

A Fractious Rebellion: Inside the SPLM-IO

By John Young



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Acronyms and abbreviations

| | |
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| ANC | African National Congress |
| AU | African Union |
| CCM | Chama Cha Mapinduzi |
| COH | Cessation of Hostilities |
| EPRDF | Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front |
| EU | European Union |
| FPD | Former Political Detainees |
| GNU | Government of National Unity |
| GUN | Greater Upper Nile |
| GRSS | Government of the Republic of South Sudan |
| IGAD | Inter-Governmental Authority on Development |
| IO | SPLM-IO (see below) |
| JEM | Justice and Equality Movement |
| MVM | Monitoring and Verification Mechanism |
| NCP | National Congress Party |
| PSC | Peace and Security Council |
| SAF | Sudan Armed Forces |
| SPLA | Sudan People's Liberation Army |
| SPLM | Sudan People's Liberation Movement |
| SPLM/A-N | Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-North |
| SPLM-IO | South Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in Opposition |
| SSDF | South Sudan Defence Forces |
| SSLA | South Sudan Liberation Army |
| SSRRA | South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Agency |
| UPDF | Uganda People's Defence Force |

I. Introduction and key findings

In the wake of the killing of Nuer soldiers and civilians by elements of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in mid-December 2013, war broke out between the Salva Kiir-led Government of the Republic of South Sudan (GRSS) and what became the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-In Opposition (SPLM-IO) under Dr. Riek Macher. This development shocked the international community, which had only recently overseen the secession of the country from Sudan to achieve what was hoped would be a sustainable peace. Within a month of the outbreak of hostilities, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), assisted by a Troika of Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States—which had overseen the negotiations that led to South Sudan's secession—were mediating the latest conflict. Both the GRSS and the SPLM-IO repeatedly voiced their support for the peace process and signed a Cessation of Hostilities (COH) agreement, but it was largely ignored, the monitoring and verification process largely fell by the wayside, and the war continued relentlessly. Some two million people were displaced and tens of thousands killed, mostly in the largely Nuer inhabited areas of Greater Upper Nile (GUN).

By early 2015 it was clear that the efforts of IGAD mediators to reach an agreement based on power sharing among the South Sudanese political elites was failing and in March it formally collapsed. Parallel to the IGAD negotiations in Addis Ababa, leaders of the ruling parties of Ethiopia, South Africa, and Tanzania attempted to reconcile the three wings of the SPLM to either support the IGAD initiative or, in the case of South Africa and Uganda, as the preferred means to end the conflict, although the Ethiopians largely dropped out of the initiative. While the IGAD mediators made progress, they did not bridge the gap between the GRSS and SPLM-IO, and many in the SPLM-IO opposed their organization's continuing affiliation with the SPLM and participation in the Arusha process, as the South African-Ugandan process was labelled. In response, a new peace initiative was announced that would have an IGAD core but included five non-IGAD African countries and other international organizations as observers. It was dubbed 'IGAD Plus'.

Against a background of continuing war and failed peace-making, this study attempts to get beyond the public face of the organization as represented by those at the peace talks and provide analysis and background of the many dimensions of the SPLM-IO. Specifically, it considers the formation of the SPLM-IO, identifies the organization's mode of operation and key political and military actors, and reports on its conferences at Nasir and Pagak in formulating its direction and maintaining a fragile unity among the fractious rebels. Key military developments through mid-2015, the main controversies within the rebel organization, relations with regional actors, and the course of the peace process are also examined.

This study draws on work conducted by the author from the eve of the conflict in 2013 through mid-June 2015 in South Sudan and Addis Ababa and relies on both interviews and documents. Research was completed before the conflict between some of the SPLM-IO generals and Dr. Riek Macher led to their dismissal and before the peace agreement was signed in August 2015. These topics could not be taken up at length in the current paper but are addressed briefly in a postscript at the end of the paper.

Among the paper's key findings:

- There is no evidence that Dr. Riek Macher attempted a coup, as alleged by Salva Kiir and the GRSS. The immediate cause of the civil war was the killing of Nuer in the SPLA and among the civilian population of Juba in mid-December 2013 by a Dinka component of the Presidential Guard. As a result of these killings, the motivation of most Nuer supporters of the insurgency is anger, a desire for revenge, and a demand that the perpetrators be prosecuted, President Salva Kiir foremost.
- The military wing of the SPLM-IO largely took form spontaneously in the wake of the Juba killings at a number of locations in Greater Upper Nile and is made up of defectors from the SPLA and locally formed 'white armies'. Only much later did a formal command structure take form.
- Through the founding conference in Nasir and two in Pagak, the SPLM-IO formulated its political positions and attempted to maintain a tenuous unity among its fractious components. Particularly contentious issues included prioritizing a negotiated peace agreement or the pursuit of war, the failure of the IGAD peace process to address the killing of the Nuer in Juba in December

2013, whether the insurgents should remain part of the SPLM, and efforts to reconcile the SPLM components.

- After a rapidly changing battlefield situation in the first months of the war there were few significant changes on the ground until April–June 2015 when the breakdown of the peace process led to an upsurge in fighting in the three states of Greater Upper Nile. Despite some SPLM-IO advances in Upper Nile made possible by the defection of Shilluk militia leader Johnson Olony, the support provided by the Ugandan army and rebel groups from Sudan to the government and an important minority of Nuer who remained loyal to the government enabled it to largely contain the war to GUN, where both belligerents share territory.
- Foreign support for the GRSS has been crucial to its survival, but has also led Sudan to provide a limited supply of weapons, training, and rear bases for the SPLM-IO. This internationalization of the conflict has added to the difficulty in resolving it and increased tensions between Sudan and Uganda.
- The institutional base of the SPLM-IO is weak, political control of the civilian leadership over the senior military commander is less than complete, and there is no consensus on military and political objectives, negotiating positions, and the structure of the organization. These problems are exacerbated by differences between the IO's armed forces, which are dominated by former senior officers of the South Sudan Defence Forces and the political wing led by former leaders in the SPLM government.
- Dr. Riek Macher is endeavouring to transform the SPLM-IO from a Nuer organization into a national party and to that end people from outside the Nuer core have been appointed to leading positions, there was representation from all of South Sudan's communities at the three Pagak conferences, and military campaigns have been launched in Bahr el Ghazal and Equatoria. However, to date, most of the fighters, casualties, and controlled territory is in Greater Upper Nile and the IO remains dominated by Nuer.
- The IGAD mediation focus on power-sharing has the potential of gaining acceptance of the SPLM factions, but it is opposed by most senior IO military commanders who see little in it for them and who, like many Nuer, are motivated by anger and revenge. Nuer IO supporters oppose efforts by the international community through the Arusha process to reconcile the SPLM

factions and have them return to power because they hold the party responsible for the Juba killings, while many among the IO military leadership have spent much of their careers fighting the SPLA and assume they would be marginalized if reconciliation is achieved. As a result, instead of bringing people together, the mediation has exacerbated tensions within the SPLM-IO and is making the achievement of a sustainable peace more difficult.

- Individual sanctions on members of the SPLM-IO have had no discernible impact on their behaviour or that of their colleagues. IGAD is divided on their application, some generals think that they are being targeted for offences of the politicians, and the repeated failure to carry out threats of sanctions has meant that they are not taken seriously by the generals.
- The additional members and supporters of IGAD Plus are unlikely to bring more pressure on the IO because its military is largely immune to pressures and in any case the initially proposed agreement was quickly rejected by the parties. What is novel about the IGAD Plus proposed agreement is that both IGAD and Professor Mahmood Mamdani—who authored a leaked submission to the AU Commission of Inquiry—conclude that the SPLM is not competent to rule the country. While Mamdani proposed an AU trusteeship for South Sudan to address the problem, IGAD has specified what the SPLM must do and is proposing various bodies to ensure that its stipulations are carried out. 🗣️

II. Background

The roots of the leadership and motivations of the SPLM-IO lay deep in second Sudanese civil war and must be understood in order to grasp the current political and military crisis in South Sudan. Frustrated with the dictatorial leadership of Dr. John Garang, SPLA leaders Drs. Riek Macher and Lam Akol fled to Nasir in eastern Upper Nile in 1991 from where they launched a revolt based on demands for internal democracy and a shift in the goal of the armed struggle from a united, reformed Sudan (Garang's 'New Sudan') to one of national self-determination for Southern Sudan. Garang had come to power in the SPLA and defeated the separatist and largely Nuer Anyanya II (some of whose members went on to join the SSDF and then the SPLM-IO) by advocating a united reformed Sudan, a position which was necessary to win the support of the Ethiopian Derg and, behind it, the Eastern Bloc and Libya. While the personal ambitions of Riek and Lam¹ are not to be discounted, the demands for internal democracy and self-determination probably had the support of most Southern Sudanese. However, the rebels who became known as the Nasir Faction did not have the international support and logistical sustenance that Garang could draw on, and this proved their undoing. As a result, the Nasir Faction became isolated and increasingly turned to Khartoum for support. In time, this developed into a full-fledged alliance against the Garang-led party as a means to divide the southern resistance and oppose the SPLA.

The high point of the rebel-government alliance was the 1997 Khartoum Peace Agreement, which granted Southern Sudan the right of self-determination as well as a formula for power and resource revenue sharing, and thus it served as a precursor of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Provisions of the agreement for a formal vote on self-determination were never carried out, but their possibility served to keep the disparate forces that Riek brought to the government in its camp. They continued to fight the SPLA even after Riek and his lieutenant, Taban Deng Gai, grew frustrated with the government's failure to implement the agreement and began their journey back to the SPLA.

With the departure of Riek and Taban, General Gatluak Deng and Paulino Matiep (both now deceased) managed to bring the various anti-SPLA militias and factions representing many of the tribes of South Sudan as well as Southern Sudanese members of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) together under the umbrella of the SSDF in April 2001 (Young, 2006). Gatluak was a Nuer officer in Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) who had been part of the 1989 coup of Hassan al-Turabi and Omar al-Bashir and held a number of government positions, including governor of Upper Nile and chairman of the Southern Coordinating Council. Paulino was a former member of Anyanya II and the leader of the rebel South Sudan Unity Movement. Paulino became the leader of the largely decentralized organization that SAF supplied and to some extent directed.

The SSDF, and not SAF, led the fight against the SPLA in the final years of the war and its components controlled much of Greater Upper Nile (GUN), parts of northern Bahr el Ghazal, the Fertit areas of Western Bahr el Ghazal, and had a strong presence among a number of Equatorial tribes, especially the Bari, Latuka, and Mundari (Young, 2012). The SSDF, not the SPLA, surrounded most of the southern Sudanese towns and, crucially, it provided the defence of the Bentiu-centred oil industry, Paulino's home area. As a result, it controlled a similar amount of territory in Southern Sudan as the SPLA and was of comparable size. The SSDF alliance with the Sudan government, however, was strictly tactical since the rebels supported the secession of Southern Sudan, which Khartoum would not tolerate.

Despite its numbers, territorial control, and support base, the SSDF was not permitted to participate in the Navaisha peace process. The CPA provided that all 'Other Armed Groups' be dissolved within one year. That was a recipe for war because the SSDF had no intention of disbanding. What prevented that from happening was the death of Garang on 30 July 2005. While welcoming individual defections, Garang had strongly opposed the integration of the SSDF into the SPLA, since its largely Nuer membership would have overwhelmed his Bor Dinka supporters who dominated the SPLA leadership.

Salva Kiir, who became leader upon Garang's death, appreciated the threat the SSDF posed to the CPA and understood that the integration of the Nuer into the SPLA would strengthen his weak hold on power by diluting the influence of Garang's base among the Bor Dinka. Those considerations, and the desire

of the SSDF to return to Southern Sudan now that self-determination had been achieved, set the stage for the Juba Declaration of February 2006, which formally integrated the SSDF into the SPLA and made Paulino the deputy leader of the army (SPLA and SSDF, 2006). The significance of the Juba Declaration has not been given its due although it—rather than the CPA—is responsible for stopping most of the fighting in Southern Sudan. However, if this was the high point of the broader peace process, the opposition and obstacles posed to the integration of the SSDF by largely Bor Dinka pro-Garang senior SPLA officers caused lasting bitterness and is a key link to the subsequent civil war. In particular, former SSDF officers complained about marginalization, lack of education opportunities, and having Dinkas promoted over them. 🗨️

III. Political crisis to the Juba massacre

Although Salva was nominally second in the SPLM hierarchy and chief of defence staff, Garang did not involve him in serious decision making and he was largely viewed as a not very sophisticated agent of his leader. In 2004 Garang suspected Salva of a coup attempt and as a result appointed him lieutenant general—and retired him from the SPLA. Upon Garang’s death there were considerable misgivings among the SPLM leadership about Salva becoming leader of the party and, after secession, commander-in-chief and president. But given the SPLA’s militarist character and Salva’s status within the hierarchy as second to Garang, to oppose him would have led to a civil war. As a result, Salva was accepted as leader but many waited in the wings for their chance to take over, and Riek led the pack. This internal competition came to the fore at the 2008 SPLM convention when Salva urged the attendees to endorse James Wani Igga, the Equatorian speaker of the national assembly, as vice-president to replace Riek for the 2010 elections, and Taban Deng to replace Pagan Amum as secretary-general of the SPLM (Young, 2012, p. 142). With the party facing a potential break-up, outsiders were brought in to mediate and the status quo was preserved with Riek maintaining the vice-presidency and Pagan staying on as party secretary-general. But Riek, Pagan, and Garang’s widow, Rebecca Nyandeng, made clear their interest in future runs for the presidency while James indicated his interest should Salva voluntarily step down.

