of Divinity’s direct engagement in and hence, continuing concern for the earthly world of human beings. Persons killed by lightning were said to be ‘chosen’ by Divinity, for reasons no Nuer would presume to understand. Because the spirit of such a person was thought to be taken by God directly ‘up into the sky’, the spirit opened up a direct and hence, potentially more reliable and beneficial channel of spiritual communication and supplication for surviving relatives. In times of grave danger, when death appeared imminent, there was no more effective means of prayer than calling upon one’s family’s col wic spirit for divine guidance and protection. By thus equating the roar and flash of lightning with those of gunfire, Nuer survivors of these devastating Baggara raids were able to validate their losses and salvage something
from their grief. In essence, they transformed their growing vulnerability to government guns into symbolic assertions of greater personal and collective control over the spiritual consequences of homicide (Hutchinson 1996: 137–40). Moreover, they did so with a sense of religious optimism, building upon long-established religious categories and convictions.

This spiritual equation also greatly enhanced men’s courage. Col wic spirits were believed to be so powerful that they could even protect their supplicants from bullets! Furthermore, every col wic spirit expected surviving relatives to provide it with posthumous heirs by marrying a living ‘ghost wife’ (ciek joka) in its name. Although a ‘ghost wife’ depended in daily life on the material and procreative support of a living pro-husband, who was normally a close paternal or maternal relative of the deceased, any children she bore were the patrilineal descendants of her spirit husband. This moral obligation was so strong that surviving kinsmen normally delayed marrying wives in their own names until after a ‘ghost marriage’ for a newly deceased col wic spirit could be arranged. To act otherwise was to invite demonstrations of divine anger in the form of illness, death or some other misfortune visited upon the neglectful kin. Since acquiring progeny was the tantamount life goal of every Nuer and the only form of immortality valued by them, these beliefs were deeply reassuring. Western Nuer men could thus face their better-armed Baggara opponents secure in the knowledge that, if shot and killed, their relatives would do everything in their power to provide them with posthumous heirs.

Following the forced flight of thousands of Nuer civilians to squalid squatter settlements then developing along the outskirts of northern cities or, alternatively, to swelling refugee camps in Ethiopia, the SPLA finally began to solidify its presence in the Western Upper Nile. Newly trained troops flowed in from Ethiopia. Many of these young men were severely brutalised by their military trainers. During the 1980s, SPLA training camps were run more like concentration camps, in which recruits were routinely starved, beaten, imprisoned and sometimes killed at the least sign of dissent (Nyaba 1997: 49–50). Very little time was devoted to their ideological development. Instead, recruits were taught to glorify the naked power of guns and to accept the life-and-death powers wielded by their military superiors as operating independently from those of God.

When the first SPLA battalions re-entered Nuer regions of the South, some Dinka and Nuba members were still bitter about the abuses they had earlier experienced at the hands of Nuer Anyanya II forces. Some
of these men vented their rage by robbing, raping, kidnapping and killing Eastern Nuer civilians encountered on their way to SPLA base camps further west. These military abuses went unpunished. Consequently, many Nuer and other southern civilians began to perceive the SPLA more as an occupying army than a liberating force.

Despite these continuing tensions, SPLA forces under the command of Riek Machar succeeded in establishing a bulwark in the northern Western Upper Nile against further Baggara attacks. By 1987, Machar had negotiated a working truce with several Baggara militias that favoured the development of long-distance trading in place of raiding (Hutchinson 1996: 148–9). A new SPLA market centre was established at Rubnyagai, not far from the government-controlled provincial capital of Bentiu. Soon a bustling trade developed, in which Nuer livestock, destined for northern meat markets, were exchanged for grain, seed, cloth, salt, sugar and other consumer goods imported from black markets in the North. During this same period, Machar forged an alliance with the bulk of the Anyanya II army and integrated it with the SPLA. However, a few outstanding Anyanya II remnants remained bound to the northern military, including several hundred Bul Nuer troops under the command of Paulino Matiep. Strategically located in the northwestern quadrant of the Western Upper Nile, these Bul Nuer troops effectively controlled the southern gateway of northern trade routes flowing into Rubnyagai. They also provided a formidable buffer between the rich oil fields lying in the north of the province and SPLA forces to the west and south. These Anyanya II were, therefore, particularly valued governmental allies—a privileged position that Paulino Matiep avidly exploited.

It was during this brief 1987–91 period of relative calm that Machar first became aware that the Western Nuer were classifying ‘bullet victims’ together with ‘lightning victims’ as col wic. Convinced that this equation would ‘cheapen’ the notion of col wic spirits, which were previously quite rare, Riek Machar embarked on an ideological campaign to rupture this spiritual association by calling for what amounted to a novel disregard for the dead. As part of his broader efforts to establish the legitimacy of the SPLA forces under his command, Machar endeavoured to convince local civilians and rank-and-file Nuer recruits that there were actually two kinds of war and hence, two kinds of homicide. Homicides carried out in the name of a ‘government war’ (koor kume), he argued, were entirely devoid of the social and spiritual risks associated with deaths generated by more localised ‘homeland wars’ (koor cieng). Whereas the latter might be
subject to pressing spiritual concerns, homicides occurring in a ‘government war’ were declared entirely impersonal, secular and final. There was no possibility of claiming bloodwealth cattle from a slayer’s family, no need to purify the killer of the tainted blood of the slain, and no reason to memorialise the dead through special sacrificial offerings and posthumous marriages (Hutchinson 1996: 108–9; 1999).

