Who are the civilians in the wars of South Sudan?

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Abstract

This longitudinal study explores the place of the civilian populations in the wars of what is now South Sudan. Using a broad range of empirical evidence we trace the evolution of conflict practices and norms from the 1800s to today. Two main insights stand out: firstly, that since the first colonial incursions, local residents have been strategic assets to be managed and exploited, and thus populations are not just legitimate targets in conflicts, but key resources to capture and control. Secondly, violent governance structures and practices have been created and reformed through these generations of coercive rule and civil wars. These two issues have undermined, and redefined, the distinction between military and civilian actors. This analysis does not excuse the massive and systematic violence against the general population of these countries. But without due consideration of these deeply engraved historical systems and logics of violent governance, today's brutal conflicts become incomprehensible, and there is a significant risk that international approaches to mitigating this violence – such as Protection of Civilians camps – become incorporated into these systems, rather than challenging them.

KEYWORDS: SUDAN, SOUTH SUDAN, VIOLENCE, CIVILIANS, CIVIL WAR, CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS.

INTRODUCTION

On the night of Wednesday 17 February 2016, men armed with guns and machetes attacked residents of a United Nation's Protection of Civilians (PoC) camp located outside the town of Malakal. The camp was established following the outbreak of yet another civil war in South Sudan in December 2013; by 2016 it sheltered roughly 48,000 people predominantly of the Shilluk, Dinka and Nuer ethnic groups. In the same period the UN established several other PoC camps in urban areas around South Sudan with a total population of more than 200,000. In the Malakal attack at least thirty people were killed, several thousand fled, homes were looted, and large parts of the camp were burnt down. This tragedy both articulates and undermines the idea of the international responsibility to protect civilians during war (Hultman, 2010). Afterwards, camp occupants criticized the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS):

> 'The UN has to protect the people, not themselves … This is a PoC! … It means protection of civilians!' (Lynch, 2016b; see also 2016a)

The implicit accusation was that UNMISS soldiers had failed to repel the attack. The incident also prompted broader questions: why was this network of UN camps needed to protect civilians in the first place? To what extent are violent actors consciously deviating from, or radically challenging, local norms and standards of war? How do the attackers justify and normalize this widespread violence against those escaping from, or unable or unwilling to engage in conflict? What, then, constitutes 'regular' warfare for those engaging in patterns of violence against local populations?

Here we present tentative answers to these questions, employing a longitudinal perspective on the protection of civilians and the evolution of warfare and violent governance. We follow the evolution of these common forms of violent governance from 1899 to the present, in particular the tactics of population control, mass displacement, and collective punishment. We firstly trace these within the period of colonial (re-)conquest from 1899-1927, during which the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium authorities waged a series of small wars (euphemistically called 'pacification' and 'patrols') against various coalitions of communities who resisted foreign violence, exploitation and rule. The second section explores the evolution of these violent practices within independent Sudan's first civil war from c. 1963-

72, in which armed groups, collectively naming themselves the Anya-Nya, conducted a fragmented guerrilla war for some form of independence against Sudanese government soldiers and allied local militias. The article finally details the continued development of violent tactics in the civil war over 1983-2005, in which a more cohesive rebel organisation, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), fought for regional autonomy and governance reform. The use and abuse of these violent tactics, however, spans the periods of 'official' peace and war in Sudan and now South Sudan's history, as peacetime governments continued to use forced displacement and collective punishment in pursuing their political and economic ends.

The article draws together our historically-focused archival and oral interview research into issues of organized violence and civilian-military relations, as well as a considerable amount of empirically-focused secondary sources. Research conducted specifically for this article includes archival research during the first civil war (1963–72) conducted primarily in the South Sudan National Archives in Juba; and a field study in and around refugee and internally displaced camps in the Blue Nile/Maban border area between Sudan and South Sudan in 2013.[1] Amassing this kind of evidence is a demonstrably useful pathway towards developing theoretical insights into in/security. Our interrogation of this material firstly emphasizes that within the South Sudan context the distinction between 'military' and 'civilian' is both conceptually difficult and empirically questionable. Instead, colonial and independent regimes and rebels alike have their own definitions of non-combatants and legitimate targets. Secondly, we find important continuities in the practice of wartime violence and governance over the last two centuries: throughout this history government officials, military leaders and rebel commanders have manipulated local populations via collective punishment and the destruction or co-option of livelihoods, often through the propagation and use of militias and proxy forces. A major strategy throughout colonial and post-colonial wars has been forced population movement and encampment in guarded enclosures, not dissimilar to today's Protection of Civilians camps.

