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Civilian Demobilization, Integration of Ex-Rebels and the Crisis of Peace Building in South Sudan

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Abstract **Original Research Article**

Independence of South Sudan on 9th July 2011 led to the formation of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan to help the new state to overcome perennial instability confronting it from multiple fronts. UNMISS was critical to the ephemeral peace that enabled the realization of South Sudan independence. It has also assisted the government of South Sudan to some extent to improve state institutions. This paper argues that poor and haphazard implementation of demobilization and integration breeds resentment among militia commanders and is a recipe for greater violence confrontation. Indeed, the frequent relapse to violence is an indication that civilian demobilization and integration is poorly executed in South Sudan hence the inability of the state to stabilize. The paper concluded that opening the democratic space will enhance the capacity of state institutions and empower the people to engage actively both political leaders and state institutions. We therefore recommended that strong institutions are key hence, only the existence of such institution can herald revival of the deplorable state of South Sudan.

Keywords: Civilian, Demobilization, Integration, Crisis and Peace-building.

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Introduction

Independence of South Sudan on 9th July 2011 led to the formation of the United Nations Mission to the Republic of South Sudan. According to Hovil (2015), prior to 2011, the United Nations Mission in Sudan had been formed. It was design to assist to implement Comprehensive Peace Accord signed 2005. For Hovil (2015), UNMIS was designed as a peace-building mission. Therefore, UNMIS was expected to help stabilize security and provide conducive environment for democratic governance to succeed in South Sudan (Hovil, 2015, p. 10).

Essentially, it could be stated that UNMIS was instrumental to the existence of somewhat ephemeral peace that guaranteed South Sudan independence. Thus, between March 2005 and July 2011, United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) monitored and promoted implementation of a peace deal that had ended a 22 year conflict between the Sudan and Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army, a rebel group rooted in Sudan's southern regions (Hemmer, 2013; Hovil, 2015). UNMIS was therefore not created in a vacuum as it shoulders several responsibilities which include the demobilization and integration programme before independence. Hemmer (2013) further stated that UNMIS engaged demobilization programme before and after South Sudan's independence, ensure stable security' and assist South Sudan foster 'stable environment for

development.

Thus, growing body of scholarly works on disarmament, demobilization and integration of rebels into the national polity or national military structure suggests that disarmament, demobilization and integration of rebels in the aftermath of conflict is a worthwhile process for peace building and sustainable peace (Hazen, 1994; Kingma, 1997; Sørbø, 2004; Rufer, 2005; Knight, 2009; Samii, 2010; Warner, 2011; Verhey, 2001). This is also not without scepticism that the enormous challenges that fraught the processes tend to scuttle the objectives if not properly implemented (Attah-Asamoah, Sharamo & Mwanzia, 2011; Alcalde, 2013; Awolich, 2014). These challenges ranged from inadequate funding, poor dedication to peace by both rebel leaders, government and institutional weaknesses, access to power or power sharing arrangement to most importantly corrupt practices among leaders. Thus, this study interrogates civilian demobilization and integration programme in South Sudan to ascertain the extent post-independence peace-building failures and sustained instability can be attributed to a poorly executed civilian demobilization and integration in South Sudan.

Civilian Demobilization, Integration and Peace Building: Conceptual Perspectives

Just like other concepts, there seems to be no generally accepted meaning of the concept of civilian demobilization. However, there seems to be scholarly consensus that successes in the areas of reintegration and demobilization of civilians remains the benchmark for peace and stability (Verhey, 2001; Sørbø, 2004; Rufer, 2005; Handson, 2007; HSBA, 2007; Nezam & Marc, 2009; United Nations, 2010; African Development Bank Group, 2011; Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2013; Odigbo & Odigbo, 2025). For African Development Bank Group (2011), demobilization is the official and guarded liberation of active fighters from armed groups or rebellion. It further explained that processes of demobilization are in two folds. First stage begins with processing individual fighters and sheltering them temporarily in designated centres like cantonment sites or barracks while second stage entails provision of packages to enable the demobilized start a new live (African Development Bank Group, 2011). Demobilization means a "formal and controlled discharge of active fighters from armed group" (United Nations, 2010, p. 8).

As can be seen, the process of demobilization normally begins with establishing centres that shelter the demobilized. Demobilization programmes continue by preparing ex-combatants to begin civilian life. According to the United Nations (2010), during the demobilization period, ex-fighters are cantoned in demobilization centres. Ex-combatants are detached from their leaders and after rehabilitation, they are been conveyed to their various homes (Handson 2007). However, there exist incidences where some fighters are re-integrated into the national army.

Earlier, Rufer (2005), reviewed conceptual approaches, specific settings and practical experiences on disarmament, demobilization and integration and concluded that such programmes are capable of opening avenues for reconciliation and socio-economic transformation. Rufer (2005) noted that civilian demobilization means all processes geared towards removal, ending and eradication of security formations such as military arsenal and sectors, ensuring that armed groups are disarmed, demobilized, trained and reintegrated into the civil society. For him, it should be accompanied by technical, medical and financial assistance that would enable the ex-combatant to upset most pressing issues facing them. In this regard, disbandment of ex-rebels remains a veritable mechanism to reintegrating the ex-rebels.

Within the period of demobilization and reintegration, other parts of processes, which may be germane in achieving the goals and purposes of the entire process, are carefully managed. This is where the issue of reinsertion and resettlement comes in. According to Rufer (2005) re-establishing the ex-combatants means empowering them to meet up with their challenges both long time and those instantaneous, at the same time reallocating the ex-combatants involves moving the from a specific point to a place of peace and tranquillity (Rufer, 2005).

In fact, demobilization could be seen as the proper dissolution of military groups and, at the personal level means discharging fighters from the state of mobilization. The discharge of ex-combatants spans over a period of time, during which they are usually conveyed to their homes or new districts and granted small initial reinsertion packages to enhance their resettlement process. It could therefore be said that ex-combatants or guerrillas are in some cases eager to return to their homes while in some cases they may deliberately stall the process out of fear of being rejected when they get back to their communities.