This revolutionary pronouncement was also aimed at encouraging rank-and-file Nuer recruits to shed any lingering feelings of personal responsibility for homicides carried out under orders from their military superiors. Certainly, Machar, like other high-ranking SPLA officers, was intent on undermining, if not destroying, any mediating structures standing between him and the loyalty of his troops, including, when necessary, bonds of kinship, community and spirituality. Yet above and beyond any problems of troop discipline, Machar’s intervention may also be viewed as an indirect assertion of political authority. Ever since British colonial times, successive ‘governments’ had claimed the right to eliminate individuals who seriously challenged their monopolistic claims to the legitimate use of force. In exercising this ‘right’, government agents also proclaimed such deaths devoid of all moral, social or spiritual consequences for their perpetrators. Otherwise expressed, assertions of governmental ‘legitimacy’ in South Sudan had long required ordinary citizens to accept – however reluctantly – the possibility that some slain relatives would be consigned to a kind of social and spiritual oblivion. By proposing this ‘government war/homeland war’ dichotomy, Riek Machar was thus canvassing for public recognition of the SPLA as a legitimate ‘government’ in its own right.

People’s acceptance of this distinction was facilitated by their increasing access to SPLA-supplied guns. ‘Homeland wars’ were founded on the structural logic of the feud. In principle, this meant that ‘brothers’ should band together against their ‘cousins’, except when facing wider threats when ‘cousins’ should suspend their animosities and fight side by side. For a feud to become effective, however, the personal identities of the original slayer and slain must be known. Otherwise, it becomes impossible for communities to determine the social epicentre – and hence, relational boundaries – of the specific individuals, families and spirits involved. As long as individually crafted spears remained the dominant weapon of regional warfare, this was not problematic. The trajectory of a bullet lodged deep in a person’s body, however, was much more difficult to trace during major gun battles. Often a gun-fighter would not know for certain whether or
not he had killed someone. Under these circumstances, the social logic of the feud swiftly gave way to the depersonalised constructions of a ‘government war’.

It was, perhaps, the secularising thrust of these developments and SPLA militarism, more generally, that helped to spur the remarkable religious efflorescence that followed. When the world appears shattered and cursed, one of the few things people can do to retain faith in the future and in themselves is to band together to create moral enclaves in which they collectively reaffirm their commitment to God’s will – however defined. For increasing numbers of Western Nuer during the latter 1980s, Christianity came to symbolise the possibility of political equality, community development and self-enhancement in the context of the increasingly vicious Islamic jihad being waged against them from the North. Outside of a small, urbanised, educated elite, Christianity had made very little headway into rural regions of the Western Upper Nile before this time. All foreign missionaries were expelled from South Sudan in 1964. And up until the start of the present civil war, most Western Nuer took the attitude that: ‘The British left together with their God’ (Hutchinson 1996: 318). Beginning in the mid-1980s, however, younger Western Nuer men and women of all ages began to embrace Christianity’s promise of a more direct relationship with a compassionate and forgiving God. Older men, in contrast, proved more reluctant to adopt a new religion that directly undermined their privileged position as the sacrificial mediators of their dependents’ religious supplications. Rank-and-file Nuer military recruits also held back, turning instead to the protective powers of indigenous Nuer prophets, who emerged in unprecedented numbers during the latter 1980s.

In many ways, this wartime turn to Christianity was reinforced by the SPLA leadership. Commander Machar, for example, was approached in 1987 by a group of some 600 hymn-singing Western Nuer civilians who complained that, although they wanted to convert to Christianity, there was no one in the entire province capable of baptising them (Hutchinson 1996: 319–21). Machar responded by summoning a Nuer-speaking Dinka pastor from the Bahr el Ghazal, and ordering him to spend several months baptising would-be converts throughout the Western Upper Nile. This was a truly ‘grassroots’ religious revolution, spear-headed by a small number of Nuer civilians who had converted to Christianity either while working as labour migrants in Khartoum before the war or while living in Ethiopian refugee camps. Machar, who was himself a baptised Presbyterian,
quickly recognised Christianity’s galvanising potential against the Islamic zeal of the Khartoum government.

Powerful indigenous prophets also began to attract major followings during the later 1980s and 1990s (Johnson 1994: 342ff). Some of these, including a Lak Nuer prophet named Wutnyang Gatakek and a Bul Nuer prophet named Deng Dit, supported this civilian turn towards evangelical forms of Christianity, while simultaneously asserting their own powers of religious inspiration. Several of them developed their own personal armies and began to weigh in on various sides of the South-on-South violence that erupted in the next phase of the war.