With its poor performance and rampant corruption, accompanied by the breakdown of civil order in much of the country, particularly in Greater Upper Nile, and continuing tensions with Khartoum over border demarcation, oil transit fees, and cross-border rebels, the SPLM government was in a virtually constant state of crisis. These problems reinforced disaffection among the former SSDF Nuer members who contended they were discriminated against in a Dinka-dominated SPLA. At a time when Salva was being weakened in the political sphere he also lost support of the former SSDF Nuer officers who looked to Riek, and particularly Paulino, for leadership. Paulino, however, was marginalized

by the SPLA high command and was sickly, while Riek directed his efforts to building a national constituency and largely ignored his Nuer base.

Meanwhile, the country was afflicted by a series of insurgencies. The three biggest were those of Maj. Gen. George Athor, former SPLA deputy chief of defence staff for moral orientation, who went to the bush after alleging that the government stole his victory in the 2010 Jonglei governor's election; the revolt of the Murle, led by David Yau Yau for autonomy of his tribe; and that of the South Sudan Liberation Army (SSLA), a faction largely made of former members of the SSDF and that stayed with SAF after the Juba Declaration. The SSLA was mostly made up of Bul Nuer and operated along the border of Unity state, although it also had a Shilluk faction. Crucial to its mobilization was opposition to the Unity state government of Taban Deng, who was held to have fraudulently defeated Angelina Teny, Riek's wife, as governor in the 2010 elections. The SSLA leadership was weak until Maj. Gen. Peter Gadet defected from the SPLA and assumed leadership. Gadet was accompanied by Bol Chol Gatkouth, a Jikany Nuer and former SSDF spokesperson and GRSS MP. Gadet launched a major SAF-supported attack in Unity state in 2012 but, when it failed, he returned to the SPLA, leaving most of his forces behind under Maj. Gen. Bapiny Monytuel.

These Khartoum-supported attacks increased tensions between the two countries. In an effort to alleviate tensions along the border, respond to disagreements over the pricing of the transit of petroleum, and at the same time to hold some members of his government responsible for its increasingly recognized failures, Salva made major changes to the composition of his cabinet. He dismissed many of the leadership core, including Pagan Amum, Deng Alor Kuol (cabinet affairs), John Luk Jok (justice), Gier Chuang Along (internal affairs), Oyay Deng Ajak (office of the president for national security), Madut Biar (telecommunications), Majak D'Agoot (deputy defence), Cirino Hiteng (culture), Kosti Manibe (finance), Ezeikel Lol Gatkuoth (former representative of the southern transitional government to the US and, after independence, head of bilateral relations in Juba), and Chol Tong Mayay (former Lakes state governor) for 'bad management', a term that some understood to also refer to corruption. While many of these individuals were probably guilty of failures of governance and corruption, they were also closely identified with pursuit of the Garangist 'New

Sudan's policy and support of rebel groups in Sudan—and Khartoum worked hard to have them removed. They were replaced by such Khartoum-friendly ministers as Dr. Riek Gai, former deputy National Congress Party (NCP) chairman, Aleu Ayiemy, Telar Deng, and in the background the security agent, Tut Gow, otherwise known as 'son of Bashir'. The then Sudanese ambassador to South Sudan and senior NCP official, Dr. Mutrif Siddig, was influential in this dramatic change in the government and the broader effort to improve relations with Khartoum.

But these changes only temporarily eased problems with Khartoum, which continued to press Salva to stop his intelligence services assisting the SPLA-North (SPLA-N) and the Darfurian Justice and Equality (JEM) rebels, which he was either unable or unwilling to do. Juba's (and Kampala's) support for Sudanese rebels was mirrored by Khartoum's support for the SSLA, which operated from bases along the Unity state border in South Kordofan. These security problems overlapped with the GRSS decision to shut down oil production as a means to pressure Khartoum, but in the event it was Juba that blinked first and resumed production, although not before losing an enormous amount of revenue.

After previously aligning with Taban against Riek, in 2012 Salva accused Taban of siding with Riek and replaced him as governor of Unity state with Dr. Joseph Monytuel. But given Taban's support within the SPLA, particularly by Chief of General Staff James Hoth Mai, this was only possible because of the assistance of the SSLA and its leader, Bapiny, Joseph's brother, who returned to Unity state with his forces. SAF provided support for this operation and supplied the SSLA with considerable military hardware on the understanding that Taban, who they did not trust, would be replaced by Joseph, who had previously served as governor of Unity when it was under Khartoum's control. For his contribution, Bapiny was promoted to lieutenant general and there was an agreement to integrate the SSLA into the SPLA.

With an internal crisis developing, Salva turned on Riek, first reducing his powers and then, in July 2013, dismissing him as vice-president. Riek accepted his dismissal, urged his followers not to respond, and they did not, but whether that was because of Riek's appeals or they simply did not care is not clear. Meanwhile, Riek began working with other former members of the SPLM leadership to replace Salva and win their support for his 2015 presidential bid.

While many analysts attribute the war to competition among the leadership for power, almost no Nuer members or supporters of the SPLM-IO hold this view. Almost without exception, they explain taking up arms against the government as being due to the killing of Nuer in the SPLA and civilians in Juba in mid-December 2013 by personal bodyguards of Salva from his home state of Warrap. The International Crisis Group reached a similar conclusion: ‘Systematic targeting of Nuer civilians in Juba in the days following 15 December was perhaps the most critical factor in mobilizing Nuer to join Macher’s movement’ (ICG, 2014, p. 17).

The insurgency began spontaneously. Initially, Riek—who fled Juba after Salva’s forces attacked his house and killed almost all of his bodyguards—had little control over it. While an in-depth analysis of the causes of the war would include struggles for power among the SPLM elite, it would also have to consider SPLM/A disunity, poor leadership, absence of a unifying ideology, weak national sentiments, the tribal character of the country and the SPLM/A, tensions arising from the failed integration of the former SSDF officers and soldiers into the SPLA, and failures of the IGAD peace process. It is unlikely that President Museveni was convinced by Salva’s claims of a coup, but he had developed a marked distrust of Riek when the latter led mediation efforts between Kampala and the Lord’s Resistance Army. As a result, Museveni concluded that Uganda’s interests would be undermined by a Riek-led Nuer victory and thus sent his army to defend the regime. 📌

IV. Formation of the SPLM-IO military leadership

What became the SPLM-IO was at first an opposition movement led at the local level by former senior SSDF officers who fled Juba in fear of their lives and sought the sanctuary of their home turfs. The key exceptions were former SSDF Generals Peter Gadet and James Koang, who were both serving officers in the SPLA. Without any formal leadership structures and little to unite them beyond anger, the desire for revenge, and a strong sense of Nuer solidarity, they fought the government and the Ugandan army. As a result, the war developed before Riek, Taban, and other members of the future political leadership could assume control over their activities. In this first phase of the war the IO forces largely consisted of irregular ‘white army’ fighters, most of whom came from the Lou and Gawaar communities in Jonglei, the Gajok and Gajaak communities in Upper Nile, and defections from the SPLA. The most significant SPLA defections were from Divisions 8 (Jonglei), 4 (Unity), and 7 (southern Upper Nile), which were largely composed of Nuer soldiers who fled to ethnically compatible areas (Small Arms Survey, 2014). Nuer elements of Divisions 1 (northern Upper Nile), 2 (Equatoria) and 6 (Mobile Division) also defected, but in smaller numbers, while there have been few defections from SPLA forces based in Greater Bahr el Ghazal. In addition, there have been defections to the IO from the police and wildlife forces, albeit in lesser numbers. Many other Nuer soldiers either took up civilian life in the wake of the Juba killings or stayed in the SPLA and fought their tribesmen.

All but one of the IO original senior military commanders was from the SSDF. Some had been officers in SAF, while others traced their political origins back to Anyanya II, which had fought Garang’s SPLA at its inception in 1983. While coming from otherwise diverse backgrounds, they shared a history of opposition to the SPLA that did not end with the signing of the Juba Declaration. At the time of the Juba massacre some of these commanders defected from the SPLA and others had been forcefully retired or recently jailed. Thus Maj. Gen. Gabriel Tang (Ginya) and Brig. Gen. Thomas Maboir had only recently been

released from two years in prison amid allegations that they were in opposition to the government and were in the process of being integrated into the SPLA when the war broke out, after which they fled Juba for their homeland in Fanjak. Maj. Gen. Simon Gatwitch had been jailed for eight months by the SPLA for reasons that are obscure but relate to questions about his loyalty; he had been released four months before the Juba massacre took place and he fled to his Lou Nuer homeland in Akobo. Maj. Gen. Chayot Manyang had been forcibly retired from the SPLA, about which he was bitter, and had spent the previous year doing little in Malakal when the fighting broke out. It appears that the SPLA Chief of General Staff James Hoth Mai, a Nuer who has long been loyal to Garang and then Salva, objected to their imprisonment but was overruled by the intelligence services. Maj. Gen. Garouth Gatkouth had been the longest serving county commissioner in the country in his home area of Nasir until his dismissal for suspicions of disloyalty, after which he had been an advisor to the governor of Upper Nile until the war broke out. Maj. Gen. Peter Gadet was the exception in that he was commander of Division 8 and when the Juba massacre took place he left Juba to take command of his forces in Panpandier, 30 km from Bor, the Jonglei state capital.

The one senior IO commander that did not come from a SSDF background was Maj. Gen. James Koang, a Jikany Nuer from Nasir, a career officer well respected in the SPLA, and the commander of Division 4 in Unity state. Beyond the original Nuer core is Maj. Gen. Dho Atrjong, a Dinka and former SPLA deputy chief of staff who ran for governor of Northern Bahr el Ghazal and believed he was robbed of victory in the 2010 elections by Paul Malong (then governor of the state and currently SPLA chief of defence staff). Retired Lt. Gen. Alfred Ladu Gore, a Bari from Juba, fled the capital and tried to launch an insurgency but failed and left for Kenya and Ethiopia but has since not been active in the military sphere.

Militarily, events unfolded at a bewildering pace after the Juba killings. On 19 December, Gadet's forces, together with contingents of the white army, captured Bor after most of the SPLA soldiers fled. On 20 December fighting broke out between Dinka and Nuer soldiers in the SPLA's Rubkona barracks and in the event James Koang sided with the Nuer soldiers, probably to save his own life. A day later, the Nuer soldiers captured the Unity state capital of Bentiu and

James announced he had removed Governor Dr. Joseph Monytuel and appointed himself 'military governor'. Only later did he align with Riek as his movement had not taken an organizational form at this time. Meanwhile, Dr. Joseph fled to Mayom county, which then became the primary focus of conflict between the two belligerent groups. In the course of this fighting in December–January, the state's oil fields were put out of commission. On 24 December the GRSS recaptured Bor, but a week later SPLM-IO fighters and irregular youth forces were again in control of the town. Fighting continued throughout this period in Malakal, with the Upper Nile capital or sections of it repeatedly changing hands. On 10 January the SPLA appeared in control of Bentiu, on 18 January a joint force of the SPLA and the Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF) captured Bor, and two days later the SPLA was in control of Malakal. Fighting continued in and around Malakal and it was not until April that it was fully under SPLA control. On 15 April IO forces retook Bentiu but shortly thereafter it again fell to the SPLA. Other areas of GUN also passed back and forth, but from April 2014 until April 2015 the military situation solidified with the GRSS in control of all three GUN capitals, and the rebels in control of significant rural areas in Jonglei and Upper Nile, but less in Unity.

In April–June 2015 government forces went on the offensive in Jonglei. The SPLA broke out of its Bentiu–Rubkona enclave and marched south as far as Koch and Leer counties and west to Mayandit during which large numbers of people were displaced, atrocities were widespread, and the action created near famine conditions. By the end of May government forces controlled almost the entire state. Meanwhile, in Upper Nile the Shilluk militia leader Maj. Gen. Johnson Olony left his alliance with the SPLA and later fought with the SPLM-IO, which changed the ethnic basis of power in the state and led to the arrival of enormous amounts of military hardware, a number of gunboats, and munitions to the depleted IO forces. Johnson's alliance with the SPLA had always been tenuous because his primary objective was defending the interests of the Shilluk. Their primary challenge came from the Dinka who formed the backbone of the SPLA and who had displaced many of the Shilluk to the east bank of the Nile and who claimed Malakal as their town, while the Shilluk had no such conflict with the Nuer. These problems were never resolved and Johnson grew increasingly alienated, ended his alliance with the SPLA, and soon aligned with the IO.