In his view, Verhey (2001) examined the concept of civilian demobilization from the standpoint of preventing child soldier. Though, he contended that the term demobilization may refer broadly to the means of abandoning active armed group and uniting into a civil society, he principally noted that demobilization refers to the release or discharge of child soldiers, their reception, and the initial assistance provided them to return to their home community or other place of settlement (Verhey, 2001). He further elaborated that demobilization is seen from both formal and informal state actions and activities. From formal perspective, de-mobilization, therefore focuses on retraining reviving children especially child soldiers as a critical process towards restructuring the military. He further noted that informal activities include occurrences of escape of a child soldiers from their abductees, armed groups or a deliberate action as a result of encouragement or other circumstances. Informal incidences may include entering into agreement with a particular armed group so as to facilitate the release a child soldier or group of child soldiers when conflict is still ongoing. Essentially, demobilization could be involuntary especially for the child soldiers, however, there is always this fear of unknown during the transition period. During this kind of transition, it is important to gain the support. Thus, a consensus from the military, family members, community and the society therefore becomes the driving force behind all activities during the transition period. More importantly, there must be acceptance by child soldiers who are passing the process of transition (Verhey, 2001, p.6).

Indeed, Verhey (2001) examined several indicators that would contribute to a successful demobilization of child soldiers. For instance, he critically looked at issues bordering on policy coherence and strategies, protection during demobilization, the issues concerning coordination and institutional issues, resource mobilization and partnerships, adequate staffing, appropriate demobilization and procedures, benefit or rather packages for child soldiers, advocacy and inclusion of child soldiers in peace accords and demobilization processes. In spite of this effort, Verhey (2001) failed to take into cognizance the politics that underlies the allocation of resource which mostly mar the implementation process. He was also interested in the creation of agencies and ad-hoc institutions, specialized institutions for overseeing the process without also recognizing the institutional behavior of most weak institutions in the third world societies that witness severe conflicts. For instance, in South Sudan the issue of politics and inadequate institutions could be seen as major obstacle confronting the state.

Thus, demobilization is the second component or the second phase in the transition process. Separating fighter from their leaders and structures marks their official transition from rebellion to civilian life. Whereas disarmament is mainly done by the military and assisted by civilians, demobilization is executed by civilians with military support. According to BTI (2012), first Phase of demobilization in South Sudan started in 2009 before independence and was concluded in 2011 with the assistance of UN Mission on Sudan. According to the report, a total of 12,525 were demobilized. It further stated that second Phase started in 2012, with over 150,000 ex-combatant successfully demobilized. There was effort towards transforming the SPLA from armed wing to a conventional national military.

Although it could be stated that demobilization in South Sudan was officially ‘voluntary’, Warner (2013) stated that in certain areas such as Akobo, it involves strict application or use of force considering the fact that some ex-rebels opposed to surrendering their arms to the constituted authorities. For him, some 1,200–1,400 assault rifles, machine guns, RPGs, and mortars were collected without casualties

(Warner, 2013). He further stated that 1,126 weapons were collected from four *payams* in Pibor County from January to May 2007. The latter process was largely aimed at the Murle, who were not previously disarmed and have a feared reputation as cattle raiders. Nezam and Marc (2009) identified two types of demobilization as regards to stability and measures to achieve stable societies after conflict situation. In their view, DDR programmes utilized cantonment strategy in which fighters are brought to centres for the purposes of being demobilized which tends to faster.

However, in South Sudan, the mixture of these two approaches appears not to have yielded desirable result. The State also appears to have lacked the capacity and the financial wherewithal to provide these facilities and the reluctance of some rebels to lay down their arms is an indication that the state is not yet completely far from fresh threats. For example, it appears that some rebel commanders are yet to embrace peace with some rebelling against the state in the aftermath of their failures to secure political appointments or even as a result of their defects during the 2010 election as can be seen in the case of Yau Yau. Since 2012, it is estimated that 4,000–6,000 largely Murle youths have either directly joined Yau Yau's ranks, received arms and ammunition from him and are exploiting the current chaos to independently attack the SPLA or other Murle, or a combination of the above (BTI, 2012). Nezam and Marc (2009) further posited that demobilization usually consists of the following activities: health screening, documentation of the ex-combatant, registration, pre-discharge orientation, mapping out areas of return and resettlement, reintegration opportunities and services.

As United Nations Department for Peace Keeping, (2000) rightly explained, demobilization is essential part of the disarmament and reintegration programme which forms part of a natural gamut of stabilizing a state that needs all-inclusive and harmonized approach in their implementation. It further stated that erecting camps are crucial requirement for the demobilization and reintegration, especially when ex-combatants have to wait for extended periods before they can be transported to their homes for resettlement. It therefore listed factors to be kept in mind when selecting and setting camps as follows:

- The camps can easily be accessed. Location of the site especially when it is located close to the rebel bases also encourages participation. Proximity to roads, airfields, rivers and railways, should also be considered.
- To encourage participation entails ensuring that security of the site is guaranteed. The participant or ex-combatant must be assured that the camp is fortified in terms of security. Management of the site must have sound security arrangement and the inhabitants should be partners in the securitization process.
- Basic amenities are essential. These are amenities that enhance human existence. For instance, there is need for good access road in the site, healthcare facilities, waste disposer and toilet facilities, provision of portable water and recreational facilities that would help for rehabilitation of ex-fighters.
- Storage facilities/armoury properly secured and guarded facilities/armouries for temporary storage of collected weapons should be set up. Transportation should also be organized as soon as possible for surrendered weapons and ammunition which is to be moved out of camp to permanent storage sites.
- There is need to establish a communication channel in the site. This channel of communication links the site with state authorities, supervising agencies and sometimes donor organizations and civil society groups who are willing to play crucial role during the demobilization period (United Nations Department for Peace Keeping, 2000, p.17).

Understandably, the above prescriptions by United Nations Department for Peace Keeping (2000) and Nezam & Marc (2009) seem to be a major step for successful and effective demobilization process. The idea is that all demobilization and resettlement efforts should include provisions for aid packages that relate directly to the immediate, day-to-day needs of the demobilized ex-combatants, such as

food, clothing, shelter, tools, transportation and education. Governments, United Nations agencies and other non-governmental organizations should participate actively in the planning and implementation of vocational training programmes. Most importantly, is that these programmes should be tailored towards building or enhancing the marketable skills of ex-fighters and to suit immediate demands of the communities/districts or areas of permanent residence of the demobilized soldiers.