**Stage three: the collapse of southern military unity**

This brief era of relative peace and prosperity in the Western Upper Nile came to a crashing halt in August 1991 following the announcement of the ‘Nasir coup’. At that time, the SPLA was still scrambling to regain its footing after having lost its principal supply lines and base camps in Ethiopia following the fall of the Mengistu government in May 1991. This event also precipitated the mass exodus of some 350,000 South Sudanese refugees from their Ethiopian hiding places. No sooner had these fleeing civilians crossed back into Sudan than they were promptly bombed by government aircraft. Riek Machar was by then the SPLA Commander responsible for the entire northern front. He established a new base camp near Nasir, the District Headquarters of the Eastern Jikany Nuer, where many thousands of returning refugees soon converged.

It was from there that Riek Machar, Gordon Kong and a high-ranking Shilluk SPLA officer named Lam Akol declared their disastrous coup against Garang’s leadership. Eritrea’s newly won independence and the earlier break-up of the Soviet Union seemed to clear the way for more open expressions of southern secessionist sentiments. Resentments over Garang’s autocratic leadership style had also been building within the movement for years. Consequently, when the coup was first announced on BBC radio, many southerners were initially hopeful that its leaders would either find ways of instituting political reforms and swiftly reunite the movement, or else establish an independent front against the Sudanese army. Neither happened. When the coup leaders failed to take control of the entire movement and Garang failed to quash them, their competing political agendas soon gave way to the
more urgent need for self-preservation. Both Garang and Machar reached for the ‘ethnic’ card. What followed were years of South-on-South military raids and counter-raids, mostly targeting the civilian population along ethnic lines.

When the SPLA divided and the first ripples of violence lapped into the Western Upper Nile, rural Nuer civilians were caught off guard. Communications between them and their better-informed eastern cousins were especially tenuous during August and September, the height of the rains. They were thus ‘innocent’ of the political maelstrom heading their way. Many western Nuer youths were, in fact, peacefully grazing their cattle in Dinka regions of the Bahr el Ghazal at that time. During the first week of September, a Dinka SPLA officer in the Bahr el Ghazal allied with Garang began rounding up and killing these unsuspecting Nuer herdsmen. When the survivors struggled back to inform their chiefs about what had happened, many Western Nuer were uncertain about how to respond. The oldest and most respected Western Nuer chief, Malwal Wun, who had served as paramount chief of the Nyuong Nuer since British colonial times, dispatched an urgent message to Riek Machar in Nasir in which he said: ‘The Dinka are killing our women and children, stealing our cattle and burning our homes. What kind of war is this? Is this a “homeland war” or a “government war”?’ Commander Machar reportedly replied that it was a ‘government war’. He explained that it was not a war between the Dinka and Nuer but a war to overthrow Garang’s leadership. The ‘Nasir Declaration’, he claimed, was not for the Nuer alone but for the whole South. Upon hearing this, Malwal Wun ordered his chiefs not to retaliate against the Dinka but to sit tight and fight only if attacked again.

Shortly thereafter, a mixed raiding party of Eastern Jikany and Lou Nuer recruits and civilians, led by Gordon Kong and by several ex-Anyanya II leaders who had rallied to Machar’s support, began to take matters into their own hands. Supported by ‘SPLA-Nasir’ military units, these Nuer drove deep into Bor Dinka territories, Garang’s home area. The Western Nuer did not participate in these devastating military raids, in which hundreds of Dinka men, women and children were brutally killed. Those Bor Dinka who remained in their home area were soon facing famine, since nearly all their livestock had been stolen or slaughtered. Subsequent interviews with several Lou Nuer participants in these attacks revealed that the Bor civilians were targeted because they were perceived to have benefited unfairly from cattle resources earlier extracted by Dinka SPLA officers in Nuer areas.
The fact that international humanitarian relief supplies flowing into the South Sudan were also concentrated in Garang’s home region was similarly used to justify blurring the line between military and civilian targets by these Nuer raiders.

The unprecedented viciousness shocked even Machar, who remained behind in Nasir. Although Garang’s support had been weakening within the movement since the ‘coup’, he immediately capitalised on this disaster by charging the coup leaders with having mounted a war of annihilation against the Dinka. Several Dinka SPLA officers who had earlier been contemplating joining forces with Machar rallied back to Garang. And from there, the conflict rapidly spiralled out of control, as rival Nuer and Dinka commanders and warlords began to carve out their own domains of military dominance. In order to solidify their positions and to ensure a steady stream of fresh recruits, rival southern military leaders endeavoured to transform earlier patterns of competition between Nuer and Dinka communities over scarce economic resource into politicised wars of ethnic violence. As one Dinka soldier explained:

