

## SOUTH SUDAN: CIVIL WAR, PREDATION AND THE MAKING OF A MILITARY ARISTOCRACY

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### ABSTRACT

This article addresses the social and political implications of wartime and post-war resource capture in South Sudan. It argues that predation by armed groups during the second civil war (1983–2005) initiated a process of dominant class formation, and demonstrates how, through various strategies of resource capture and kinship networks, commanders from the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and other factions formed a new aristocracy – a “dominant class” that thinks of itself as “the best”. Drawing on Marcel Mauss's analysis of ‘gifts’, it describes how commanders, through gifts of bridewealth and wives to their subordinates, formed a lower stratum of followers that strengthened their position. After the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the military elite in power has maintained this lower stratum through the deployment of nepotistic and clientelist networks. The article discusses three modes through which the elite has sought to distinguish itself, showing how the elite has used the lower stratum to demonstrate its prestige and influence in the post-war period, and how the elite's ostentation and widespread corruption have triggered popular resentment in which old ethnic enmities sometimes resurface.

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ON 15 DECEMBER 2013 THE GRAVEST POLITICAL CRISIS in the short history of the Republic of South Sudan erupted. Following a series of disagreements within the highest echelons of the ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement, thirteen political figures were imprisoned, accused by President Salva Kiir of attempting a coup under the leadership of estranged Vice-President Riek Machar. Since then, Kiir – aided by the Ugandan army and supported by an increasingly embarrassed international community, as well as by the former northern Sudanese foe – has tried to curb the rebellion led by Machar.<sup>1</sup>

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1. For more details see Douglas Johnson, ‘Briefing: The crisis in South Sudan’, *African Affairs*, 113, 451 (2014), pp. 300–9. For an alternative interpretation, see Matthew LeRiche, ‘South Sudan: not just another war and another peace in Africa’, *African Arguments*, 28 January 2014,

As early as 16 December, the international media started to frame the new conflict in ethnic terms, based on the fact that Machar was a Nuer and Kiir a Dinka, disregarding the myriad other ethnic groups in the country and their grievances, as well as the fact that Kiir's political prisoners belonged to various ethnic groups – including his own – and that the SPLA's chief of staff remained a Nuer.<sup>2</sup> This ethnic interpretation was compounded by the extremely violent turn of the political crisis in Juba, when SPLA soldiers killed Nuer civilians, triggering a cycle of reprisals on Dinka civilians in Bor by armed men affiliated to Machar.<sup>3</sup> However, a few observers both inside and outside the country quickly started to voice concerns about the dangers of a self-fulfilling prophecy of ethnic conflict.<sup>4</sup>

This article argues that the current crisis in South Sudan has to be understood not simply in the context of ethnicity, but within a system of class domination based on wartime predation. The military elite that found itself in power after the war established its hegemony through the capture of resources during the war itself. Through various predation strategies it considerably expanded its own kinship networks, and its political power, and constituted itself as a military aristocracy. After the war, it continued to feed the networks of its followers through the manipulation of state resources – according to the NGO Global Witness, more than US\$4 billion have been embezzled since the country became semi-autonomous in 2005, which has led to deep popular resentment.<sup>5</sup>

<<http://africanarguments.org/2014/01/28/south-sudan-not-just-another-war-and-another-peace-in-africa-by-matthew-le-riche/>> (11 February 2014).

2. BBC, 'South Sudan capital Juba hit by gunfire', 16 December 2013, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-25396853>> (16 December 2013); *The Guardian*, 'South Sudan President says military has foiled coup', 16 December 2013, <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/16/south-sudan-capital-gunfire-coup-reports-machar>> (16 December 2013).

3. Human Rights Watch, 'South Sudan: soldiers target ethnic group in Juba fighting', 19 December 2013, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/12/19/south-sudan-soldiers-target-ethnic-group-juba-fighting>> (20 December 2013).

4. Matthew LeRiche wrote: 'There is undoubtedly a relationship between the political struggle and underlying ethnic competition. ... [Yet] it is not the driving factor as much as the personal ambition of leaders and their immediate supporters.' Juba-based journalist Andrew Green warned: 'Whether true or not, that perception is extremely dangerous and could trigger fighting in tense spots around the country.' Both are quoted in James Schneider, 'Experts Weekly: South Sudan in violent crisis', *Think Africa Press*, 20 December 2013, <[http://thinkafricapress.com/south-sudan/experts-weekly-south-sudan-violent-crisis?utm\\_source=buffer&utm\\_campaign=Buffer&utm\\_content=buffer80411&utm\\_medium=twitter](http://thinkafricapress.com/south-sudan/experts-weekly-south-sudan-violent-crisis?utm_source=buffer&utm_campaign=Buffer&utm_content=buffer80411&utm_medium=twitter)> (22 December 2013).

5. There are fears that the report for the period 2007–11 of the auditor general will reveal that more billions of dollars have been stolen. *Global Witness*, 'Attack on activist threatens anti-corruption efforts in South Sudan', 12 July 2012, <<http://www.globalwitness.org/library/attack-activist-threatens-anti-corruption-efforts-south-sudan>> (25 August 2012); *Sudan Tribune*, 'SPLA top generals asked by anti-corruption to declare their assets', 27 February 2012, <<http://www.sudantribune.com/SPLA-top-generals-asked-by-anti,41727>> (25 August 2012).

Most of the literature analysing resource capture in South Sudan has focused on the period during the war. The most thorough account, provided by David Keen, sheds light on how government-affiliated parties benefited from famine through trade networks.<sup>6</sup> Mark Duffield has also written on the involvement of Sudanese army officers in illegal currency trades,<sup>7</sup> while Alex de Waal *et al.* have described predations by other parties,<sup>8</sup> including the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA),<sup>9</sup> the former rebel group that now governs the country.

This article builds on this earlier work and addresses the social and political implications of wartime and post-war resource capture in the context of the new state. It traces the processes through which wartime predation in South Sudan initiated the formation of a dominant class. Through their accumulation of resources, SPLA commanders<sup>10</sup> augmented their own social and economic status, thus forming a new aristocracy – not a 'nobility', but a 'dominant class' that thinks of itself as 'the best'.<sup>11</sup> They also created new social contracts and patron–client relations by converting their newly acquired resources into 'gifts' to their subordinates, and formed a separate class of indebted intermediaries, a lower stratum which strengthened their control over the troops and their position *vis-à-vis* other members of the military elite. After the war, the deployment of nepotistic

6. David Keen, *The Benefits of Famine: A political economy of famine and relief in southwestern Sudan, 1983–1989*, 2nd edn (James Currey, Oxford, 2008).

7. Mark R. Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars: The merging of development and security* (Zed Books, London, 2001), p. 154.

