



Cattle belonging to displaced Dinka people in Jonglei State, South Sudan, October 2008 (UN Photo/Tim McKulka)

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CYCLICAL YOUTH-LED CONFLICT AS AN EARLY WARNING INDICATOR¹

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¹Portions of this article were drawn from the authors Master's research and thesis submitted to the University of Waterloo in 2013.



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INTRODUCTION

The dynamics of conflict are shifting. In the 2011 World Development Report, the World Bank stated that conflicts are now increasingly cyclical and intractable events; 90 percent of the civil wars that occurred in the 2000s were fought within countries that had experienced a domestic conflict in the past 30 years (World Bank, 2011). Countries are more likely to experience cycles of violence due to the persistence of weak state structures that cannot extend their reach into peripheral regions, leading to local instability (Kingston, 2004). Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, the international community observed several states – in which external actors provided 50 percent of those states' overall revenues – relapse into civil war (Call, 2012). Given the significant investment by the international community in peacebuilding projects in post-conflict states – whether democratic reforms, economic reforms, capacity building, or sustainable development – there needs to be a significant increase in research focused on civil war recurrence, as the trajectory of post-conflict states cannot be guaranteed without sustainable peace.

This paper will analyse whether the agro-pastoral violence by youth from 2005-2011 (particularly in Jonglei state) could have been used as an early warning indicator of the potential outbreak of violence in South Sudan, and whether addressing the youth-based violence could have been used as an avenue to prevent conflict before the outbreak of civil war in December 2013. This paper will initially discuss the internal political tension that contributed to the instability that resulted in the outbreak of civil war in December 2013 in order to give context and background to the ongoing conflict in South Sudan. While the political tension resulted in the outbreak of conflict, the Upper Nile region in which the conflict was centred saw the mobilization of children and youth militias as the primary supplement to the formal military units in the region. However, the militias that were mobilized were not created during the conflict; rather child and youth cattle raiding groups were co-opted once the civil war broke out. By focusing on the role of children and youth in cyclical violence in the agro-pastoral regions of South Sudan, and comparing the failure to enforce law and order in Jonglei State with strong governance seen in Warrap and Lakes states, this paper concludes that the mitigation of agro-pastoral violence could have reduced the mobilization of children and youth in the conflict that started in December 2013.

REVERSION BACK INTO VIOLENCE

On December 15th, 2013, armed conflict broke out in Juba, the capital city of South Sudan. Within ten days, the conflict had spread throughout the country as forces loyal to President Salva Kiir Mayardit and former Vice-President Riek Machar fought for control of major cities in the Greater Upper Nile region, consisting of Jonglei, Unity, and Upper Nile states (Pendle, 2014). While the conflict began with defections by members of the governing party, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), in the Upper Nile region, armed civilians also joined Riek Machar forming the SPLM in Opposition (SPLM-IO) (Rolandsen, 2015). While conflict was confined primarily to the three states of the Greater Upper Nile region, many analysts consider this violence the outbreak of civil war recurrence in South Sudan rather than a regional rebellion due to the all-encompassing nature of the war (for an expanded discussion see Pendle, 2014). The dominant faction of the conflict is the ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) headed by President Salva Kiir, who continued to maintain control over 7 of the 10 states in South Sudan and the apparatuses of government after the outbreak of conflict in December 2013 (Rolandsen, Glomnes, Manoeli & Nicolaisen, 2015). However, the major opposition force, the SPLM-IO headed by Riek Machar, had been able to establish control within both the cities and countryside of the Upper Nile Region, presenting a significant threat within the country.