[1] Carried out by the second author (Rolandsen) during two weeks in November, the field work consisted for the most part of observations, informal interviews and group discussions with a broad set of people including refugees, internally and locally displaced people, host populations and their representatives, government and rebel officials, foreign aid workers and peacekeepers. This fieldwork primarily evidenced the continuation of war practices that targeted local populations and manipulated their movements, but also the ways in which the warring parties instrumentalised the international response to the ongoing refugee crisis.

This historical exploration offers a critical vantage point on the roots of South Sudanese discourse around military practice in conflict. In doing so, it challenges researchers and practitioners to ask how Protection of Civilians activities respond to – and are themselves part of – the wider history of violence against civilians, and conflict practices and logics, in South Sudan. The next section sets out this theoretical challenge within the academic field; the three subsequent sections are structured chronologically, tracing the historical processes that produced the attack on the PoC camp in Malakal in 2016.

CIVILIAN PROTECTION AND TARGETING

The goal of protecting civilians has to a large degree framed Western discourse following the much publicized failures in places such as Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia, and Somalia (Curran, 2016; Hultman, 2013; Hyndman, 2003). Emerging modalities include military intervention; peace monitoring; capacity-building for soldiers and police within fragile regimes; measures to protect displacement camps; and mediation of relationships between displaced people and local populations. Concerns over civilian protection has also shaped the many state and peace building projects undertaken in South Sudan since 2005, as well as the joint UN-African Union Mission in Darfur and the UNMISS Chapter VII mandate. Protection of Civilians activities have also received attention from scholars, most particularly on the ways in which multilateral organisations and external actors can reduce or avoid the civilian impact of irregular warfare and other kinds of organized violence (Ruggeri et al., 2016). Much of this work interrogates the theoretical and practical basis for PoC approaches and presents a compelling critique of the protection offered by the international community (Bradley 2016; Willmot et al. 2014; Baines and Paddon, 2012: 232–4). A key point is the lack of clarity and effectiveness of this international regime of laws and norms (Sandholtz, 2008; Kratochwil, 2013).

This article engages with two major lines of enquiry within this PoC literature. The first is the core questions of consent and accountability in direct interventions in warfare (Cronin, 2013; Slim, 2007; Steadman and Tanner, 2003). In South Sudan, the UN's PoC camps are exceptional in the sense that they essentially providing refuge from potential violence from state as well as rebel actors. The second area of research this article focuses on is the extent and consequences of the politicization of civilian protection. This includes ineffective responses to various armed groups' and governments' manipulation of often inadequate aid programmes (Williams and Bellamy, 2016), including the diversion and confiscation of aid,

but also the use of refugee and displaced camps for recruitment and training (de Waal, 1993; Duffield, 2001; Keen, 1994; Stedman and Tanner, 2003).

But the politicization and manipulation of, and violence against, civilians and PoC camps is not just a practical challenge. These issues require a more systematic discussion of why this politicization, manipulation and violence is instrumental in South Sudan's conflicts, and thus what is creating the need for protection in the first place. As such, researchers and practitioners continually grapple with the problems of the 'underlying logic' of safe areas and civilian protection: Orchard and Hyndman (2014: 182; 2003: 56–7) note that 'warring factions ignore these consensual arrangements of humanitarian and conflict law, and peace-keepers [fail] to take into account the goals of these belligerents; in particular, the issue of direct civilian targeting.' More specifically, there are three lacunae which scholars and practitioners alike need to pay attention to: how local populations are perceived as a resource in warfare; the overt and strategic targeting of communities in personalized violence and proxy wars; and, the historical blurring of lines between categories of civilians, rebel and state military actors.