Following Johnson's defection, the SPLA withdrew its forces from Dolieb Hill and on 15 May Gabriel Tang's forces occupied the town and, together with Johnson's militia, went on to capture Malakal. The capture of other towns along the Nile soon followed, including Akoka, Kodok, and Melut. But Melut, and then Malakal, were soon back in government hands because most IO forces and the white army departed from the area to march on Paloich and the oil fields. As during other phases of the war, the SPLM-IO military leadership reported that as well as government forces they were also fighting SPLA-N forces of Malik Agar from Blue Nile, Nuba SPLA-N fighters, and JEM soldiers.² While the advance led to a large section of the Nile falling to the IO, it petered out after the white army left the battlefield.

While the war has been characterized by rapid changes of territories controlled, through most of the period under examination IO forces controlled Lou and Gawaar counties of Akobo, Ayod, Fanjak, Nyirol, Pigi, and Uror counties. In Upper Nile the IO controlled Adok, Dodok, Dolieb Hill, Longochuk, Maiwuit, Pagak, Ulang, the west bank of the Nile, the island of Kaka, and most of Nasir county, but not Nasir town. As a result of the April–May 2015 SPLA and SSLA offensive, the government controlled most of Unity state while IO forces largely retreated to areas along the Sudanese border. After being resupplied by SAF they were able to retake some territory, but most of the state remained with the government. In Bahr el Ghazal IO forces carried on guerrilla operations in parts of Aweil West and Aweil North near Sudan's border state of Eastern Darfur, while in Western Bahr el Ghazal IO forces carried out guerrilla attacks near Wau but can only hold territory for short periods. In Western Equatoria rebel forces operate around Mundri, which they briefly controlled, and in the Nimule area on the Ugandan border, home to their leader, Maj. Gen. Martin Kenyi. But again the rebels operate as a guerrilla force and have not managed to occupy any villages or towns. 📌

V. SPLM-IO political leadership takes form

While those who became the IO military leaders were quick to respond to the Juba killings and mobilize their local communities for war, the civilian leaders were slower to come together. After fleeing Juba, Riek, his wife Angelina, and Taban Deng were saved by Peter Gadet and then began a long journey across South Sudan which took Taban to Addis Ababa, where he assumed IO leadership of the IGAD-initiated negotiations, while Riek and Angelina initially stayed in the field and tried to organize the IO forces from a base in Nasir.

Meanwhile, Pagan Amum, Deng Alor Kuol, John Luk Jok, Gier Chuang Along, Oyay Deng Ajak, Madut Biar, Majak D'Agoot, Cirino Hiteng, Kosti Manibe, and Ezekiel Lol Gatkuoth were arrested and put on trial for participating in Riek Macher's alleged coup. Dr. Peter Adwok was briefly arrested and then released and placed under house arrest because of his poor health. Under considerable pressure from the international community and Riek, seven detainees were turned over to the government of Kenya on 29 January 2014. They then proceeded to Addis Ababa where IGAD accepted their separate participation in the negotiations—to the surprise of Riek, who had expected they would join the SPLM-IO. Four detainees—Pagan, Oyay, Majak, and Ezekiel—were kept in detention until May 2014 when they, too, were released because of a lack of evidence and continuing international pressure.

Ezekiel joined the IO and, after engineering an escape from South Sudan, Peter Adwok also went to Addis Ababa where he, too, joined the IO. The latter is a Shilluk and accomplished author who held ministerial positions in the Government of National Unity (GNU) and the GRSS. Before Peter fled house arrest in Juba he publicly condemned the SPLM and gave up his party membership. Rebecca Nyandeng, widow of the late John Garang, initially appeared to side with the IO before increasingly gravitating to those who would be called the Former Political Detainees (FPD) without, however, officially joining their group. Her son, Maboir Garang, joined the IO and was appointed a spokesperson, a coup for Riek, who was anxious to develop relations with the Dinka, particularly with the son of the SPLM's first leader.

Among the early leaders:

- Peter Parr, education minister in the Jonglei government, fled the state and made his way to Addis Ababa where he was placed in charge of education.
- Hussein Mar, the long-serving deputy governor in Jonglei who was acting governor at the time of the Juba killings, claimed that the SPLA tried to assassinate him and followed the same route to Addis Ababa where Riek appointed him to the humanitarian commission. Both he and Peter were prominent in the early SPLM-IO leadership.
- Lt. Gen. Alfred Ladu Gore, a former Anyanya leader, government minister, and a Bari from Juba, tried to organize anti-government forces in Equatoria before being transported across the country by Nuer soldiers and then going to Addis Ababa where he was appointed deputy leader of the IO and deputy commander-in-chief.
- Dr. Dhieu Mathok Diing Wol, a Dinka academic from Northern Bahr el Ghazal, former NCP official and assistant professor at the Centre for Peace and Development Studies at the University of Juba, left Khartoum for Addis Ababa when hostilities broke out, where Riek appointed him director of foreign relations. Ezeikel Lol serves as his deputy.
- Gabriel Changeson, a Jikany Nuer and head of the United Democratic Salvation Front, spent the early months after the Juba massacre in the UN displaced camp in Juba before he was able to flee to Nairobi and then to Addis Ababa. Gabriel is in charge of finance, befitting his background as a banker, and he also served briefly, but with distinction, as minister of finance in the GRSS.
- Aggrey Ezbon Idri, from Mundri, was the director of the Nile Commercial Bank before fleeing Juba and was appointed deputy of finance and resource mobilization.
- Dr. Richard Mula, from Mundri and a former MP, who is believed to have defeated Kosti Manibe as an independent candidate in the 2010 elections, was appointed head of the IO's justice commission.
- Manawa Peter, a Lou Nuer from Akobo and former Jonglei minister, is the deputy to Maboir Garang.
- Ramadan Hassan Laku, former NCP official, Mundari, and former MP, was appointed director for organization in the office of the chairman.

Under each chair there is supposed to be a committee of 15 members recommended by the chair, but this stipulation is still being implemented. James Gadet serves as Riek's personal spokesperson while Col. James Lony, a director in the office of the SSDF's Paulino Matiep, was appointed spokesperson of the SPLM-IO.

Those leading dissidents who did not join the IO became known as the FPD or G-10 (Group of Ten) and Pagan became their nominal leader. The FPD lack military forces and do not have much public support, but because of their former status as senior officials in the SPLM they are sometimes attractive to peace-makers looking for a middle ground between the IO and the government. The FPD have accused both the government and the IO of militarism, and of excluding them from the peace process, and have endeavoured to advance their interests by attempting to mediate between the government and the SPLM-IO, as well as being active in the inter-party reconciliation process. But the results have been mixed. Although Riek courted them and would have welcomed them into his camp, they are reviled by the IO membership, who accuse them of corruption while in government, encouraging the war, and using the Arusha talks (see below) to take them to power. The FPD are close to President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, who was largely responsible for their release from jail and generously funded their extended stay in Nairobi, much to the annoyance of his critics. 📌

VI. SPLM-IO strategies

The haphazard way in which the SPLM-IO took form militarily and politically, the initial lack of formalized leadership, lack of logistics, missed opportunities, difficulties in coordinating regular and irregular forces, the rapid turn of events, the quick response of IGAD in organizing a peace process, and the major divisions within the movement mean that military and political strategy is still not clear in the organization. Moreover, strategies cannot be assumed by reference to resolutions passed in conferences, particularly the initial Nasir meetings, which few of the military leaders attended. Here, actions are a better judge of underlying positions and sentiments than rhetoric and stated claims. It thus seems clear that Riek and Taban were never committed to a protracted war, but instead hoped to achieve quick military victories as a basis to press their demands at the peace table. These leaders expected to rejoin a SPLM government and introduce desired reforms, of which federalism is foremost for Riek, and to prepare for the 2015 elections in which he would be the SPLM presidential candidate. His strategy was thus short-term, reformist, weak in terms of programmes, and lacked an overriding vision. Moreover, it is doubtful that this approach was fully shared by the majority of the IO political leadership and even less by the military leadership.

The IO developed as a movement embracing many political currents, but formally adopted a SPLM superstructure and programme that has little meaning for the situation its supporters find themselves in. Riek, Taban, Angelina, and a handful of other politicians have been the strongest proponents of maintaining the SPLM affiliation even when it is clear that the majority of the members of IO favour ending the link. Speculation among the IO membership is that having so often been taunted about his defection from the SPLM in 1991 that Riek feels the need to demonstrate his consistency by clinging to a ruling party that still has some international legitimacy, even though its domestic legitimacy has been seriously eroded.

As well as the problem of identity and operating within a loosely structured organization without a clear command structure, Riek tried to establish political structures, but there was a yawning gap between its political and military wings. Other revolutionary movements in the region such as the Tigray People's Liberation Front, Eritrean People's Liberation Front, and the Movement of National Resistance placed considerable emphasis on ideological issues. The ideological concerns then provided the basis for these movements to develop programmes of reform as a means to change society and mobilize their people. But ideology never figured significantly in either the SPLM or the IO and likewise there have been few extended debates on political programmes in either organization. Indeed, improving the welfare of the people has rarely gone beyond the rhetorical level and this goes far to explaining the tenuous links both organizations have had with the people. As a result, there is always the danger of the leadership disconnecting with popular sentiments. This danger has been exacerbated by the IGAD mediators and international community, which have not understood the internal dynamics of the IO and, as a result, have repeatedly pressed the IO leadership to accept measures its membership, particularly the powerful generals, oppose.

In the absence of a guiding ideology or even a realistic party programme by either the SPLM or the IO, decisions on the way forward are largely based on opportunistic considerations and thus there is little consideration of endgames. In fact, opportunism has overruled any firm strategies since the SPLA launched its insurgency in 1983. The SPLA went from a devotion to the state communism of the Derg to aligning with American Christian missionaries after the end of the cold war when it needed support from the West, and from advocating a united reformed New Sudan to supporting secession. The SPLM-IO is cut from the same cloth. However, unlike the mother party, which has been able to acquire military supplies from China, Uganda, and on the open market as a recognized state, the IO does not have a ready supply of foreign benefactors in the wings and has had to depend on Sudan, which has its own priorities.

The SPLM-IO's military leaders come from the formalized structures of SAF, SSDF, and the SPLA and lead forces for which political knowledge, much less ideological orientation, was never a serious concern. Thus the conduct of a guerilla war along the lines of Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Uganda was never entertained.

As a result, the IO military functions as the conventional counterpart of the SPLA. While the military officers are often highly skilled at a tactical level, they are not known for their strategic vision, have limited capacity to press their political views, and have not developed alliances with groups like the Nuer intellectuals who largely share their views. As a result, their basic power lies in their ability to restrict or stop the implementation of policies they oppose, not formulate and implement new policies. The generals are closer to the sentiments of the people and the white armies than the political leadership, but mobilizing the people and using that power to transform society as was done by revolutionaries in Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Uganda is alien to their conservative values and traditions. Neither the SPLA during its war with the North, nor the SPLM in government, nor the SPLM-IO have been motivated by the desire for revolutionary change. To the extent that they want change it is largely restricted to changing personnel in government, giving more political weight to their tribe, and improving performance.

At the outset of the conflict the dominant sentiment of the IO military leadership was one of outrage and revenge and the generals frequently contended that it is 'our turn' to rule. But given that Nuer hegemony is hard to justify under a democratic system where the Nuer constitute a minority, that language has now been largely set aside and Dinka participation in a post-Salva national government is accepted. The limited armed struggles in Equatoria and Bahr el Ghazal, however, make it difficult to imagine a genuinely pan-South Sudanese IO force taking power. From the inception of the conflict the SPLM-IO military leaders favoured the pursuit of a military victory and early losses have not deflected them from that thinking, in part because IGAD has not been able to provide an acceptable set of solutions to their problems and the government has been reluctant to compromise. As a result, their constant refrain has been one of 'give us the logistics and we will do the job'.

Parallel to the IO's conventional forces are the white armies, which have figured prominently in the war, but their leadership is defuse and primarily concerned with revenge, looting, and protecting community property in the wake of the Juba killings, and not with long-term political objectives (Young, 2007). Often ferocious and fearless in battle, their organization and leadership is weak and they are often distracted by looting. Moreover, with limited resources

to keep them in the field for extended periods and with cattle to care for, they typically only stay in the field for short periods. Moreover, the various white armies take on different characteristics in different areas and recently something similar to a white army of irregular youth forces has emerged in Unity state. Peter Gadet said that in the wake of IO advances in Unity state some youths—whom he called a ‘white army’—began mobilizing on their own, but by late 2014 they had been absorbed into the rebel army.³ Thus the level of control of the Lou white army under Simon Gatwich is different than that of the Jikany under Garouth Gatkouth. The dependence of the SPLM-IO on the white army has limited its tactical options, restricted its operational manoeuvres, and gives the SPLA an advantage. The IO commanders recognize its weaknesses, but have failed to adapt its tactics in response. This may be changing because increasing numbers of fighters now come from the villages and towns, have education, and include some from the diaspora and a handful of women.⁴ This has led some sections of the white army to raise demands for post-conflict jobs and education. But while they are often critical of the IO political leadership, it cannot be said that they have anything resembling coherent political objectives.