However, both prescriptions failed to emphasize the environmental realities, conditions and complexities that fraught demobilization programmes (Odigbo & Odigbo, 2025). The fact that it involves different rebel groups at different moments in time and it takes place in a very volatile and dangerous political context means that there is need to address environmental condition. For instance, in South Sudan, surprise rebel attacks on the capital Juba, as well as armed violence throughout the country occurred on a daily basis. Since the programme involves several phases of arms collection, training, kind services as well as cash payments and political appointment, it makes a randomized controlled trial virtually impossible. Also excluding groups (even temporarily) from certain benefits allocated to others would increase violence on the spot, exactly because the exclusion of the benefits of state power and inequality in access to resources in general is a major cause of civil war in South Sudan.

Kingma (1997) examined demobilization after war and reintegration of ex-combatant and observed that in the past few decades' demobilization of ex-combatants occurred after an end to active conflict though such processes take diverse contexts and approaches. He gave instances of Uganda where conflicts ended for years prior to the commencement of demobilization and the absorbing the military personnel who were previously under the National Resistance Army of Uganda. In his view, the primary aim of Uganda's demobilization is majorly in three spheres. For instance, Kingma, (1997) divided these aims as military, social and budgetary purposes.

The first which is the military aim is to maintain a military force that is well-trained and indeed motivated to contribute meaningfully to national security. The second aspect which is social objective entails resettlement and peaceful reintegration of ex-combatant and their families in a manner that will ensure they are productive. Thus, before considering these processes of demobilizing ex-soldiers, nations must into consideration the cost implications as it will mean maintaining large number of military personnel. However, the stages and processes are sequentially but divided so as the institutions involved (Kingma, 1997).

Indeed, the process of demobilization cannot begin without a critical evaluation of case loads and careful plans to achieve results. Those ex-combatants earmarked for demobilization are brought to certain places where they would be registered and identification tags given to them. In fact, disarmament and reintegration are crucial steps towards demobilization. Areas mapped out for the demobilization should be secured and equipped with healthcare facilities to aid people who are in need of healthcare and counselling. Indeed, Kingma (1997) further explained that demobilization in Uganda began with pre-discharge interactive sessions, where the participants would be given information on how to begin activities that financially rewarding, and how to open bank accounts, educate people on issues relating to law and order and other environmental matters. In the process of demobilization, people or the participants are given packages that will enable them start a new life. For instance, basic necessities such as clothing, building materials such as zinc, cement, wood etc and farm implements are distributed to assist the people to restart their lives again. In fact, the Uganda experience involved packages where veteran's children received one year payment of school fees (Kingma, 1997). Also, some demobilized received in tranches certain amount of money and some were paid at the point of demobilization.

In spite of this assistance there is always a challenge in demobilization process. There are huge obstacles to resettlement of ex-combatant. The issue of location which from the outset was not known to the returnees' remained a constraint. It increases anxiety and sometimes threat to life and discriminatory acts against the demobilized. Thus, Kingma (1997, p.12)

noted that movement of the resettled people to a new place or places can only be enhanced if they are supported and means of transport provided.

Kingma further emphasized that various approaches could be adopted in the process of demobilization which is determined by the need and environmental realities. He also identified various support efforts needed for a successful demobilization and was also skeptical on the negative implications if not prudently executed. However, he did not dwell on issues relating to the ambitions (which sometimes political) of those demobilized. Their political ambition often confused them or sometimes compels some to return to rebellious life.

Thus, experiences in South Sudan suggest that some of the ex-combatant have to resort to violence or raise arms against the government because of lack of access to power. As we have noted earlier, David Yau Yau is a good example. There are also cases where most post-independence conflicts are linked to the manipulation or poor implementation of the DDR programme. In this regard, it could be stated that the character of government which tends to settle some rebel leaders with high and juicy political offices seems to promote rebellious attitude. This has actually failed to dissuade people from engaging or returning to the act of rebellion. It has rather presented the act of rebellion as a means of achieving political relevance or access to state power instead of abating the present violence it rather reinforces it hence there is dividend accruable to it.

Undoubtedly, civilian demobilization in post conflict societies has corresponding impacts on the entire political process and indeed successful integration enhances participation of the citizenry in policy making process. Indeed, Harkness (2011) asserted that integration of rebels has been a feature of just about more than one and half of all documented peace processes in Africa since the 1990s. This is mainly attributed to the prevailing opinions that explain redevelopment as post-conflict processes essential for reintegrating rebels into national security architecture (one that includes former rebels and is representative of a society's ethnic and religious diversity) would not relapse into conflict. Thought such integration provides a credible security guarantee to all sides, particularly in cases of civil war, allowing the warring parties to overcome credible commitment problems. Harkness (2011) argued that this is dissimilar to demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) which are stages of reintegrating ex-combatant into a civilized society. According to him, it is an alternative to demobilization; military integration allows former rebels to retain access to military power via state institutions and thus secures their ability to protect their interests moving forward.

The above position of Harkness (2011) no doubt has been not only complex but confusing as well. First, there is a huge linkage between integration and demobilization. It may be cumbersome to separate them. Integration could not be seen as option to demobilization but rather a credible means towards achieving durable peace at the end of conflict in a society. They are connected and indeed, fundamental towards a specific objective. In fact, one cannot demobilize without integrating, either into the military, police (any other security agency) or even the society since it is assumed that engagement in war may have separated the rebel or the combatant from his or her immediate society.

Thus, integration of rebels could be seen as a means of integrating ex-combatant into a legitimate security structure (Hazen, 1994; Glassmyer & Sambanis, 2008; Warner, 2013). This is the process of reconciling groups especially the warring parties to ensure that everyone feels accepted and protected from the repercussion or role played during the period of conflict. Integration of rebels ensures the avoidance of ethnic dominance of the military which sometimes creates a sense of existential threat amongst excluded groups.

Even where government moderates win out and peace agreements involving military integration do move forward, such arrangements create problems of their own which may in turn lead to a renewal of conflict (Warner, 2013). Extremist rebel officers who may not be satisfied with power sharing arrangements and see them instead as a stepping-stone to their own ethnic dominance, are incorporated alongside moderates. Also, the initial stages of integration often entail the wholesale

absorption of rebel units without their immediate reorganization and dispersal amongst existing units (Harkness, 2011). He further explained that this process creates internal ethnic factions within the national military.