Recent advances within conflict studies offer insights which can help to close these lacunae. Particularly since the 1990s, academics and activists have increasingly studied how armed groups engage in the opposite of civilian protection. Within conflict studies 'violence against civilians', once assumed to be a tragic side effect of wars, is now understood to play a central part in the deliberate strategies of belligerent groups (Valentino, 2014: 91; Steadman and Tanner, 2003). More specifically, scholars ask: how and why do armed groups and governments target civilians or subject them to casual violence, and what are the results of such indiscriminate violence and collective punishment (Balcells and Justino, 2014: 1345; Kaempf, 2018)? They demonstrate that civilian casualties are often not collateral damage, but that warring parties purposely plan, as part of their military strategy, to kill, rape, plunder, demoralize, punish and displace civilians, and that civilians are often entangled in wars through political and material support or active participation in violence (Cronin, 2013: 175). Increasingly scholars discuss modalities of mobilization in conflict (Muggah, 2006; Muggah and O'Donnell, 2015; Schutte, 2016: 4–5), and how impact on civilians is shaped by factors such as military technology and patterns of ir/regular warfare (Balcells and Kalyvas, 2014). These developments within conflicts studies suggest that if we are to understand why populations are not adequately protected, and why they become targets in conflict, it is

necessary to understand the development of such widely diverging local military theories and practices of war (following Kalyvas et al., 2008: 13).

These two fields of PoC research and conflict studies currently do not connect in studies of conflict in South Sudan. Analysts of civil war violence in South Sudan have provided detailed accounts of military elites fighting for control over a centralized and extractive state apparatus (de Waal, 2014; Rolandsen, 2015). There is also a growing body of literature that examines theories of conflict from the community-level and moral perspective (including Jok, 2005; Leonardi, 2007; Biong Deng, 2010; Pendle, 2014; Hutchinson and Pendle, 2015; Stringham and Forney, 2017, Justin and de Vries, 2017; Rolandsen, 2018; Kindersley, 2019). Both these strands of research provide useful insights into violence against civilians, especially research on the evolution of wartime practices of population control (Thomas, 2015; Kindersley, 2017; Rolandsen and Kindersley, 2019). This article sets out to explicitly connect these areas of research by investigating the question of civilian protection using these stands of research into South Sudanese conflicts as points of departure.

The longitudinal analysis in the next sections demonstrates that violence against civilians has been essential to Sudanese and South Sudanese concepts of governance and civil war violence for more than a century. People use their own distinctions between fighters and non-combatants, and there are many home-grown norms guiding conduct towards these groups and perceptions of legitimate targets for military action. Authorities have long seen local populations as existing to be controlled: both in order to demonstrate, secure and perpetuate their own power, and to remove populations from the control of other parties. Populations were not necessarily 'civil'; local authorities considered inhabitants of towns and villages as partners in and tools for violent governance. In this history violence against local populations is a common practice rather than a deviation. Since the pre-colonial and colonial era state-society relations have been inherently violent; forced extraction of labour and collective punishment of populations are perceived as key elements in governance. The management and manipulation – essentially, herding – of people in and around war zones is a ubiquitous feature of warfare. When studying this from a chronological perspective it becomes evident how these practices have evolved over time, and how the introduction of Protection of Civilian camps is the latest development in a long history of managing populations in conflict.

From the outset we need to emphasize that we are not saying that disregard for life in warfare is a primordial trait of 'the Sudanese and South Sudanese', or particular to South Sudan. We demonstrate instead how modes of warfare have evolved primarily from past practices of both foreign and national agents, and from local discourses of 'legitimate violence' and common standards for conflicts. Nor do we argue for adoption of these local standards, or for their moral legitimacy, but rather that any effective protection of populations in South Sudan requires understanding of how and why populations have been targeted during wars and insurgencies, despite increasingly comprehensive diplomatic, humanitarian and military efforts to shield them.

COLONIAL INCURISIONS AND THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF POPULATIONS AS A WARTIME RESOURCE, 1899–1956

Starting from about a century ago a skeleton staff of militarized officials imposed colonial rule in what is now South Sudan and began the institutionalization of today's pattern of extractive, violent control. The officials saw local populations as primordial and backward collectives to be exploited, mobilized or punished *en masse*. Compared to the norms and ideals advocated within PoC discourse, Sudan's pre-colonial and colonial history gave rise to a different understanding of the rules of war and legitimate violence. This period established a practice where the state generally treated people as enemy combatants, justifiable collateral and financial assets; local populations grew to understand state power and authority as resting on violent impunity (Hutchinson, 1996; Jok and Hutchinson, 1999). Today's military units, government forces and rebels alike, and their strategies and tactics can be traced back to the colonial conquest and the extractive ivory, slave and cattle trades of the nineteenth century (Johnson, 2011: 5).

