



Situation Report

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Jonglei 2010: Another round of disarmament

Introduction

Acronyms and abbreviations

Comprehensive Peace Agreement	CPA
Government of Sudan	GoS
Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army	SPLM/A
Government of South Sudan	GoSS
South Sudan Defence Force	SSDF
Sudan Armed Forces	SAF
International Non-Governmental Agencies	INGOs

Although the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of January 2005 formally ended the war between the Government of Sudan (GoS) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), internal security has remained a major problem for the fledgling southern government. Indeed, internal conflict, rather than the prospect of a return to war between the north and south, poses the biggest threat to the holding of the CPA-stipulated national election in April 2010, the referendum on southern self-determination in January 2011, and the viability of South Sudan as an independent state.

Nowhere is the problem more evident than in Jonglei, the biggest state in area in South Sudan and with 1 358 602 people the most populous.¹ There are a number of explanations for the high level of intra and inter-tribal conflict in the state. First, the campaign of destruction by Dr Riek Macher and his Lou Nuer allies in the early 1990s in their revolt against the Dr John Garang-led SPLM/A laid the basis for conflict between the tribes of the region that has continued until the present. Second, Jonglei's conflict network must be among the most complex and violent in the south, and the state hosts the Lou Nuer and the Murle who are at the centre of this conflict. Third, Jonglei brings together in one state the politically and economically developed minority Bor Dinka with a largely deprived majority from other tribes. And, lastly, Jonglei has long been an incubator for conflict in southern Sudan. It was in eastern Jonglei that Anyanya II in the mid-1970s began its opposition to the Addis Ababa Peace Agreement of 1972. It was in Jonglei that the 1983 revolt began that is generally held to mark the start of Sudan's second civil war. The state was a core area of support for the main opposition to the SPLA, the South Sudan Defence Force (SSDF), the centre of conflict between

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the SSDF and the SPLA, and the state was among the areas most resistant to the SPLA. But the underlying causes of the endemic violence in the state are a range of structural factors led by the failure of the SPLM/A to establish viable systems of local governance, its refusal or inability to protect the citizenry of South Sudan, and continuing dependence on a traditional cattle-based economy.

In the wake of lawless conditions across much of Jonglei, the regional government in Juba and the state government in Bor have had only one response: disarmament. The proliferation of weapons which is held to be the cause of the violence is also given as the reason for the lack of development, the inability of the state to attract investment, the failure to provide services, and the ineffectiveness of local governments, according to the state governor.² The problem with this explanation is that it was used to justify the disarmament campaign of 2006, but the completion of that campaign did not produce more development, investment, or services. To understand better what has become virtually the only response of the GoSS to endemic violence in the state, there is a need to summarise briefly the 2006 disarmament before examining the campaign that began in December 2009.

The increasing level of conflict in Jonglei in the period after the signing of the CPA became a major focus of concern, both for the international community anxious to carry out programmes unhindered by violence, and by the GoSS and SPLA which saw in the spreading violence a threat to their own power.³ In particular, the SPLM/A viewed the disarmament of the civilian population as critical to eliminating former enemies (particularly among the Nuer where the SSDF drew much of its support), as well as a means to reduce the capacity of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) to create further instability by supporting lawless elements in the state. These concerns congealed around the demand for civilian disarmament.

The approach of the government to civilian disarmament rhetorically supported the peaceful handover of weapons, but in the event that the tribes proved uncooperative, it threatened force and this was backed up by the presence of Division 8, based in Jonglei and led by Brigadier General Peter Bol Kong. The focus of the campaign was on Iyod (Gawaar Nuer), Duk (Dinka), and Aror and Nyirol (Lou Nuer) counties. Pastoralists from all these areas were heavily armed, but it was the Lou that were of specific concern because alone among the Nuer clans they do not have sufficient grazing lands and water within their own territory during the dry season and as a result must move their cattle into the lands of their neighbours. And since they have usually refused to leave their weapons behind when entering neighbouring lands, there have often been clashes with local people or with the SPLA.

Also of concern to the government and the SPLA was the fact that the Lou youth had organised themselves into what they called the 'White Army', an informal, but highly effective group of youth based in the cattle camps that had the capacity to mobilise thousands of gun carriers quickly.⁴ Moreover, there was strong circumstantial evidence that the White Army was being supported by the SAF through elements in the SSDF whose status was unclear because the disarmament was being pursued almost simultaneously with the integration of the SSDF into the SPLA as a result of the Juba Declaration of January 2006.⁵ Moreover, the SAF still had a significant presence in South Sudan in 2006 and the numerous sightings of helicopters with UN markings in the areas of conflict which turned out to not be from the UN suggested they probably came from the SAF.

