War and Genocide in South Sudan

Published by Cornell University Press

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War economies are “system(s) of producing, mobilizing and allocating resources to sustain violence.” While war economies are meant to produce and sustain violence, they also produce social reordering and new forms of governance through the accumulation and control of capital. Charles Tilly’s famous words—“war made states, and vice versa”—are especially applicable to the SPLA. Its war economy was supposed to sustain its war-making capacity, and in a drive reminiscent of what Tilly observed in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe, war-making fostered the organization of taxes, police forces, and courts and ultimately led to state-making. The SPLA’s state-making also came together with the formation of a dominant social class. In this sense, the war economy actually created different groups, with different types of group legitimacy and entitlement. South Sudan’s war economy was indicative of what kind of state would emerge after the war once these different military elites fused together. Postwar predation networks would expand on wartime networks in South Sudan.

**Looting, Taxation, and the SPLA Administration**

**Looting**

The SPLA’s war economy was multifaceted. The first aspect of the SPLA’s war economy that I examine is its looting, in what seems to be the most “disorganized” aspect of its resource extraction.
The SPLA consistently plundered civilians for various reasons. It often pillaged out of necessity to survive and continue military operations. Just like civilians, the SPLA was sometimes famine-stricken. Lack of international aid in rebel areas meant there were no relief supplies to be taxed, looted, or hijacked. This pushed the various militias (on both the government and SPLA sides) and marauding bandits to pillage civilians to sustain themselves—at least at first, before trade networks expanded after 1991.

Whatever the motives (need or opportunism), the SPLA troops often moved into civilians’ houses, confiscated and ate their food, and robbed them of clothes, kitchenware, and livestock. When humanitarian aid effectively reached SPLA-held areas, troops appropriated relief supplies while brutalizing civilians. Whatever they looted, the SPLA forced the communities to carry. SPLA troops behaved in the same fashion in many parts of the country—especially those they were not from. Yet the looting prompted some civilians to flee with their resources. This was exactly what the SPLA wanted to avert through its administration’s taxes. Thus the “roving” bandits described by Mancur Olson had to become more stationary in order to control looting, protect production by civilians, and maintain a steady influx of resources.

Taxes and Administration

The SPLA’s rudimentary administration played a key role in sustaining military campaigns with resources it extracted off civilians. It was essential in making the areas under SPLA control at least sustainable economically. Based almost entirely on the old structures of the Native Administration and the provincial governments of the old Southern Region, the SPLA administration was officially meant to restore law and order. But much more important, its purpose was to support the troops and serve military operations. The efficiency of this strategy was demonstrated in the SPLA’s rolling back of government advances at the end of 1995, which would have been impossible without civilian support provided through the civil administration. In this sense, war-making steered the development of the civil administration.

Yet the SPLA administration did not amount, according to Øystein H. Rolandsen, to a “well-oiled government machinery.” The SPLA administration was rudimentary before the 1990s, although this varied by area. It partly relied on the rural population’s payment of taxes in kind. The SPLA taxes consisted of cattle, milk, sorghum (dura), and anything else that could be eaten or traded by the troops. According to Johnson, the SPLA extracted a rough 20 percent tax on items supplied for civilian use. But it is truly impossible to know the exact percentage. Taxes were collected through a chain of intermediaries. The SPLA
used colonial structures to coerce civilians into paying tribute and chiefs to assemble it. Violence was the glue that held the system of taxation and forced labor together, and the SPLA sometimes did not even have the monopoly of theft until it asserted control over its territories. Civilians were often forced to feed alternately the army, militiamen, and the SPLA.

The struggling population—especially in areas soldiers did not originate from—often only paid these taxes out of fear of being further robbed. Non-Dinka communities perceived the SPLA as a hostile “Dinka army” who forced food contributions that were merely “organized” looting. The situation looked at first sight different in Dinka areas. In Lakes state in Bahr El Ghazal, a former child soldier recalled that “it was very different: everyone knew what his contribution to the movement was as a Dinka: it was a moral obligation.” Households took turns in contributing cattle, but food contributions were supposed to be presented by every family each year.