8. Alex de Waal *et al.*, 'Food and power in Sudan: a critique of humanitarianism' (African Rights, London, 1997).

9. The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) was created in 1983 and became the main Southern Sudanese rebel group under the leadership of John Garang, fighting government troops and affiliated militias until the signature of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in January 2005 with Khartoum.

10. During the war, the SPLA wanted to keep the ranking system relatively limited in promoting people, and its maximum rank was commander. Nevertheless, the SPLA distributed ranks to many people, including those of commanders. After the National Convention of 1994, the SPLA introduced new ranks. With the signature of the CPA in 2005, the ranking system became fully conventional. The SPLA continued to distribute ranks, sometimes as an honorary title and/or a reward for serving the struggle, or sometimes for being the relative of a high-ranking officer, to people who were not involved in combat. Therefore, in the context of a military structure where ranks did not always correspond to military assignments, and where the evolving military structure of the SPLA prevented the researcher from tracing changing military positions in detail, the rank of commander should not be understood strictly from a military perspective. In this article, it should be interpreted more as a position of power of a high-ranking member of the SPLA commanding soldiers in a given zone, often very independently from the SPLA leadership since the guerrilla army was very weakly centralized. Interview, SPLA soldier, Juba, 5 October 2010; Interview, SPLA soldier, Juba, 4 April 2009; Interview, SPLA soldier, Rumbek, 28 March 2010; Richard Rands, 'In need of review: SPLA transformation in 2006–10 and beyond' (Small Arms Survey, Geneva, November 2010).

11. Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society: Social classes and political organisation*, vol. II, 3rd edition (Routledge, London, 1989), p. 2; Joseph Morsel, *L'Aristocratie Médiévale. La domination sociale en Occident, Ve–XVe siècle* (Armand Colin, Paris, 2004), pp. 6–7.

and clientelist networks by the ruling elite has enabled it to maintain this lower stratum, which in turn played an instrumental role in the preservation of the status quo.<sup>12</sup> The elite does not function without its intermediaries, whom it uses to demonstrate its prestige and influence.<sup>13</sup>

Invoking the work of Norbert Elias and Jean-Pascal Daloz, the article identifies three modes of 'elite distinction' in order to describe the ways in which both the elite and its lower strata have defined and asserted themselves in the post-war period.<sup>14</sup> Drawing on Marcel Mauss's analysis of 'gifts', it also describes the formation of social classes through gifts of bride-wealth and wives,<sup>15</sup> and illustrates how corruption binds the system of political and class domination. The focus on class should not be interpreted to mean that this social system is stable or static, as numerous tensions run through the system, driven by political, economic, and ethnic rivalries. During periods of crisis, these tensions may lead to the 'de-courtization' of warlords<sup>16</sup> – as demonstrated by the period of political instability that began on 15 December 2013, and by Machar's departure to the bush. As Mauss writes,

The rich man who shows his wealth by spending recklessly is the man who wins prestige. The principles of rivalry and antagonism are basic. Political and individual status in associations and clans, and rank of every kind, are determined by the war of property, as well as by armed hostilities, by chance, inheritance, alliance or marriage. But everything is conceived as if it were a war of wealth. Marriage of one's children and one's position at gatherings are determined solely in the course of the potlatch given and returned. ... Progress up the social ladder is made in this way not only for oneself but also for one's family. Thus in a system of

12. The conceptual framework is extracted from Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as political instrument* (James Currey, Oxford, 1999), pp. 38, 41–2.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

14. Thomas Callaghy's analysis of state formation in Zaïre, inspired mainly by Norbert Elias, and Jean-Pascal Daloz's more general reflections on elite distinction, make interesting points. Yet I do not consider the South Sudanese state as absolutist or its military aristocracy as nobility. Thomas M. Callaghy, *The State–Society Struggle: Zaïre in comparative perspective* (Columbia University Press, New York, NY, 1984), pp. 113–15, 126, 165–6, 182, 443–4; Norbert Elias, *La Société de Cour* (Flammarion, Paris, 2008), 3rd edn, p. 19; Jean-Pascal Daloz, *The Sociology of Elite Distinction: From theoretical to comparative perspectives* (Palgrave/Macmillan, Basingstoke and New York, NY, 2009).

15. This article should not be read as an intervention in the debate between Marxists, structuralists, and others about marriage payments. I agree with John L. Comaroff on the importance of contextualizing the meaning of bridewealth in regards to the total social order of a society, but I also borrow from Marxist and structuralist analytical frameworks. For Comaroff's proposed analytical paradigm of marriage payments, see John L. Comaroff (ed.), *The Meaning of Marriage Payments* (Academic Press Inc., London, 1980), p. 33.

16. I am inspired here by Norbert Elias's analysis of the long process of the 'courtization of warriors' between the eleventh and eighteenth centuries in Europe, when 'warriors' became 'courtiers' as they came to settle around the most powerful ruler, as discussed later in the article. Norbert Elias, 'The courtization of the warriors' in James B. Collins and Karen L. Taylor (eds), *Early Modern Europe: Issues and interpretations* (Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, 2008), pp. 385–97, p. 389.

this kind much wealth is continually being consumed and transferred. Such transfers may if desired be called exchange or even commerce or sale; but it is an aristocratic type of commerce.<sup>17</sup>

The article draws on 150 interviews conducted from January 2009 to December 2010 in South Sudan, although only a few interviews are cited directly in the article. These semi-structured interviews focused mostly on the period of the war, and included women and men from various backgrounds, ethnicities, and age groups, such as students, police, SPLA soldiers, former combatants, chiefs, as well as members of the government, the administration, and civil society organizations. Interviews were carried out in a number of locations, including the states of Central and Eastern Equatoria, Upper Nile, Jonglei, and Lakes. Given the prevalence of displacement during the war, some respondents interviewed in Juba were from Jonglei or from Lakes, and so on. Narratives of bridewealth payment by commanders for their soldiers were particularly prevalent amongst Dinka respondents from the area of Bor, who formed the core of John Garang's SPLA. The results also draw on a survey that was issued to 2,500 respondents on gender issues, which the author directed for UN agencies in 2010.

The article first reviews the various strategies of predation deployed especially by SPLA commanders, their reconversion of captured resources into the expansion of their own kinship networks, and their constitution as an aristocracy. It then explores the commanders' investment of captured resources into the creation of new kinship relations to create a lower stratum of faithful followers. It describes how, after the war, the elite and the lower stratum utilize each other to define themselves and how nepotistic and clientelist networks continue to sustain these relationships, creating popular resentment.

### *Strategies of resource accumulation and kinship expansion*

The second civil war (1983–2005) in large part revolved around the capture of resources by all parties to the conflict. While the government of Sudan was mostly interested in the capture of oil resources, cheap labour, and cattle,<sup>18</sup> the southern Sudanese groups (the SPLA, splinter groups, and government-affiliated militias) also looted, stole relief items, and were involved in various trades to enrich themselves.<sup>19</sup>

17. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and functions of exchange in archaic societies* (Martino Fine Books, Eastford, CT, 2011), pp. 35–6, p. 36.