The crisis began with the refusal of the Lou Nuer cattle herders to give up their weapons before entering the territory of the Duk Padiet Dinka. As a result, appeals were made in December 2005 by the chiefs, local government officials, and senior politicians, such as Vice President Riek Macher, for the Lou to hand over their weapons voluntarily. But these efforts were not successful and Bol Kong began his forceful disarmament campaign. By January 2006 Bol Kong had begun directly engaging the White Army in a series of battles that culminated in May 2007 with the dispersal of the young pastoralists to Dolip Hill (near Malakal in Upper Nile State).

Estimates vary over the number of weapons actually collected, but the initial view was that although the campaign had led to the loss of many lives that it had been a success. And to the extent that a key objective of the campaign was to overcome what was perceived as SAF-inspired fifth columnist activities in Jonglei, the defeat of the White Army was a welcome development. But very quickly doubts about the entire exercise began to rise. There were suggestions that the weapons collected were not properly stored and accounted for and there was anger in some quarters that those who had handed over their weapons voluntarily were not compensated as they had expected. In addition, as attested to by the author who visited the Waat area shortly after the disarmament was completed, insecurity still prevailed. Moreover, the cost of the entire exercise was very high: at least 400 SPLA soldiers and more than 1 000 White Army fighters were killed, as well as an unknown number of civilians.⁶ The local economy was severely disrupted, crops were not planted, cattle were stolen, personal possessions of the civilian population were looted by armed groups, including the SPLA; indeed, the SPLA was probably the biggest abuser of the civilians since it did not have adequate food supplies and thus it largely stole from the local inhabitants to survive. In addition, the campaign left the area littered with mines and explosives.

Politically the results were also mixed. The entire campaign had little civilian oversight and the GoSS-established South Sudan DDR Commission was only notable because of its absence. Leaders from the area and beyond, such as Paulino Matieb, the newly appointed Deputy Leader of the SPLA, voiced their abhorrence at the level of violence in the disarmament campaign. On the one hand, former SSDF leaders feared that the attack on the White Army was a veiled attack on them by elements in the SPLA leadership that opposed the Juba Declaration. On the other hand, the apparent support of a few former SSDF local leaders for the White Army caused alarm in some quarters of the GoSS and suggested that they had not fully accepted integration into the SPLA. Meanwhile, the tacit acceptance of the forced disarmament campaign by the UN, despite initially supporting a community based voluntary approach to disarmament, and its failure to condemn evidence of massive human rights abuses, left the organisation lacking credibility. But the campaign stopped short of disarming the Murle of south-east Jonglei and the tribe was not slow to attack its defenceless neighbours, thus forcing them to quickly acquire weapons, particularly the Lou Nuer who were the primary victims. As a result, within two years of the 2006 forceful disarmament campaign, Jonglei was again awash in weapons and by late 2009 another disarmament campaign was under way.

Indeed, the SPLA leadership now acknowledges the failure of the 2006 campaign, but places most of the blame on the international community. Thus SPLA Chief of Defence Staff, Lt General James Hoth, said the reason the campaign was a failure was that it had to be aborted in the face of strong condemnation from the international community and as a result it could not go forward and disarm the Murle, who, by their continuing attacks, encouraged the disarmed tribes to re-arm.⁷ Major General Peter Bol Kong also speaks darkly of 'deceptions by NGOs' to explain the failure of a campaign which he noted pitted him against his own people.⁸ Both James and Peter note the role of the GoS in inciting the people of the south to rebellion. (Despite the failures of the campaign Bol Kong was shortly thereafter promoted from brigadier to major general.)

Many senior leaders of the GoSS publicly supported the campaign of forceful disarmament in Jonglei in 2006, and accepted it again in 2009-10, if it proved necessary. Local authorities were again unhappy about what was held to be a deteriorating security situation in the state and as a result they also strongly support disarmament, including forceful disarmament – if it proves necessary. As was the case in 2006 there is still opposition among senior non-Nuer SPLA officers to SSDF integration because they claim to fear that some SSDF officers are not loyal and may yet defect to the north and thus any violence in what was a core area of SSDF support must be strongly opposed. Moreover, among the Bor Dinkas who still figure prominently among the SPLA leadership core there is still strong

opposition to the Nuer, particularly the Lou Nuer who conducted the horrific attack on their community in 1991.