Yet not all Dinka civilians felt the moral obligation to contribute to the Dinka army. They felt pressured too. A Bor Dinka civilian recounted how people in his community often did not have enough food to feed themselves after the SPLA passed through: “The SPLA taxes consisted of cows, milk, sorghum (dura), and pretty much anything that could be eaten. The joke among locals was that whenever the SPLA was approaching, instead of keeping things in their houses, people would keep their belongings in the bush, and sometimes bury them. The SPLA found out and went outside villages to dig for dura. An old man asked them what they were looking for. Were they looking for rap (dura in Dinka)? The old man told them: ‘My friends, Garang sent you to fight the enemy, the Arabs, not rap.’ That’s the joke. The SPLA was taking a lot of food. The SPLA would leave marks on the ground to tell absentees that when they came back they needed to prepare food for them. Even bulls in cattle camps were to be milked.”

Thus, even in Bor Dinka areas, civilians saw the SPLA as busier accumulating resources than fighting against its sworn-enemy. South Sudan was not that different from other African civil wars more famous for their war economies, such as Sierra Leone, where there was also, as David Keen described, “space for a wide variety of parties to engage in their own exploitative ‘games’ under the cover of a righteous civil war.” Soon, the SPLA similarly emerged as a “twin threat” with government forces and other armed groups, including in its home areas. Non-Dinka civilians were not alone in feeling that taxation amounted to extortion. Some Bor Dinka felt this way too, probably aggravated by the fact that troops were by then mostly Dinka from Bahr El Ghazal, the competing constituency.

Rolandsen highlights two competing interpretations regarding how sophisticated or rudimentary the SPLA administration was before 1994. The first, by Alex De Waal, argues that the SPLA administration was mostly very minimal
because leadership devoid of democratic inclinations and the availability of food aid meant that the armed group did not need to rely on civilians as much. The second, by Douglas Johnson, posits that the administration was well-structured and developed, but undocumented and too authoritarian, which the 1994 convention was meant to address. This is also the SPLA’s own interpretation. According to this view, Rolandsen writes, “the role of the chiefs and their courts should be studied more closely.” The chiefships, under the supervision of the civil/military administrators (CMAs), were heavily militarized and instrumental in gathering taxes and manpower for the troops. Chiefs were either intimidated or coopted, and the rulings of customary courts were also used by all armed groups to procure more resources. Therefore, the two interpretations are not incompatible. Instead, they complement each other: the SPLA administration was indeed minimal. It relied on chiefs and courts whose (arguably main, in the case of the chiefs) purpose was to gather resources. If there was anything “civil” about this administration, it was militarized to serve the SPLA’s war-making and personal enrichment machine.

SPLA Forced Labor

Looting and taxes were inextricably linked with forced labor. Civilians were forced to transform goods stolen or extorted from them, into support for the troops. Women were at the forefront of food production. Typically, in Dinka areas such as Lakes in Bahr El Ghazal, women mostly willingly supported the SPLA troops through women’s organizations. But in Equatoria, other women, mostly from ethnic groups less represented among troops, were forced to cook food and brew beer for the troops. They also cultivated tobacco, sunflowers (for oil production), and honey. The SPLA took at least half of what they cultivated in collective crops (in Lobone camp in eastern Equatoria, for example) or of what they picked up in the bush.