18. The Arab cattle herds grew from raids by government-affiliated militia but stolen Dinka cattle also found their way to the Omdurman market where they were sold, frequently for the export meat trade. Douglas H. Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars*, 2nd edn (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, 2007), pp. 151–2; Keen, *The Benefits of Famine*.

19. Johnson, *The Root Causes*, pp. 143–4.

From the early years of the guerrilla war, the rural population in SPLA-administered areas was made to contribute to the running of the rudimentary administration by paying taxes in kind, in grains and livestock (including cattle).<sup>20</sup> The collection of this tax had devastating consequences on the communities that were already struggling to survive.<sup>21</sup> It also did not prevent the SPLA troops from moving into the houses of civilians and confiscating their food, while brutalizing them.<sup>22</sup>

The perception that the northerners were 'better' with civilians than the brutal SPLA was still widespread in 2009–10 in some areas, particularly in the states of Central and Eastern Equatoria.<sup>23</sup> A woman, once an SPLA soldier, recalled the years of the war: 'Many of them are illiterate. The vision of the SPLA, they are not oriented at all about the future. They are oriented that "When we capture a place, the houses, we take them! We take the houses, we take everybody, the women there, we take!" This is what they were orientated on!'<sup>24</sup> Peter Adwok Nyaba has explained the behaviour of SPLA soldiers by their lack of political indoctrination: 'The SPLA, instead of being a genuine national liberation movement, turned into an agent of plunder, pillage, and destructive conquest. The strong link between being a soldier in a national liberation movement and the solidarity with the people ... was completely absent. ... The SPLA became like an army of occupation in areas it controlled and from which the people were running away.'<sup>25</sup> Moreover, because the SPLA often left behind a trail of human rights abuses, looting, and wasted resources (such as grain and cattle), its image was quickly tarnished.<sup>26</sup>

The troops' behaviour towards civilians was not, however, the same throughout the South. It was partly dependent on the conduct of the war and on the resources that fuelled the guerrillas, as well as the presence of other militias who also sustained themselves through the use and abuse of civilians. As Douglas Johnson and Gérard Prunier note, 'The pattern of fighting between the SPLA and local Southern militias involved attacks on civilian populations by both sides, entailing the wholesale destruction of villages and farms. This affected the SPLA's reception in areas outside

20. A rough 20 percent 'tax' was applied to items supplied for civilian use. *Ibid.*, pp. 147–8, 152.

21. Sam Gonda and William Mogga, 'Loss of the revered cattle', in Nigel Twose and Benjamin Pogrand (eds), 'War wounds: development costs of conflict in Southern Sudan' (Panos Institute, Washington, 1988), pp. 63–82, p. 77.

22. Interview, grassroots human rights association members, Yei, 9 April 2009.

23. Interview, women's group, Nimule, 23 April 2009; Interview, members of an opposition political party, Rumbek, 30 March 2010.

24. Interview, SPLA soldier, Juba, 11 November 2010.

25. Peter Adwok Nyaba, *Politics of Liberation in South Sudan: An insider's view* (Fountain Publishers, Kampala, 1997), p. 51.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 36–7.



of the main Nilotic recruiting grounds (Dinka, Nuer, and Shilluk).<sup>27</sup> In Equatoria, not a typical recruiting ground for the SPLA, the guerrillas utilized higher levels of coercion than in the home areas of its soldiers such as Bahr El Ghazal, where it attempted to protect the population rather than exploit it. The SPLA administration was also particularly harsh to civilians in areas controlled by government-aligned militia, such as Eastern Equatoria and Upper Nile where the Murle, some Mundari, the Toposa and the Gajaak Nuer lived.<sup>28</sup>

In 1991, the fragmentation of the SPLA led to the multiplication of armed groups, the use of civilians as a resource in war, the diversion of aid relief to supply soldiers, and the intensification of asset-stripping raids.<sup>29</sup> Although impossible to measure precisely, the degree of predation, and the amount of resources captured, increased. Recalling the time of the 1991 split, one respondent remembered 'It was followed by anarchy. Real anarchy. Killings, and looting, and all sorts of offences were committed.'<sup>30</sup>

The perpetrators of anarchy were, in the words of Arop Madut-Arop and Peter Adwok Nyaba – both SPLA insiders – an 'army of peasants'.<sup>31</sup> At the same time, SPLA soldiers claimed that it was a popular army made of brothers, husbands, uncles, and cousins, which probably facilitated the weaving and expansion of kinship networks through resource capture.<sup>32</sup> For many, joining the guerrilla army provided a chance of starting a new life at a higher social level and with a clean slate.<sup>33</sup> People from all walks of life were recruited into the SPLA,<sup>34</sup> and John Garang himself recognized the economic appeal of the rebellion: 'the marginal cost of rebellion in the South became very small, zero to negative; that is, in the South it pays to rebel'.<sup>35</sup>

Since the SPLA could only impose a limited degree of centralization over the vast Southern territory, local commanders were very autonomous,

27. Douglas H. Johnson and Gérard Prunier, 'The foundation and expansion of the Sudan People's Liberation Army', in Martin W. Daly and Ahmad Alawad Sikainga (eds), *Civil War in the Sudan* (British Academic Press, London, 1993), pp. 117–41, p. 131.

28. Douglas H. Johnson, 'The Sudan People's Liberation Army and the problem of factionalism' in Christopher Clapham (ed.), *African Guerrillas* (Indiana University Press, Oxford, 1998), pp. 53–72, pp. 68–9.

29. Johnson, *The Root Causes*, pp. 145, 151–2.

30. Interview, former SPLA soldier, Juba, 10 November 2010.

31. Nyaba, *Politics of Liberation in South Sudan*, p. 25; Arop Madut-Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road to Peace: A full story of the founding and development of SPLM/SPLA* (Booksurge Llc, Charleston, NC, 2005), p. 86.