The international community, led by the UN and the International Non-Governmental Agencies (INGOs), is again expressing concern about the deteriorating security situation in Jonglei and expressing the need for order so that it can carry out its development programmes, without, however, endorsing forceful disarmament. Indeed, the agencies are much more careful this time around not to be so closely associated with the campaign. Once again, the DDR Commission is not playing the role that is expected of it. And, as was the case in 2006, there are concerns that the deteriorating security conditions in the south pose a threat to the unfolding peace process, and in the media there is loose talk suggesting that the level of violence indicates a return to north-south war, although the link between cattle-based local conflicts and war between conventional armies is not clearly drawn. There is also a desire in some circles, and this apparently includes President Salva Kiir, to eliminate insecurity in the lead up to the election because his legitimacy and that of the SPLM could suffer if the situation is not brought under control.

A critical point of similarity between the two disarmament campaigns is the absence of the same key local personalities in trying to persuade the youthful cattle herders, who are the primary focus of the campaign, to turn in their weapons. Foremost here is Major-General Ismael Konyi, a paramount chief, former SSDF general, and widely held to be the most influential leader among the Murle pastoralists. He was clearly aligned with Khartoum at the beginning of the 2006 disarmament campaign, but now has – apparently – made his peace with the SPLM/A and was appointed a MP in the South Sudan Legislative Assembly and a presidential advisor. However, after he failed to completely disarm the Murle in 2007 (and it is claimed by some that he never really tried), he was dismissed from his post by Salva, after which he went to Khartoum and stayed for a few months, leading to suspicions that he still had links with SAF. The second key personality whose absence is as noteworthy in 2010 as it was in 2006 is SPLA Major General Simon Gatwich, from Yuai. Simon is a traditional leader of the Lou, was the leading SSDF figure in the area before the Juba Declaration, and currently holds a directorship at SPLA headquarters in Bilfam, outside Juba.

Perhaps most ominously Major General Peter Bol Kong is again leading the disarmament campaign and he is widely feared in Jonglei. To be sure, he is voicing his support for a peaceful disarmament and began his efforts by talking to the local chiefs and telling them that they must convince the young men in the cattle camps to turn over their weapons to the local *payam* (district) and *boma* (village) authorities. Politicians from Juba have also been brought in to convince the youth of the need to hand in their weapons. In addition, Bol Kong is directly talking to the youth and attended the 15 December 2009 Lou-Murle reconciliation conference in Akobo. It must be emphasised, however, that this is precisely how the process began in 2006: making commitments to peaceful disarmament and engaging the chiefs, local authorities, regional politicians, police, and talking to the youth, but making clear that if this approach does not work and the weapons are not handed in, then forceful means will be employed. Bol Kong is convinced that by winning the formal approval of these key groups that his efforts cannot be considered forceful. Moreover, he said that if force is used to disarm the youth they will not accept and could join the opposition.⁹ He also said that he does not want conflict while people are preparing for the election.

As in 2006 the 2009-10 disarmament campaign in Jonglei began with the Lou Nuer, but according to Peter Bol Kong, this has less to do with giving the process legitimacy by confronting his own tribe, than with protecting the Murle who are widely hated and could be quickly overwhelmed by armed neighbours should he disarm them first.¹⁰ He also says that he is well prepared for the challenge by having seven Murle officers in his camp, two of them major generals, and is advised by four parliamentarians from the area.

To be sure, there are differences between conditions in 2009-10 and those in 2006. While some elements of the GoSS argue that the SAF is still actively conducting a covert campaign of subversion throughout the south,¹¹ there is little conclusive evidence of that, and the northern army simply does not have the capacity for such an effort in the present circumstances. A recent study of arms flow in Sudan also raised this issue and noted that an undetermined number of weapons found in the south could be traced to the north, but it could not provide details, or evidence that they were being distributed as part of a concerted SAF campaign of subversion.¹² Indeed, unlike the case in 2006, with re-deployment the SAF now has only a minor presence in the south (largely in the Joint Integrated Units), the White Army was defeated and no similar organisation that could be construed to have genuine political objectives has emerged. And although the former SSDF officers and soldiers have still not been fully integrated into the SPLA, there is no evidence of any subversion on their part. It would be surprising if elements in the SAF had completely given up what had clearly been a campaign to destabilise the south, but it does not have the capacity to generate the problems of insecurity which are examined here, and its ability to exacerbate them has markedly declined.