While it should be relatively straightforward to formulate macro-level military strategies, it was not until very late in the day that the IO actually had a formal general staff to develop such strategies. Meanwhile, the local character of both the IO formal military formations and the white armies means that it is very difficult to implement strategies. Under pressure from the displaced people of Nasir, the IO repeatedly tried to retake the town so that the displaced could return home. Worthy though this objective was, an organization focused on broader strategic objectives would have directed more attention to two major targets—capturing Juba and the oil fields—and not responding to the demands of local citizenry. That the IO, and particularly the white armies, were subject to these influences speaks to the parochial character of its armed forces. That said, in the early phase of the conflict, the IO attempted to march on Juba, but lack of logistics, resistance from the UPDF (tacitly supported by the diplomatic community), and diplomatic pressures halted that campaign. The IO shut down the oil fields of Unity state and made similar efforts in Upper Nile by launching repeated attacks on Renk—a gateway to the oil fields and

through which the pipeline passed—from bases in Sudan’s White Nile and Wadakona. It is widely speculated, but not proven, that pressure and possibly bribes were made by the Sudanese and Chinese to stop this advance.

Until recently, IO senior commanders carried out operations from their home areas and led troops that were personally loyal to them and thus not easily controlled by the centre. However, with government forces largely retaking positions the generals had to turn to Riek and Taban to acquire weapons and supplies. This increasingly put the latter in the driver’s seat. While the commanders rely on Riek and Taban to acquire military logistics, Riek’s authority and capacity at the negotiating table depends on the loyalty of the commanders, which cannot be taken for granted. It is a symbiotic relationship that includes considerable distrust.

Although the IO results on the battlefield have generally been poor, the generals reasoned that things could be quickly turned around and, given the long experience of the second civil war, that assumption is not misplaced. Thus, the acquisition of sufficient armaments, military advances in Equatoria and parts of Bahr el Ghazal, divisions within the Juba government, economic collapse, or a few key defections could change the entire course of the war. That, however, does not discount consistent weaknesses in IO military performance.

For example, Johnson Olony’s forces proved critical to the government holding Malakal, Fashoda, and other towns along the river in Upper Nile, and these positions served as a shield for the northern oil fields. However, Johnson was primarily concerned with advancing the interests of the Shilluk in a context where the Dinka of Upper Nile view Malakal as their city and have forcibly removed most Shilluk from the east bank of the Nile. As a result, the Dinka—and not the Nuer—are the biggest threat to his community and therefore his relationship with the government and the SPLA has always been tenuous. Tensions between Johnson’s forces and those of the SPLA produced numerous local-level conflicts, there were repeated delays in paying his soldiers, and after he began making negative public statements about Upper Nile governor Simon Kun, the SPLA chief of staff, Paul Malong, ordered him to come to Juba, but he refused. Things spiralled out of control after government forces killed Johnson’s deputy, James Bwongo, on 1 April 2015.

Against that background, Johnson began developing relations with the IO through its emissary, Karlo Kuol—who, like Johnson, was formerly with the SSLA. There was also a need for Karlo to assume this role because of the bad blood between Johnson and the IO regional commander, Gabriel Tang, as a result of the fighting over the previous year. In the event, Riek appointed Johnson senior commander and Tang placed his entire force under him.⁵ Johnson's forces had largely controlled Malakal and government dependence on him was such that he was given considerable amounts of military hardware, reportedly including 12 Chinese-made armed amphibious vehicles and a number of barges, all of which he took with him when he defected. As a result, Johnson brought all the Nile towns under IO control, including Wadakona, which permitted the rebels to resume shelling Renk and posing a threat to the strategically significant Paloich oil fields. But this threat was reduced by Juba sending reinforcements and the arrival of SPLA-N forces from Blue Nile and the Nuba Mountains, while the IO advance petered out when white army fighters increasingly left the front for their homes. Riek was quick to declare Malakal a Shilluk town and said he would consider appointing Johnson or his appointee as governor of Fashoda, a largely Shilluk inhabited state,⁶ which he subsequently did. Those commitments served to ease Shilluk concerns, but considerable bitterness has developed between the Shilluk and the Nuer as a result of the war and if the new alliance is to be secure there will have to be a concerted effort at reconciliation.

Working in the SPLM-IO's favour is the growing economic crisis in South Sudan with oil revenues affected by a 'triple whammy' of reduced production because of IO military action, dramatic declines in the international price of oil, and an oil transit agreement with Sudan based on a fixed dollar amount that has not been reduced despite the decline in the value of oil. As a result, in May 2015 Vice-President James Wan Igga called on regional leaders to save South Sudan from economic collapse (Tesfa News, 2015). He was not alone: Toby Lanzer, the UN humanitarian coordinator in South Sudan until his dismissal by the government on 1 June 2015, said that the country was on the verge of 'economic collapse' in the face of the lowest development indicators in the world and seventeen months of brutal violence (*Guardian*, 2015). Thus the IO does not have to win on the battlefield to weaken the government, but simply to survive and wear the SPLA down militarily and the government politically. 📌

VII. Non-Nuer members and forces

The insurgency began as an almost exclusively Nuer movement with the exception of Alfred Ladu Gore, who tried—with little success—to mobilize the Bari and other Equatorians against the government. The IO leadership thinks the Equatorians are more sympathetic to them than to the Dinka-dominated government and support their appeal for federalism, but assume they will not commit to the opposition until it looks like the government can be overthrown. The decision of SPLA Maj. Gen. Martin Kenyi, a Madi who was formerly the leader of the military wing of the Equatoria Defence Forces, part of the SSDF, to join the IO insurgency in November 2014 was a welcome development for the party. To date, his forces have not captured any territory, but Martin reports that mobilization across Greater Equatoria has been completed and operations are being conducted throughout the region, although this cannot be confirmed.⁷ Even more than his counterparts to the north, the Equatorian rebels suffer from long supply lines and shortages of logistics. However, this is to some extent overcome by their use of guerrilla tactics which force the government's security forces to employ means of terror that threaten to alienate the local population.

Questions about the loyalty of some leading Equatorian IO officials were raised when Alfred Ladu Gore, Ramadan Hassan, Abdel Elias Sandrai—the IO's representative to Kenya—and others met with the Equatorian state governors in Nairobi in late May 2015 to discuss mutual areas of concern. The IO leadership was fully informed about these discussions and even had input into them,⁸ but later there were widespread—but to date unproven—allegations that the trio accepted cash payments from GRSS counterparts. Not in doubt, however, was their subsequent visit to Kampala, made without the knowledge of the leadership, where they again met South Sudan and Ugandan government officials. There were allegations that the trio were planning to defect to the government, but professing their loyalty to the IO, they returned to Nairobi and Addis Ababa.

They appear to have convinced Riek that their visit to Kampala did not involve discussions about defecting or setting up a separate movement, but others in the SPLM-IO, particularly Equatorians, viewed these assertions with considerable scepticism. However, an investigation carried out by the 27-member IO-Equatorian Caucus concluded that the trio had indeed met with GRSS and Ugandan officials on 25 May in Kampala, there was reason to believe that they had received money from the GRSS, they had not informed the leadership of these meetings, and they even alleged corruption in the appointments of family members within the organization (*Sudan Tribune*, 2015d). As a result, the caucus urged the IO leadership to appoint a five-person committee to carry out further investigations and that these officials be suspended pending the results of the inquiries. On 22 June Riek convened a special meeting of the leadership in Nairobi to consider the evidence and demand answers from the three individuals who were in attendance. Not only do these developments cast doubt on the organization's efforts to bring leading Equatorian officials into the rebellion, but also the ability of the government to undermine the organization. While the three Equatorians were officially absolved of the accusations against them, considerable distrust remained.

The IO has only made limited inroads in Northern Bahr el Ghazal, where Maj. Gen. Dau Aturjong's bitterness over the results of the 2010 governor's election led him to revolt and align with the IO, and this has served as a catalyst for others discontented with the dictatorial rule of former governor Paul Malong and upset over the government's killings in Juba and elsewhere. Although Dau was quick to take to the field and mobilize a force claimed by IO generals to number 4,000 (but others suggest this estimate to be considerably exaggerated), Dinka elders pressured him to restrict his campaign. According to IO military sources, weapons were initially also slow to arrive from Khartoum and this led to defections. Eventually he reportedly did receive a large supply of weapons via Darfur, presumably because his forces are mostly along the Sudan border and on the frontline with the SPLA-N and the Darfurian rebels. However, to date Dinka disaffection with either their state governors or the national government has not reached the stage where they are prepared to take up arms, much less join the IO in significant numbers. Indeed, at the time of writing Dau's forces were estimated by IO sources to only number about 300 after many

had deserted with their weapons. Reduced numbers in turn have forced Dau to resort to a guerrilla campaign in similar fashion to his counterparts in Equatoria.

The best prospects for the IO may be among the minority groups of Bahr el Ghazal, particularly the Fertit of Western Bahr el Ghazal, who have long chafed at Dinka domination and were a critical component of the SSDF. Some villages near Wau were captured under the leadership of Maj. Gen. Thomas Bazyllo Tandro, but dissatisfaction over his leadership has led these forces to wither and at the time of writing they were probably fewer than 200.

Riek has led efforts to give the IO a pan-South Sudanese character and while this has not always been embraced enthusiastically by the Nuer—who note that their tribe has spilled almost all of the blood in this war—it has not been opposed. But it has led to anomalies like the Equatorian Alfred Ladu Gore being appointed the deputy head of the IO and the deputy commander-in-chief, though Taban, as lead negotiator and having responsibility for acquiring armaments, is the number two in practice. Moreover, despite formally holding the position of deputy commander-in-chief, Alfred plays virtually no part in the functioning of the military. Riek and his supporters hold that the future success politically and militarily of the SPLM-IO depends on it transforming into a genuine national force.

Nuer diaspora

Many members of the SPLM-IO leadership, cadres, and IO intellectuals in Addis Ababa and Nairobi are dual passport holders and, as a result, the distinction between diaspora and local is not always clear. That said, Nuer living abroad attended the two Pagak conferences at their own expense, provided support for their war-affected families, some have returned to South Sudan to join the IO forces or the white army, and others have helped to finance the war and win the support of governments in their adopted lands. In Nuer-concentrated areas like the US states of Iowa, Minnesota, and Nebraska, their efforts have brought an awareness of the war to public officials, but these areas are far from the political and media centres of Washington and New York, where lobbying is more likely to impact on US policy. Although not a wealthy community, the Nuer diaspora have the potential of providing a regular stream of money to the

SPLM-IO. In May–June 2015 Gabriel Changeson brought his skills to mobilize the US Nuer to assume that role. While the SPLM-IO does not have the organization or skills of the Eritrean and Ethiopian diaspora communities, which were major funders of their wars, they are a resource to tap and the IO leadership makes clear the importance it attaches to them by regularly sending its officials to Australia, Canada, and the US to cement their ties. 📌

VIII. IGAD peace talks

IGAD intervened in the conflict within weeks of its outbreak with the same structure and some of the same people that oversaw the IGAD Naivasha negotiations—thus Gen. Lazaros Sumbeiywo was made co-chair with Gen. Ahmed Mustafa from Sudan, and former Ethiopian foreign minister, Seyoum Mesfin, assumed the lead role. They, in turn, were backed up by the Troika of Norway, the UK, and the US, and the negotiations were held in Addis Ababa under Ethiopian government auspices. The talks have gone through various phases, the first involving not only the government and the IO, but also the FPD, other political parties, and South Sudanese civil society.

However, it soon became apparent that some of the other political parties participating in the peace talks were closely aligned with the government, such as the South Sudan Democratic Forum of Dr. Martin Eli Lomouro, who served as the minister of cabinet affairs, while other parties were politically insignificant. After initially trying to co-opt the SPLM-Democratic Change (which serves as the official parliamentary opposition) and its leader, Dr. Lam Akol, by permitting him to lead the government negotiating team, Salva concluded that he was too close to the IO, removed him from the negotiations, did not permit him to leave Juba, and closely monitors his activities. Meanwhile, the IO contended that civil society under the government was not neutral and that civil society in its territories was under-represented in the negotiations. Despite initial rhetorical support for widening the peace process to include civil society, it increasingly pressed for the talks to be limited to the two main belligerents and to exclude the FPD. The government in time concluded that negotiations should only be among the parties to the conflict. As a result, the role of civil society and other political parties has declined. The IO also pressed for consideration of the root causes of the conflict and, while one session was held in Bahr Dar, government representatives did not attend and that initiative was also set aside. Riek continued to call for the root causes of the conflict to be considered, but for many of his followers the root cause of the conflict begins and ends with

the SPLA killings in Juba and the government has consistently rejected going down that road.

The IO repeatedly tried to bring the issue of the Juba killings to the table, as this was a fundamental demand of its constituency. However, it was repulsed by the government with the support of the IGAD mediators who passed the issue over to the AU, which appointed a Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan under former Nigerian President Obasanjo Olusegun. His report was presented to an AU Heads of State meeting in South Africa in January 2015 but has not been released publicly despite demands from many quarters, including Riek and the Troika. Riek has been outspoken on this issue, even though the commission report condemns IO officials as well as those in the government, because of pressures from his community for accountability. The failure of IGAD to consider the Juba killings and the AU's decision not to publish its findings fuelled opposition in the IO ranks to the entire peace process, which they held to be biased.