Tensions and fears that surrounded the upcoming national elections in 2015 resulted in the political tensions that plagued the SPLM throughout 2013 (Rolandsen, Glomnes, Manoeli & Nicolaisen, 2015). Salva Kiir's leadership was being contested by Riek Machar, Pagan Amum (who is the former SPLM Secretary-General), and Rebecca Byandeng (John Garang's widow), who had all announced that they would run in the upcoming presidential election (Rolandsen, Glomnes, Manoeli & Nicolaisen, 2015). The conflict that broke out in December followed a series of high-level dismissals, including of Vice-President Riek Machar, the cabinet, the Governor of Unity State, and the Secretary-General of the SPLM in July 2013. Due to the significant political backlash that followed these dismissals both within and outside the SPLM party, Kiir dissolved the SPLM's political structures in November 2013, including the Political Bureau, its highest executive organ (Podder, 2014). These actions by Kiir were argued to be unconstitutional and can be seen as clearly removing any political or constitutional guarantees given to groups that had fought in the Second Sudanese Civil War and joined the SPLM to provide a united front when negotiating an end to the civil war with Khartoum (Johnson, 2014). Charles Call argues that when changes occur in the guarantees that were made in peace agreements, such as firing or prosecuting individuals within the political system that were previously involved in the civil conflict, these moves can be seen as exclusionary behaviour by the dominant group (2012).

Naomi Pendle has argued that the outbreak of conflict in South Sudan occurred in order to re-balance the power relations within the country when the negotiated power balance was broken (2014). Given that there are no avenues for political contestations or a transition plan within the political elite, Oystein Rolandsen has argued that the current conflict was caused by the “political crisis within the SPLM” (2015, 164). By December 2013, those within South Sudan who opposed President Salva Kiir had begun to coalesce around Riek Machar and the other political leaders who had been dismissed by Kiir (Johnson, 2014). The political leaders of South Sudan were meeting in Juba in December 2013 to discuss how to reform the SPLM; they threatened open protests if their meetings with Kiir did not result in a political agreement (Rolandsen, Glomnes, Manoeli & Nicolaisen, 2015). On December 16th, 2013, Kiir broadcasted that he had defeated a coup attempt that had been orchestrated by Riek Machar, former cabinet ministers, and former members of the SPLM leadership (Johnson, 2014). Whether a coup actually occurred is still debated; however, it resulted in the arrest of 11 individuals who allegedly were involved in plotting the coup (Johnson, 2014). Riek Machar fled the capital before being arrested, finding refuge in the Greater Upper Nile region. As conflict spread, Machar was able to draw upon the political and military structures that he commanded while he was head of the Nasir faction in the Second Sudanese Civil War. However, the SPLM-IO was also able to draw upon another set of forces that had been active before the outbreak of violence: children and youth groups involved in agro-pastoral conflicts. While the political conflict among the SPLM leadership resulted in the events that allowed for civil war recurrence, the ongoing instability in the Greater Upper Nile region caused by agro-pastoral violence set the conditions that shaped the actors and scale of the conflict that allowed a civil war to be fought in the region. Rather than a civil war that involved clashes between the professional militaries of the SPLM and SPLM-IO, the recurrence of war in December 2013 was all encompassing, following the tone of individualized violence seen in the agro-pastoral conflicts being fought in the region. Therefore, given that small scale, protracted violence was already occurring, all sides were able to recruit these actors for their cause, centring the conflict in the Greater Upper Nile.

AGRO-PASTORAL CONFLICT IN JONGLEI STATE FROM 2005-2011

Of the three states that make up the Greater Upper Nile region, Jonglei State is the largest territorial unit, and was a centre for the communal-focused violence of civil war recurrence. In comparison, the Upper Nile state was the focus of more formalized military campaigns aimed at controlling its large oil fields. Jonglei state has also been the centre of many conflicts historically, including major campaigns between competing southern militaries during the Second Civil War. Both the SPLM and SPLM-IO heavily mobilized groups from Jonglei state in December 2013: the SPLM mobilized ethnic Dinka youth, while the SPLM-IO mobilized ethnic Nuer youth. Given that the agro-pastoral conflict has strong ethnic dimensions, with youth from the Dinka, Nuer, and Murle ethnic groups conducting raids and counter raids, it was not a stretch to mobilize these groups as they were already in conflict. Given the communal-based violence experienced in Jonglei state, it provides the best case to analyse the effect of youth mobilization in South Sudan.