32. Interview, SPLA soldier, Juba, 5 October 2010.

33. Nyaba, *Politics of Liberation in South Sudan*, p. 40.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

35. Atta El-Batahani, Ibrahim A. Elbadawi, and Ali Abdel Gadir Ali, 'Sudan's civil war. Why has it prevailed for so long?' in Nicholas Sambanis and Paul Collier (eds), *Understanding Civil War: Evidence and analysis, Vol. 1 – Africa* (World Bank, Washington, DC, 2005), pp. 193–219, p. 193.

especially with administration, taxation, and recruitment, which enabled some of them to constitute their own economic bases.<sup>36</sup> SPLA commanders and soldiers, as well as the commanders of other factions, were involved in various trades to enrich themselves. The commanders essentially became warlords, 'businessmen of war'.<sup>37</sup> For example, Riek Machar's SPLA-United/Southern Sudan Independence Army (former Nasir faction) troops exchanged cattle for arms supplies with the Sudanese Armed Forces, while other southern commanders allied to the SPLA used their access to looted cattle and cattle markets to constitute their own independent economic bases.<sup>38</sup> Government-affiliated militias were equally involved in trades. Paulino Matip, a warlord from Mayom county in Unity state, maintained his own Bul Nuer militia near Bentiu by dealing in sorghum and cattle. While Paulino had interests in the oil fields, he also amassed cattle at a tremendous rate.<sup>39</sup> When he died recently, over forty-seven wives and a hundred and two children survived him.<sup>40</sup>

The SPLA was involved in various trades from the inception of its armed struggle in Ethiopia's Itang refugee camp, where it 'taxed' and resold considerable amounts of relief food taken from refugees, earning millions of Ethiopian Birr.<sup>41</sup> It also exported livestock and gold to Uganda through SPLA-protected or controlled trade. According to Anne Walraet, from 1991 onwards the Dinka Bor managed to monopolize cross-border cattle trade in Eastern Equatoria, becoming powerful intermediary traders. To generate the highest profits, they excluded the cattle suppliers (the Didinga) from these networks.<sup>42</sup> Although Walraet does not offer an analysis of class formation, it is clear that control over the cattle trade contributed to the consolidation of a military elite among SPLA commanders hailing from the Bor Dinka, whose subsequent actions demonstrated a class consciousness.

36. Garang was criticized in the wake of the SPLA split for his tactic of promoting subordinates only to remove them before they could establish their power base – see Johnson, *The Root Causes*, pp. 92–3, 106. Garang's autocratic tendency may have unintentionally limited the extent to which SPLA commanders constituted their own economic bases.

37. Chabal and Daloz, *Africa Works*, p. 85.

38. Johnson, *The Root Causes*, p. 152.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

40. *Sudan Tribune*, 'Paulino Matip Nhial Nyaak, General', August 2012, <<http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?mot1948>> (25 September 2012).

41. Diversion of relief started in Ethiopia refugee camps in the first years of creation of the SPLA. At the time, relief food was traded for cash, clothing, cattle and other items. So much money was earned, that in 1990 the Itang Camp manager bought vehicles for the SPLA. Alex de Waal *et al.*, 'Food and power in Sudan' (African Rights, 1997), pp. 75–9.

42. Darlington Akabwai and Priscillar E. Ateyo, 'The scramble for cattle, power and guns in Karamoja' (Feinstein International Center, December 2007), pp. 20–1; Anne Walraet, 'Governance, violence and the struggle for economic regulation in South Sudan: the case of Budi county (Eastern Equatoria)', *Afrika Focus* 21, 2 (2008), pp. 60, 65, <<http://www.gap.ugent.be/africafocus/pdf/08-21-2-AWWalraet.pdf>> (25 August 2012).



This elite was already, in a Marxian sense, a 'class for itself'. It traded coffee, tobacco, and timber with neighbouring informal economies, in exchange for commodities of various sorts.<sup>43</sup> Its commanders, while negotiating in the name of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), the political branch of the army, struck deals of their own. The income from this trade was then divided in a disproportionate way between the Movement, its leaders, and the South Sudanese people.<sup>44</sup> The funds of the Movement were kept in the personal accounts of some of John Garang's inner-circle lieutenants.<sup>45</sup> Post-war practices of embezzling state funds and redirecting them into personal bank accounts abroad are thus based on wartime practices. Despite the guerrillas' initial (and superficial) Marxist rhetoric and stated hatred of the bourgeoisie, some officers thus made quite a profit for themselves during the war.<sup>46</sup>

### *Wealth and polygamy*

Civil wars, rather than just undermining social capital and breaking down social order, lead to the creation of new forms of social relations.<sup>47</sup> Both new and old elites often look for validation by surrounding themselves with other social actors.<sup>48</sup> Accordingly, the commanders of the SPLA (and of other armed groups) displayed their newly acquired wealth through the expansion of kinship, and created new social relations and new social

43. For example, cattle – looted or obtained at lowest prices in the framework of 'forced markets', a concept used by David Keen – could be traded for weapons or gold, or weapons for cattle, and then used to pay bridewealth. See Akabwai and Ateyo, 'The scramble for cattle', pp. 20–1; Walraet, 'Governance, violence and the struggle for economic regulation', p. 60.

44. Johnson, *The Root Causes*, pp. 165–6; Alfred Taban Logune, '2006 Country Report Sudan' (Global Integrity, 2006), 2; David Deng, 'The new frontier: a baseline survey of large-scale land-based investment in southern Sudan' (Norwegian People's Aid, March 2011), p. 29, <[http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/6F0B144DA275260B8525785C0069DB6A-Full\\_Report.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/6F0B144DA275260B8525785C0069DB6A-Full_Report.pdf)> (25 August 2012); Aly Verjee, 'Is all well in the teak forests of South Sudan?', *African Arguments*, 14 February 2013, <<http://africanarguments.org/2013/03/14/is-all-well-in-the-teak-forests-of-south-sudan-by-aly-verjee/>> (2 March 2013).

45. Part of the crisis of confidence in the SPLA leadership was its rampant corruption. For example, John Garang had the reputation amongst his opponents of seeking to amass as much personal wealth as possible through the movement. Corruption was one of the topics addressed at the SPLM conference in Rumbek between 29 November and 1 December 2004. During the conference Salva Kiir stated that 'some members of the Movement have formed private companies, bought houses and have huge bank accounts in foreign countries', *Sudan Tribune*, 'Minutes of Historical SPLM Meeting in Rumbek 2004', 10 March 2008, <<http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article26320>> (25 August 2012).

46. The SPLA's Marxist rhetoric was mostly a strategy enabling it to source military support from communist Ethiopia. A few years later, most had forgotten about the Manifesto. Nyaba, *Politics of Liberation in South Sudan*, p. 30; Johnson, 'The Sudan People's Liberation Army', pp. 53–4.

47. Luka Biong Deng, 'Social capital and civil war: the Dinka communities in Sudan's civil war', *African Affairs* 109, 435 (2010), pp. 231–50, p. 232.