Interestingly, Baaz & Verweijen (2010) argued that donor approaches to military integration have to a large extent been characterized by an ostrich policy, with little efforts to monitor and influence the unfolding processes. They summarized external donor involvement in the integration process as poor while arguing that South Sudan lacks capacity to implement policies. According to them demobilization means a more efficient measures to a military transformation, because it shuns politics or politicking. This rather simplistic narrative, however, fails to take a number of crucial issues into consideration, including the relative scarcity of allocated resources, South Sudan's limited political space for enforcing policies, the fact that "willingness for reform" does exist in substantial layers of the South Sudan army and finally, the external climate where images of donor interests are deeply shaped by a long and troubling history of foreign intervention (Baaz & Verweijen, 2010, p. 4).

It is imperative to note that foreign-driven "social engineering," may not reasonably address fundamental issues and strategies targeting the transformation of the military should put into consideration the South Sudan state, more importantly is to design and evolve measures of engagement especially in the areas of re-absorbing the ex-rebels into the military structures. This renewed engagement strategy will help to address adverse outcomes of the entire process as well as helping the state to deal with issues associated with rebel groups. As noted earlier, demobilization and reintegration of ex-rebels are key towards containing various forms of clashes in Jonglei state which has been extended to the capital Juba and later snowballed into civil war. It can't be neglected; integration must be seen as key in the views of donor nations and agencies in the South Sudan.

In a similar vein, Hazen (1994) argued that nations coming out from conflict situations engaged in social integration. Incidentally, it is still unclear among scholars what constitutes social integration, measures to achieve it and how to determine when it has been achieved. Thus, social integration denotes creation of level playing ground for all citizens; the extent to which citizens comply and the kind of conversations established in a political space. Indeed, social integration refers to the situation in which members of a community share common norms, beliefs, and goals that are structured and enforced through social institutions and a common dialogue (Hazen, 1994). Thus, post-conflict reintegration aims to rebuild these norms to re-establish socio-economic and political structures destroyed during the war (Hazen, 1994).

In circumstances where there is conflict, some sections of the political system undertake social integration especially the rebels or combatants. This may antithetical to the notion of conflict which projects destructive image, Hazen (1994) argued that social integration does and must take place in order for the fighting factions to be able to recruit combatants, prevent them from deserting, and create a cohesive fighting force. It is a similar process to what happens in national militaries wherein recruits enter a new culture and are trained and educated into a set of beliefs and practices that must be followed. However, most find it difficult to imagine such a process happening among non-governmental fighting factions. Instead, rebel factions are often viewed as violent criminals, greedy delinquents, or crazy savages. Although "rebel factions have violent and greedy elements in them, there is also a culture and institutional structure that guides behaviour and indoctrinates new recruits into a set of beliefs and norms effective for fighting a war" (Hazen, 1994, pp. 2-3).

As can be seen, integration especially in war period is seen in fold; namely, intentional or voluntary and forceful integration. The intentional integration occurs following the desire of the combatant to be integrated, even though that many have argued that such choice was taken by the combatant because of lack of alternative options. However, it is intentional or voluntary to the extent that the choice is that of the combatant. On the other hand, forceful integration is conducted with the use of force in which combatant

are compelled either through abduction or apprehended and co-opted into the integration process.

In some peace building success stories, the rebel army embraced legitimate processes of transformation. This could be in form of rebranding or metamorphosing into state institutions like political party or agencies capable of repositioning the group to be active and compete for national development. However, Glassmyer & Sambanis, (2008) have argued that integrating ex-combatant into the military may likely not guarantee peace. They came to conclusion that initiatives for peace that are not completely executed or poorly managed may threaten the wider outcome of the entire exercise. It may endanger peace rather than promoting peace. Furthermore, it contended that successfully implementing integration aspects of peace agreements is suggestive and not conclusive (Glassmyer & Sambanis, 2008).

Thus, with the signing of Comprehensive Peace Accord, Warner (2013) asserted that huge number of armed groups existed in South Sudan. He further explained that close to fifty thousand different armed groups affiliated to SPLA and its military wing were integrated into national army. Also, Juba Declaration was a significant diplomatic victory in this respect, therefore, in that it won over large numbers of key Southern commanders. For instance, it facilitated "integration into the SPLA, a force numbering an estimated 125,000, about a quarter of which may be former SSDF" (Cited in Mc Evoy & Le brun, 2010; Githua, 2023; De'Nyok, 2023). By 2012, about 3,000 former rebels joined the national army during President Salva Kiir amnesty period (Warner, 2013).

However, experiences have shown that integration has remained a difficult issue in South Sudan. According to Tadesse (2012) noted that integration into the army enlarges the costs on security sector in Republic of South Sudan, as government expended almost fifty per cent of its annual budget on the MoD and the SPLA, while over eighty per cent is on salaries (Warner, 2013). The implication is that a good chunk of the limited resources accrued to state would be directed towards rehabilitation of ex-combatant and security in general instead of investment. This condition also tends to develop sense of frustration and stimulate aggression among the people.

The South Sudan Defence Force (SSDF) and Other Armed Groups (OAGs) were integrated into the SPLA. Thus, it therefore implies that certain number of people who were previously no SPLA members or who had previously fought against the structures of the SPLA were integrated to becomes members of the SPLA and group they previously seen as enemies. It therefore further dampened the SPLA's unity and ability to galvanized or mobilized its members. Generally, it midwived the emergence of a new SPLA that are merely an amalgam of dissident forces with little or no commitment to national aspiration, no common goal and virtually lack of principles and national interest. As a result, rebel commanders and their forces abandoned mobilizing the people which could be their primary duty and engaged in bitter rivalries and unhealthy competition for power (cited in Attah-Asamoah, Sharamo & Mwanzia, 2011).

In fact, sectarian conflicts in South Sudan explain the prevalence and persistence of political instability in South Sudan. Tadesse (2012) maintained that South Sudan's decades of marginalization have resulted to unfriendly conditions that often provoke violent clashes. There exist numerous perspectives on factors contributing to violent clashes in South Sudan. Thus, there are both specific and general causative factors that triggers and drives various forms of conflicts in South Sudan.