Jonglei State has experienced a chronic lack of security and justice since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in 2005, marking the end of the Second Sudanese Civil War. This insecurity has persisted due to three key reasons. First, the trajectory and events of the civil war resulted in the breakdown in traditional/tribal governance structures. Upon the youth's return after the conclusion of the civil war, they often challenged and resisted the forms of governance that were in place in many regions throughout South Sudan. During the civil war, children and youth were the primary source of manpower for the southern rebel groups. They were easily co-opted into the military structure, given that their positions within the tribal structure was itself militarized (Evans-Pritchard, 1960). Youth in Jonglei from the Dinka, Nuer, and Murle ethnic groups were given the primary responsibility of guarding and caring for cattle. While this generally involved insuring that cattle had access to grazing lands and water, it could also involve defending the herd against possible raids or even participating in cattle raids. In the process of caring for cattle, youth were exposed to defensive and offensive tactics that could be utilized or drawn upon for military raids (Deng, 1972). During the Second Sudanese Civil War, youth were often moved to the regions in which they were needed most, which conveniently for military commanders was often outside the control of their local governance structures and under the control of commanders. Therefore, the loyalty to the local community was shifted to the local commanders during conflict: a relationship that was exploited in the most recent outbreak of violence in South Sudan.

²There is no specific age that is given to 'youth' among the ethnic groups in Jonglei State. This classification follows from the age-set tradition, and is situated between child and warrior. For this reason, an individual considered a youth (and who participates in cattle raids) can be anywhere from 10-25 years old. For an expanded discussion see Legassick, 2013 pp 47-62.

³For a greater discussion about the tradition of cattle raiding, and the shifts in this tradition due to the Second Sudanese Civil War, please see Legassick, 2013 pp11-15



The second cause of insecurity in Jonglei State was the inability of the Government of South Sudan (GOSS) to effectively transition into the roles of governance that had been previously held by leaders within the tribal governance structure. Once youth began to challenge traditional forms of governance, the formal state government structure should have stepped into the vacuum that was created. Not only would this have resulted in legitimacy of the GOSS in the Upper Nile region, but it would have also resulted in the provision of personal security and predictability in the lives of the Dinka, Lou-Nuer, and Murle. When security and predictability are guaranteed, economic violence is significantly decreased. Collier et al. (2003) found that a causal relationship exists between low levels of economic development and the chances that war will occur. In the conflict trap thesis, areas with low levels of economic development are more likely to experience conflict; however, once conflict occurs, it disrupts any development that was occurring, thereby destroying an already weak economy and potentially plunging the country further into conflict. In Jonglei State, predictability in the day-to-day lives of citizens would have allowed for cattle herding to occur along less militarized dimensions.



The violence in Jonglei has become highly personal given the lack of governance and justice in the region, which has resulted in raiding moving well beyond the theft of cattle by youth to attempts to seek justice for past crimes.



UN Photo/JC Mollwaine

The third cause of insecurity was that the GOSS was unable to establish an effective justice system in Jonglei State that could address the major problem on the ground: conflict surrounding the practice of cattle raiding. Formally and officially, cattle raiding in South Sudan is illegal. However, since the GOSS began to administer the South according to the terms of the CPA in 2005, raiders had been rarely arrested let alone tried in court for stealing cattle or deaths related to cattle raiding. While attempts have been made to address the problem of cattle raiding by establishing stronger police forces, these forces were unable to combat the rampant insecurity within Jonglei State in the period before the outbreak of conflict in December 2013.

The conflict seen in Jonglei state from 2005 to 2013 originates from the tradition of cattle raiding. Historically, raids occurred when an individual or group stole cattle from a neighbouring tribe in order to gain prestige and expand the size of their herd (International Crisis Group, 2009). This process was historically non-violent, as the tribe whose cattle were stolen conducted counter-raids in kind. These raids and counter-raids were minor in comparison to cycles of violence seen in cattle raiding from 2005-2013, as the conflict was confined between raiders and cattle guards, who were all youth; individuals from the surrounding community were rarely affected by raiding (Leff, 2012). However, in the post-2005 violence, raiding shifted focus solely from the theft of cattle to raiders attacking and burning entire villages, and targeting women, children, and the elderly.