48. Chabal and Daloz, *Africa Works*, p. 94.

actors.<sup>49</sup> They converted their newly acquired wealth into human and social capital through cattle exchange – more precisely bridewealth exchange, mostly paid in cattle. As a former high-ranking soldier put it:

War wealth is associated with big families. You have more money or you have more cattle, you want to have more wives. ... And then you have more wives, you have a lot of children, most of them girls, who will be married. This is the whole mentality.<sup>50</sup>

New wives also served as a testimony of a man's military exploits, and according to Nyaba, there was 'cut-throat competition between the senior commanders over the loot which they invested in many wives'.<sup>51</sup>

This was not the first time that Sudanese men in positions of power looted resources to re-invest them in large-scale polygamy. Francis Mading Deng has written about his father, the Dinka chief Deng Majok, who was rumoured to have married around 250 wives.<sup>52</sup> He was accused of collecting cattle from the community of the girl he wanted to marry to pay her bridewealth and of maintaining his wealth through the imposition of taxes on the Ngok Dinka. In this sense, the abuse of power and extortion of wealth by SPLA commanders during the war are similar to those of an established chief in the 1940s–1960s. Nevertheless, the SPLA commanders' abusive practices occurred in the context of more violence and some commanders (albeit a minority) failed to comply with the custom of paying bridewealth at all.<sup>53</sup>

The second civil war also created new opportunities in the marriage market, because the high numbers of men of marriageable age who were at the front lines (or had fled the country) made it easier for commanders to acquire new wives.<sup>54</sup> Although John Garang had just one wife (Rebecca), he was an exception; most SPLA commanders had multiple wives.<sup>55</sup> They were reputed to marry numerous women – as many as 51 in some cases – especially in the countryside, where levels of scrutiny were lower than in the towns.<sup>56</sup>

49. Nyaba writes: 'It was a fashion among the Nilotic and other tribes in South Sudan to display new wealth in the number of wives one married.' Nyaba, *Politics of Liberation in South Sudan*, p. 72.

50. Interview, former SPLA soldier, Juba, 10 November 2010.

51. Nyaba, *Politics of Liberation in South Sudan*, p. 72.

52. Deng writes that for the Dinka, there was no limit on how many women one could marry. Polygamy could only be limited by age and wealth. Francis Mading Deng, *The Man Called Deng Majok: A biography of power, polygyny and change*, 2nd edn (Red Sea Press, Trenton, NJ, 2009), p. 191.

53. Interview, former SPLA soldier, Juba, 10 November 2010.

54. *Ibid.*

55. Interview, SPLA soldier, Juba, 8 November 2010.

56. Sharon E. Hutchinson recalls in her ethnography of the Nuer that polygamy was generally perceived to be on the increase. Sharon Elaine Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with money, war, and the state* (University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 1996), p. 336; Interview, former SPLA soldier, Juba, 10 November 2010.

Some SPLA commanders also expanded their material, human, and social capital by establishing bases in Nairobi. As pointed out by Julia Aker Duany, some lived 'removed from the field of battle ... in luxury homes in the suburbs of Nairobi and Kampala'.<sup>57</sup> The ability of army leaders to derive such advantages from war was not unique to Sudan. For example, the dignitaries of the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) are known to have consumed the proceeds of the sale of their country's resources in the suburbs of Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Lisbon.<sup>58</sup>

Thus, the strategies of predation deployed during the second civil war resulted in the creation of a new military aristocracy. Despite its Marxist rhetoric, the SPLA became a space for resource accumulation by its commanders, who used their newly acquired wealth to expand their immediate kinship networks, and, as the next section illustrates, their extended ones as well.

*The creation of military kinship and a lower stratum*

Back in SPLA territory in South Sudan, the commanders used 'a combination of violence and patronage to transfer the allegiance of young soldiers from their families to the military hierarchy'.<sup>59</sup> Cherry Leonardi has explored how the youth struggled during the war to retain its independence from both the SPLA and the family sphere. She briefly mentions the girls that commanders gave to their soldiers as 'rewards', but does not examine in detail the processes through which loyalty is created. Similarly, although Sharon E. Hutchinson described the SPLA zonal commanders' involvement in regulating marriage disputes,<sup>60</sup> she does not recount the SPLA commanders' involvement in marriage payments *per se*.

As a matter of fact, the SPLA soldiers who were sent to the front lines, leaving the marriageable women of their home areas at the mercy of their commanders, were still hoping to marry themselves. However, doing so required them to obtain permission from their commander to leave the front line to return to the village, which was a luxury rarely granted.<sup>61</sup> The most common practice was therefore that the commanders would

57. Julia Aker Duany, *Making Peace and Nurturing Life. A memoir of an African woman about a journey of struggle and hope* (1st Books Library, Bloomington, IN, 2003), p. 206.

58. Jean-François Bayart, 'Preface to the second english edition. Africa in the world: a history of extraversion' in *The State in Africa: The politics of the belly*, 2nd edn (Polity, Malden, MA, 2009), p. xxxv.

59. Cherry Leonardi, "Liberation" or capture: youth in between "hakuma", and "home" during civil war and its aftermath in Southern Sudan', *African Affairs* 106, 424 (2007), pp. 391–412, p. 399.

60. These marriage disputes related to the bridewealth rates for previously eloped girls. Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas*, pp. 207–8.

61. Interview, former SPLA soldier, Juba, 10 November 2010.

substitute for the family of their soldiers, by either paying their bridewealth or witnessing the agreement between them and the bride's family, thus guaranteeing the bridewealth's future payment.<sup>62</sup> An SPLA soldier recalled:

The problem of postponement of dowry,<sup>63</sup> it's because there were no resources [to pay it]. Some commanders and soldiers who did it, they were telling me that commander x, y, z, was the one who paid dowry for my wife, proudly. And you know to do that it's somebody that really loves you, it has to be a member of the family, and even sometimes in a real family, they don't do it. Not everyone will give dowry for you, it has to be the closest, your best friend, that will pay dowry for you. And so, some say that, proudly, that commander x, y, z paid dowry for the wife ... or do negotiations, with the chiefs and the relatives. ... And many of these things started in Ethiopia, started from the same big people who could marry.<sup>64</sup>

Commanders thus enabled their soldiers to marry. By the end of the war, many soldiers in the SPLA reportedly had more than one wife, usually between two and four.<sup>65</sup> As one respondent exclaimed: 'They married, they married from each location! They had so many wives!'<sup>66</sup> But the central role played by commanders in this process did not simply represent a courtesy or a favour. Rather, these commanders and soldiers, along with the bride's kin, became part of a social contract, bound by obligations. This was compounded by the fact that marriages with postponed bridewealth payment were sealed through a witnessed contract. As a result, when soldiers married they often became inextricably bound to their superiors. To paraphrase Marcel Mauss, 'the circulation of wealth (is) but one part of a wide and enduring contract'.<sup>67</sup>

Writing about Samoa, Mauss stresses the point that making return gifts is an absolute obligation in order to retain authority and wealth.<sup>68</sup> In the same vein, the 'gift' made by the commanders to their soldiers constituted ways to retain their authority. For the Dinka, it is the head of the family (the father) who normally pays his son's bridewealth with assistance from his brothers, extended kin and friends. A man receives cattle as bridewealth and then disposes of them in marriage, and he returns the favour later when a friend or a relative gives him cattle.<sup>69</sup> Thus the commanders, who placed

62. Interview, former SPLA soldier, Juba, 10 November 2010; Interview, SPLA soldier, Juba, 8 November 2010.

63. Bridewealth is popularly called 'dowry' in South Sudan, even though bride price is paid from the groom to the bride's family.