A leaked draft submission to the AU Commission by Professor Mahmood Mamdani concluded that the Naivasha peace process was a failure, asked for the exclusion of IGAD military forces from any peacekeeping role in the country, views the SPLM as incapable to rule, and calls for a hybrid AU–UN transitional administration for South Sudan (Upper Nile Times, 2015). There is reason to believe that international administration of South Sudan could win the support of many in the country, particularly among the Nuer who would see it as a vehicle to remove Salva and the SPLM (and who would not be unduly upset by Riek's exclusion), but it is vehemently opposed by the elites in both the SPLM and the IO. The IGAD mediators, as well as the US and EU, view it as too controversial.

IGAD has largely focused on finding a power-sharing formula with Salva retaining the presidency and Riek becoming either prime minister or vice-president. But the crucial question was how much power each of these positions would hold. The IO contended that the prime minister should have executive powers and the president be essentially an honorary position. The government held that the president should have executive powers and there should be two vice-presidents, since it was not prepared to give up the position of James Wan Igga and risk losing support among the Equatorians. The government also

recognized that such an arrangement would effectively acknowledge that what was at stake was a power-sharing arrangement between the Dinka and Nuer, with the other tribes marginalized.

Various formulas were considered for the percentages of positions that would be held by the government, IO, and the FPD. While Taban argued for the IO to have a 53 per cent share of power in GUN (a position IGAD accepted in its June 2015 proposal), the government rejected this because during most of this period it controlled the capitals of the three states. Likewise, the IO made demands for power sharing in the other states, but with a negligible military presence in them, the government objected. The negotiations considered how power would be shared in Greater Upper Nile, but never came close to an agreement.

Many Nuer did not approve of IGAD reducing the conflict to the issue of sharing power between Riek, Salva, and a few colleagues (and Riek said that he shares that view⁹), nor could they accept that after many of their people had died that the country would be led by the man who they felt had orchestrated the Juba killings. Also undermining prospects for a negotiated solution to the conflict was the conviction of both parties that a military victory was still possible.

A major weakness of the IGAD mediation has been its internal divisions. The biggest obstacle for a mediation that assumes neutrality is the UPDF's support of the government and, to a lesser extent, SAF's support to the SPLM-IO. Meanwhile, Kenya is upset at Ethiopia's domination of the peace process and this is reflected in reports by diplomats from a number of countries close to the peace process that General Sumbeiywo undermined the authority of chief negotiator, Seyoum Mesfin, because he believes that as the principal author of the CPA that he should lead the negotiations. These differences have also played out at the state level between Ethiopia and Kenya. Tanzania and South Africa in turn give the impression of wanting to use the Arusha intra-SPLM reconciliation talks as a means to take over leadership of the peace process from Ethiopia. With the advent of IGAD Plus (see below) there are concerns within IGAD that their regional peace process is being hijacked by the AU. The GRSS has also publicly criticized the role of the Troika, a refrain taken up by Museveni. These divisions are also reflected in the failure of IGAD to agree on a sanctions regime. As one AU analyst noted, instead of focusing on how to advance the peace process, much energy is now being devoted to turf wars over the various mechanisms

to be employed. Rank-and-file IO members only had a vague understanding of these divisions, but they served to further undermine the legitimacy of the entire peace process.

IGAD and some international actors have repeatedly advocated sanctions; individual sanctions were applied by the EU, US, and Canada to four senior military combatants, two of them from the IO—Major Generals Peter Gadet and James Koang—followed subsequently by UN sanctions. However, there is no indication that these sanctions had any impact on them or their colleagues. SPLM-IO Divisional Commander Gabriel Tang facetiously complained that the imposition of sanctions against Gadet had made him more popular and he demanded that he be sanctioned as well.¹⁰ On 3 March 2015 the UN Security Council passed Resolution 2206 and called for its Sanctions Committee to designate individuals and entities while the Peace and Security Council of the AU appealed to the Council for the immediate imposition of an arms embargo on the belligerents. As of early September 2015 that has not happened. However, a united position on sanctions within the region is difficult to reach when Uganda and Sudan are supporting the belligerents out of a conviction that their national security is threatened.

Arusha talks

The Arusha talks began shortly after the onset of the conflict to reconcile the belligerents by their shared membership in the SPLM, but were given incentive by the failure of the Addis Ababa negotiations to make headway. The process, intended to supplement and support the main talks, was led by the ruling parties of Ethiopia (the Ethiopian Revolutionary Democratic Front or EPRDF), South Africa (African National Congress or ANC), and Tanzania (Chama Cha Mapinduzi or CCM) with the talks taking place in Arusha, Tanzania. However, after initially supporting this initiative, the EPRDF largely withdrew, apparently because it was believed that this process would undermine Ethiopia's domination of the IGAD mediation.

While the Addis Ababa negotiations were unproductive and acrimonious, the Arusha talks were more conciliatory. The three SPLM factions signed a framework agreement on 23 October 2014 that committed them to work together

peacefully and acknowledge their shared responsibility for the crisis. On 21 January 2015 the Intra-SPLM Dialogue produced the Agreement on the Reunification of the SPLM, signed by Riek, Salva, and the FPD's Deng Alor. The signatories agreed that 'the reunification and reconciliation of the SPLM is the key to the resolution of the current crisis' (Mayardit, Teny, and Kuol, 2015), a conclusion that is in complete contradiction to repeated SPLM-IO resolutions (see below). The parties also agreed to restore peace and stability, apologize for past atrocities, embrace policies that encourage tolerance and democracy, promote political pluralism, refuse to let those who committed atrocities in the war hold office, and expedite the conclusion of a peace agreement.

The agreement to apologize for the country's breakdown is held to be crucial by IO leaders who claim that as the leader of the SPLM, Salva bears the primary burden of guilt and should as a result step down as president,¹¹ but it can just as easily be argued that following a collective admission of guilt that the SPLM should dissolve. Likewise, the agreements on organizational matters are held to directly respond to some of the disputes in the lead-up to the conflict in December 2013. Thus the signatories called upon the National Liberation Council to ensure internal democracy and report to the National Convention and place term limits for SPLM national and state party chairpersons of two terms of five years, revocation of the dismissal of cadres from party membership and leadership positions resulting from the internal conflicts, use of secret ballots when no consensus is achieved, abolition of the right of chairpersons to the National Convention, congresses and liberation councils to appoint 5 per cent of the members, and various measures to institutionalize secret ballots and make SPLM office holders more accountable. The signatories agreed to the formation of a transitional government made up of the SPLM factions and that 'other parties shall participate proportionately'.

Many in the SPLM-IO view this agreement with considerable suspicion, no reconciliation process has been agreed to, and the IO leadership has repeatedly insisted that this process must be dependent upon the outcome of the IGAD negotiations where substantive issues have yet to be resolved. In late May 2015 President Uhuru Kenyatta called for the Arusha talks on SPLM reconciliation to be integrated with the IGAD mediation, which is not only in opposition to the clear distinction made between the different forums, but would give the

FPD—which he supports—a higher profile (McCormick, 2015). The proposal was opposed by Ethiopia and antagonized Sudan.

By June 2015 the IO leadership concluded that the Arusha process had reached an impasse and for it go forward there must be a comprehensive peace agreement,¹² and Riek confirmed this.¹³ Nevertheless, there were a number of meetings between the FPD and representatives of the GRSS under the auspices of the Arusha process, but not involving the SPLM-IO. As a follow up, five

Box 1 **China sponsored talks in Khartoum**

In an effort to support the IGAD talks, China organized a one-day conference in Khartoum in January 2015. Juba initially objected to the Khartoum venue, but China reasoned that Khartoum was the source of weaponry for the SPLM-IO and at the same time it was crucial to the revenue of South Sudan because of its oil pipelines. Moreover, Riek had served as a presidential adviser to the Government of Sudan, while Salva served as vice-president in the GNU. It did not need to be stated that China alone has the economic leverage to severely pressure either country if it had the inclination.

At the conference the belligerents recommitted to the peace process, COH agreement, security of the oil fields, and allowing unhindered access to humanitarian agencies (*Sudan Tribune*, 2015a). However, there is no indication that the conference had any lasting impact, as ceasefire violations continued and there was no breakthrough at the IGAD negotiations in Addis Ababa. As well as organizing the Khartoum meeting, China pledged to supply 700 troops to the UN mission in South Sudan, something it has never done before. While the Ethiopians eventually blocked them from taking up positions in the oil fields, the IO's Taban Deng stressed that these forces must operate strictly within the mandate of the UN and not support the government by reinforcing its control of the oil fields (*Sudan Tribune*, 2015b).

The holding of the Khartoum conference is probably more significant than its results because China's policy of no interference in the internal affairs of other countries has been sorely challenged in South Sudan and Sudan, where it has major economic interests. China is also involved in a balancing exercise because it is politically close to Khartoum while it views the GRSS as being uncomfortably close to the US (ICG, 2002, p. 4). For China, this conference may be part of a learning experience and, having once taken the initiative, it may become more engaged in the South Sudan peace process and at some point—but not in the foreseeable future—utilize the considerable power at its disposal. But looked at narrowly, Chinese diplomats cannot be happy with the outcome of the conference.

China's efforts to encourage peace and protect its significant economic interests in South Sudan have not stopped with the IGAD process and it has provided rented housing to ten senior IO officials in Nairobi. There are also widespread allegations that China is using financial inducements to convince IO officials not to attack the northern Upper Nile oil fields, but there is no evidence of this and it is doubtful that the military leaders could be controlled by bribed political leaders.

FPD members—Deng Alor, Madut Biar, Cirino Hiteng, John Luk, and Chol Tong—went to Juba on 2 June 2015. They were accompanied by the deputy chair of the ANC, Cyril Ramapoza, the secretary-general of the CCM, the foreign ministers of Ethiopia and Kenya, and other diplomats, who all made clear their support for the initiative. The FPD had three meetings with Salva, a number of meetings with the SPLM leadership and other officials, and claim their mission was welcomed except by the NCP-sympathizing ministers who largely replaced them in the government.¹⁴ The FPD issued a statement calling for peace and party reunification, and announced their intention to go to Addis Ababa to meet SPLM-IO leaders (SPLM General Headquarters, 2015). After their departure from Juba, Salva decreed that all those dismissed from the party had been reinstated and their bank accounts unfrozen. The latter point is held to be critical by those who contend that the wealthy FPD members are anxious to access their money and it is also an inducement among a smaller number in the IO.

On 8 June, Pagan Amum led an FPD delegation to Addis Ababa to participate in a consultation on IGAD Plus. It also met with Taban, but Riek refused to see them. Pagan subsequently returned to Juba as secretary-general of the SPLM, followed by the others, with the notable exception of Majak D'Agoot and Oyai Deng.

Cessation of Hostilities agreement

IGAD was quick in getting the belligerents to sign a COH agreement on 23 January 2014 (GRSS and SPLM/A-IO, 2014). When that failed to take hold, Salva and Riek signed another ceasefire agreement on 9 May. It, too, proved unworkable. On 9 November 2014 Nhial Deng and Taban Deng signed a 're-dedication' of the original COH agreement, but it was also ignored. While the military officials of both sides managed to come to agreement on the key issues, they were frequently obstructed by their respective political leaderships who were anxious to gain IGAD and international approval but did not want to see implementation. Moreover, the IO repeatedly argued in defence of their breaches of the agreement that this was to be expected since they maintained that the government had no intention of abiding by these agreements. Senior IO officers argued

that although they signed the COH agreement they did not feel bound by it until the UPDF left the country, a provision of the agreement never implemented. Gadet also pointed out that various Sudanese rebel groups were attacking the IO and that the GRSS does not have the capacity to force them to accept the terms of the COH agreement.¹⁵

Monitoring and Verification Mechanism

IGAD's Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (MVM) was set up on 20 February 2014 to monitor implementation of the COH agreement by the two parties to the agreement. The MVM has six teams deployed to the three states of GUN. After an investigation a report is submitted to the IGAD special envoy for further review. The peace-makers selected a MVM process based on the participation of the belligerents, which brings a measure of authority to the exercise but can also make it highly contentious as the contending representatives press their partisan positions. Indeed, distrust by both parties of the other's representatives was widespread and some of the monitors were even arrested. As a result, the MVM has become almost invisible and has had no constraining impact on the parties. IGAD also announced its intention to support the MVM with a Protection and Deterrence Force, but it has never materialized because of a lack of resources, problems in its relations to the UPDF, and the opposition of the SPLM-IO, which views such a force defending the oil fields and other areas as being aligned with Juba and thus to be targeted. As a result of these failures, IGAD's legitimacy has been seriously eroded. 🗨️

IX. SPLM-IO conventions

Nasir convention

What became the Nasir founding convention of the SPLM-IO on 15–18 April 2014 was first organized for Taban Deng to brief Riek (then based in the eastern Upper Nile area) on the state of the negotiations. On Riek's recommendation, this briefing evolved into a convention with about 1,000 people attending, mostly displaced officials from Juba, Malakal, and other centres, as well as representatives of other political parties, civil society, and church leaders. Among the key resolutions were the endorsement of the IGAD mediation, condemnation of IGAD's support for the role of the UPDF in South Sudan, and rejection of the proposed Protection and Deterrent Forces as it 'compromises IGAD's neutrality as a mediator' (SPLM General Headquarters, 2014a). The conference remanded the negotiating team and called for the immediate withdrawal of UPDF and the Sudan Revolutionary Front forces (Justice and Equality Movement, SLA-Abdul Wahid, SLA-Minni Minawi, and SPLM-North) from South Sudan. It called for a federal system of governance for South Sudan. The conference rejected Salva's claim of an attempted coup by Riek and his comrades on 15 December 2013, condemned the 'Juba genocidal killings', and as a result declared the Salva government 'illegitimate'. It welcomed the formation of the AU Commission of Inquiry and called for the establishment of an independent Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission.