Just imagine Riek or Garang going to their respective tribes to talk the Nuer or Dinka civilians into fighting one another so that Riek or Garang becomes the leader of South Sudan. Do you think that anybody would go to war? We don’t care about their political careers, at least not to the point of killing ourselves. They know this and that is why they have to make it sound as if tribal wealth is under threat from the rival tribe in order to persuade people to wage war. (Jok & Hutchinson 1999: 133)

This recruitment strategy, of course, was a complete sham. For whatever Nuer cattle were ‘recovered’, for example, during ‘retaliatory’ raids on Dinka cattle camps were not returned to their original Nuer owners but, rather, claimed as ‘government property’ to be redistributed as the reigning military commander saw fit. The cumulative result was a steady siphoning of civilian cattle into the byres of individual southern military leaders and warlords. These unchecked predations fomented further political division – most notably but by no means exclusively – from within Machar’s faction. When combined with the intentional burning of homes, destruction of crops and commandeering of international food aid flowing into the region, most Nuer and Dinka civilians fell deeper and deeper into poverty.

By the end of 1992, the military situation began to stalemate, with Machar’s forces holding most of the greater Upper Nile and Garang’s forces controlling most of Equatoria and the Bahr el Ghazal. Between
1992 and 1996, Machar’s faction grew increasingly unstable, owing to internal power struggles and to recurrent defections to the sides of both Garang and the government (cf. Johnson 1998). This instability was reflected in an awkward series of political transformations which, nonetheless, failed to stem the fragmentation of Machar’s support. In March 1993, Machar renamed his movement ‘SPLA-United’, after he was joined by Kerubino Kuanyin Bol, a Dinka, and several other former SPLA officers who had managed to escape from Garang’s political prison in Equatoria. This multi-ethnic union did not last long. Kerubino broke away to form his own military faction with the government’s support, whereupon Riek Machar, in an effort to rally his remaining forces, rechristened his movement as the ‘Southern Sudan Independence Movement/Army’ (SSIM/A) in 1994. None of these political make-overs, however, could overcome Machar’s primary military handicap: an inadequate supply of arms and ammunition. Finding himself without access to the international frontier and thus, without any reliable means of resupplying his troops in the Upper Nile, Machar drifted further and further into the government’s camp, where he solicited arms to continue his self-obsessed battle against Garang (cf. Nyaba 1997).

Although many Nuer and Dinka civilians recognised the self-destructive impulse of these developments when they first occurred, they were powerless to stop them, owing to the unchecked predations and abuses of local SPLA and SSIM commanders. Gradually, however, many rural Nuer and Dinka men and women came to identify their interminable sufferings with the birth of a new breed of warfare: ‘the war of the [southern] educated [elite]’. As one prominent Nuer chief later exclaimed before a mixed assembly of Nuer and Dinka chiefs in June 1998:

They used to tell us that the Nuer and Dinka fought each other because we are ignorant. We don’t know anything because we are not educated. But now look at all this killing! This war between the Nuer and Dinka is much worse than anything we experienced in the past and it is the war of the educated [elite]. It is not our war at all!

Unlike a ‘homeland war’, the violent confrontations unleashed by Garang and Machar appeared endless. Whereas earlier conflicts between Nuer and Dinka communities rarely lasted more than a few days before local chiefs stepped forward to restore the peace, ‘the war of the educated’ proved impervious to numerous international and regional mediation attempts. And unlike a ‘government war’, ‘the war of the educated’ seemed to have no overarching political objective,
other than personal struggles for power. Most Nuer civilians could not understand why Riek Machar was continually mobilising troops to dislodge Garang, instead of sending them to chase ‘the Arabs’ out of the South. Nor could they fathom why Garang steadfastly refused to make any conciliatory gesture towards the Nuer, even though he knew, as early as 1994, that the situation was ripe for a major SPLA peace initiative.

While acutely aware that the NIF government in Khartoum was manipulating rivalries between Garang and Machar (as well as subsidiary conflicts between them and other southern commanders and warlords), most rural Nuer with whom I spoke placed responsibility for the continuing violence between the Nuer and Dinka squarely on the shoulders of ‘the two doctors’. One prominent Dinka leader compared ‘Riek and Garang’ to ‘two people fighting over the meat of a buffalo they have not yet killed!’ Similarly, many Nuer and Dinka civilian leaders vehemently rejected these men’s attempts to project their leadership struggles onto their respective ethnic groups. As one Nuer chief pointedly exclaimed: ‘Garang did not give birth to the Dinka, the Dinka gave birth to John Garang! So, too, Riek is not the father of the Nuer but the son of the Nuer.’ But most of all, many Nuer and Dinka civilians concurred that Machar and Garang had violated the most fundamental premise of indigenous leadership: respect for one’s own people. ‘If you want to be a leader, you cannot kill your children, when you want to rule them!’