64. Interview, SPLA soldier, Juba, 8 November 2010.

65. Interview, SPLA soldier, Juba, 11 November 2010.

66. Interview, SPLA soldier, Juba, 5 October 2010.

67. Mauss, *The Gift*, p. 3. Bridewealth is generally paid in several instalments in South Sudan, and the wartime postponement of its payment to a peaceful future, most probably contributed to the longevity of that contract.

68. Mauss, *The Gift*, p. 6.

69. Francis Mading Deng, *The Dinka of the Sudan*, p. 106.

themselves in the role of fathers, expected the loyalty of kin from the soldiers whose bridewealth they funded.

The intertwining of resources, feelings, and personalities is characteristic of exchange contracts.<sup>70</sup> Honour and rivalry, expressed through marriage ceremonies, also play crucial parts in gift exchange. From a Maussian perspective, enriched SPLA commanders used gifts to show their wealth and win prestige, not only amongst their troops but also *vis-à-vis* other commanders. This type of gift exchange was aristocratic and characterized by generosity and a particular etiquette (of witnessing the signed agreement guaranteeing the marriage).<sup>71</sup> In this case, such contracts cemented the personal and intimate ties already developed on the front lines between soldiers and commanders, and implied continued allegiance and active political support. This was particularly useful to commanders in the post-CPA period as it ensured that they could achieve power and maintain their positions. Other examples of wife giving and/or voluntary participation in bridewealth payments by non-relatives to retain political allegiance also exist. Francis Mading Deng has described how some Dinka came forward to contribute to his father's bridewealth in order to obtain political favours.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, Douglas Johnson's fascinating account of the prophet Deng Laka's life provides an example of kinship expansion and of the creation of a group of obliged followers. Indeed, Deng Laka allowed his roughly sixty wives to take their own consorts and gave these men some cattle to marry their own wives, thus expanding Laka's kinship in various ways.<sup>73</sup>

To paraphrase Mauss again, 'prestations' are in theory voluntary and spontaneous but are in fact given in a way that is calculated to generate a return.<sup>74</sup> 'Gifts' also encompass many practices of corruption and pave the way for future collaboration.<sup>75</sup> By substituting themselves for their soldiers' fathers and creating new military kinship ties through these gifts of wives/bridewealth, the SPLA commanders did exactly what Richard Sklar has described as a process of dominant-class formation: they 'reconstructed the existing organization of authority' in order to 'protect and extend' their class interests.<sup>76</sup>

70. 'This confusion of personalities and things is precisely the mark of exchange contracts', Mauss, *The Gift*, p. 18.

71. *Ibid.*, pp. 35–6.

72. Deng, *The Man Called Deng Majok*, p. 193.

73. Douglas H. Johnson, *Nuer Prophets: A history of prophecy from the Upper Nile in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1994), pp. 126, 146.

74. The French word 'prestation' designates any thing or series of things given freely or obligatorily as a gift or in exchange. It includes services and entertainments as well as material things.

75. Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, 'A moral economy of corruption in Africa?', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 37, 1 (1999), pp. 25–52, pp. 39, 40.

76. Richard L. Sklar, 'The nature of class domination in Africa', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 17, 4 (1979), pp. 531–52, p. 538.

*The elite and its lower stratum*

The practice of gift giving enabled the military elite to create a lower stratum of followers, first, by using bridewealth to foster new kinship ties that reinforced soldiers' loyalty, and second, by giving a range of smaller gifts to elevate SPLA soldiers to an economic status that was higher than that of the local population. This lower stratum became part of the equation described by Chabal and Daloz between 'rulers, intermediaries and the ruled' by taking up the position of 'intermediaries'.<sup>77</sup> By enabling these intermediaries to marry many wives, the elite also allowed them a taste – on a smaller scale – of the privileges it enjoyed, thus fostering the illusion of a commonality between rulers and intermediaries.

Despite their different levels of wealth, the common feature linking rulers and intermediaries is their need to manifest their superiority through a range of overlapping practices. In his work on elite self-definition, Jean-Pascal Daloz writes: 'What is critical for elites is to demonstrate their dominance *vis-à-vis* subordinates and to exhibit at least as much supremacy as their peers.' Citing Norbert Elias, he recalls how, in France, nobles were requested to leave their locality (in which they had the status of kings) to be subjected to a process of 'courtization' and settle around the king and queen.<sup>78</sup> According to Elias, the slow transition of warriors into courtiers in Europe from the eleventh to the eighteenth centuries eventually pacified society. Although such a pacifying effect over the *longue durée* cannot be observed in South Sudan,<sup>79</sup> one may certainly observe the three main practices through which, Daloz argues, elites seek to distinguish themselves – residences, vehicles, and dining out.

Once the CPA was signed, ministers in Juba all assembled in the same neighbourhood around the President's house, and started building houses (in a city where huts prevailed) each seeking to out-do the other, and their houses elsewhere in Africa, in the kind of 'monopolistically controlled competition' described by Elias.<sup>80</sup> Beyond the desire to signify ascendancy, this house-building rivalry was primarily a means of communicating supremacy between rivals, and even more between the leaders of various factions. The houses are usually heavily decorated to impress visitors and signify an active social life. Similar to the nobles in modern France, the government officials have their own followers. What I have called the lower stratum (or intermediaries) live in the vicinity of the elite's compound or in

77. Chabal and Daloz, *Africa Works*, p. 44.

78. Daloz, *The Sociology of Elite Distinction*, p. 69.

79. Elias, 'The courtization of the warriors', p. 386.

80. This often resulted in land appropriations from the local populations and triggered conflicts between the Bari community and the GoSS in Juba, see Naseem Badié, 'Les dynamiques locales de la construction étatique à Juba, Sud-Soudan (2005–2008)', *Politique Africaine* 122 (2011), pp. 21–39, p. 35; Norbert Elias, 'The courtization of the warriors', p. 386.



huts on the compound itself, which resembles a mix between a military camp and a court.

As for the vehicles, 'a primary object of competitive display'<sup>81</sup> for elites throughout the world, they are often decorated, typically with golden tissue boxes, figurines and fur. The four-wheel drives of the President and Vice-President are at the top of the scale. Their shiny black colour distinguishes them from the rest of the elite and they travel in convoy. When they are driving through the streets of the capital city, all traffic is halted by policemen who violently reprimand any citizens who fail to stop their engines immediately or to retreat to the far side of the boardwalk. Such reprimands are meant physically to show the authority and potential violence of the new state. But they also attest to the stratified nature of power, ranging from the top of the elite to its lower strata and its extended kinship networks, who take advantage of their connections to demonstrate their own superiority and power over other ordinary citizens who are not related to the elite through extended kinship networks.