Support was especially coerced when the SPLA was in a fragile military position. For example, women from Nimule remembered being forced to support SPLA troops when the government tried to retake the town from 1994 to 1998. In those days, one of them recalled being forced to grind sorghum and to brew over twenty barrels of alcohol a day to be taken to the frontlines. Other women remembered that the only way to escape cooking day and night for the SPLA troops was to run away and hide in the bush. Women recalled that if they refused to cook, they were beaten and/or raped, or threatened to be. They were also beaten or raped if they refused to welcome and feed soldiers who came to their houses, sometimes in large numbers. Most SPLA soldiers were from Dinka or Nuer groups—and increasingly Dinka. They did not speak the same language
as these women. This fostered misunderstandings and further beating.\textsuperscript{32} Once they had been coerced, it was common for these women to walk and carry food for several days for the SPLA.\textsuperscript{33} Some of them ended up being forced to join and assist the troops on a more permanent basis, being turned into de facto camp followers.\textsuperscript{34} Others were reportedly traded by commanders.\textsuperscript{35}

Back during slavery, the accumulation of women through polygamy and trade was a way to obtain labor.\textsuperscript{36} In fact, most slaves in Africa were women.\textsuperscript{37} Slavery and particular modes of production interacted. Citing Emmanuel Terray and his study of the Asante people, Paul E. Lovejoy noted that according to Terray, the Abron society’s mode of production was based on slavery, with three economic sectors: agriculture, gold mining, and transport (portage). The SPLA replicated exactly these economic sectors in the areas under its control. It forced civilians to work on mines and farms and to carry all sorts of goods for its troops (i.e., portage). Lovejoy noted that “slave owners may have many sources of income, but a substantial portion must derive from activities related to enslavement, trade in slaves, and the appropriation of the product of slave labour.”\textsuperscript{38} The next chapter of this book continues to show how women, at the forefront of food production, were also reproductive capital in themselves and were exchanged.

The SPLA’s mode of production thus resulted in the accumulation of both material wealth and wealth in people through the acquisition of women. This accumulation of wealth, even if especially concentrated in the dominant class, trickled down to the lower strata via the expansion of military kinship networks and increased group ownership.\textsuperscript{39} Group ownership, in turn, contributed to build up group entitlement. Because it was reminiscent of slavery, a system of economic exploitation rooted in racism, this mode of production was prone to foster extreme and exclusionary ethnic group entitlement.

Men also participated in war-related activities.\textsuperscript{40} In SPLA-captured towns and settlements, they were forced to support the troops as well. Some of those who had initially joined the SPLA freely, like the Lotuko who rallied out of disappointment with the Equatorian regional government of Tembura, were confined to the roles of porters.\textsuperscript{41} Such examples of ethnic discrimination against non-Dinka recruits are reminiscent of the colonial division of labor and of military slavery. Overall, a lot of men, women, and children across all ethnic groups carried food, soldiers’ belongings, and ammunition, sometimes for long distances.\textsuperscript{42} Yet many men—especially in Equatoria—fled to the bush to escape the SPLA and often never came back to their families during the war, leaving women vulnerable to attacks as single heads of households.\textsuperscript{43} SPLA soldiers especially pressured single women to support the troops, visiting them at night and inquiring about where their husband was, particularly in the wake of desertions after the 1991 split. A Madi woman remembered, “If after three times they’ve come to your house
and you cannot prove you’ve got a husband, they torture you and then they force you to grind sorghum and bring it to the frontline.44'

As mentioned earlier, the SPLA also organized farming throughout the areas it controlled to increase food supplies for both its troops and trading activities. A Kakwa (Equatorian) man remembered that in Lobone, eastern Equatoria, “the SPLA forced people to cultivate for them. They caught you and forced you.”45 But Lobone was not just a farm: it was also a mine, where the SPLA forced civilians to dig.46 In other locations, such as Lobonok in central Equatoria, the SPLA also had the local chief provide one bucket of gold per month, and each member of the community work one day a week in the mine.47

Even if forced labor in SPLA-held areas was not slavery, it certainly was reminiscent of its economy. The SPLA also used its court system to force civilians with a prison sentence to work in its farms/mines and earmarked some of the production for the division commanders, much like it used court fines to collect cattle.48 This was again a remnant of the organization of slavery.49 SPLA-run farms were reminiscent of the system of the zarai‘b—especially prevalent in Bahr El Ghazal during the nineteenth century. There, female slaves were forced to cultivate too.