With a population of over 1.3 million (International Crisis Group, 2009) – and with approximately 80 percent dependent on the cattle economy – the outbreak of agro-pastoralist conflicts in Jonglei has had a major impact on the population's daily life (Heaton, 2012). In particular, the violence in Jonglei has become highly personal given the lack of governance and justice in the region, which has resulted in raiding moving well beyond the theft of cattle by youth to attempts to seek justice for past crimes. The most recent cycle of conflict in Jonglei, beginning with the January 2009 raids by the Murle on the Lou-Nuer, has escalated in intensity due to the more effective organizational structure and improved coordination through the use of new technologies such as satellite phones (Leff, 2012). The proliferation of small arms and light weapons has led to an increase in casualties when clashes occur (Rands and LeRiche, 2012). The tactics used allow raiders to steal more cattle, which leads to a reciprocally escalated response during counter-raids. Furthermore, herders are more inclined to increase the scale of violence in hopes of dissuading any additional retaliatory response, reclaiming their stolen cattle, and stealing cattle as compensation.

Due to the lack of prosecution for raids and no bloodwealth compensation, counter-raids have allowed the victimized tribes in Jonglei to seek 'justice' for previous thefts and deaths. Bloodwealth is an important tradition, as any 'wrongdoing' once resulted in compensation in the form of cattle (International Crisis Group, 2009). Due to the importance of cattle for the tribes in Jonglei, incidents of violence were reduced since cattle had to be given as bloodwealth, negating any previous gains from raids. The movement away from this system has led to a great increase in the level of destruction (Leff, 2012). While cattle remain the primary focus of the current string of conflicts from 2005-2013, all members of the tribal community are now targets for violence by raiders. Furthermore, attacks have been carried out in such a way that maximum damage is done to the community by increasing the number of cattle stolen in each counter-raid, attacking all members of the community, burning community structures, and destroying infrastructure and the source of livelihoods during raids (United Nations Mission in South Sudan, 2012).

Each of the cycles of conflict in Jonglei originated at different times and for different reasons. While it is usually difficult to determine the exact attack that started the cycle, there are fairly strong indications that major clashes fuelled the conflict (see table 1). The most recent conflict between the Dinka and the Lou-Nuer can be traced to a raid that occurred in Duk County in May 2007. The Dinka were able to raid some 20,000 cattle from the Lou-Nuer; however, there were no deaths reported. Cattle in the pastoral regions are each worth about 400-500 South Sudanese Pounds (SSP) (Richmond & Krause-Jackson, 2011). Therefore, the stolen herd was worth anywhere from 8-10 million SSP (equivalent to 1.8-2.27 million USD). Although cattle are not sold on a regular basis, they are considered savings that can be used when needed. The Lou-Nuer strongly believed that the government failed to properly investigate the raid, as they only recovered 300-800 cattle, and cite this incident as one of the key grievances fuelling future conflict with the Dinka (International Crisis Group, 2009). Small-scale raiding occurred throughout 2007 to 2009; however, the Lou-Nuer responded to the May 2007 Dinka raid two years later in August and September 2009.

TABLE 1: MAJOR TRIBAL CLASHES IN JONGLEI STATE

DATE OF ATTACK	PERPETRATING TRIBE	VICTIM OF ATTACK	LOCATION	ESTIMATED DEATHS	ESTIMATED CATTLE STOLEN
May 2007	Dinka	Lou-Nuer	Duk	N/A	20,000
January 2009	Murle	Lou-Nuer	Akobo County	300	N/A
February 18, 2009	Murle	Lou-Nuer	Akobo County	250	N/A
March 5-8, 2009	Lou-Nuer	Murle	Likuangole and Pibor County	450	600