In addition to functioning as a way of distancing the walking crowd, cars distinguish the importance of the official. Key factors include the value of the car, whether or not the owner has a driver, and how clean the car is. The cleaner the four-wheel-drive Nissan is, the wealthier and more important its owner is likely to be.<sup>82</sup> The more numerous the passengers in the vehicle, the more likely they belong to the intermediary group. The elite and their intermediaries regularly intimidate pedestrians by driving too close to them or demanding that they get out of the way. A consequence of this is the high number of car accidents in Juba, involving the elite on a daily basis.<sup>83</sup>

We could compare this trend to what Daloz evokes in examining the relationship between the elite and their vehicles, when recalling the case of VIPs in Moscow who regard themselves as above common people and drive at incredible speed while disregarding the safety of others. He concludes that given the parallels between the cars' power and social hierarchies, and the symbolic violence that derives from aggressive overtaking, 'horsepower and class-consciousness may be related'.<sup>84</sup>

Finally, the elite in Juba also likes to eat out, to the extent that the popular term of a 'dining class' has been especially created to describe the phenomenon.<sup>85</sup> With the signing of the CPA, restaurants have flourished in

81. Daloz, *The Sociology of Elite Distinction*, p. 73.

82. A pick-up Nissan is typically seen as being less prestigious than a sedan.

83. Zechariah Manyok Biar, 'The irony of urgency in Juba', *Sudan Tribune*, 21 August 2012, <<http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article43643>> (25 August 2012).

84. Daloz, *The Sociology of Elite Distinction*, p. 75.

85. Ayom Wol Dhal, 'New vocabulary for new republic', *New Times*, 2 October 2012, <<http://newtimes-ss.com/?p=1444>> (15 October 2012).

Juba, but their number still remains limited in absolute terms. At the time of my field research, there were only a few, mostly by the Nile river. They exist in a strict hierarchy in which the ‘*rakuba* dining class’ – the lower stratum dining in cheap local *rakuba* restaurants – is distinguished from the ‘expat dining class’, the elite dining in expensive expatriate-oriented restaurants in Juba, which in turn is distinguished from the ‘Serena dining class’, the top of the elite, who benefited so much from the war and embezzled so much from government funds that it can afford to dine out in Nairobi restaurants.<sup>86</sup>

Eating out and ‘hanging out’ ensure social visibility – being seen in fashionable places and in good company. The number of clients – the lower stratum or intermediaries – who accompany the elite demonstrate its prestige and influence. The elite makes sure that it is seen ‘hanging out’, having drinks and conversations with former friends and relatives to try to appear still connected to its original community and retain legitimacy.<sup>87</sup> Officials have casual political dinners with their counterparts, or are surrounded by their clique of lower-stratum ‘boys’ – who also intend to convey their own popularity and empowerment through the company of the patrons.<sup>88</sup>

The ability to eat in various types of ethnic restaurants demonstrates cosmopolitanism<sup>89</sup> and, in the case of the Southern Sudanese officials, dining in a restaurant like Da Vinci that serves refined Western food sends the message that they have spent time in the West, or at least have lived outside South Sudan (in East Africa, for example), and are well acquainted with its mores. These officials are thus at least as professional and as important as their Western counterparts, and perceive themselves to be better than their less-travelled peers.<sup>90</sup> Here, as Mauss has argued, it is not so much about ‘having’ as about ‘being’, and the desired state of being is rich, refined, and dignified.<sup>91</sup>

### *Post-war benefits, clientelism, and nepotism*

For all their attempts to distinguish themselves from subordinate groups, the elite remains intimately linked with different lower strata that support it, through nepotistic and clientelist networks. This is necessary in order to avoid the conflict that the ‘jealousy’ of a neighbour, a colleague, or a relative

86. *Ibid.*

87. The African elites’ attempt to remain connected to their bases is discussed in Chabal and Daloz, *Africa Works*, pp. 38, 43.

88. Author observations, Juba, October 2010.

89. Daloz, *The Sociology of Elite Distinction*, p. 80.

90. Author observations, Juba, November 2010.

91. ‘The only way to demonstrate his fortune is by expending it to the humiliation of others, by putting them “in the shadow of his name”. ... It is the *persona* which is at stake.’ Mauss, *The Gift*, p. 38.

might generate,<sup>92</sup> and to avoid creating a disconnect between the local and the national that might undermine the system on which their privileges depend.<sup>93</sup> As a result, a form of 'solidaristic graft'<sup>94</sup> emerged following the signing of the CPA, in which the new military elite extended post-war benefits to its kin and to the lower stratum's kin through various channels. It thus continued to 'build' the state on the legacy of wartime SPLA administration of liberated areas.<sup>95</sup> This should not come as a surprise. The logic of lineage systems and that of the state are not antithetical – quite the contrary: they can prosper together and, as highlighted by Jean-Francois Bayart, lineage-based societies have adapted remarkably well to new bureaucratic environments.<sup>96</sup> This has been the case of the South Sudanese state.

The construction of a state entrenched through patronage networks was facilitated by the large-scale polygamy of the war years, which has enabled commanders to control state institutions through kinship networks. It was common for the SPLA and militia leaders to have at least 40 to 60 children, whom they typically placed at all echelons of the government and the army once the new institutions were created in 2005. For example, the 60 children of one of the founders of the SPLA were placed in the Office of the Vice-President, in the Southern Sudan Centre for Census, Statistics, and Evaluation (now National Bureau for Statistics), in other government institutions, and in the SPLA itself.<sup>97</sup> One respondent explained that a large kin network 'empowers you, because when you have more children you have more human resource, and you do whatever you want, you get whatever you want. Something by force, fighting, you have people ... it was part of the investment of some of wise leaders.'<sup>98</sup> The military elite also used the affirmative action criteria of the constitution, which states that at least 25 percent of the organization must be female, to appoint the wives of commanders and of lower-stratum intermediaries to important army, police, and government positions.<sup>99</sup>

92. Sardan, 'A moral economy of corruption in Africa?', p. 43.

93. Chabal and Daloz, *Africa Works*, pp. 38, 41, 42.

94. The expression is derived from Ernest Harsch, 'Accumulators and democrats: challenging state corruption in Africa', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 31, 1 (1993), pp. 31–48, p. 34.

95. On wartime SPLA administration, see Øystein H. Rolandsen, *Guerrilla Government: Political changes in the Southern Sudan during the 1990s* (Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, Sweden, 2005).

96. Jean-Francois Bayart, Stephen Ellis, and Beatrice Hibou, *Criminalization of the State in Africa*, 2nd edn (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, 2009), p. 39.

97. Author observations, August 2010; *Sudan Tribune*, 'South Sudan Chief Justice Denies Nepotism in Appointment of His Daughter', 2 March 2013 <<http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article45695>> (2 February 2013).