The slaving frontier between the “free north” and the “slave south” had continued to move south in the longue durée.50 To a certain extent, the SPLA, in its expansion to the far south, the Equatorian region, and its practice of forced labor continued to move this frontier further south. Forced labor was essential to the development of the three economic sectors outlined earlier (agriculture, mining, portage), and their profits, added to those derived from the capture of cattle, also contributed to the development of a dominant class.

Cattle Raiding and Cattle Looting by the SPLA

Indeed, in addition to looting, taxation, and forced labor, the SPLA raided cattle in both the communities it administered and in those it considered enemies.51 Cattle was a much sought-after economic and social resource—not only did it sustain the troops but it was also sold and used to cement kinship ties with military implications, as I further explore in the next chapter.52 In raiding cattle, the SPLA acted much like other parties to the conflict who raided cattle on a large scale. Whoever (factions or SPLA) defeated the enemy effectively took all its cattle.53 Unfortunately, no reliable and precise estimates exist to determine the scale of such raiding, given the absence of a southern cattle population census before, during, and after the war. Yet the SPLA’s cattle raiding affected virtually every ethnic group.54 Throughout the 1980s, the guerrilla group expanded its cattle raiding into Ethiopia when its presence grew in the southwestern part of
the country, just like other groups sponsored by the Sudanese army or its militia allies.\textsuperscript{55}

Within the territories under its control, the SPLA also used various punitive measures to appropriate cattle. The fact that the SPLA itself raided cattle did not prevent it from also acting as local police, supposed to prevent raiding. If the owner was found guilty of raiding, the SPLA confiscated cattle, always seizing more than what was originally raided.\textsuperscript{56} In addition, the SPLA used the court system to collect cattle from civilians. The heavily militarized nature of the SPLA administration meant that commanders without any judicial training were appointed as judges. A former Dinka SPLA child soldier explained how this worked: “Cattle could be gotten through looting (since there was no real judge, a commander could be a judge), and by using civil-related cases and imposing a fine, or through collecting cattle to feed the soldiers and giving a percentage to the commanders.”\textsuperscript{57}

But the SPLA was not an isolated case. Its expropriation of cattle was mirrored in government-affiliated militias areas. Paulino Matiep and Riek Machar traded with the Sudanese army using looted relief supplies, sorghum, cattle, and weapons in the Upper Nile region.\textsuperscript{58} Matiep’s South Sudan Defense Forces (SSDF) also employed the customary court system to amass cattle in Unity state. His officers used the administration system they had set up (the counterpart of the SPLA administration) to threaten the chiefs. A Nuer civilian from Unity state elaborated on how this system worked: “Paulino Matiep had a lot of cows: if civilians made some mistakes (according to the bosses), they had to give to the boss. For offenses like elopement, you had to pay a 5 cows fine. Only one cow would go to the father of the girl, the rest was for the boss. Matiep’s people, the SSDF, worked with the chiefs. The chiefs were threatened.”\textsuperscript{59}

Racketeering was also profitable. A racketeer is, according to Tilly, “someone who produces both the danger and, at a price, the shield against it.”\textsuperscript{60} In the early 1990s, SPLA commanders demonstrated the full extent of this definition. First, they forcibly mobilized Dinka communities into militias called \textit{gelueng} in reaction to cattle raids by various enemies. \textit{Gelueng} militias would protect cattle but also raid cattle in neighboring Nuer areas of Unity state. Thus, after producing the “shield” against threats of cattle raiding by neighbors, they also produced the “danger” to civilians living in SPLA areas.\textsuperscript{61} As a former child soldier from the area recounted, “Daniel Awet, the former Governor of Lakes, decreed all young men should be armed and be stationed in cattle-camps. This SPLA-created militia meant civilians had to pay for protection in cattle.”\textsuperscript{62}