Historically, failure to address land disputes especially for grazing purposes and leadership gaps that have leveraged armed groups to dictate for the society and ceased such opportunities for selfish aggrandizement undermined collective interest. Beyond this, the youths are still heavily armed in their communities. The state and people are still ruled by authoritarian dictatorship, use of force and gun. It is a state with less or no value systems and principles that respect human dignity. Tadesse (2012) thus concluded that the driven force behind these conditions is the feeling and sense of disconnection between the government in power and the people especially at the rural communities.

Thus, the manner of integration in South Sudan has continued to engender instability. Indeed, the International Crisis Group (2011) posited that:

> "the 2006 integration of Paulino Matiep (as SPLA deputy commander in chief) and allied militias remains both incomplete and a source of considerable resentment within the SPLA, because it and other integrations were premised on amnesties and because of the many officers who were taken in at what were perceived to be arbitrarily high rank. Some, cognizant of a precedent in which rebel leaders have been re-integrated on favorable terms or even rewarded, hoped to end this incentive to insurgency. Those opposed advocated the use of force, so as to crush the rebels and discourage future mutiny. Others sought to continue a near-term strategy of amnesty and reintegration. Though aware it would not be a sustainable strategy in the long run, they were even more conscious that domestic unrest could be ill afforded ahead of, or in the immediate wake of independence" (International Crisis Group, 2011, p.10).

Collaborating with the International Crisis Group (2011) position on the poor success and the inability of South Sudan to successfully integrate, Weber (2013) explained that more than 40,000 irregular combatants from diverse armed groups were officially integrated into the national army under the "big tent" policy from 2009 to 2012 in South Sudan. However, this programme has done little more than to provide leaders of armed movements with the privileges and opportunities at advancement they desired (Weber, 2013). In his view, the integration in South Sudan appears hugely unsuccessful with ex-combatant poorly integrated and not committed as expected after integration. Consequently, some commanders are waging internal wars with their armed groups which portend future danger. The danger is that dissatisfied combatants may establish new militias for the purposes of accessing political portfolios or funds. No doubts that integrating rebels into the ranks of regular army may further breeds the creation of more factional forces demanding access to political authority and other privileges. Also, more contestations among the forces could be seen as these forces pushing for better negotiating outcomes from SPLA.

In fact, a major hindrance to peace in South Sudan could be seen from the fact that virtually all the ex-fighters continued to show loyalty to commanders who became civilian politicians. South Sudan government and SPLM specifically were not able to formulate people oriented policy. In fact, people have not seen either dividends of peace or any impactful socio-economic and political transformation that have positive impacts on the lives of the people. Apart from this, it appears that there is no major transformation in place and instead, what has happened could according to Awolich (2014) best be described as "a big tent policy" in which influential individuals are accommodated in the government, and the rebel leaders bribed into quitting insurgence without actually resolving the causes of revolts. "No consequential redress has happened, no reconciliation has taken place, and justice was forgotten" (Awolich, 2014). Therefore, of continuation of violence can be seen from the standpoint of state failure to evolve remedial strategy to restart the new state in a manner that both the state and the people will enjoy durable peace.

On the hand, studies seem to be divergent than unanimity on the exact definition and appropriate strategy for peace building in the aftermath of war. Thus, peace building can be seen as a process of reviving a post conflict society and there is no generally accepted understanding and guarantees that such societies would relapsed into violence if the process is poorly executed (Alumona & Odigbo, 2020). Though, studies such as (Lederach, 1997; Albert, 2001; Miller, & King, 2004; Tschirgi, 2004; Adebo, 2005; Bolarinwa, 2006; Isumonah, 2006; Lotze, De Carvalho & Kasumba, 2008; Hutton, 2014; Githua, 2023; De'Nyok, 2023; Kuol, 2025; De'Nyok; 2025) essentially argued that peace building is a necessary process aimed at reconstructing a society in the aftermath of conflict, but there is still disparity on the period or time peace building can satisfactorily be done. Indeed, reviving

communities affected by the devastating impacts of war shows that building peace entails rebuilding the communities from the scratch of ruins and building confidence in people to accept and be accepted in the community again. According to Boutros-Ghali (1992) sees the concept of peace building as all actions geared towards identification and assistance of structures capable of strengthening peace and avoid a relapse into conflict situations. It means reviving the institutions and building infrastructures of nations destroyed during civil war and strife (Boutros-Ghali, 1992).

Thus, Hutton (2014) focused on the connection between peace building and state building, since the state is the primary vehicle through which domestic and international peace is sought. His contention is that the current peace building practices prioritize the society but also not ignoring other facets of the society and interventions towards addressing issues of peace building comprehensively. He clearly stated that there is no disconnect between peace-building and state building. Therefore, considering domestic and global assumptions and views on the procedures taken to build peace and actors involved, separating both concepts becomes almost impracticable.

In addition to this linkage between peace building and state building, Hutton (2014) explained that at national and local levels there exist numerous tensions between building a state (focusing on capacity) through institutions and processes, and consolidating peace and security (focusing on legitimacy). Call and Wyeth highlighted these tensions between peace building and state building that need to be addressed to ensure that national-level initiatives contribute towards the longer-term consolidation of peace (cited in Hutton, 2014).

As can be seen, synthesizing perspectives on peace building, one may arrived at basically two forms of peace building programmes. These two patterns involved;

a. efforts design to help to build and revive the state;
b. Calculated attempts towards enhancing capacities of communities obviously facing difficulties and are generally weak.

From the above, peace building engenders two strategic opportunities to state and other elements like communities that comprised the state. It is important to note that the state is crucial as the symbol of authority in any given society. The crucial role played by the state is driven by the ruling elites exercising state authority.

Theoretical Underpinning

At the heart of this study is finding explanations for the weakness or poor performance of the government in South Sudan and perhaps more importantly, is to interrogate the progress of peace building processes adopted in South Sudan by United Nations and the implications of these on sustainable peace in South Sudan. In the literatures examined, explanations for persistent democratic challenges that threaten the fragile peace have been sought mainly by looking at the measures to revive communities and participation in the political process, yet the various approaches produced one result, “civil war”.