This history of conquest and military slavery – and the brutal extractive personalized mode of governance maintained and reinforced by new rulers – is crucial to understanding the roots of violent political authority in relation to local populations. Slave armies were a common feature of both trade and conquest during the 19th century. Military slavery underpinned government military capacity under the Sudanese Mahdiyya state over 1882-1898, and in the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium from 1899 until Sudan's independence in 1956. In the latter period, the soldier held an ambiguous role, as Johnson (1988: 150) notes: 'the lack of volunteers among Southern Sudanese drove the government to measures of recruitment that

were scarcely distinguishable from those adopted by the Turco-Egyptian regime.' For instance, well into the Condominium period over 1899-1956, the British administration continued to brand the skin of Sudanese soldiers to make deserters easier to identify. Notably, while patterns of recruitment throughout (and after) the Condominium continued to centre on economic, social or physical coercion; local communities developed projects of management, evasion, and mediation of this external violent power (Leonardi, 2007b). The state's peripheral governance was founded by – and on – ex-slave soldiers and their descendants who served the colonial regimes of Sudan, Uganda and Kenya, and administrated early garrison towns (Johnson, 2011: 5, 10; Johnson, 1988: 143, 147). Systematic mobilization of various temporary fighting forces also stems from this period, when the predecessors of today's militias were initially used for slave raids and later for 'pacification'. In addition to coercion, the promise of spoils, local domination and rectification of past grievances were important motivators for groups of young men to fight alongside the intruders' regular soldiers. Local irregulars were also vital during the second world war campaigns against Italian rule in Ethiopia, and as a part of local 'defence schemes' into the 1950s.[2]

For those on its peripheries, then, the Sudanese state was a form of local authority founded on violence, the threat of violence and military service. From 1898 to the 1930s, state formation in the three southern provinces of Sudan took place in a context of 'pacification': 'in response to local defiance, or even local indifference, the troops of the new government burned villages, seized cattle as 'fines', and carried off war captains and hostages to distant prisons or for conscription in the army, all in the name of establishing government authority' (Johnson, 2011: 10; see also Rolandsen and Daly, 2016: 52–55; Vaughan, 2015). The holdings of the recently rehabilitated South Sudan National Archives include blunt examples of this process. An Upper Nile Province file from the governor's office, dated 1917, contains a sub-section listing 'Lau Nuer Prisoners for Enlistment'.[3] Notes from Akobo District, written in the 1910s, give a brief history of the day-to-day process of establishing government authority:

> April 1902: Blewitt [with] Wilson and Crispin and 160 men of 10th Sudanese started up the Filus [river] to Denkur [a chief of the Nuer], who offered a fair fight.

[2] For example, South Sudan National Archives (SSNA), Moru District file 36.C.1; Equatoria Province 15.B 'Defence measures', 1940–1; Equatoria Province 15.B.3 'Control of aliens.'
[3] SSNA File No. 15, UNP Governors Office, sub-file No 10: 'Lau patrol', 1917.

20th April burnt a village at Flirt

22nd April took Denkur's village and looted it

23rd April burnt villages

24th April burnt villages

25th April burnt villages and shot all Nuer on sight.

June 1910: patrol by O'Sullivan with [officer] Wahab and 60 police visited Warkang and Dorp Tar of Jekaing and collected tribute. Other sections then paid up willingly.[4]

In 1927, during one of the last campaigns to overcome Lou Nuer resistance to colonial rule, the Royal Air Force deployed four DH9 biplanes. In an early 'shock and awe' exercise, homesteads and cattle herds were strafed and bombed. The practice of using airpower against Sudanese communities may thus be traced to almost a century ago (Collins, 1983: 128–31; Johnson, 1993: 101–22). Application of mass, generally indiscriminate violence against rebellious populations was primarily intended to establish undisputed authority at a low cost (for the British), seeking – to use Sara Berry's (1992) powerful phrase – 'hegemony on a shoestring'. These practices included divide-and-rule tactics that co-opted and mobilized the above-mentioned local paramilitary groups from one area to fight against another.

Civil governance tactics were similarly punitive and dependent on the threat of force. Throughout the colonial period, group taxation, seasonal forced labour levied through chiefs, and widespread corporal punishment were intended to ensure the notion of a powerful government that could avenge any acts of defiance. The British rationalized resistance by characterising some groups within the local populace as 'martial races'. The severity of punishment was justified by explicitly racist and essentialist prejudices, which have proven so resilient as to feature as received wisdom in current explanations of 'inter-ethnic violence' (Rolandsen and Breidlid, 2012).