DATE OF ATTACK	PERPETRATING TRIBE	VICTIM OF ATTACK	LOCATION	ESTIMATED DEATHS	ESTIMATED CATTLE STOLEN
August 2009	Lou-Nuer	Dinka	Wernyol and Panyangor	42	N/A
Sept 2009	Lou-Nuer	Dinka	Duk padiet	167	N/A
February 6, 2011	Murle	Lou-Nuer	Uror County	8 (3 Nuer Chiefs)	1000
April 18-24, 2011	Lou-Nuer	Murle	Likuangole and Pibor County	200	138,000
June 15-24, 2011	Lou-Nuer	Murle	Gumuruk, Likuangole, and Pibor County	400	398,000
August 18, 2011	Murle	Lou-Nuer	Pieri and Uror County	750	38,000
December 2011	Murle	Dinka	Jale	42	N/A
December 23, 2011 – January 9, 2012	Lou-Nuer	Murle	Likuangole, Pibor, and Pibor County	1000	100,000
January 2012	Murle	Dinka	Duk	47	200
December 27, 2011 – February 4 2012	Murle	Lou-Nuer and Dinka	Akobo, Nyirol, and Uror Counties	276	60,000
February 2012	Dinka	Murle	Bor	9	N/A
March 2, 2012	Murle	Lou-Nuer	Nyirol County	15	15,000
March 9-11, 2012	Murle	Lou-Nuer	Ethiopia (Wanding Payam)	225	20,000

Compiled from Sources: Jonah Leff, "My Neighbour, My Enemy: Inter-tribal violence in Jonglei," Sudan Issue Brief No.21 (October 2012): 3.; Agereb Leek Chol, "Jonglei state Conflict Analysis: Why Second Disarmament Is Not a Solution." South Sudan News Agency, March 18, 2012. www.southsudannewsagency.com/opinion/analyses/jonglei-state-conflict-analysis-why-second-disarmament-is-not-a-solution.; International Crisis Group, "Jonglei's Tribal Conflicts: Countering Insecurity in South Sudan," Africa Report no. 154 (23 December 2009).

⁴This table is draw directly from my Masters thesis dissertation. For the original and expanded analysis, see Legassicke, 2013)

While the conflict between the Dinka and Lou-Nuer peaked in 2009, the clashes between the Lou-Nuer and Murle began, bringing a new level of violence to the conflict. In January 2009, a Murle attack on the Lou-Nuer in Akabo County was seen as breaking a perceived 'pledge for peace' negotiated by Vice-President Riek Machar in early 2009 between both tribes (International Crisis Group, 2009). Part of the pledge, according to the Lou-Nuer, was the freedom to migrate into Murle territory. This is a major point of contention, as the Murle strongly objected that migration was not part of the negotiated agreement. It is difficult to determine what was guaranteed as Riek Machar acted as a shuttle negotiator between both tribes. Therefore, it is possible that the Murle and the Lou-Nuer were given different versions of the agreement. Regardless, the peace was broken, resulting in great mistrust between the Murle and the Lou-Nuer. In response, the Lou-Nuer attacked Likuangle from March 5th-8th, 2009, killing 450 Murle, mostly women and children (Leff, 2012). In addition, Lou attackers also stole 600 head of cattle during the raid.

The response by the Lou-Nuer led to a tit-for-tat strategy during the following two years (International Crisis Group, 2009). In each case, a victimized tribe would only respond to the hostile actions of another. This allowed the scale of the conflict to increase or decrease depending on the circumstances within the state. Therefore, from February 2009 until February 2011, there was a reduction in the scale of violence during raids. However, small raids were often conducted during 2009 to 2010, and daily during the 2010 to 2011 dry season, starting in November (United Nations Mission in South Sudan, 2012). The reduction in scale has been partly attributed to the response and presence of the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), as it established temporary operating bases in the Lou-Nuer and Murle territories of Akobo and Pibor Counties respectively. However, as these bases were temporary, once the UNMIS presence was removed, conflict re-occurred.

In January and early February 2011 the Murle conducted a series of small-scale raids in Uror County. On February 6th, a Murle raid resulted in the death of eight Lou-Nuer; three were traditional chiefs. Initial attempts were made to resolve the conflict through dialogue and bloodwealth by County officials, the South Sudanese Police Force (SSPF), SPLA, and Pibor chiefs (United Nations Mission in South Sudan, 2012). All parties agreed that the raiders should be arrested and the cattle returned. Although there was widespread support to resolve the conflict, the GOSS failed to implement the agreement. The SPLA recovered only a portion of the cattle, 260 of the 1000, and failed to return the cattle to the Lou-Nuer. Furthermore, the SSPF failed to arrest the raiders responsible.