Crucially, the conference approved the 'Provisional Structures of the Movement', which included the establishment of the National Leadership Council comprising the chairperson, deputy chairperson, head of eight provisional committees, and the governors. The conference also agreed on the establishment of the Military and Security Council comprising the commander-in-chief, deputy commander-in-chief, heads of relevant provisional committees, governors, front commanders, and heads of military and security organs. It also approved the establishment of eight National Provisional Committees with each committee to be made up of fifteen members supported by a secretariat. The conference also

endorsed Riek Macher as provisional chairperson of the SPLM and commander-in-chief of the SPLA and other organized forces without any consideration when a full leadership conference would take place.¹⁶

A crucial debate took place on the position of the SPLM in the insurgency with representatives of the other parties attending the conference arguing for a front led by the SPLM-IO but to include other parties and forces. Maj. Gen. Garouth Gatkuoth spoke against any SPLM affiliation and was supported by a couple of generals in attendance, but most of the senior commanders—who probably shared Garouth’s views—were in the field. Angelina Teny led the leadership in an emotional defence of the SPLM and Riek managed to gain the conference’s approval to defer a final decision on the matter. The conference attendees decided to provisionally call themselves SPLM-SPLA, a name that has not caught on, and instead the rebels became known as SPLM-IO. A number of generals and non-SPLM politicians were angry at the efforts of the leadership to maintain the SPLM linkage when the party had limited popular support and was widely held by the Nuer to be the author of the Juba massacre.¹⁷

In view of efforts expended on the Arusha intra-SPLM reconciliation process, it is noteworthy that the Nasir conference concluded that ‘the Intra-SPLM party dialogue has been overtaken by national events and the current crisis has moved beyond the SPLM Party [and therefore] the environment for such a dialogue shall be conducive after a final peace agreement has been signed.’¹⁸ This resolution has served to bolster IO opponents of the Arusha process, and embarrassed the political leadership (which has largely ignored it) and the international community, which have generally been strong proponents of the intra-party reconciliation, irrespective of popular sentiments and the historical role of the SPLM in South Sudan.

The conference also called for the immediate release of the four remaining SPLM detainees and reparations for the victims of the crisis.

Pagak I conference

With the peace talks faltering and the IO leadership pressed by IGAD to sign an agreement in which Riek would serve as prime minister or vice-president in a Salva-led transitional government, Riek asked the mediators for a fifteen-day

break to convince his supporters to accept these conditions, and with little option, IGAD agreed. From the outset the December 2014 meeting was plagued with organizational and financial problems and the initial interference of the Ethiopian security services who expelled journalists who wished to attend and even stopped an IGAD delegation, led by a former Ethiopian ambassador, for two days in Gambella. In the event, only two independent internationals attended the conference, a journalist from Khartoum and the author.

Conference organizers claimed an attendance of 5,000, but even the likely 2,000–3,000 was impressive. Hundreds took week-long bus trips from Nairobi and Khartoum to Pagak and there were small contingents from Australia, Canada, Europe, Egypt, and the US. Delegates represented every state in South Sudan and each state held meetings. In addition, there were meetings of the military, elders, and traditional leaders, all of whom submitted their resolutions to the conference organizers. The late arrival of Riek and the leadership meant that they had little opportunity to orchestrate the conference. The vast majority of those in attendance were Nuer and perhaps half of them came from Upper Nile state and thus its meeting was key. Chaired by Garouth Gatkuoth, the attendees accused the IGAD mediators of bias, refused to participate in any Salva-led government, called for Salva to step down as president, asked the IO leadership to withdraw from the Arusha SPLM unity talks, demanded that the killings of the Nuer in Juba be addressed in the negotiations, further demanded that the root causes of the conflict be considered, and asked for a thirty-month transitional period during which the IO military would maintain a separate existence (SPLM/A Upper Nile Military Governor's Office, 2014).

While Taban maintained that the IO negotiating team's acceptance of a Salva-led transitional government must also be accepted by the conference, Garouth argued to the contrary and referred to the Upper Nile state resolutions.¹⁹ He was supported by Major Generals Gadet and Chayout. As a result, if Riek and Taban expected to get the conference to agree to accept a Salva-led transitional government, fully endorse the Arusha talks, and ignore the failure of the mediation to address the Juba killings, they were disappointed. Likewise, the IGAD negotiators could not have been happy to see sentiments expressed which directly challenged their process and could not easily be dismissed because they expressed the views of large numbers of ordinary IO supporters.

Without any vote on the matter, there was little doubt that most IO members supported federalism. For the Nuer, federalism meant state-level Nuer control in Greater Upper Nile and an end to perceived Dinka domination of these governments, although at the time of the outbreak of the civil war all three governors of Greater Upper Nile were Nuer, albeit highly unpopular among Nuer constituencies. Never answered or even addressed was why non-Nuer in the region would accept Nuer hegemony in government. There was also no consideration of Riek's version of federalism, which involved reverting to the twenty-one districts established by the British during colonial times.

A long interim period of thirty months in which the IO military would retain its independence, there would be a joint command, and Juba would provide the rebels with logistics was a bottom-line position for the military leadership even though it was understood that it would probably not be accepted by the government. Although the various resolutions passed in the state assemblies covered a range of issues, the final 'communique' of the 'Sudan People's Liberation Movement General Headquarters', as it chose to be called, 'reaffirms total and undivided loyalty to the leadership of Dr. Riek Machar Teny-Dhurgon' (a surprising statement since his leadership had never been considered or challenged at the conference) and then went on to recommit to the 'peaceful resolution of the South Sudan civil war through the IGAD mediation process that addresses the root causes of the conflict . . . [and] stands for a federal system of governance which restores power to the people . . .' (SPLM General Headquarters, 2014a).

One of the main outcomes of the conference took place after it was officially over, as Riek stayed on to have closed-door meetings with his military leaders to respond to their demands that the military be reorganized. Incredibly, after a year of often intense war, the IO did not have a formal military structure. Faced with such united pressure and the need to establish structures comparable to that of the SPLA, Riek agreed to the military's demands. The other perennial complaints of the military related to their lack of logistics and opposition to the SPLM reunification talks. With the commitment to reform the army hierarchy, however, the senior generals returned to their stations.

In due course, Riek announced a structure which entailed him still maintaining ultimate control, no defence minister being named, as some commanders

were known to favour, with the following appointments (SPLM/A Chairman and Commander-in-Chief, 2014a):

Simon Gatwich as chief of general staff with the following deputies:

- Maj. Gen. Peter Gadet Yak, operations
- Maj. Gen. Garouth Gatkouth, logistics
- Maj. Gen. Dau Atujong, training
- Maj. Gen. Martin Kenyi, moral orientation
- Maj. Gen. Elias Juda Kulang, administration
- Maj. Gen. Moses Chot Riek, military production
- Maj. Gen. John Both Teny, general headquarters command
- Maj. Gen. Gabriel Tang Gatwich Chan, inspector general.

In addition, Riek announced the commands as follows:

- Maj. Gen. James Khor Chuol, Latjor Division 5
- Maj. Gen. Thomas Mabor Dhuo, Phou Division 7
- Maj. Gen. Peter Dor Manjur, Bieh Division 8
- Maj. Gen. Maguek Gai Majak, Lich Division 4
- Maj. Gen. James Koang Chuol, 1st Special Division
- Maj. Gen. Martin Terento Kenyi, Eastern Equatoria
- Maj. Gen. Salem El Haj, Central Equatoria
- Col. Wesley Welba, Mid-Western Equatoria
- Maj. Gen. Dau Aturjong, Northern Bahr el Ghazal
- Maj. Gen. Thomas Basilo Tindo, Western Bahr el Ghazal

Riek also proclaimed the establishment of 21 states and subsequently he appointed governors to many of them (SPLM/A Chairman and Commander-in-Chief, 2014b):

- Adar (Chayout Manyang Wuor)
- Bieh (Koang Gatkuoth Kerjiok)
- Central Equatoria
- Fashoda (Tjwok Adher Aguet)
- Imatong
- Jonglei

- Kapoeta
- Lakes
- Lich (Robert Ruai Kuol)
- Lol (Aguer Rual Lual)
- Mid-West Equatoria
- Northern Bahr El Ghazal (Akol Madhan Akol)
- Phow
- Pibor
- Rumbek (Mabor Marier Makoi)
- Sobat (Duer Tut Duer)
- Warrap (William Ilario Dhal)
- Wau (Tingo Peter Regbig)
- Western Bahr el Ghazal
- Western Equatoria
- Yei River

Some of the governors were still yet to be announced and most will oversee states which are wholly or in part under government control. The states are based on both ethnic and territorial criteria and the boundaries have yet to be determined, but the main objective in this arrangement is to better provide services to the people.²⁰ Such is the theory, but with few resources to draw upon and endemic instability, the announcement of states and governors is more aspirational.

Pagak II conference

The main stimulus for a second Pagak conference on 19–23 April 2015 was continuing upset by the senior generals who had recently been given impressive titles but did not have the resources, experience, or job descriptions to fulfil their responsibilities. However, it was officially designated as a leadership conference to review the peace process. The key resolutions of the approximately 150 in attendance included approval of IGAD Plus, but the attendees asked that the expanded peace mediation not attempt to impose a solution and instead facilitate the IO and GRSS negotiating a sustainable agreement (SPLM/A Chairman and Commander-in-Chief, 2015). The conference noted that the mandate

of the South Sudan legislature ended on 8 May 2015 and that of the GRSS president on 21 May, and the IO did not recognize the legitimacy of their decision to arbitrarily extend their terms of office. However, in the circumstances holding an election would be impossible and the IO needs a negotiating partner and cannot refuse to deal with Salva by declaring his rule illegitimate. The leadership conference again called upon the AU to release the Obsanjo report and that the UN and the AU establish an independent judicial body to try perpetrators of human rights abuses in the South Sudan conflict. The conference also resolved to establish means of national reconciliation in the most war-affected areas.

The IO delegates applauded the efforts of their negotiating team in reaching an agreement at Arusha, but repeated the formula that ‘the implementation of SPLM Reunification is not possible without first reaching a negotiated peace settlement.’ While many in the IO, and almost all of the senior military commanders, favoured abandoning the Arusha process, the political leadership continued to favour it.

The delegates welcomed efforts to engage other political parties, including the FPD, and endorsed the IO’s six-member committee to engage these parties.

The delegates called upon the UN to facilitate the return of IDPs to their homes, deplored the ‘infiltration’ of GRSS security agents into UN and national and international NGOs, and their deployment into IO-controlled areas. It also instructed the South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (SSRRA) to cooperate with humanitarian agencies operating in IO areas. It called for the development of a ‘blue print and ground rules to guide the working relationship between the SPLM/SPLA and international humanitarian agencies and further encourage SSRRA to issue licences to all NGOs working in the SPLM/SPLA controlled areas’. These resolutions could be interpreted as indicating a greater IO concern with the welfare of the citizenry under its control, but the humanitarian agencies are likely to see in them a major interest in security and the imposition of new rules and regulations that may impede their work.

The senior military commanders expressed frustration with the IGAD negotiations, contended that the negotiations and the international community were biased against the IO, and opposed the priority given to the negotiations over conduct of the war. At their private meetings with Riek and Taban the latter was accused—not for the first time—of aligning with elements of the FPD to

reach a negotiated agreement and betray the IO armed struggle. Another cause of frustration was the view that the formal military hierarchy established after Pagak I was not working as expected, power was still centralized under the political leadership, and that Simon Gatwich as chief of staff did not have full authority. Also raised was the military leadership's concern with what they felt was the needless loss of life of their soldiers because of a lack of medicines and qualified medical personnel.

As well as the senior Nuer military commanders, Alfred Ladu Gore and Martin Kenyi from Equatoria attended Pagak II, but Maj. Gen. Dho Aturjong from Bahr el Ghazal did not attend. Observers at the meeting reported that the Equatorians kept a low profile, presumably because they did not want to place themselves in a dispute between Taban and the Nuer generals.

The military left the conference agreeing to disagree with Riek and Taban. The leadership knows that the popular perception of the Nuer in South Sudan is that they are anarchical and prone to division, and they are anxious to prove their critics wrong. As a result, these conferences have become integral to SPLM-IO governance, but it is not clear whether they ensure democratic accountability of the military and political leadership or—as appeared to be the case at Pagak II—forums where the leaders thrash out their differences and the rest of the IO are reduced to the status of observers. That said, after the failure of eighteen months of IGAD peace-making to produce an agreement, most IO members are probably closer to the military's negative appraisal of the mediation and the Arusha process than to the views of Riek and Taban. 🗑️

X. IGAD Plus

The failure of IGAD to make progress led to a breakdown in negotiations in March 2015 and the subsequent announcement that five African countries from outside the region—Algeria, Chad, Nigeria, Rwanda, and South Africa, representing various regions of the continent—would join the negotiations together with the AU, China, the EU, the IGAD Partners Forum, and the UN. Although premised on IGAD and Seyoum continuing to lead and form the core of peace-making efforts, this proposal had to be endorsed at the June AU summit in South Africa. In the event, the AU’s Peace and Security Council (PSC) made clear its frustration with the lack of progress by the parties to the conflict, concentrated on reinforcing the process, including the efforts to reunite the SPLM, singled out the FPD to encourage dialogue, and commended the appointment of the former president of Mali, Alpha Oumar Konare, as the AU High Representative for South Sudan (AU PSC, 2015a).