Indeed, it is important to note that explanations of the trajectories of conflicts and post-independent violence as well as leadership failures in Africa and more specifically South Sudan cannot be exclusively located within the context of internal dynamics of power struggle which is a subset of the contest, rather, the explanation should also be sought from the character of the State and the fact that over 80% of the leaders both at national and county levels in South Sudan are formerly leaders of rebel factions during the struggle. However, the emphasis of this study is to interrogate the narratives of violence in South Sudan and measure the extent peace-building frameworks have engendered peace in post independent South Sudan.It is based on the above illustrations that this study adopted the United Nations *Agenda for Peace* as its theoretical framework. According to Hearn, Bujones and Kugel (2014), an Agenda for Peace is often regarded as the genesis of modern peace-building and can be seen as an early theoretical framework of peace building. Essentially, the United Nations *Agenda for Peace* embodied four major assumptions for achieving and conserving peace. These assumptions; Preventive diplomacy, Peacemaking, Peace-keeping and Post-

conflict peace-building have been applied prior to independence and in the post independence period. For instance, through peacemaking hostile parties South Sudan and Sudan, SPLA and SPLAIO, President Kiir and Vice-President Machar have been severally entered into agreement even thought the parties to the agreement failed to fully honour the agreements. Thus, through preventive diplomacy, tensions in South Sudan have not escalated and through peace keeping, the UN has retained troops in South Sudan after a decade of independence thereby improving structural conditions capable of maintaining peace. However, considering the persistency and sectarian nature of violence in post independence South Sudan and efforts of the UN to enthrone peace, United Nations Agenda for Peace becomes not only relevant, but the bedrock for understanding the dynamics of the post-independence conflicts in South Sudan and perhaps more importantly the measures taken by UN to foster peace and stability in South Sudan.

UNMIS Civilian Demobilization Programme and Integration of "Other Armed Group into National Army in South Sudan

Leaders of South Sudan and Sudan signed the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Though the CPA was primarily designed for South Sudan but it could not resolve insecurity in various areas in South Sudan. South Sudan like many East African states was engulfed with clashes among pastoralists and other forms of violent conflicts over access to natural resources. The decades of violence among ethnic nationalities drive feeling of competition and distrust among ethnic groups in South Sudan. As a result, years after the signing of the CPA, South Sudan announced comprehensive disarmament programme. The SPLA welcomed the idea and encouraged various Governors of the states to advised people from their ethnic groups and locality to embrace the process by handing over arms in their possession to legitimate authorities.

According to Daboh, Fatoma & Kush (2010) the SPLA-led demobilization campaign in South Sudan was launched against a backdrop of simmering tensions over common property resources and politicized inter-ethnic rivalries. Thus, by April 2012 about 12,525 combatants had been demobilized and even fewer had been supported by sporadic reintegration services (HSBA, 2013). As earlier noted, in 2009, the first phase of Demobilization started but ended in 2012 with a total of 12,525 people demobilized (Hutton 2014). He further stated that the second phase that began in 2012 had a caseload of 150,000 people. Indeed, the process of civilian demobilization is the second component of DDR program. The separation of ex-rebels and dislodging their command structure marks the beginning of transition to civil life. While it is important to note that DDR program in South Sudan has recorded mixed results, there is also need to emphasize the fact that retrieving arms from civilians may be difficult where arms are perceived as an obligation for survival.

However, in line with the effort to secure peace, Bass, (2012) explained that between January to May 2007, about 1,126 weapons were collected from four *payams* in Pibor County 1,200–1,400 assault rifles, machine guns, RPGs, and mortars were collected without casualties in Akobo in 2007. He further stated that over 43,686 weapons comprising, 12,583 AK-47s, 6000 G3s, and other rifles and light weapons have been successfully retrieved since the commencement of civilian disarmament. In 2006 the SPLA retrieved over 3,000 weapons during civilian disarmament operations in Jonglei State were collected.

Though according to Daboh, Fatoma & Kush, (2010) the initiative to retrieve arms was political rather than locally-driven security imperatives. However, sophistication and huge number of ammunition gathered indicates that even the actualization of independence by South Sudanese has not erase the mentality of acquiring arms for individual self-defense. It also explains that more needed to be done to not only disarming and demobilizing but to dissuade them from active engagement in arms dealing. This is because the present approach is poorly design and mainly militarized without security fortification. BTI (2012) stated that rebellion in some communities cost 1,600 in some local areas. Thus, activities in Jonglei that aimed towards

improving security unfortunately degenerated into conflict (BTI, 2012). Indeed, civilian demobilization in South Sudan is hazardously multifaceted. Generally, mopping up arms in circulation especially those in the hands of civilian is a desideratum for peace, however, it can be noted that conducting this retrieval activity in a post-conflict society is even more demanding. Ending violent conflict in Jonglei exposes the strategic hollowness of South Sudan approach towards addressing security in the country. Furthermore, it showed poorly conceived and lack of consultation and engagement of local stakeholders in ending the proliferation of small arms in the rural areas in South Sudan.

In general terms, GoSS's civilian disarmament and demobilization have produced mixed outcomes. The planning of DDR was poor. The government's inadequate support of the implementation undermines the real essence of the entire programme. With clear legal backing and terms dictating processes, the event produced diverse but unpalatable results. In fact, some states vehemently opposed the programme and indeed refused to participate. According to BTI (2012) Warrap reported that 15,000 weapons were retrieved but such reports raised the argument on when these weapons was collected, were they retrieved during the disarmament and demobilization or prior to the programme. Apart from this none of the states in entire federation was able to announce publicly the number of arms retrieve during the demobilization programme.

The top-down order, as opposed to bottom-up initiative was backed by little consultation and few resources, the narrowly defined DDR initiative failed to build partially because the civil society was not engaged or provided any incentives in order to buy into the program. The decentralized nature of the campaign reinforces concerns that the GoSS's overall policy to increasingly 'devolve' administration to the states is translating into uneven and, in places, ineffective governance.

The South Sudan case furthermore highlights how political dynamics and considerations can inhibit demobilization; i.e. armed groups may be reluctant to demobilize if they believe that their political goals may be unacceptably jeopardized by doing so. In fact, it further demonstrates how distrust between warring groups can hamper demobilization, since other armed groups conserved clandestine forces following the Comprehensive Peace Accord. Though, various economic interests in different cases can influence the willingness of combatants to demobilize. For instance, in Southern Sudan between 2006 and 2011, many SPLA soldiers were reluctant to demobilize because military service offered employment and wages, whilst the likelihood of gaining future civilian employment was uncertain (Stibbe, 2012). Moreover, demobilization appears difficult and sometimes impossible when there is culture of impunity and patterns of institutionalized culture of conflict. Furthermore, long years of conflict between Sudan and South Sudan, the internal wrangling after independence have created some sort distrust, normalize the culture of revenge and stiff competition among the rebel groups also hindered genuine process of demobilization.