The inability of various government authorities to respond to the killing of three traditional chiefs can be viewed as the last straw for the Lou-Nuer. Subsequent retaliations increased to an unprecedented scale of violence, with each counter-raid topping the level of violence of the previous raid. The peak of the cycle of conflict between the Lou-Nuer and Murle occurred from December 2011 until February 2012. Beginning on December 23rd, 2011, a new 'white army' force of 8,000 youth composed of a Lou-Nuer majority and Dinka minority launched a series of attacks on the Murle. The youth that mobilized to form the white army were those involved in previous cattle raiding clashes. Conservative estimates suggest these attacks resulted in a total of 1,000 Murle deaths (Leff, 2012).

The white army was the largest force assembled since the signing of the CPA. It was well organized, and able to carry out large-scale attacks. The subsequent retaliations by the Murle could not match the level of violence achieved by the white army. At most, the Murle were able to mobilize a few hundred fighters for any given raid. When political disinterest in the cycles of relatively low-level cattle raiding resulted in a failure to prosecute cattle raiders, the cycles of the conflict intensified and developed a cyclical structure of raids and counter-raids escalating from the theft of cattle to massacres of local villages. Following the outbreak of conflict in December 2013, political actors repurposed the youth militias that were active in Jonglei to fight for their respective causes. The mobilization in Jonglei stands in stark contrast to Warrap state and Lake state which did not experience violence in December 2013.

ADDRESSING LOW-LEVEL YOUTH CONFLICT

It was the failure of dealing with low-level conflict of cattle raiding in Jonglei State that allowed for the rapid mobilization of the state's youth militias in the conflict that broke out in South Sudan in 2013. In comparison, two neighbouring states outside of the Greater Nile Region – Warrap and Lakes States – that had experienced similar low-level cattle raiding since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement did not experience any mobilization in December 2013. I argue that this lack of mobilization was due to the fact that political action was taken within these states to mitigate the scale of cattle raiding that occurred (see discussion in next paragraph). While low levels of cattle raiding itself was not banned, any large raids, violence, or bloodshed was quickly investigated by the respective police within Warrap and Lakes States, and charges were levied according to the severity of crime committed (Lakes & Unity MPs agree to recover stolen cattle, 2013). Even in occasions where cattle raiding crossed state borders, cross-border investigations were held, resulting in a reduction of violence around the practice of cattle raiding. Therefore, by having political, judicial, and police forces

UN Photo/Isaac Gideon



respond to the conflict as it initially occurred, leaders in Warrap and Lakes States were able to remove any culture of impunity.

From 2005 to 2013, a similar pattern of cyclical conflicts based on the tradition of cattle raiding had been occurring across the borders of Unity, Warrap, and Lakes States. Raids across these states assumed a cyclical nature, in which individuals would cross the border regions of each state, creating a triangle of conflict. While the level of violence was minor when compared to the scale of violence discussed in the previous section, cattle raiding was occurring across state borders, complicating the potential political solution to the problem. The majority of the raids were concentrated in cycles between Lakes and Warrap States, with violence also seen in raids that occurred between Unity and Warrap States. However, what differentiated the circumstances in Unity, Warrap, and Lakes from the scale of violence and level of impunity seen in Jonglei is that the political leaders representing Unity, Warrap, and Lakes States made ending the violence between their states a top political priority.