Forced population movement has been a consistent tactic in managing recalcitrant populations and exploiting their labour. Mass displacement of people was an accepted method of implementing colonial policies in the twentieth century, a financially expedient way of depopulating resource-rich areas, of dividing and weakening insurgent populations, and of making manageable administrative units for cheap rule. One of the largest operations

[4] SSNA Pibor District 36.B, Akobo notes, c. 1912.

of this kind created a no-man's land in the Kafia Kingi enclave, on the western border of today's Sudan and South Sudan (Thomas, 2010). The colonial government also obsessively micro-managed movements of people across what they perceived as fixed tribal boundaries, to manage taxation and maintain divisions between otherwise possibly insurrectionary populations (see Leonardi, 2013; Thomas, 2010, 2015; Vaughan, 2013; Willis, 2003). At the local level, controlling the government apparatus was based on raising incomes and funds through taxation, 'fines' of cattle and through violent raids on villages and cattle camps, making violence against the governed population an aspect of state finances.

Lines between the local population and military forces were further blurred during the colonial era by the regular conscription of prisoners and war captives (Johnson, 2011: 11). Everyday life included executions, corporal punishment, and long prison sentences for minor infringements. Violence in the south intensified towards the end of Anglo-Egyptian rule. In July 1955 police, assisted by armed merchants from the north, fired into a group of demonstrators in Nzara, killing eight people and wounding many others (Report, 1956; Poggo, 2011: 37). A month later, in August, southern soldiers mutinied in several towns and massacred northern officers, government officials and merchants together with their families (Report, 1956; Poggo, 2011: 40–7). Government retaliation was comprehensive and systematic, although shrouded in a discourse of legality: mass executions and other reprisals against residents in the south were given an administrative gloss through group trials (Rolandsen, 2011a; Rolandsen and Leonardi, 2014). Such methods were common to all governments – rebel and state – operating in Sudan during the twentieth century.

AFTER SUDAN'S INDEPENDENCE: PROXY WAR AND THE PERSONALIZATION OF VIOLENCE

When Sudan became independent in 1956, the levers of state power passed to mid-level Sudanese bureaucrats trained by the British, who were mostly from the northern Nile Valley. Although instilled with Arab nationalism, they perpetuated the colonial apparatus, much as the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium had relied on previous patterns of violent governance. The new rulers – and their armed adversaries – further entrenched a militaristic government, including the deliberate targeting and herding of the population in towns as well in the countryside.

Colonial-era governance practices were entrenched by continued militarism. Military experience and education have remained the key route to – and source of legitimacy for – roles in both 'government' and 'rebel' armed factions. Except for brief interludes of civil politics in the periods 1953–8, 1964–9 and 1986–9, independent Sudan has been ruled by military officers who seized power through coups. The background for the first civil war in the South (1963–72) was the coup in 1958 led by General Ibrahim Abboud, which radicalized parts of the Southern educated elite. Together with former soldiers, these intellectuals escalated political opposition to the elites in Khartoum; armed violence reached the level of civil war in the period 1963–4 (Rolandsen, 2011b). This propelled professional southern soldiers into positions of political leadership and, likewise, forced southern politicians to become soldiers. Initial rebel leaders were seasoned veterans promoted from the rank and file, such as Emilio Tafeng and Ali Gbatala, but politicians also took on the role of guerrilla leader, most prominently Saturnino Lohure, who progressed from Catholic priest to elected legislator to insurgency leader (Poggo, 2011; Lagu, 2006).

There is clear continuity in the key features of post-colonial warfare where state militaries are geared towards controlling and combatting their own populations in slow-paced but highly violent conflicts. All warring parties, including rebel governments, used collective punishment and other strategies targeting communities and their livelihoods such as the mass burning of villages and confiscation of livestock and crops, often with the aid of militias and other auxiliary forces. The frustrations, abuses and tensions perpetuated by these methods of violent dominance escalated the first civil war. The government started the practice of burning villages as retaliation for assumed support of local 'outlaws' in 1956 (Rolandsen, 2011a: 114). It sent fighter planes to bomb and strafe villages around the border town of Pochalla as a response to the first incident of rebel violence in 1963. Both the state and rebel factions continued to use courts and administrative structures to legitimize their violence, including the formal trial and execution of alleged informants (Rolandsen and Kindersley, 2019).