It appeared that Ethiopia anticipated that the proposed agreement would be backed up with clear sanctions, but in the event the PSC only referred the matter to its sanctions committee, thus undermining its capacity to pressure the principals. It was also agreed that the AU Commission of Inquiry report would be released at the mid-July meeting of the PSC. Apart from the naming of the guilty parties, the most controversial element of the report was the separate submission of Professor Mahmood Mamdani, in which he contended that the Naivasha peace process was a failure, that IGAD forces should not be deployed in South Sudan, and advocates the imposition of an AU–UN transitional government. Collectively, Mamdani’s submission to the AU Commission of Inquiry, the IGAD Plus proposed agreement, the private assessments of AU members, and the public statements of frustration by the US, amount to the emergence of a consensus that holds the various SPLM factions responsible for the present war, the failure to achieve peace, and doubts its capacity to govern South Sudan. How this will play out remains unclear, but the lack of faith in the SPLM will mean that at the least its authority will be constrained and overseen. The

internationals, however, are reluctant to follow Mamdani in establishing a precedent of turning over a sovereign territory to a foreign administration.

SPLM-IO leaders accepted the expanded membership of IGAD Plus because they hoped it will neutralize the partisan engagement of the regional countries of IGAD. The internationals in turn thought that the increasing numbers would bring greater pressure on the principals. The rebels contended that China can play a positive role in the peace process if it is able to overcome its reluctance to become engaged in local politics. However, the need to bring other countries into the mediation because of the lack of neutrality and capability of the IGAD countries raises the question of the viability of IGAD as a regional peace-maker and Western support and funding for its mediation efforts.

Circulation by the SPLM-IO of IGAD's June statement, 'Key Provisions and Justifications for the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan', was quickly rejected by both the government and the SPLM-IO. Riek's detailed response included criticism of the failure to release the AU Commission of Inquiry report, a call for a hybrid court to be formed outside of South Sudan, a complaint that there were no provisions for the families of the '20,000 victims' of the Juba attacks, no reference to federalism, the absence of a ceasefire for the non-GUN states. He contended that all state capitals and major towns should be demilitarized, containment should also include government forces, and that unification of the armed forces could not be completed in eighteen months as called for by IGAD (Machar, 2015). Riek repeated the demand that the UPDF, various Sudanese rebel groups, including 'one from Chad' (sic.), must be withdrawn before a ceasefire can be approved. He rejected the power-sharing formula and held that Salva Kiir and his government has lost its authority by overstaying its term and by the killing of civilians in Juba, although he had previously made clear his willingness to work in government with Salva.

As to be expected, both principals focused most of their complaints on power sharing and security arrangements. What they failed to notice and is novel about the proposed agreement is that IGAD and Professor Mahmood Mamdani are close to being on the same page. Both have concluded that the SPLM is not competent to rule the country and, while Mamdani proposed a UN-AU trusteeship for South Sudan, IGAD has spelled out in detail what the SPLM must do

and has proposed various bodies to ensure that its stipulations are carried out. Although IGAD wants to place tight constraints on a post-conflict South Sudan government, it accepts the continuing dominance of the SPLM and its programme of reforms and imposed structures would produce continuous negotiations and paralysis.

After the 'Key Provisions' summary roundly rejected by both parties it disappeared from sight. Nevertheless, the parties were subsequently informed that instead of it being a basis for further negotiations, it would be presented to them on 24 July, in an only slightly revised form, on an essentially 'take it or leave it basis'. 🗨️

XI. IO regional relations

Sudan

That Sudan became the principal supporter of the SPLM-IO is ironic because the NCP favoured a Dinka-led government since, it reasoned, the biggest tribe was more likely to deliver stability. That view was seriously undermined when the SPLA attacked and destroyed the Heglig oil fields that, while in a disputed area, were nonetheless clearly under Khartoum's authority, and thus risked an all-out war until the international community insisted that it withdraw. Moreover, Salva's dependence on President Museveni, the threat posed by the presence of the Ugandan army near Sudan's border, and the continuing support Kampala and Juba give to the Sudanese rebels led Sudan to come to the assistance of the SPLM-IO. A rebel defeat would leave Museveni and the Sudan rebels in an even stronger position with South Sudan and that would be intolerable. Further complicating relations, there is still no agreement on the joint Sudan–South Sudan border, Abyei remains a source of tension, and Khartoum is unlikely to accept Juba's appeal for a revision in the oil transit fees no matter how unfair they are.

With the exception of Sudan, the IO entered this war isolated in the region and internationally. Almost two years later the rebels still do not have any stalwart friends, but their foreign relations and capacity to reach out to the international community have improved. Khartoum remains their bedrock because it is the only country known to provide the IO with military support and rear bases, but its relationship with the IO is largely tactical, it is wary of the rebels, and has not given up on the Juba government, which has many NCP sympathizers. While the rebels want to shut down oil production, Khartoum depends on the transit fees it receives for South Sudan's oil and a complete stoppage of oil production would deepen Sudan's economic crisis. However, Khartoum does not want its support for the IO to be highlighted because critics would be quick to contend that it is using the IO as a means to reassert its control over South Sudan. While the former SSDF officers had a long relationship with SAF, relations with the IO are now handled by the National Intelligence and Security

Service, by whom the rebels are not so well known. Moreover, Khartoum provided the SSLA with an enormous amount of military equipment in its campaign against the Unity state government of Taban Deng, which served as an important conduit for Ugandan military supplies to Sudanese rebels. However, when SSLA leader Babiny Monytuel defected, all the equipment was turned over to the SPLA and that will clearly serve as a cautionary experience.

The SPLM-IO representative to Sudan is Dak Doup Bishiok, former NCP-appointed governor of Upper Nile from Longochok, but other IO officials, including its foreign affairs representative, Dhieu Mathok, also live in Khartoum.

Uganda

In light of the massive support that President Museveni provided Salva Kiir's government, the early response of the SPLM-IO was one of anger and idle threats to take the war to Uganda. But cooler minds prevailed and it was appreciated that the IO should work to undermine Museveni's commitment to the Salva government. After initial opposition, the Ugandan government agreed to accept IO diplomatic representatives in Kampala and permit them to meet the media and elements of Ugandan society. This representation was initially led by Otim David, an Acholi Equatorian and former lecturer in political science at Makerere University, but, claiming his life was threatened by South Sudan government agents in Kampala, he was reassigned to Nigeria and his replacement was Brigadier Keat Gang, former director of national security in Malakal and administrator of finance for external security in Juba. There is growing opposition in Uganda to a war that brings few benefits to the country, but costs it a significant number of soldiers' lives, at least in the crucial early period of the war. In late May 2015 the country's Parliamentary Committee on Defence and Internal Affairs Efforts complained about the financial costs of the operation in South Sudan and called for withdrawal of the UPDF from the country (*Sudan Tribune*, 2015c). Although a meeting between Museveni and Riek has often been suggested, it has not materialized and there were a couple of angry exchanges between the two men at the Addis Ababa negotiations.²¹ Museveni's distrust of Riek relates to his mediation with Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army, which he believes was used to undermine him.

Ethiopia

The Ethiopian Derg was the primary supporter of the SPLA for many years and as a result the EPRDF viewed it with suspicion. Nonetheless, the Ethiopian government has worked closely with the post-secession SPLA on security along their shared and frequently turbulent border. At the same time, Addis Ababa wants to keep relations with the SPLM-IO on a balanced footing because angering the rebels could cause problems in its relations with the Nuer in the crisis-prone region of Gambella where they constitute a majority.

Privately, IO leaders accuse GRSS officials from GUN of bribing the Gambella regional administration. Publicly, they allege that the Salva government is supporting dissidents led by Thowath Pal Chane, a Gambella Nuer and former central committee member of the Derg, and while the truth of that allegation cannot be ascertained, Thowath's group appears to be operating from bases in South Sudan and the Ethiopian army has crossed the border to attack it (*Sudan Tribune*, 2015b). Thowath Pal, however, remains a shadowy character and little can be said with certainty about him or his alleged group. Juba government supporters in turn claim that Ethiopia is assisting the SPLM-IO, although there is no evidence to support that allegation. Meanwhile, there are periodic allegations that the IO is receiving weaponry from Eritrea, but there is no concrete evidence of that, either, but were that to be true it would indicate both desperation and a lack of political judgement on the part of the rebels given the predictable anger it would produce among the Ethiopians who they cannot afford to alienate. The Ethiopian government views itself as a regional hegemon and is upset at the presence of Uganda's army in South Sudan and needs a peace agreement to get the UPDF to leave.

Goi Joak Yoal, former commissioner for Akobo and holder of a master's degree from the US, is the highly competent SPLM-IO representative to the country.

Kenya

Kenya feels that it should lead the IGAD peace process based on its questionable achievement of the CPA and because Ethiopia is technically maintaining the dominant position by holding extraordinary IGAD heads of state meetings instead of regular meetings which would involve the chair passing out of Ethiopian

hands to Kenya. Kenya has also championed SPLM reconciliation, which Ethiopia fears may be designed to weaken its control over the IGAD peace process. President Uhuru Kenyatta initially strongly supported the FPD as a means to highlight his role in the South Sudan peace process, but perhaps recognizing their impotence and the criticisms that have been made about their lavish living in Nairobi at government expense, he encouraged them to find a means to leave. Like Ethiopia, Kenya is not happy with the presence of the UPDF in South Sudan and the country becoming a client state of Kampala. President Kenyatta has taken a keen interest in the South Sudan conflict because it provides an opportunity for him to shine on the international stage, but also because his plans for developing Lamu as a major port—partly dependent on it being the end point of an oil pipeline from South Sudan—are being undermined by the continuing conflict.

Abdel Elias Sandrai from Equatoria, who is close to Alfred Ladu Gore, is the IO representative to the country, but many IO officials live in Nairobi. 📍

XII. Conclusion

It was widely anticipated among Nuer that there would be war with the government of Salva Kiir, but no one predicted that the conflict would begin with the Presidential Guard killing Nuer in Juba. The latest war bears comparison to the final phase of the North–South war, which largely pitted the SPLA against the Khartoum-supported SSDF, and some hold the present conflict to be a continuation of that war and an attempt by Khartoum to undo the secession of South Sudan. However, the GRSS–IO war is better understood as being the result of first, the failure of the first IGAD mediators and backers to appreciate how ill-prepared the SPLM was to assume the responsibilities of governance; second, the extent of the conflicts among Southern Sudanese and the importance of the SSDF in leading the campaign against the SPLA; and lastly, the failure of the SPLM to develop a national ethos that muted the country’s strong tribal identities.

IGAD has focused almost exclusively on reaching a power-sharing agreement between the SPLM elites, but most SPLM–IO supporters took up the armed struggle because of bitterness and the desire for revenge in the wake of the Juba killings and this approach has little resonance for them. Indeed, the resolution of the problems of South Sudan must involve a complete reform of the institutions of governance that were in crisis long before the outbreak of hostilities in December 2013. Trying to go back to a pre-conflict status quo is unlikely to be viable.

The rapid deployment of the UPDF and use of Sudan rebels saved the government from being overrun in the early turbulent days of the war when territories and towns rapidly switched sides. After that burst the SPLM–IO turned to developing formal military and political structures, gaining international legitimacy, formulating negotiating positions, establishing governance institutions, embracing other ethnic communities, and, for the military, attaining a reliable supply of logistics. This shift from military to political concerns brought the contradictions within the organization to the fore. The most significant

contradictions are between the SPLM political elite and the SSDF generals that dominate the IO army and if these groups do not develop means to not only co-exist but work together, the organization could collapse. This might be welcome news for the enemies of the SPLM-IO, but it would be messy, violent, make the conflict more difficult to resolve, probably be long lasting, give rise to demands for Nuer secession, make large areas of South Sudan ungovernable, and encourage even more regional meddling in the country. It is thus incumbent on the leadership to ensure the unity of the SPLM-IO and on the peacemakers to organize a process that addresses the needs of the South Sudanese people, not just the elites, and to ensure that the CPA's Machakos Protocol commitment to democratic transformation is realized. 📄

XIII. Postscript

The long-running battle between the dissident generals and Dr. Riek Macher reached a new phase when, on 20 June 2015, Simon Gatwisch signed a letter to Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir asking for weapons, that the weapons provided bypass Taban Deng and go directly to the field, and that he was sending Gabriel Tang to Khartoum to make the arrangements. The leak of the letter exposed the long-simmering dispute in the SPLM-IO (since the letter also spoke for Gadet, Garouth, and Tang) and Khartoum's support for the rebels.