The Khartoum government, however, continued to fan the flames of these southern conflicts, proving remarkably adept at fostering further divisions within the southern military hierarchy. The government’s main objective was to regain control over the tremendous oil reserves located in the Western Upper Nile (Human Rights Watch 2000). The government relied primarily on Bul Nuer forces allied with Paulino Matiep and with Kerubino Kuanyin, who were close relatives through an inter-ethnic marriage, in order to prevent Garang’s SPLA forces from the Bahr el Ghazal and Machar’s forces from the southern Western Upper Nile from reaching the oil fields north of Bentiu. While Matiep’s forces had performed this service since the early 1980s, it was not until after the 1991 splitting of the SPLA that the government revived its pre-war plans to construct a massive oil pipeline between Bentiu, the provincial capital of the Western Upper Nile, and a Red Sea port in the far North. The complete co-optation or destruction of Machar’s SSIM forces in the Western Upper Nile was an essential element of these plans.
Fourth stage: an explosion of inter-Nuer factional fighting

The government’s strategy of divide and conquer culminated in the signing of a nominal peace agreement in April 1997 with Riek Machar, Kerubino Kuanyin Bol and several other southern military leaders, all of whom had forged secret alliances with the national army during the 1991–96 period (Human Rights Watch 2000). This agreement represented the consolidation of a preliminary ‘Peace Charter’ negotiated with Machar a year earlier. Garang played no role in these negotiations. In these agreements, the government of Sudan promised, in exceedingly vague terms, that southern Sudanese ‘rights of self-determination’ would be recognised through a southerner-wide referendum to be held after an ‘interim period’ of four (or more) years. In exchange for this weakly worded promise, Machar, Kerubino and other southern signatures agreed to graft their remaining military forces onto the national army as the ‘Southern Sudan Defence Forces’ (SSDF) in a reinvigorated war against Garang, to participate in a regional transitional administration known as the ‘Southern Sudan Coordinating Council’ and to accept ‘Islam and custom’ as the bases of all national legislation. Many southern Sudanese – including many Nuer – ridiculed the terms of these agreements from the beginning as representing little more than a veiled form of ‘unconditional surrender’ to the government’s Islamist agenda. Many Western Nuer civilians and rank-and-file SSIM recruits also remained profoundly distrustful of the government’s motives but felt they had nowhere else to turn for political direction than to Riek Machar.

Whatever ripples of hope may have passed through Western Nuer communities upon first hearing that ‘the war was over’ soon dissolved in a tidal wave of inter-ethnic conflagrations. No sooner had the ‘April 1997 Khartoum Peace Agreement’ been signed than the government began targeting some of the less educated southern military commanders under Machar’s command to mutiny against him. Some of these illiterate warlords had been marginalised by the SPLA leadership in the past. Enticing them with promises of independent arms and of major promotions within the northern military hierarchy, the government began to peel away Machar’s military and political support. Kerubino was made a major general in the Sudanese army in 1997, and named the vice chair of the ‘Southern Sudan Coordinating Council’ a year later. However, these rewards failed to stem his growing disenchantment, and he abruptly defected to the SPLA in late January 1998, after mounting a surprise attack on Wau, a major
government garrison town in the Bahr el Ghazal Province. Double-crossed by Kerubino, the government began to invest more heavily in Paulino Matiep as a political counterweight to Riek Machar. In early 1998, Paulino Matiep was made a general in the Sudanese army, whereupon his militia, which formed part of the SSDF under Machar’s command, broke away with the government's support as the South Sudan Unity Movement/Army (SSUM/A) (Human Rights Watch 2000). Other prominent Nuer warlords, such as Gabriel Tangeny in Fangak, Simon Gatwich Dual in Akobo and Gordon Kong in Nasir were similarly enticed to create independent military alliances with the government and to challenge Riek Machar’s leadership. Nevertheless, it was Matiep’s forces who were entrusted with carrying out most of the dirty work of driving Nuer civilians out of the oil zones both north and south of Bentiu. In June 1998, General Matiep unleashed his Bul Nuer forces against Machar’s SSDF positions along the crucial Bentiu/Adok corridor. Burning down Machar’s home town of Ler three times during 1998, Matiep’s forces succeeded in displacing some 70,000 Nuer civilians from the province by December 1999 (cf. Human Rights Watch 2000).