Somewhat different from 2006 the SPLA is standing back and letting the local authorities take the lead, at least in the initial phase. Thus police, chiefs, boma, and payam officials are collecting and registering the weapons. But in the background there is the large presence of the SPLA and Peter Bol Kong who is a powerful reminder of what is in store for those who insist on keeping their weapons. Indeed, Bol Kong has told assemblies of chiefs and youth leaders across Jonglei that he wants a peaceful disarmament, but that he will not permit cattle herders taking their weapons outside their home areas. Should they do so, he told them, they must accept the consequences, and it is understood by all that the consequences are that they will be shot. The other side of the coin is that the SPLA has promised the herders that it will provide for their security in the *toiches*, although Bol Kong says that if the disarmament is successful, by which he means comprehensive, then the police can defend these areas.¹³

Disarmament, however, is always affected by local conditions and in 2009 much of southern Sudan suffered drought conditions which will force herders to move further, increase the competition for grasslands and water sources and force more of them to consume their cattle, which they are reluctant to do. Also critical are the relationships between the tribes. In that light Duk Padiet looms large. This was where the first serious confrontations began in 2006 between the SPLA and the Lou Nuer who insisted on not surrendering their weapons when taking their cattle into an area they considered hostile because of bad relations with the community dating back to the early 1990s. And in 2009 relations between the same tribes were very tense and difficult to disentangle. Conflict intensified after a massive cattle raid by Duk herders on the Lou in which, according to some estimates, 20 000 head were taken. The failure of the state government to have more than a few hundred of the stolen cows returned led to accusations by the Lou of Dinka bias in the capital of Bor. After this a series of revenge and counter revenge attacks took place over the next few months. In response a reconciliation conference was organised by the Jonglei State Government led by Deputy Governor Hussein Mar Nyuot (himself a Lou Nuer) that not only failed, but almost led to his death when he was assaulted by irate Lou. And the conference was followed up on 20 September 2009 by a Lou attack on Duk Padiet in which 82 people were killed and few cattle were taken,¹⁴ thus making clear the political character of the action.

Against that background the annual movement of the Lou cattle herders into Duk Padiet this year was, not surprisingly, very tense. But the cattle herders I saw and talked to in early December 2009 were clearly paying heed to the warnings of Bul Kong and were going to the *toiches* of Duk Padiet and points south without guns. One Lou herder said, 'people are dying every day and it is better not to have guns'.¹⁵ But he also went on to say that it is up to the government to protect them from the still armed Murle.

In Duk Padiet the payam leaders reported that the Lou herders that had arrived in the area were without weapons, but they claimed that they were all elders and there were fears that the youth might yet come later with guns. In any case the authorities said that conflicts with the Lou typically occur at the end of the dry season when they are leaving the area, so they were still very apprehensive. These local leaders were quick to point out that all of their youth had been disarmed and, unlike the Lou, they do not leave home to graze their cattle. While there have been reports that weapons found in the possession of the Lou by the SPLA suggested northern (i.e. SAF) origins, the payam officials said that the biggest local source was SPLA soldiers selling their guns.¹⁶

Late dry season conflicts may yet occur, but the concerns of the Lou herder quoted above were already being realised as Murle attacks were reported on a daily basis in December. Some of these attacks, such as that reported near Lou-inhabited Walgak on 6 December 2009, were actually at the toiche where Bol Kong had promised security, and in that case, even the county commissioner was almost killed.¹⁷ As a result, payam officials were publicly voicing their anger: 'Is the government going to be responsible? Who is the guilty one: those who tell us to put down our weapons or those who attack us when we are defenseless?' asked a payam official. The men at this payam office said that they were not begging the government for support and if the killings continued until Christmas they would take back their guns from the payam where they are being held and seek revenge. Whether this was just heated talk of the moment or if it suggests the impending breakdown of the disarmament campaign is not clear, but even an elderly official of the Walgak Women's Organisation argued that if the Murle abduct and kill our children then we should do the same to them and not be afraid to face the consequences of the government.¹⁸

The Murle attack on the Walgak youth may have been larger than others, but everywhere in Jonglei there were reports of cattle thefts and child abductions, some of them virtually within the boundaries of their villages. Indeed, while interviewing officials in the Yuai (Lou) county compound shots were heard and it was soon determined that a Murle attack was underway nearby that involved the abduction of four children and the theft of an undetermined number of cattle.¹⁹ Reportedly the distraught and disarmed family was chasing the raiders with only their spears. The SPLA, according to Colonel Choal, did not have the vehicles necessary to chase down the Murle. Most Murle attacks, however, appear to have been on cattle herders going to the toiche and since there are very many herders coming from many directions, it would seem almost impossible for the SPLA to defend them all, even if they had sufficient logistical support.