IGAD's chief negotiator, Seyoum Mesfin, met the same generals, as well as Chuol Gakah, and they repeated their complaints. Seyoum asked the generals for a formal letter. Simon wrote that Riek and Salva 'cannot be saleable to the people of South Sudan' [because] 'they are seen by the people of South Sudan as symbol of hate, division and failed leadership' (SPLA Chief of General Staffs, 2015). Simon also rejected the Arusha SPLM reunification process and contended that there should be no resumption of peace talks before the AU Commission of Inquiry released its report.

Riek's response was to support reconciliation even though he claimed that the generals were secretly meeting SPLA and UPDF intelligence agents to discuss military support and were receiving financing from the GRSS. Riek's conciliatory approach ended after Garouth gave a speech at a church in Gambella in which he said he no longer viewed Riek as his leader. Assuming that the Nuer would side with him in a fight with the generals and that Simon Gatwisch—under pressure from his fellow Lou and militarily defenceless in Pagak—would not come to their support, Riek relieved Garouth and Gadet from their commands on 21 July, appointed James Koang to the general staff in charge of operations, and assumed personal responsibility for logistics. Garouth and Gadet were placed under loose control of the Ethiopian federal police but, fearing arrest, Gadet fled to Khartoum. It soon emerged that Brig. Gen. Gatwic Puoch, a Jikany, previously close to Salva and a brother of Upper Nile Governor Simon Kun, who had only recently defected from his position with SPLA intelligence in Wau,

together with Maj. Gen. Malith Gatlaik, a Lou, Lt. Col. James Lony Thichiot, a Lou, and Brig. Gen. Chuol Gakah sided with Gadet and Gathoth. Claims and counter-claims of the loyalty of other IO officers have continued ever since.

On 24 July IGAD gave the belligerents a 'compromise agreement' and advised them to begin negotiations on 5 August and complete them by 16 August. This agreement was surprising because first, it included almost the same provisions that both the GRSS and the SPLM-IO rejected in March, and second, it included the former detainees (with the exceptions of Oyai Deng and Majak D'Agoot), even though they had returned to Juba and Pagan Amum had resumed his position as secretary-general of the SPLM.

Indeed, in March the IO leaked IGAD's 'Key Provisions and Justifications for the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan' and Riek criticized it at length. He again said he would not sign any agreement until the AU Commission of Inquiry report was released. Meanwhile, the PSC gave copies of the report, together with Mahmood Mamdani's separate submission, to the heads of state and Riek and also formed a committee of seven, including Uganda, to make recommendations and submit their report by the end of August. Likewise Riek attacked the March agreement because it failed to sufficiently emphasize federalism, did not call for a ceasefire for the non-GUN states, failed to provide for the demilitarization and containment of forces in all state capitals, and that unification of the armed forces could not be completed in the proposed eighteen months (Machar, 2015). He also said that the UPDF and the Sudanese rebel groups must be withdrawn before a ceasefire could be accepted. In addition, Riek objected to the power-sharing formula that left the government in complete control of the states of Greater Equatoria and Greater Bahr el Ghazal. To sign such power-sharing arrangements would reduce Riek to being a tribal leader and undermine his hopes of winning a presidential election at the end of the transitional period. Crucially, after previously saying that he could work with Salva, he now said the government had lost its legitimacy by extending its term of office and killing civilians in Juba. Lastly, Riek objected to the former detainees participating in the negotiations. His Nuer supporters, however, welcomed IGAD's allocation of a 53 per cent share in the governments of GUN. They and Riek also strongly

endorsed the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission to ensure that the provisions of the agreement was overseen by the international community—largely the AU—and were carried out on a timely basis.

Complicating the need for the SPLM-IO to decide on the compromise agreement were its growing internal divisions, which spread to a section of the Nuer Council of Elders, led by its chairman, Gabriel Yuol, and including Gabriel Changeson, Michael Mario, Timothy Tot, and Sarah Nyanath Yuang. On 30 July they had a tense ten-hour meeting with Riek, but he did not agree to end his singular domination of the IO, reinstate the generals, or let them attend the Pagak IGAD agreement consultation; only to again accept reconciliation, which is interpreted as welcoming the generals back to the fold, not changing any of his positions.

The Pagak consultation began 2 August with about 120 delegates, all hand-picked by Riek. With the support of Angelina, Riek attacked the agreement but, with the exception of some Equatorians led by Maj. Gen. Martin Kenyi, they had few followers. However, there is good reason to suspect that Riek's opposition to the agreement was not sincere and was largely tactical and designed to improve the IO's bargaining position with the government. The large majority of the attendees approved the agreement, although they passed resolutions calling for 33 per cent IO representation in the seven non-GUN states, a thirty-month army integration period, and provisions to strengthen the agreement's commitment to federalism. It was not clear what the status of the amendments were, although almost all of the attendees interviewed by the author said they would accept the agreement even if the amendments were not endorsed in the negotiations. Never satisfactorily explained was how they now accepted a Salva-led transitional government after making his removal the centrepiece of their opposition since the beginning of the conflict. Although Riek said he shared Salva's view as expressed in a letter to Haile Mariam that the former detainees should not be recognized in the negotiations, Taban thought otherwise and they did participate in the negotiations.

That the SPLM-IO leadership accepted in early August essentially the same agreement they had rejected four months previously can largely be attributed to the demoralization caused by divisions in their military and political ranks,

major losses in Unity state, the lack of weaponry, and the failure to garner more than minimal support in the non-GUN states. Acceptance of the agreement was not due to the provisions offered, international diplomacy, pressures exerted by President Bashir, or the threat of the illusive Plan B should the belligerents reject the agreement, all of which have been suggested. Although Riek contended that the GRSS would reject the agreement and the war would continue—and that view was shared by most observers at the time—there was little doubt that he was committed to a negotiated settlement to the conflict, an approach that left the IO vulnerable to the changing positions of the international community and the GRSS.

On 7 August Riek formally relieved Gabriel Changeson and Timothy Tut from the IO leadership. The Naivasha-based dissident politicians (which now included the American Nuer and long-time advocate of Nuer independence, David de Chand) and the dissident generals in Khartoum continued to endorse the demands of the Nuer internationally to reconcile, but were busy forming their own separate political and military organizations.

Appreciating that Riek and the IO would likely sign the compromise agreement and the government would not and, as a result, would suffer international condemnation, President Museveni invited Prime Minister Haile Mariam, President Kenyatta, and Sudanese Foreign Minister Ibrahim Ghandour to Kampala on 11 August, where he attempted to make the agreement more favourable to the government and Uganda. He demanded that the 17 August deadline be extended, no power sharing in the GUN states, power be distributed at the executive level based on 53 per cent for the government and 33 per cent for the IO, Juba and the regional capitals not be demilitarized, and the so-called 'frontline states' of Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, and Uganda assume responsibility for security arrangements and integration of the forces, and that they be completed within three months. Sudan would not go along with such a proposal, but it appears to have initially gained the approval of Ethiopia and Kenya. In response, Riek called a meeting of his followers on 14 August and told them the IO could not accept Museveni's proposals and for the party to expect international condemnation and isolation. But behind the scenes Museveni's plans were challenged and, as a result, a third compromise agreement was presented to the belligerents.

This draft provided 46/40 per cent representation in the government's favour in the states of GUN, the IO would select the governors of Upper Nile and Unity and have 15 per cent representation in each of the other seven states, while the former detainees would be granted 7 per cent representation at the state and national levels. Riek gained his needed token representation in the non-GUN states, but the IO representation in GUN had been reduced and it had lost Jonglei, which quickly became a major concern of the powerful resident Lou Nuer. Nonetheless, it looked like the IO would accept the agreement and the government would reject it.

To the surprise of the belligerents, President Bashir managed to insert a last minute provision in the agreement which called for the Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF) to 'be disarmed, demilitarized, and repatriated by the state actors with whom they have been supporting within the Pre-Transitional Period'. This provision made clear the challenges the agreement would face and Sudanese diplomats made clear they were going to press for its implementation. The failures of the CPA continued to haunt peace-making efforts.

Fearing possible arrest and the pressures he would face to sign the agreement, Salva did not come to Addis Ababa on 13 August to negotiate with Riek as required by IGAD and did not attend the IGAD Heads of State Summit two days later, until Museveni insisted, and he came.

With the 17 August deadline approaching, the general view was that there would be no agreement, a conclusion supported by the government organizing anti-peace demonstrations in South Sudan and the national television giving virtually non-stop coverage to critics of the agreement. But to the surprise of everyone, by midnight on 16 August Riek and Salva accepted an outline agreement and an official signing ceremony in the morning was planned. By morning GRSS opposition to the agreement had solidified and by the afternoon Salva returned to Juba with the promise to return to Addis Ababa in fifteen days to sign the agreement, although that seemed unlikely. The best that the mediators could salvage from the affair was an agreement between the SPLM-IO and the former detainees who had no armed forces, few supporters, and little justification for even being in the negotiations.

Nonetheless, the SPLM-IO leadership considered the agreement reached a success if only because their organization had not fractured and they could look

forward to the international community bringing its power to bear on the GRSS, while Riek was now hailed as a peace-maker. But their amendments were not even considered, the fifty seats they were granted in the National Assembly left them in a distinct minority, they had no representation in the Council of the Regions, and their limited gains could not justify the enormous loss of life and destruction over the previous twenty months.

But what may prove to be the biggest weakness of the agreement was its failure to address the popular demands of the Nuer for the removal of Salva and the end of SPLM domination of the country. These were the issues that the dissident IO generals and politicians focused on in their condemnation of what they considered a 'surrender agreement'. The loss of the Jonglei governorship to the government because of the powerful opposition of the Bor Dinka also quickly became a major arrow in the dissidents' armour.

Bending to international pressure, Salva invited IGAD and other dignitaries to Juba to witness his signing of the agreement on 26 August. He, however, immediately drew into question his commitment to the agreement by releasing a detailed statement of objections, and made clear he was signing it under duress. Fearing that the government might attempt to escape its commitments under the agreement, the US announced that it was pursuing its efforts to gain UN Security Council approval for a range of sanctions that could be enacted, but this was opposed by Russia and Angola. Meanwhile, the signing of the peace agreement and a permanent cessation of hostilities agreement corresponded with an upsurge in fighting along the Nile; the dissident IO generals and politicians operating under the new labels 'South Sudan Armed Forces' and the 'Federal Democratic Front', respectively, claimed that those fighting the government forces were aligned with them.

Supporters of the agreement acknowledged its weaknesses but, as was the case with the CPA, they claim it was an important first step. However, if the agreement does not completely go off the rails it can be anticipated that the international community will devote most of its energies to trying to keep it on track. What they would keep on track was an agreement that returned the same politicians to power, proving once again that the route to power in Sudan and South Sudan was through war and the subsequent legitimacy bestowed by the international peace-makers.

As was the case with the CPA, the compromise agreement gave the SPLM a hegemonic position in the government and reaffirmed South Sudan's status as a one-party state. The future of the IGAD compromise peace agreement and of South Sudan does not look positive without a wholesale restructuring of the state and a commitment to democratic transformation—and neither seems likely. 🗨️

Endnotes

- 1 This paper generally adheres to the Sudanese and South Sudanese convention of referring to figures by their first names (while also observing the exceptions).
- 2 Interview with Maj. Gen. Peter Gadet and Maj. Gen. Garouth Gatkuoth, Addis Ababa, 3 June 2015.
- 3 Author interview with Maj. Gen. Peter Gadet, Pagak, 9 December 2014.
- 4 Author interviews with white army fighters with university degrees, Gambella, Ethiopia, 28 November 2014.
- 5 Author interview with Maj. Gen. Gabriel Tang, Addis Ababa, 14 June 2015.
- 6 Author interview with Riek Macher, Addis Ababa, 9 June 2015.
- 7 Author interview with Maj. Gen. Martin Kenyi, Addis Ababa, 10 June 2015.
- 8 Author interview with Riek Macher, 9 June 2014.
- 9 Author interview with Riek Macher, Addis Ababa, 9 June 2014.
- 10 Author interview with Maj. Gen. Gabriel Tang, Pagak, 12 December 2014.
- 11 Author interview with Ezeikel Lol, Addis Ababa, 2 June 2015.
- 12 Author interview with Taban Deng, Addis Ababa, 9 June 2015.
- 13 Author interview with Riek Macher, Addis Ababa, 9 June 2015.
- 14 Author interview with John Luk, member of FPD delegation, Addis Ababa, 10 June 2015.
- 15 Author interview with Maj. Gen. Peter Gadet, Addis Ababa, 4 June 2015.
- 16 Author interview with Maj. Gen. Garouth Gatkuoth, 13 June 2015, Addis Ababa.
- 17 Author interview with Yenn Thiang from the South Sudan Democratic Forum, 16 June 2015, Addis Ababa.
- 18 Author interview with Maj. Gen. Garouth Gatkuoth, 13 June 2015, Addis Ababa.
- 19 As witnessed by the author, Pagak, 10 December 2014.
- 20 Author interview with Agner Rual, governor of Lul state, Addis Ababa, 2 June 2015.
- 21 Museveni invited the SPLM-IO to Kampala on 29 August 2015, but Riek did not attend (*Sudan Tribune*, 2015e).

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