Even before these attacks began, many Western Nuer civilians and ordinary SSDF recruits were growing alarmed at the increasingly transparent intentions of the government to exploit the lengthy, four-year interim period specified in the 1997 Peace Agreement for the strategic deployment of northern troops in formerly ‘liberated’ Nuer areas and, more disturbingly, for the rapid extraction of formerly untapped southern oil deposits. By 1998, the government of Sudan, in cooperation with a consortium of international petroleum companies headed by Talisman (a Canadian firm) had embarked on a $1.6 billion oil development scheme (for details, see Human Rights Watch 1999: 137ff. & 2000). The first phase of this scheme, which was completed in August 1999, involved the construction of a 1,100 kilometre oil pipeline from Bentiu to newly constructed oil refineries and export stations in the distant North (cf. Human Rights Watch 2000). The pipeline, which has an initial carrying capacity of 150,000 barrels per day, is slated to be expanded to 250,000 barrels per day by 2001. The government also hopes to extend the pipeline southwards through the Western Upper Nile Province to Adok, a village on the White Nile. While the second construction phase of this oil development scheme has not yet begun, the massive oil revenues generated by the first phase dramatically strengthened the government’s economic viability and international credibility over the past two years. Moreover, a significant
proportion of the government’s oil revenues was invested in the domestic production of sophisticated weaponry to bolster its seventeen-year-long assault on the citizens of the South. If nothing else, the government’s lunge for the oil stimulated renewed contacts and cooperation between SPLA and SSDF field commanders on the ground, despite the continuing unwillingness of John Garang and Riek Machar to reconcile their political differences for the greater good of the South. Apparently fed-up with the repeated attacks on Western Nuer civilians ordered by Matiep, two of his most important field commanders, Philip Bipen and Peter Gatdet, mutinied in 1999. Peter Gatdet defected with some 1,000 Bul Nuer to the SPLA, while Philip Bipen began fighting in tandem with Machar’s SSDF forces in the southern oil zone (Human Rights Watch 2000).

During this same 1998–99 period, mounting civilian despair over the continuing hostilities between Garang and Machar fomented a major grassroots peace initiative. Breaking free of a seven-year-long stranglehold on inter-ethnic communication imposed by rival southern military units, scores of prominent Dinka and Nuer chiefs gathered, first, in Lokichokkio, Kenya, during June 1998 and, later, in Wunlit, Bahr el Ghazal, during February–March 1999. Their objective, as one chief put it, was ‘to end this nasty little war that the educated [southern military elite] makes us fight!’ With financial and logistical support from the New Sudan Council of Churches, these peace workshops (both of which I attended) succeeded in significantly reducing tensions between Nuer and Dinka communities west of the White Nile. They also pressured rival southern military leaders into investigating and restraining the cattle-raiding proclivities of some of their most abusive field commanders. From the perspective of Nuer and Dinka civilian leaders, ‘the war of the educated’ was not a war between ‘the Nuer’ and ‘the Dinka’, but a war declared on the civilian populations of both groups by self-serving southern military commanders and warlords. As one leading Nuer chief, capturing the consensus of civilian participants of the Wunlit Peace Conference, exclaimed: ‘There is nothing in the hearts of Nuer and Dinka to cause this war. This war has been imposed on us from outside. It is not our war at all!’

Nevertheless, it remains to be seen whether or not this civilian-based peace process will triumph over intensifying government efforts to foment further mistrust and violence between southern military leaders. A follow-up peace meeting held between Nuer civilian and military leaders in Wicok, Western Upper Nile, during October 1999 attempted to reconcile the Bul Nuer, who by this time were badly divided amongst
themselves, and to end their attacks on other Nuer communities. However, as soon as the government got wind of the conference, it promptly bombed Wicok as well as numerous other SSDF locations in the Western Upper Nile (Human Rights Watch 2000). A third ‘People-to-People’ conference held in Liliir during May 2000 failed to extend the peace established at Wunlit to Nuer, Dinka, Murle and Anyuak groups living east of the White Nile. Nevertheless, the government remains deeply threatened by the spirit of peace and reconciliation successfully generated by the 1999 Wunlit Peace Conference and, consequently, has moved thousands of northern troops into the Western Upper Nile over the past two years in order to ensure the security of its oil operations.

At the time of writing, the ‘Khartoum Peace Agreement’ appears a dead issue. Charging the central government with repeated violations of both the spirit and terms of that agreement, Machar resigned from the government in February 2000 and made his way to Nairobi, where he is currently struggling to salvage some of his former political prominence. Nevertheless, there is little prospect of a future political reconciliation between him and Garang. Consequently, the Western Nuer, in particular, remain deeply fractured and politically paralysed.

**War as a manifestation of God’s anger**

Having lost, perhaps, half their homeland populations to the ravages of war, famine, disease and displacement since 1991, many Nuer and Dinka civilians I interviewed during 1998 and 1999 complained alike of being ‘exhausted by death’. With much of the Western Upper Nile scarred by increasingly vicious Nuer–Nuer military confrontations and with no clear leadership alternatives on either ethnic horizon, many Nuer and Dinka men and women have come to define their interminable sufferings as a ‘curse from God’. Rather than confront the reality of their powerlessness as individuals to make ‘the world good again’, many people found psychological solace in the idea that they somehow ‘deserved’ this war, that they ‘brought it upon themselves’.

For many of the tens of thousands of Dinka and Nuer women and men who have sought spiritual refuge from this war in Christian conversion (cf. Nikkel 1997), God is said to be punishing southern Sudanese for their earlier ‘slowness’ in abandoning ‘the worship of false gods’. Support for this conviction was found in an apocalyptic passage of Isaiah 18, as set forth in the Third Edition of *The Good News Bible*. Loosely translated and gratuitously headed by the editors with
the caption ‘God Punishes the Sudan’, this passage offers little reason to hope that God’s anger will ‘cool’ anytime in the foreseeable future.