Any SPLA campaign to carry out a sustainable disarmament programme would in the first instance need strong leadership from the GoSS in Juba, and indeed, the Jonglei deputy governor made that point forcefully.²⁰ Thus far that political will has not been forthcoming, either because insecurity in Jonglei is not of sufficient concern, or because the threat to the peace process at the national level and the upcoming election are pre-occupying President Salva and his advisors. Indeed, there are already signs that the state government is frustrated by the lack of concern of the authorities in Juba. At the Jonglei state level, however, there seems to be a high degree of commitment to complete an effective disarmament campaign as evidenced by statements by Governor Kuol Manyang and his ministers. The ministers were also anxious to engage other organisations in their efforts, but were emphatic that they 'don't want a lot of discussion' and that for them disarmament means 'taking weapons, period'.²¹

While the SPLA Chief of Defence Staff said that reports of weapons disappearing during the 2006 disarmament campaign were not true, Jonglei ministers acknowledged that it was and still is a problem, and indeed that there was as yet no agreement on what to do with the weapons confiscated. Their preferred solution was to turn over the best of the weapons to the police, half of whom it was reported did not have any weapons at all, and then to the wildlife and prison forces, with those not of value publicly destroyed.²² The Aror Commissioner, in

turn, cautioned against the weapons being kept for long periods in the payams because they invariably led to a lot of people hanging about which posed a threat to community security.²³

From the political leadership the problem passes to the military leadership and, in particular, to Peter Bol Kong. It is clear that he does not have the resources within his own division to protect the Lou cattle herders or to root out the Murle raiders. He will need more soldiers, more food to feed them, and many more vehicles to patrol the vast and largely road-less territory of Jonglei. Indeed, he tacitly acknowledged the problem, admitted to having fewer than 6 000 soldiers in his division, and said that his army had no presence at all in three northern counties of the state.²⁴ And this speaks to the weakness of the army which although variously estimated to have between 150 000 and 200 000 soldiers (even among the high command there is no agreement on the size of the army), it cannot ensure that Bol Kong's division has its full complement or could provide the 20 000 soldiers and motorised equipment necessary over an extended period to carry out the disarmament programme.²⁵

Critical to understanding the failure of the 2006 disarmament campaign was the fact that it was stopped before the Murle were disarmed, and, thus, if the 2010 disarmament programme is to be considered successful, even in the short term, then this tribe must be disarmed. But that will not be easy and attempts thus far to disarm the Murle have been half-hearted and ineffective. The Murle pastoralists of south-eastern Jonglei are feared and demonised across a wide swath of South Sudan. They maintain contentious relations with the Bor Dinka, Anuak, Taposa, various Nuer clans, and the Mundari, and they regularly carry out raids on tribes in the Gambella region of Ethiopia. Although a much smaller tribe than most of their neighbours (in the much disputed 2009 national census they numbered only 148 000, but may be as much as double that in size), they nonetheless often better their counterparts in engagements by the willingness of small groups to spend days and even weeks hiding in the forest waiting for suitable targets.

The Murle are very defensive about their reputation, or as one chief put it, 'people are telling a lot of lies about us', and even the SPLM's own county commissioner accused the GoSS of bias.²⁶ Murle leaders feel particularly aggrieved that Kuol Manyang, a Bor Dinka, a tribe with whom they have the most contentious relationship, holds the governorship of Jonglei.²⁷ The government in Juba is led by a Dinka, the Murle presence in the SPLA is minimal, and the SPLM representative and deputy leader of the National Security and Intelligence Services in Khartoum, Majak DAGoot, is a Bor Dinka. As well as political isolation, the Murle suffer from geographical isolation, worsened by the extreme underdevelopment of their county. There is only one road – and it is really a track – linking Pibor to the outside world, and unfortunately for the Murle, it is to Bor. That road is usually only open from January to April, after which the rains preclude traffic. There are also no regular air flights to Pibor. As a result, all products must be brought in over great distances under difficult conditions and this leads to much higher prices being charged for goods than elsewhere in South Sudan. This year drought in the region made the track to Bor passable by December, but because of contentious relations with the Bor Dinka, food relief supplied by the WFP and commercial transport has repeatedly been attacked by the Dinka and this has necessitated the use of SPLA protection. To the north there is a river connection with Akobo, but this is only open during the rainy season, and again contentious relations with the Lou have all but stopped that transit link. In past years, even though raiding was still going on between these tribes, it was at a sufficiently low level that trade could still be conducted. Indeed, a Jonglei minister said that 'Pibor is like a separate state'.²⁸

Further reinforcing the view that the Murle are unique is their proclivity to abduct children. The usual explanation is that the Murle suffer from STDs that produces high rates of infertility and because of this problem they abduct children to replenish their numbers. Indeed, infertility appears to be a factor, but it may be exaggerated. Infertility is probably due to the very young age at which many girls are married who then get pregnant and often miscarry. In the past there was evidence that the

Bor Dinka exchanged the babies of unwanted pregnancies with the Murle for cattle, but in the present tense environment those transactional relations appear to have ended. The Commissioner for Pibor also reported that Murle will sometimes abduct children to replace those who have died, or to have equal numbers of boys and girls.²⁹ More recently abductions have become a business for young and destitute youth who can exchange children for cattle to pay dowries. In the absence of more authoritative analyses this explanation is necessarily cursory, but it does suggest that the phenomenon of child abductions is rooted in the culture of the Murle, and is closely linked to the cattle economy, and that disarmament of the type being pursued by the SPLA and GoSS is unlikely to prove enduring because it does not address the underlying causes of child abductions, nor the deep poverty of the people which has made abductions a lucrative business.