Thus, part of the difficulties of demobilization is the failure or inability of many of the ex-rebel to register with authorities officially saddled with the duty to facilitate demobilization. For instance, government agencies and international organizations in charge of the process have laid down procedures which include registering at the designate points. This registration will enhance data collection and reliability that will further determine the success of demobilization programme. For instance, Stibbe, (2012) pointed out that in Southern Sudan, SPLA leaders announced their numbers as 300,000 during the 2005 DDR programme while this total was discarded by international actors as overestimated, and a demobilization target of 90,000 was agreed with the SPLA instead. Essentially, signing Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) between Sudan and South Sudan marked the genesis for the search for peace to end decades of conflicts in Sudan. Thus, with acceptance of the 2005 pact, amnesty and military integration were adopted as the part of the process of reintegrating ex-rebels into the security architecture.

Indeed, studies like (Glassmyer and Sambanis 2008; Licklider 2014; Hoddie and Hartzell 2003; Knight 2009; Colletta 2012; Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2013;

Warner 2016; Kuol, & Biar, 2020) have noted that military integration is a crucial strategy of peace-building with the sole purpose of combining and integrating ex-combatants into the national security arrangement. As can be seen, Office of the President of South Sudan and the Ministry for National Security, initiate and decide on conditions for amnesty packages and also shoulder the responsibility of negotiating with ex-commanders for integration processes in South Sudan. This process started immediately in 2005. According to the BTI (2012) between 2005 and 2012 virtually fifty thousand (50, 000) persons comprising sixty groups were integrated into the national army (SPLA). Alcalde, (2013) also explained that the Juba declaration facilitated the integration of estimated 125, 000 former SSDF by 2012, a total of 3, 000 former rebels joined national army during presidential amnesty between 2009 and 2012 under the "big tent policy" more than 40, 000 irregular combatant were integrated.

In his view, Warner (2013) explained that bounties such as cars, houses, cash, integrated and promoted in the military, free accommodation and regular national salaries were promised to people once they agreed to be integrated. Evidently, each commander and his loyalists secured integration based on their capacity to negotiate. Those commanders capable of securing funds to challenge the authority of the state appear to have negotiated more attractive integration than those with less ability.

The South Sudan Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs and the SPLA instruct forthwith the integration of the members of armed group who successfully agreed on a deal. This means that such armed group cannot be subjected to the DDR process. According to Warner (2013) government decision to integrate ex-rebels into the SPLA is to ensure unity prior to their inclusion into the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. It is generally the believe of government and stakeholders that well integrated ex-rebel would be loyal to state authorities and amenable to control. Thus, at the signing of Comprehensive Peace Accord, the Sudan People's Liberation Army was a standing force for the nation with other para-military and ex-rebel forces numbering close to 50,000 members (Warner, 2013; Kuol, & Biar, 2020). But looking at security challenges between 2005-2011, South Sudan government therefore prioritized or rather adopted policy of accommodation rather than use of force. The implication is that government grants amnesty to different rebel groups with the sole purpose of integrating these forces into the national army led by the Sudan People's Liberation Army. The essence is mainly to neutralize and grossly reduced if not completely eliminated insecurity in South Sudan. Secondly and perhaps more importantly, is to secure a serene and conducive atmosphere or environment of peace for speedy transformation of the State. Thus, Other Armed Groups posed serious threat to peace and stability especially during the pre-independence period and the immediate post-independence South Sudan. Their (OAGs) acceptance to integrate into the national army increased the military strength of the South Sudan army to almost 140,000 personnel (Sharamo & Nwanzia, 2011).

Interestingly, notwithstanding this merger and other efforts geared towards continued negotiations with those that declined, most of the commanders of the rebel groups are still active rebels. Most of their activities tend to have continued to complicate peace process especially some who felt that political positions given to them in the integration process seem to be little from what they bargained for.

For instance, the tables below show the names and tribes of rebel commanders who have accepted to be integrated and those who are still active after the Juba declaration and after independence in 2011.

Table 1: South Sudanese Militia Commanders as of October, 2013

S/N	Commander	Name of Force and Affiliation	Location	Status
1	James Arezen	SSDN/A-Cobra	Pibor County Jonglei	Active as of 2013
2	David Yau Yau	SSDM/A-Cobra	Pibor County Jonglei	Active as of 2013
3	Adoch Agul	SSDM/A-Cobra	Pibor County Jonglei	Active as of 2013
4	Gayin Ngarubin	SSDM/A-Cobra	Pibor County Jonglei	Active as of 2013
5	James Lopia	SSDM/A-Cobra	Pibor County Jonglei	Active as of 2013
6	Longaben Wayah	SSDM/A-Cobra	Pibor County Jonglei	Active as of 2013
7	Johnson Olony	SSDM/A-Upper Nile	Fashoda County Upper Nile	Reintegrated into National Army
8	Alyuk Ogot Akol	SSDM/A-Upper Nile	Upper Nile and South Kordofan	Accepted Amnesty
9	Gordon Kong	SSDF	Tadamun County, Blue Nile	Accepted Amnesty
10	Mohamed Chol Amir	SSDF affiliate	Blue Nile	Active and recruiting members
11	Muntu Mutallah	SSDF affiliate	Blue Nile	Active
12	Kamal Loma	SSDF affiliate	Blue Nile	Active
13	James Bogo	SSDF affiliate	Bwat, Blue Nile	Active
14	Bapiny Monituel	SSLM/M	Juba	Accepted Amnesty
15	James Gai Yoach	SSLM/A	South Kirdofan	Arrested and his forces reintegrated
16	Mathew Puljang	SSLM/A	Mayom	Accepted Amnesty
17	Bipen Machar	SSLM/A	Mayom	Accepted Amnesty
18	Karlos Kuol	SSL/A	Juba	Accepted Amnesty

Source: Compiled by the authors from HSBA, (2013, p. 3)