The war entrenched inherited colonial understandings of the local population in the peripheries as legitimate military targets and people to be governed in collective units. In areas affected by the Anya-Nya war, population control followed the pattern of counter-insurgency elsewhere in the post-colonial world: government forces or proxy militias brought

people assumed to sympathize with and assist the rebels to 'Peace Villages' on the outskirts of garrison towns (Rolandsen and Kindersley, 2019; Poggo, 2011: 87–8). Records of local government from the period indicate that officials claimed that this was for the people's own protection,[5] but these measures also denied rebels access to the population, and brought people of dubious loyalty under close scrutiny. Finally, concentrating residents in garrison towns provided the government with access to cheap (or forced) labour and 'tax'. Rebels also engaged in the coercive management of local populations: the Anya-Nya rebels controlled access to garrison towns by running checkpoints on routes into markets, and by forcibly displacing people from 'pro-government' villages through violence or burning campaigns (Rolandsen and Kindersley, 2019).

From the 1950s into the early 1960s the independent government also expanded the paramilitary-style chief's police, which was a continuation of colonial practice of mobilizing local paramilitaries and 'defence schemes'. Then – during the first civil war – men were temporarily recruited in 'friendly' villages to pursue 'outlaws'. In this conflict, the warring parties expanded violent control of local populations to the individual level. Their recruitment of informers, scouts and 'home guards' during the 1960s formed the basis for a fine-meshed intelligence network and in the last years of the first civil war, local government authorities in the south also established a formal system of National Guards (*Aras Watani*) as informers and as armed auxiliary troops. By the mid-1960s, the Anya-Nya rebels of the first civil war had similarly developed networks of scouts, informants and local 'guards'. Accumulated evidence from government security files indicate that in some months, their violent retribution against chief's police, suspected collaborators and informants (and their villages) surpassed the number of attacks on the Sudanese army or police (*ibid.*).

In the first decades of Sudan's independence, armed parties in a growing civil war employed, and developed on, established violent practices involving the general population and significantly expanded control over individuals and their movements (see Komey, 2010; Rolandsen and Kindersley, 2019). More recent expansions of this informant-based security state are rooted in logic and practices from this period; the security apparatus was not invented in the 1990s by the National Islamic Front/National Congress Party regime, or by

[5] See, for example, documents in SSNA Equatoria Province file 36.E.1, 1966; and Torit District file 36, 1966.

the post-2011 Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) government in South Sudan. Many of the apparatus' agents and administrators would have long personal experience in security work for (often multiple) rebel groups, militias and governments (cf. Weinstein, 2007).

RECENT CONFLICTS: THE IMPACT OF LARGE-SCALE TRANSNATIONAL WARFARE

A political settlement of the first civil war in 1972 was the beginning of a decade of uneasy peace, which ended in 1983 when sporadic violence escalated to the level of civil war and the SPLM/A was founded. The ensuing twenty-two years of conflict cemented endemic logics and emic theories of command, strategy, and military morality that underpinned shifting norms of acceptable violence against populations during war. The war was fought on a larger scale than the first, over a longer period, and with moments of intense brutality. This was particularly manifest after 1991 when factional politics and competition for resources and power split the SPLM/A and sparked mass violence and collective 'punishment' of populations across the south (Johnson, 2011; Rolandsen, 2005). Expansion and perpetuation of the war was facilitated by neighbouring governments supporting the SPLM/A and other southern militia factions in regional proxy warfare, but also by all parties' skimming supplies from humanitarian operations (Rolandsen, 2005). The scale of the conflict, the flood of light weapons and advanced firepower, and the involvement of regional powers made the second civil war distinct, not least in its profound moral, spiritual, and cultural impact on society and everyday life. But these methods of warfare were grounded in past military and security institutional practices and the socialization of conflict within rural areas.

One of the most visible forms of entrenched practice across armed parties was that of population control, which included forcing mass displacement and the depopulation of territories through raiding and bombing, controlling the flight paths and resettlement of these populations, and brokering and taxing aid supplies and the remaining personal assets of people under their control (Muggah, 2006; Stedman and Tanner, 2003). The Government of Sudan, the SPLM/A factions and local militia groups treated these destitute populations as an economic utility and war asset. These tactics gave armed parties access to desperate recruits, supplies and profits, provided captive labour pools for economic projects (for instance in the

mass agricultural projects in central Sudan), and denied opponents the same resources through depopulating strategic areas.