There appears to be a growing awareness in the community that child abductions are wrong and must be stopped. That was confirmed in interviews carried out with Murle chiefs, youth leaders, and others who are assisting in efforts to identify abductees and return them to their families.³⁰ Indeed, some abductees have already been returned, but for the first time the Lou Nuer have abducted children of the Murle. In revenge attacks carried out by the Lou in March 2009 on villages in the Gumurck and Lekuangle payams of Pibor County, 563 people were killed and 133 children and women were abducted or reported missing, and of those, 45 have been identified as being held in the Lou area.³¹ This was confirmed by the Save the Children Fund-UK representative in Lou-inhabited Waat who is endeavoring to identify Murle abductees in the area. These abductions by the Lou were viewed as 'unprecedented', involving collective revenge, and that it had no basis in the culture of the tribe. But if the endemic fighting in the area is not contained there is real concern that Lou abductions of Murle children could become more widespread.

Despite the daunting nature of the task Bol Kong said that 'after one or two months the problem [of disarmament] will be solved'³² and that was also affirmed by James Hoth (26-11-09) which implies an expected completion date of no later than mid-February, but by that date the campaign was still underway. Taking the weapons from the cattle herders is only the first step in a sustained and multifaceted campaign, but it is by no means clear that either the GoSS or the military leaders fully appreciate that.

Conclusion

For disarmament to be enduring there is a need for the GoSS to begin confronting the structural factors that encourage the tribes to take up weapons. These factors are principally three-fold: first, the failure of the SPLM/A during 22 years of armed struggle, and in the five years since the signing of the CPA, to establish functional and legitimate institutions of local governance that can provide much needed services; second, the failure of the SPLA to accept responsibility fully for protecting the civilians of South Sudan, particularly those that have been disarmed; and, lastly, the failure of the SPLM/A to even start the process of reforming the rural economy and its near total dependence on traditional forms of raising cattle.

Firstly, from its inception the SPLM/A attempted to achieve a quick military victory, and as a result it gave short shrift to mobilising the people in a popular insurgency. Instead of looking to the people of South Sudan for its strength, resources, and inspiration, the SPLA fought a war in the name of the people, but acquired its sustenance, equipment, and much of its pseudo-leftist ideology to fight that war from the Ethiopian Derg and its Eastern Bloc allies. The SPLM/A never mobilised its people through programmes of social reform, the provision of services, and the establishment of rudimentary government structures. As a result, it never acquired the skills necessary to run civil administrations, and that weakness is evident today. From its inception to the present, the SPLM/A has been dominated by military officers whose notions of southern liberation have been limited to the military sphere and this has given rise to a stark militarism.

With the collapse of the Derg, the SPLM/A shifted rapidly to the ideological right to win the support of the US and the international NGOs which filled the void of

providing food and the minimal services that the SPLM/A was either incapable of or not interested in providing. Thus, on the eve of peace the SPLM was a shell that only existed to give the organisation legitimacy internationally and its leaders had virtually no experience in administration. Even in early 2010 and less than a year before South Sudan is likely to become an independent state, state governors and county commissioners are drawn almost exclusively from military backgrounds and their central concerns are security and control, and not administration, development, and the provision of services. Ironically this very emphasis on security and control at the expense of establishing genuine systems of local government undermines the capacity of the SPLM/A to develop links with the people and create a secure environment. Instead, what passes for services in Jonglei is almost exclusively provided by international NGOs.

But the April 2010 election is beginning to change the political dynamics in Jonglei and may be an important instrument to express the deep discontent of ordinary South Sudanese and foster the desire for accountable governments. What appear to be robust elections are being conducted, while this paper is being completed, at the boma, payam, county, and state levels, and they are challenging SPLM hegemony and the dominance of old guard military officers in local government. Indeed, the SPLM has lost control of many of its members, who are running as independents. In particular, there are highly competitive campaigns underway at the state level, Akobo County, and other centres.