Table 2: South Sudan ex-rebel Leaders since April, 2010

S/N	Person (s) involved	Tribe	Date of Rebellion	Reasons for Rebellion	Area of Operation
1	George Athor Deng	Dinka	April 2010	Election Issues	Jonglei
2	Gabriel Tangunye	Nuer	Refused integration	Long-period of crisis	Upper Nile

3	Peter Gatdet Yak	Nuer	April 2010	Accusation on corruption	Unity
4	Bapiny Monituel	Nuer	Refused integration	Tribal rift about SPLA	Unity
5	Gatluak Gai	Nuer	April 2010	Politically motivated	Unity
6	Abdel Bagi Agyii	Dinka	March 2011	Politically motivated	Northern Bahrel Ghazal
7	Uluak Oliny	Shilluk	After April 2010	Unknown	Upper Nile
8	David Yau Yau	Murle	April 2010	Politically motivated	Jonglei

Source: Compiled by the authors from Sharamo & Nwanzia (2011, p. 12)

From the tables above, it could be noted that in spite of the modicum success recorded through integration process, yet, challenges of negotiation and implementation of negotiated outcomes keep stultifying progress towards achieving durable peace. For instance, the Juba declaration facilitated the integration of estimated 125, 000 former SSDF (Sharamo & Nwanzia, 2011; Kuol, 2025). Furthermore, by 2012, a total of 3, 000 former rebels joined national army during presidential amnesty and between 2009 and 2012 under the "big tent policy" more than 40, 000 irregular combatant were integrated (Warner, 2013).

However, myriad of issues tend to stall integration process in South Sudan, leading to defection and re-defection of the rebel leaders thereby creating a more vulnerable and fragile atmosphere. First, is the fact that virtually close to the meddle of the year 2012 there exists no institution saddled with responsibility of spearheading integration process from the beginning to the end (Warner, 2013). For him, integration should be driven by stakeholders, government representatives and leaders from counties, local communities and the ex-rebel leaders pending on existing agreement of integration. In fact, in some circumstances, religious and traditional leaders are co-opted to become major stakeholders of integration.

However, Warner noted that:

> Although integration in South Sudan provides mix feelings, the extent of its success remains contestable especially when integrated forces possessing different degree of training and different views on where they place their allegiances. These differences could be traced to the fact that South Sudan forces including the integrated ex-rebel are either quasi literate or completely uneducated. There was no adequate military training of the integrated forces. In this circumstance, seniority is largely dependent on the ability of the integrated forces to secure better deals. As a result, the SPLA is dominated with vast number of commanders with all standing alone with their loyalist none loyal to the state and many of the commanders remain at the same rank. The implication is the emergence of national army who is unable to command a single military division (Warner, 2013, p. 44).

Closely related to this is the challenge of the increasing cost imposed on the security sector. For instance, since the end of hostility between Sudan and South Sudan and more specifically since 2010 when general election was conducted, South Sudan

sectoral share of expenditure shows that the security sector has high budgetary allocation. This has continued to increase financial burden in the face of implementation of the policy of "Objective Force 2017" which helped to right-sizing the force from 210,000 men down to about 120,000. No doubts, integration of ex-rebel forces puts heavy financial burden on South Sudan. Substantial amount of money and indeed national income is devoted to payment of salaries and other logistical professional needs.

Indeed, military integration is key in the aftermath of conflict. It marks the beginning of reconciliatory process. It therefore means that any sensible government that emerges at the end of conflict situation would be sensitive enough to implement policies and faithfully integrates the ex-rebels in a manner the society would avert sliding back into conflict. Experiences have shown that in spite of the centrality of this aspect of reconciliation, some governments do not take it serious.

Most of the basic issues (like camps, specific agency to oversee the process, accountability and probity) that tend to promote the process sometimes are being neglected or sometimes politicized. This negligence disposes some of the rebels to difficult condition and also endangers the ephemeral peace achieved under the process. It also creates a condition where people would wander about or wait for months without being integrated. More pitiably, is the condition and habitation areas of the rebels during this process of integration. Poor condition of integration tends to compel some rebels to find shelter under the trees while waiting for the integration proper. The table 3 below shows the status of military integration in South Sudan as of 2013 and the condition upon which they are integrated.

Table 3 Status of Military Integration in South Sudan

S/N	Group	Commander	Start date of negotiation	Number of troops	Status of Integration
1	SSLM/A	Bapiny Montuil	26 April 2013	1200	Fully integration as of 2016
2	SSDF	John Duit	May 2002	215	Integrated in 2014
3	SSDM/A	David Yau	September 2010	200	Not yet fully integrated. Yau Yau's deputies were later arrested.
4	SSDM/A	James Kuburin	4th December 2012	280	Already reintegrated in 2015
5	SSDM/A	Peter Kuol	February 12th	1300	Integrated

Source: Compiled by the authors from HSBA, (2013, p. 6; Githua, 2023; De'Nyok, 2023)

Generally, integration of ex-rebels in South Sudan promoted high level of inducement and based on this commanders tend to return to rebellious act at any little opportunity while newly integrated soldiers defect or switch loyalties for juicy positions, improved pay packages Following from the above data presented and analysis, we therefore invalidated our first hypothesis which states that the adoption of disarmament, civilian demobilization and integration programme by the United Nations Mission in Sudan enhanced peace building in South Sudan.

Conclusion

We reiterated that this study has investigated demobilization and integration programme in South

Sudan. It noted that while such processes are unavoidably essential in a post-conflict societies including South Sudan, there is still no guarantees that it would eliminate all manner of threats in a post-conflict society. The last decade of South Sudan independence has demonstrated that in spite of demobilization and integration, the nation has relapsed into civil wars in 2013 and 2016. This is in spite of sectarian violence and other pockets of rural and ethnic conflicts that have stall progress since 2011 declaration of independence. We therefore concluded that state actors and partners should frame demobilization and integration framework to reflect justice ideals capable of addressing ill-feeling and at the same time convince the rebel to surrender arms. It is our position that when peace or return of arms is tied to juicy offices or financially induced, it collapses with the end of financial flow or removal from office. The paper concluded that opening the democratic space will enhance the capacity of state institutions and empower the people to engage positively and actively to both political leaders and state institutions. We therefore recommended that strong institutions are key hence, only the existence of such institution can herald revival of the deplorable state of South Sudan.

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