In garrison towns in the south, the Sudan government controlled their dependent populations through travel passes and military perimeters; in the Nuba Mountains (and later in Darfur), people were resettled into the military encampments of 'Dar es Salaam' peace villages; and in Khartoum, brutal slum clearances, checkpoints, and forced encampment minimized the disruptive power of hundreds of thousands of displaced people, limited them to dependent and underpaid labour, and provided opportunities for coercive recruitment into the Armed Forces. Local militias controlled population movement and settlement, for instance on the Darfur-Northern Bahr el Ghazal frontier in the late 1990s, capturing fleeing people as labourers and conscripts, and acting as intermediaries negotiating (and taxing) humanitarian access to displaced camps in southern Darfur (Jok, 2001: 49–50; Kindersley, 2017). And within rebel-controlled territories, mass relocations sustained the SPLM/A, for example in the large-scale resettlement of Dinka-ethnicity military families and displaced people in Yei town in 1997. Such mass movements were often both violent and poorly managed, for instance in the forced, unassisted repatriation of Itang refugees from Ethiopia into South Sudan in 1991, during which thousands died (Johnson, 2011: 88–90; Scott-Villiers et al., 1993).

All armed parties to the conflict became adept at using the growing international discourse on the protection of civilians to their benefit, while they did not necessarily conceptualize these brutalized populations as 'civilians'. Having control over impoverished and apparently 'civilian' populations was a key tool in negotiating aid supplies throughout the war, for the Sudan government as well as for various rebel factions. The SPLM/A founded the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (SRRA) in 1986, which operated across the south to coordinate relief organisation and aid, and commonly took 'quotas' of food aid and other assistance, as well as manipulating the siting of relief projects (Rolandsen, 2005: 73–5, 129–33; cf. Mampilly, 2011: 145, 149).

The second civil war also cemented older ideas of political-military command within the Government of Sudan and within the SPLM/A and its factions. The conflict fused political and military power. Apart from the brief period 1986–9, the Government of Sudan was a military dictatorship where the distinction between political and military authority was blurred. In several localities, government-allied military commanders took on 'customary'

and political leadership for the populations they controlled: for example, the commander Paulino Matiep, whose militia controlled a large part of Unity State, also set up a system of courts with Sudan Government sanction in Khartoum's slums and camps for internally displaced people (Kindersley, 2016). Within the SPLM/A and its breakaway factions, political and military power was fundamentally intertwined by the organisation and conduct of the war (Mampilly, 2011; Rolandsen, 2005). For instance the leader of the SPLM/A, John Garang de Mabior, was initially a member of the Anya-Nya; he was then absorbed into the Sudan Armed Forces in 1972, gaining further military training abroad and a doctorate in agricultural economics, before assuming leadership of the insurgency movement in 1983 (as 'Dr John'). He was then both the political leader of the nominal Sudan People's Liberation Movement and Commander-in-Chief of the rebel army; after the signing of the peace agreement in 2005 he maintained these positions while also assuming that of vice-president of Sudan and presiding over the semi-autonomous Government of Southern Sudan (Rolandsen and Daly, 2016: 112-13).

The militarization of South Sudanese politics was further ensured by the rule that anyone joining the SPLM/A during the war – and, after the peace agreement in 2005, anyone appointed to elite civil service positions within the regional government – had to have a military rank. Even since 2005 there has been only nominal distance created between military, judicial, administrative and statutory branches of the South Sudan government; governance is fundamentally informal, militarized, and punitive. State governors are automatically promoted to the military rank of brigadier general. This had (and has) profound implications for SPLM/A wartime and post-war governance. South Sudanese public authorities' personal careers and civic institutional work became embedded in wartime military and security structures and hierarchies.

The conflict also extended this militarization governance into wider society. The horrific scale of brutalities and new methods of killing reworked community moralities and social norms of armed violence and criminal responsibility (Jok 1999, Jok 2005, Jok and Hutchinson 1999, Hutchinson 1996). Endemic violence and insecurity encouraged the creation of often heavily-armed local militia and protection groups, built on societal histories of collective self-defence but which worked to fundamentally reshape and militarize community hierarchies (Oosterom, 2017; Kurimoto, 1994). Personal opportunities for self-promotion or for bare survival within this violent context encouraged particularly young men

into careers across militias and armies, rewriting standards of manhood, family order, and social and generational hierarchies (Hutchinson, 1996). And in evading and mitigating the impact of these armed authorities, communities have developed a constituency of interlocutors and mediators, many of whom draw on their own military connections and careers within the wartime terrain to hold military groups and governments at arm's length (Leonardi, 2007a, 2007b).