As it became clearer that the raids were taking on a tit-for-tat pattern across state borders, the Members of Parliament (MPs) for Unity, Warrap, and Lakes States began working to ensure that there was no escalation to the conflict. MPs worked at passing common laws in each of their states that would allow all stolen cattle to be returned to their original tribes and ensured that those responsible for theft were prosecuted (Lakes & Unity MPs agree to recover stolen cattle, 2013). These efforts by state officials led to accountability for actions taken during cattle raids, removing any chance of a culture of impunity developing in Unity, Warrap, and Lakes States as it had in Jonglei State. During a conference on inter-state cattle raiding held in June 2013, the Governors of Lake, Unity, and Warrap States announced that they were going to increase security measures in each of their states and along the border to prevent potential cross-border raids. Political leaders also agreed to implement standardized punishments to ensure that raiders would not receive preferential treatment if they were caught or prosecuted in their home jurisdiction regardless of age (Three South Sudan states agree to impose the death penalty on cattle raiders, 2013). In



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⁵While Unity state was involved in the efforts to eliminate cross-border raiding, its mobilization in the 2013 conflict was due to the outbreak of violence between Nuer and Dinka oil workers located within the state. Therefore, while Unity is discussed within the context of political solutions in addressing the impunity of cattle raiding, it did experience violent conflict in 2013. See International Crisis Group, 2015.

particular, the legalization and standardization of bloodwealth – payments made to the families or communities in compensation from crimes committed – at 51 cattle for each victim harmed in cattle raiding is likely to reduce the level of violence occurring during raids as any gains made in cattle raiding would be negated in repayment. The political action that was taken by MPs in Unity, Warrap, and Lakes States ensured that cattle raiding did not become militarized as it had in Jonglei State. Therefore, when conflict broke out in South Sudan in December 2013, there were no formalized structures of children or youth cattle groups that could be co-opted and mobilized by either government or opposition in the conflict. This resulted in no involvement of children or youth from Warrap and Lakes States in the civil war. Furthermore, it might also indicate why Warrap and Lakes States remained uninvolved in the civil war.

CONCLUSION

The December 2013 civil war was caused by the internal tensions between the political elite in the SPLM. However, locating the rebellion in the Upper Nile region was no coincidence. States such as Jonglei had been experiencing instability ever since the signing of the CPA in 2005, as the GOSS was unable to establish its control in the periphery. This gap in governance allowed cyclical raids to be conducting amongst youth of ethnic groups in Jonglei State, and solidified the structures that were drawn upon by warring political leaders in 2013. However, this paper has also suggested that there is a connection between the mobilization of youth militias in civil wars in the areas that there was impunity in instances of low level violence; in the case of South Sudan, the impunity was found in the practice of cattle raiding. By comparing two sets of cases, that of Jonglei with Warrap and Lakes States, it can be seen that in those areas where political solutions to cattle raiding were established, mobilization did not occur. By removing the culture of impunity, youth in agro-pastoral regions had no reason to create cohesive groups to raid or protect cattle. These examples suggest that when violence broke out in December 2013, there were no existing group structures to mobilize in Warrap and Lakes States. This paper presents an initial discussion in the connection between existing conflict among youth groups, and the wider mobilization of these structures during civil war. More research is needed on the subject, particularly the comparative case between Jonglei and the Upper Nile region, and Lakes and Warrap States. Further research of these cases should demonstrate that political action on agro-pastoralist conflict can be translated to the low-level involvement of children in the 2013 civil war. In regions where there are no existing children or youth group structures that can be mobilized, recruiters would have to actively engage individuals rather than drawing on wider groups. This process takes more effort and time, as each fighter would have to be individually mobilized. Given the existing structures in Jonglei, these structures could be mobilized much more quickly and with less effort, allowing for the resources of military groups to be focused on conducting the war rather than on recruitment.

The cycles of conflict that were seen in cattle raids among ethnic based youth groups have now shifted to all-out war. Given that these youth groups have been fully mobilized in the civil war, their demobilization will come with a formalized end to the conflict, and a long term process of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration. Furthermore, reconciliation will

be needed to mend the mistrust between the ethnic groups in South Sudan. While the civil war in South Sudan is on-going (though there have been intermittent cease-fires and political agreements), this paper would suggest that in order to reduce the mobilization of youth in future conflicts, stronger governance institutions must be created that extend throughout the country into relatively rural agro-pastoral regions. These institutions must have the ability to investigate and prosecute instances of violence to reduce impunity in these regions.

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