Secondly, the SPLA has never fully embraced the notion that it has a responsibility to protect the people of South Sudan. Not being organically linked to the people of the south, the SPLA understood its liberation war as being solely focused on militarily defeating the northern army. Further hindering the prospect of a genuine identification with the people of South Sudan was the failure of the SPLA to overcome tribal identities and construct a pan-South Sudan identity. Instead, the SPLA under John Garang was itself dominated by Dinkas, and in particular those from his home area of Bor. As a result, many people in the south viewed the SPLA as aggressors and this led them into the arms of the government, and thus it was never able to realise its objective of militarily defeating the SAF. Instead it attained state power as a result of the CPA. The SPLA has begun to accept greater responsibility for protection of civilians, but its focus remains on the threat posed by a return to a north-south war and its preference is that the police and local authorities should assume this task. And under ideal circumstances this should indeed be the case, but the extent of internal insecurity is such as to grossly overwhelm these ill-equipped and poorly trained bodies. Moreover, the failure of the authorities to provide protection has not only led the typically well-armed cattle herders to refuse frequently to give up their weapons, but it has often encouraged them to form their own para-military organisations, such as the Lou White Army, and this in turn produces conflict with the SPLA.

Another key structural factor underlying the insecurity which afflicts Jonglei and many other parts of South Sudan is the dominance of the pastoralist economy with its martial values, emphasis on individualism, dependence on weaponry for the protection of the herders' cattle as well as their personal security, and lack of respect for government. Instead of being of commercial value, cattle are primarily used for the provision of dowries and the large number of cows required encourages cattle raiding. Cattle are also critical to individual status: as the governor of Jonglei noted, for most people in South Sudan to be without cattle is to be a 'nobody'.³³ Moreover, in the absence of alternative livelihoods, cattle are the ultimate protection against starvation.

During the dry season cattle herders move their animals in search of grazing lands and water and when this involves entering the lands of other tribes conflict is often the outcome, to such an extent that at least in Jonglei it sometimes appears that a war is underway between the tribes. This violence results in people living in constant fear and insecurity. It also leads to enormous waste: the loss of young lives, the high consumption of resources by the security forces as they attempt to control the gun-wielding cattle herders, and the loss of vast tracts of land that

have been abandoned because of insecurity. Against this background the SPLM/A has done little, either during the course of the war or since, to build institutions to control the cattle-based violence; nothing to encourage farming or other means to shift from a near total dependence on cattle; and little to promote the marketing of meat or milk.

Instead the role of the armed groups has been almost entirely counter-productive. Virtually everywhere in Jonglei I was told that while tribal- and cattle-based raiding and violence have always been a feature of the region, they assumed a new and more dangerous dimension after Dr Riek Macher's 1991 Lou Nuer-led attack on the Bor Dinka in the course of his rebellion against Garang's SPLA. This pivotal event in the recent history of the south was not only a cattle raid of epic proportions, it gave the Lou a taste for an easy and violent means to acquire assets that could be used to buy guns and pay dowries. In the wake of the Bor attack, Riek and others went over to the GoS, where they acquired large numbers of weapons which they widely distributed in the cattle camps of Greater Upper Nile to gain supporters. And this in turn led to competition from the SPLA, which also distributed or sold weapons to the tribes. The cattle herders have thus been manipulated by all the parties to the war in South Sudan, and now that the war has been declared over they are held to be a threat. And, instead of trying to win them over with the provision of security, services, and jobs, the government and SPLA can only offer up one policy: disarmament.

For some it is a chicken and egg question: does disarmament lead to effective local government and the provisions of services, or does effective government end the need for civilians to arm themselves? The GoSS and the SPLA argue for disarmament first, but the completion of the campaign in 2006 did not end the violence, produce good government, or lead to development. Repeating the same arguments in 2009-10 raises the political stakes and leaves the legitimacy of the SPLM-led government and the SPLA very much in the balance should they fail to deliver a second time. As a result, whether the tribes comply voluntarily or not, the 2010 disarmament is likely to be much more far reaching than that carried out in 2006. And that could translate into a successful outcome, resistance, or initial acquiescence by the tribes, which will wait to see if the SPLA can deliver on its fundamental promise of providing security. But in any case that is only the first step and unless the authorities move quickly to establish effective local governments, building infrastructure, and providing services and jobs the cost in financial and human resources in carrying out this latest disarmament is likely to come to naught.

One reason to hope that this time might just be different is the launch of a major national government-funded development programme in Jonglei – the Unity Program – led by Second Vice President Ali Osman, supported by Salva Kiir, and with its implementation being overseen by GNU Presidential Advisor Dr Riek Gai.³⁴ This programme is focused on Jonglei, not only because of the extreme levels of under-development in the state, but also because the state has so often been an incubator of conflict in the region. Indeed, without such a programme there is good reason to fear that the disarmament campaign will not prove enduring and that the cattle herders will at some point again acquire weapons. But there is reason to think that the name and timing of the programme on the eve of the national election and less than a year before a likely secessionist referendum vote are not just because of the undoubted needs of the state. Nor is the fact that Dr Riek Gai is himself from Jonglei and is running in the election in his home area of Akobo likely to be just a coincidence. The main thrust of the programme is on road construction, which is desperately needed in such isolated centres as Pibor and Akobo, which are also centres of conflict.