These logics of military governance and armed community order continued during the Comprehensive Peace Agreement period (2005–11) and after South Sudan's independence in 2011. Post-peace disarmament and demobilization programmes were instead used by the Southern Sudanese regional government to restructure, enlarge and upgrade the SPLA (Sureau, 2014). The resettlement of over two million returning wartime refugees within South Sudan was also manipulated by regional governments and military leaders, including by specifying returnee camp sites and the locations of new villages and service points. These authorities extended their control not only over humanitarian and developmental investments, projects, and aid distributions, but also over resettled populations (see Kindersley and Diing Majok, forthcoming 2019). These practices of population control and indiscriminate violence also continue up to the present, not least in the current manipulation of residents of Blue Nile and South Kordofan by the Sudanese government, including the herding of refugees into new 'peace villages,' the systematic depopulation of rebel-controlled territories through indiscriminate bombing, and the control and manipulation of humanitarian aid access and supplies (Amnesty International, 2015).

The UN Protection of Civilians camps discussed in the introduction represent the latest stage in a long history of encampment of the people of South Sudan. When the third civil war broke out in December 2013 government soldiers and allied militias killed many town residents, mainly men hailing from the Nuer ethnic group (Rolandsen et al, 2015: 90). The massacres were motivated by claims that the victims were rebels in hiding with weapons stashed away. Because most of the people seeking protection hailed from areas controlled by the armed opposition the government claimed that the UNMISS had taken side in the conflict and was harbouring rebels (International Crisis Group, 2014: 14–15; Rolandsen et al., 2015: 94–5; Johnson, 2016: 186–8, 199–205). Attacks and raids on the PoC camps were therefore considered justified.

Current conflicts in South Sudan as well as Sudan follow essentially the historical patterns and logics of war expounded above, with many of the same actors (see Johnson, 2014; Rolandsen et al., 2015). The new South Sudanese state has created its own peripheries to pacify (Schomerus and de Vries, 2014: 18), conducting collective punishment of populations it sees as outside of its control, and running its own mass recruitments that straddle coercion and co-option (Vaughan et al., 2013: 1–22).

CONCLUSION

Through examining the history of the civil wars and wartime practices in South Sudan, we have situated current atrocities and attitudes within well-established if evolving logics of conflict. We conclude that any attempt to implement protection measures for populations affected by war needs to be informed by a proper understanding of these logics. But to date, responses have instead been based on, and hampered by, external actors' theoretical, legal, and historical definitions of who civilians are supposed to be and what war is supposed to look like. This does not necessarily imply that current PoC practitioners are ignorant of the nature of warfare in South Sudan. Rather, since acknowledging the actual lack of distinction between civilian and combatant could undermine global frameworks and the legal basis for protection work, practitioners may purposely disregard such complexities, especially in a restrictive and tense operational environment like South Sudan (Marriage, 2006; Autesserre, 2010). But such a self-imposed blind spot restricts effective analysis of the mechanisms and impetus behind this victimization.

Regardless of these internal debates, though, in the case of the PoC camps, the UN risks recreating modalities of population governance and encampments used by successive armed regimes since the colonial period. Even if its personnel do not perceive themselves in this way, UNMISS is already itself a military-political authority within South Sudan and part of these more local theories of protection and armed action. Residents recognized, fled to, and demanded protection from UNMISS during conflicts since 2013 because UNMISS is locally understood as another form of militarized government controlling UN-held territory. The leadership had little choice but to open their UN bases across South Sudan and convert them into Protection of Civilians camps (H. F. Johnson, 2016). As such, UNMISS is another military authority managing local populations and negotiating their movements, pass systems, and internal governance; the persistent idea of an additional UN regional protection force supports this (Kindersley and Rolandsen 2016).

This view makes local contestations over PoC camps, if not acceptable, at least explainable. Together with the NGOs servicing them and the UN peacekeepers guarding them, they are primarily seen as a strategic political asset to be managed and exploited. Then the violence in February 2016 against residents of Malakal's Protection of Civilians camp takes on a different hue. Within this context, the attackers are not extremists operating outside the local moral economy. Instead they are part of this wider politics of armed groups whose militarized ethics and wartime governance practices have evolved over the course of generations of endemic conflict and armed authority in the two Sudans. Our analysis indicates that there is a need for a conceptual shift within the agenda of protection of civilians at the global level, towards conceptualising and designing external interventions where local standards and practices in war are taken into account. To predict, prevent or protect, it is vital at the very least to understand these practices and philosophies.

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