Other Nuer villagers attributed God’s wrath more directly to the human blood southerners continue to shed daily amongst themselves. The tragic explosion of intra-ethnic violence between Nuer forces loyal to Dr Riek Machar and others supporting Paulino Matiep Nhial’s violent bid for power only seemed to confirm God’s justification for continuing rage. Confronted with these depressing developments, it is, perhaps, not surprising that many Nuer and Dinka civilians have become resigned to the idea that: ‘This war will end when God wants it to [and not before then]!’

However, this fatalistic attitude, the product of seventeen years of unrelenting warfare and social upheaval, did not go unchallenged. Several members of the southern educated elite openly scoffed at the idea that this war was caused by God’s anger. ‘Why should God be angry at us?’ exclaimed one senior Dinka intellectual active within the political wing of the SPLA:

We are fighting a political war! And how could fighting for our political rights possibly be [construed as] a form of punishment from God? Are we like Hitler? Have we killed millions of innocent people in cold blood? No! We are fighting a defensive war on our own lands to free ourselves from political domination and economic exploitation by the Khartoum government. There is nothing that we have done to deserve God’s anger!

A second discursive challenge emanated from indigenous prophetic traditions dating back to the first and most famous of all Nuer prophets, Ngundeng Bong (Johnson 1994). Before he died in 1906, Ngundeng Bong allegedly foretold the coming of ‘a great war’ in which Nuer and other ‘black people’ of the South would definitively free themselves from northern Arab domination (Hutchinson 1996: 348ff.; Johnson 1985, 1994: 336ff.). Ngundeng’s enigmatic prophecies, which have been conveyed across the generations through sacred songs, are sometimes referred to by contemporary Nuer men and women as ‘the Nuer Bible’. For more than a century now, successive generations of Nuer have combed these haunting songs for clues about their collective future. Faith in the penetrating truths of Ngundeng’s prophecies also began to attract the attentions of many Dinka and other southern Sudanese during the first civil war (cf. Johnson 1985, 1994). Among these songs are also several well-known passages that foretell an intermediate phase of southern liberation struggles, when the Nuer would be bitterly divided and fighting amongst themselves. I have heard many contemporary Nuer allude to these verses with a tone of
They nevertheless remain hopeful that the tremendous hardships they are currently experiencing represent a tragic but necessary step along a divinely guided pathway to their collective liberation.

Although oriented towards different secular and religious ‘truths’, all three discursive perspectives reflect an all-too-human quest for a sense of hope in an era of unremitting violence. For those Christians who have turned to Isaiah 18 in search of a ray of hope, the dominant interpretation is one in which God’s anger will eventually ‘cool’ towards southern Sudanese. ‘Isaiah says that it is not the end of the world. It is not Doomsday.’ Rather, people just need to realise that ‘Jesus is our doctor from God’ (Scroggins 1991; Hutchinson 1996: 316–17). It is thus a matter of strengthening one’s faith in the Christian message and in the compassionate forgiveness of a caring God that many Nuer and Dinka converts now argue is the best means to ensure their collective survival. Nevertheless, contemporary interpretations of Isaiah 18 are far less clear when it comes to predicting the ultimate victor of this war. Unlike well-known passages of Ngundeng’s songs, the final liberation of southern Sudanese is by no means assured by the Book of Isaiah.

Whatever currents of doubt and pessimism may have crept into this ongoing ‘dialogue’ between indigenous prophecies, the Christian Bible and secular political ideologies have been most closely associated, in my experience, with the post-1991 shattering of southern political and military unity. Suspicions of God’s anger, though earlier voiced by some Nuer prophets and evangelists, only gained wider acceptance once John Garang and Riek Machar and other southern military leaders began to fight out their political differences along ethnic and sub-ethnic lines.

Dividing Sudan’s unresolved civil war into four main stages, this paper has traced evolving patterns and forms of political violence as these have affected Nuer civilian populations in the Western Upper Nile over the past seventeen years. The first stage (1981–83) was the briefest but it laid the groundwork for all that followed. Disagreements over the overarching political objectives of southern resistance efforts combined with escalating struggles between Nuer Anyanya II leaders and a small circle of Garang’s more highly educated and militarised supporters to create a socio-political rift (complete with ‘ethnic’ overtones) that has dogged the SPLA since its inception in 1983. This was the first and, in
retrospect, one of the most important political fissures to have emerged within the southern military hierarchy since it provided the government of Sudan with an initial foothold from which to mount its campaign of ‘divide and conquer’ against the South.