98. Interview, SPLA soldier, Juba, 8 November 2010.

99. Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS), 'The Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan' (Juba, 2005), p. 7.

Some officials of the new government admitted that the kin of the elite and their lower-stratum clients were rewarded with public service jobs to the extent that more than 60 percent of public servants were alleged to be unqualified for their positions.<sup>100</sup> Another channel of reward was their inclusion in the inflated lists of corrupted demilitarization programmes.<sup>101</sup> These programmes also included the members of various other armed groups that joined the SPLA in 2006<sup>102</sup> and their kin.<sup>103</sup> These practices cemented commanders' ties with the lower strata. As much as commanders recognized a common class interest, the SPLM has continued to suffer internal divisions that, while they reflect broader struggles over resources and power, often play out along ethnic lines.<sup>104</sup>

### Conclusion

Scholars of class formation in Africa, such as Richard Sklar, have established that, in Africa, 'class relations, at bottom, are determined by relations of power, not production'.<sup>105</sup> Sklar associates the rise of dominant social classes with the modern political party, which facilitated their control of the state and their subsequent appropriation of its state resources. For his part, Larry Diamond sees political corruption as the 'primary mechanism of dominant-class formation'.<sup>106</sup> The case of South Sudan demonstrates that wartime predation can play the same role as political corruption, initiating a process of dominant-class formation.

During conflict it was the guerrilla group, not the party, that was the instrument of the rise of a military aristocracy and of its lower strata. After the war, through the rapid increase of state resources with oil revenues, the

100. Deputy Information Minister Atem Yaak Atem estimated that as many as 65 percent of state workers may have falsified their credentials or are unqualified. See Jared Ferrie, 'South Sudan to clean up civil service, oust unqualified workers', *Bloomberg*, 19 October 2011, <<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-10-19/south-sudan-to-clean-up-civil-service-oust-unqualified-workers.html>> (15 August 2012); Interview, SPLA soldier, Juba, 11 November 2010; Interview, SPLA soldier, Juba, 8 November 2010.

101. The demilitarization process started in 2005 and was highly political since it included multiple armed groups.

102. The Juba Declaration and the CPA established the alignment of OAGs, requiring the incorporation of between 34,000 and 50,000 former South Sudan Defence Forces (SSDF) combatants. Sarah Preston, Henry Smith, and Stuart Kefford, 'Developing integrated approaches to post-conflict security and recovery: a case study of integrated DDR in Sudan' (Safer World, July 2008), p. 18; Lydia Stone, 'Failures and opportunities: Rethinking DDR in South Sudan' (Sudan Issue Brief, Small Arms Survey, May 2011), p. 3.

103. These programmes were meant to satisfy their demands for recompense in exchange for the surrender of their weapons, through the delivery of attractive reintegration packages.

104. Interview, SPLA soldier, Juba, 11 November 2010.

105. Sklar, 'The nature of class domination in Africa', p. 537.

106. Larry Diamond, 'Class formation in the swollen African state', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 25, 4 (1987), p. 579.

semi-autonomous (and then independent) prebendal state<sup>107</sup> intensified the elite's domination and sharpened social differentiation, confirming the thesis of Morris Szeftel, who argued that 'corruption and class formation thus rest on prebendalism, on the control and use of state position'.<sup>108</sup> As Ernest Harsch has written, while in some countries the extent and nature of the role of corruption in private accumulation may be of secondary importance, 'in others it is the cement that holds together the entire system of political and class domination'.<sup>109</sup>

This article has illustrated how South Sudan's military elite formed itself into a new aristocracy through wartime predation, and cemented its power through lavishing resources (captured during periods of war and post-war) upon soldiers, former foes, and affiliated kin, thus creating a class of obliged intermediaries through new social contracts. In post-war South Sudan, corruption binds and reinforces the system of political and class domination. But this system simultaneously compromises the state's long-term survival, because it tends to provoke class and ethnic conflicts.

Since 2005, this new aristocracy – with its constant reference to the legitimizing myth of the "struggle", its ostentation, and its sense of ownership, combined with growing state violence – has triggered popular resentment. A large part of the population, including Dinka groups, has been particularly frustrated with what it considers to be widespread nepotism, bringing entire families, expanded during the war, to government positions.<sup>110</sup> Although ethnic groups cannot be equated mechanically with political factions in South Sudan,<sup>111</sup> the accusation of 'Dinka domination', a running theme throughout South Sudanese history, thus regained momentum.<sup>112</sup> Despite the fact that Dinka groups are to be found on both sides of the recent struggles within the SPLM,<sup>113</sup> the crisis that started on

107. The notion of prebendalism was adapted by Richard A. Joseph in *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The rise and fall of the second republic* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987), from a concept originally developed by Max Weber in *Economy and Society: An outline of interpretive sociology*, 2 vols (University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 2013). Prebendalism refers to the allocation of political and administrative office as political reward, without anticipation of actual bureaucratic performance but for appropriation of a financial rent.

108. Morris Szeftel, 'Between governance and underdevelopment: accumulation and Africa's "catastrophic corruption"', *Review of African Political Economy* 27, 84 (2000), pp. 287–306, p. 302. See also Morris Szeftel, 'Political graft and the spoils system in Zambia – the state as a resource in itself', *Review of African Political Economy* 9, 24 (1982), pp. 4–21.

109. Harsch, 'Accumulators and democrats', p. 37.

110. Interview, SPLA soldier, Juba, 8 November 2010; Interview, SPLA soldier, Juba, 11 November 2010.

111. Young, *The Fate of Sudan*, p. 65; Johnson, *The Root Causes*, p. 94.

112. In the late 1970s especially, a new form of 'anti-Nilotic' racism (with the rhetoric of 'Dinka domination') emerged in the region. See Johnson, *The Root Causes*, pp. 52–3.

113. Intra-elite struggles within the SPLA have involved the group of the Bor Dinka, John Garang's kinsmen (a Twic East Dinka), and the Dinka Rek from Warrap area (Salva Kiir's kinsmen). Garang built the core of the SPLM/A around the Bor Dinka community. The

15 December 2013 has been largely portrayed in the international media as an ethnic conflict between the Nuer and the Dinka. Just as 'tribalism' masks class privilege,<sup>114</sup> the ethnic narrative of the unfolding war has masked fractures that traverse the post-war society and that have more to do with the dire inequalities between the new aristocracy, its lower strata, and ordinary citizens, than it does with historical ethnic animosities.

Garang loyalists, nicknamed 'Garang boys', have been accused of fomenting (three) coup attempts to oust Kiir's regime: *Sudan Tribune*, 'S. Sudan attempts to block alleged coup reporting', 3 August 2012, <<http://www.sudantribune.com/S-Sudan-attempts-to-block-alleged>> (15 August 2012).

114. Richard L. Sklar, 'Political science and national integration – a radical approach', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 5, 1 (1967), pp. 1–11, p. 6.