Linked to the programme are efforts by the GoSS to extend its telecommunication services in the state and again these two counties are a primary focus. Timothy Taban Juuk, Information and Tele-Communications Minister in Jonglei, is overseeing this programme and is also running for the position of county commissioner in Akobo in what is assumed will be a tight campaign with John Luk.

So it would appear that the election may be having a positive impact. The linkage between disarmament and the provision of infrastructure was not part of the government's thinking in 2006; instead, it was assumed that development would somehow spontaneously take place once the cattle herders had been disarmed, and that clearly did not happen. This time the link has at least been drawn, the funding has been provided, and in February real progress in the provision of infrastructure could be seen in some of the eastern parts of the state. Of course it remains to be seen if the funding, close oversight, and commitment on the part of governments will continue. And since most of the funding behind the Unity Program is coming from the national government, it will likely not continue beyond the assumed vote for southern secession in January 2011.

- 1 Sudan Tribune, 21 May 2009.
- 2 Interview with Kuol Manyang, Governor of the State of Jonglei, November 30 2009, Bor.
- 3 This section on the 2006 disarmament is largely drawn from my 2007a paper: *Sudan People's Liberation Army: disarmament in Jonglei and its implications*, Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria: Occasional Paper 137, 2007.
- 4 Young, John. *Sudan People's Liberation Army: disarmament in Jonglei and its implications*, Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria, Occasional Paper 137, 2007.
- 5 Young, John, *The South Sudan defence forces in the wake of the Juba Declaration*. Small Arms Survey. Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva, 2006.
- 6 Young, 2007.
- 7 Interview with Lt. General James Hoth, SPLA Chief of Defense Staff, November 26 2009, SPLA HQ, Bilfam.
- 8 Interview with Major General Peter Bul Kong, Commander of Division 8 Jonglei, December 9 2009, Juba.
- 9 Peter Bul Kong, December 9 2009.
- 10 Peter Bul Kong, December 9 2009.
- 11 James Hoth, November 26 2009.
- 12 Lewis, John. *Skirting the law: Sudan's post-CPA arms flows*. Small Arms Survey, Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva, 2010.
- 13 Peter Bol Kong, December 9 2009
- 14 Interview with Riek Deng Riek, Payam Administrator, Abraham Murial, Deputy Administrator, John Gatlaug, SPLM Secretary, and many others, December 5 2009, Duk Padiet.
- 15 Interview with Wany Wanchol, Lou Cattle Herder, December 7 2009, Duk Padiet.
- 16 Riek Deng Riek, December 5 2009.
- 17 Interview with Gabriel Tuaklam, Acting Executive Director Walgak Payam and Simon Machurich, Deputy Payom Administrator, December 6 2009, Walgak.
- 18 Interview with Nyapthni Kong, Women's Organisation, December 6 2009, Walgak.
- 19 Interview with Colonel Get, SPLA Colonel and others, December 5 2009, Yuai.
- 20 Interview with Hussein Mar Nyuot, Deputy Governor Jonglei State, December 4 2009, Bor.
- 21 Hussein Mar Nyuot, December 4 2009.
- 22 Hussein Mar Nyuot, December 4 2009.
- 23 Interview with Tut Nyang, County Commissioner of Aror, November 30 2009, Bor.
- 24 Peter Bul Kong, December 9 2009.
- 25 According to the International Crisis Report on Jonglei of 23 December 2009, 20 000 soldiers have been committed to the disarmament campaign.
- 26 Interview with Akot Madikr, County Commissioner of Pibor, February 12 2009, Pibor.
- 27 At the start of the April 2010 national election campaign all governors are to turn over their authority to neutral administrations.
- 28 Hussein Mar Nyuot, December 4 2009.
- 29 Akot Madikr, February 12 2009.
- 30 Interview with Nyadit Maro, Paramount Chief for 10 Bomas of Pibor County; Awow Bido, Deputy Paramount Chief of Pibor County and 10 sub-chiefs, December 2 2009, Pibor.
- 31 Akot Madikr, February 12 2009.
- 32 Peter Bol Kong, December 9 2009.
- 33 Kuol Manyang, November 30 2009.
- 34 Interview with Riek Gai, Presidential Advisor GNU, February 14 2010, Khartoum.