During the second stage (1983–91), Garang rapidly solidified his control over the SPLA but failed, at least initially, to shield Nuer civilian populations in the Western Upper Nile from various, pro-government, Baggara Arab militias barrelling down on them from the North. People’s response to the tremendous losses of life experienced at the hands of their better-armed Baggara assailants, however, was remarkably creative and optimistic. Identifying the fire and thunder of enemy bullets with the transcendent powers of God, the Western Nuer came to view each new death as a prospective source of divine protection and support for surviving relatives. By categorising ‘bullet victims’ together with ‘lighting victims’ as potential col wic spirits, people were able to salvage something meaningful from their grief. This spiritual equation, nevertheless, was soon ruptured by Riek Machar. As part of his more general efforts to ensure the unquestioning obedience of his troops to kill on command, Machar introduced a novel distinction between ‘homeland wars’, where God’s responsibilities as the ultimate arbitrator of human morality remained relevant, and ‘government wars’, where acts of homicide were deemed to be entirely impersonal, secular and final. With the gradual replacement of locally crafted spears by SPLA-supplied guns as the dominant weapon of regional defence and warfare, most Western Nuer came to accept this conceptual dichotomy and began to develop their religious imaginations in novel directions. During the brief era of relative security that followed between 1987 and 1991, thousands upon thousands of Western Nuer civilians turned en masse to Christian conversion, while others looked to indigenous Nuer prophets for spiritual protection.

During the third stage (1991–97), the ‘war of the government’ was overwhelmed by the ‘war of the educated’ [southern military elite], in which bitterly divided southern military leaders began to fight out their political differences along ethnic lines. As this South-on-South violence gained momentum in Nuer and Dinka regions of the Western Upper Nile and Bahr el Ghazal Provinces, civilian communities on both sides fell prey to an ever-growing number of regional commanders and warlords, who strove to establish their own domains of political and economic authority. No longer restrained by southern nationalist sentiments or by former ethical limits on the killing of unarmed women
and children, these predatory forces went completely unchecked. Although southern civilians were acutely aware that this South-on-South violence was not in their interests, they were unable to stop it. This violence also played straight in the hands of government propagandists, who sought to portray the ‘problem of the South’ as rooted in internal tendencies towards ‘tribalism’ rather than in the government’s own discriminatory political and economic policies. Dangling promises of arms and major military promotions, the government of Sudan eventually succeeded in coopting major segments of the Nuer forces nominally under Machar’s command and in reasserting military control over southern oil reserves in the Western Upper Nile.

Following Machar’s signing of the 1997 Khartoum Peace Agreement, the government stimulated further divisions within Machar’s SSDF forces in order to promote the rapid exploitation of previously untapped southern oil reserves. During this same 1997–2000 period, Nuer and Dinka civilian leaders found the courage to take matters into their own hands. With financial and logistical assistance from the New Sudan Council of Churches, these civilian and religious leaders forged a path-breaking, grassroots, peace agreement at Wunlit in 1999, which significantly defused hostilities between Nuer and Dinka groups lying west of the White Nile. Although extending this peace initiative to Nuer, Dinka, Anyuak and Murle communities east of the White Nile has proved more difficult, the success of the 1999 Wunlit Peace Conference has instilled fresh hope in many Southern Sudanese hearts and fresh fears in the national government.

Looking towards the future, there is reason to believe that evolving religious convictions will continue to play a pivotal role in Nuer reassessments of the precipitating agents and ultimate meaning of this war. The pro-active peace stance adopted by the New Sudan Council of Churches represents one important dimension of this process. But we should also anticipate that indigenous Nuer prophets will be able to help heal the bloody divisions that have resulted from elite competition and government manipulation among Nuer military units in recent years. A powerful new prophet named Gai Riang has recently emerged among the Lou Nuer. As I write these lines, Gai Riang is in the process of summoning all Nuer ‘who call themselves commanders’ to an extraordinary peace meeting at a location near the great pyramid (biy) originally constructed by Ngundeng Bong. Threatening those who fail to respond to his summons with imminent death, Gai Riang hopes to use his widely recognised spiritual powers to pressure Paulino Matiep,
Rick Machar, Gordon Kong and many Nuer warlords and commanders to cease their predations on Nuer civilians and to reunite in the face of continuing government attacks. While it is not yet known whether or not Gai Riang’s spiritual forces will prove triumphant, this ongoing event represents only the latest in a long series of religiously-inspired, regional peace initiatives that will undoubtedly continue until success has been achieved.

NOTES

1. This paper is based on varying periods of ethnographic field research carried out in Nuer regions of South Sudan during 1980–85, 1992, 1996, 1998, 1999 and 2000. I would like to acknowledge with appreciation recent support for my research activities offered by a year-long fellowship from the Pew Evangelical Scholars Program during 1998–99 and two Senior Fellowships from the Harry F. Guggenheim Foundation during 1998–99 and 1999–2000. I also wish to thank Christopher Clapham and Douglas Johnson for their insightful comments on an earlier version. However, I remain solely responsible for any of the paper’s shortcomings.

2. There exists a growing literature on recent processes of political fragmentation in South Sudan fomented through the creation of tribal militias. For particularly astute analyses, see Africa Watch 1996 and Mohamed Salih & Harir 1994.

REFERENCES