Historically, what mattered in state-making was the effort, the movement to build infrastructures to collect protection rents—not whether that protection worked. And in this movement, “war making, extraction, state making, and
protection were interdependent. As such, the SPLA’s racketeering was an inherent part of its process of proto-state-making. The SPLA also wove together the threats of both economic and sexual predation, because women were capital. The threat of sexual violence was meant to foster men’s enrollment in the SPLA to protect their properties and female relatives, a Dinka respondent claimed: “The SPLA took cows to feed itself, to frighten people, to force them to join the troops: ‘If there’s a son in your village in the SPLA, then he will protect the daughters, the sisters, the wives, the properties,’ it said.”

**After 1991: Increased Resource Capture**

The 1991 SPLA split intensified predation by all armed groups, while trade networks involving the looted material expanded. The multiplication of armed groups, the removal of a single SPLA administration, and the loss of the SPLA’s bases in Ethiopia (and its fragile position), meant that resource capture was no longer centralized.

But if resource capture increased in 1991, it did not mean that the SPLA became “richer”—at least not for a few years. Indeed, tensions around access to resources ultimately created further splintering within armed groups—therefore generating more competition for these resources. Interfactional fighting and government advances on the ground made relief operations extremely difficult yet easily manipulated by warring parties—which would soon make the SPLA richer. The concentration of displaced persons renewed the demand for the delivery of large quantities of aid while amplifying the diversion of these relief supplies for military use. Relief supplies and the sympathy of relief agencies became objects to be won by competing SPLA factions.

Ultimately, the 1991 split would prompt the SPLA to further build the institutions of its rudimentary administration, which as the next pages show, went hand in hand with predation. The SPLA developed its administration for various reasons—first out of competition with its splintering factions. Then, Sudan increasingly became a pariah state in the eyes of the U.S. for its sponsoring of terrorism. The SPLA leader tapped right into these international developments. In the eyes of his southern competitors, “Garang projected Khartoum as Islamist, racist and terrorist on Capitol Hill.”

By 1993, the U.S. and European states considered Sudan a “rogue state.” But the SPLA also needed to gain popularity, and improving its human right record was one way to boost its image to foreigners and expatriates. Shortly after the split in 1991, the SPLA’s Political Military High Command had agreed on the
Toriit Resolutions, which paved the way for a transformation of the civil administration.72 In April 1994, the SPLA organized its first National Convention, eleven years after its creation.73

The convention was supposed to signal the movement’s democratization, and the SPLA put much effort into being seen to strengthen the features of its protostate. This first meant practicing “reform rhetoric.” The convention itself was described in academic accounts as a “show for external consumption.” In this theatrical act, the Dinka were overrepresented, and elections that reelected the leadership were far from being free and fair.74 If one of the main achievements of the convention was to separate the civil from the military administration and subordinate it to a new national executive, a South Sudanese intellectual compared this institutional exercise to “window-dressing.”75 In fact, “the military administration was disguised as civil administration until the signing of the CPA.”76

Expansion of the SPLA Administration and Predation

After 1994, the administration remained heavily militarized and the protostate violent and extractive. The SPLA used its expanding civil administration to maximize its predation.77 The Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association (SRRA), the relief wing of the SPLA since 1986, had already been accused of diverting money meant to alleviate famine in Northern Bahr El Ghazal back in 1988 and of diverting food aid in Ethiopia’s refugee camps to support SPLA military operations in the South.78 After 1994, the SRRA was still tied to the SPLA despite claims of separation.79 It became more central in the system of predation as more international relief supplies arrived in the years following the 1994 convention.80 In 1996, the SPLA movement created the Civil Authorities of New Sudan (CANS), but much like the SRRA, all decision-making staff from the CANS were military officers.81

Observers had criticized the 1994 convention for overrepresenting the Dinka.82 After 1994, access to resources remained with the leadership, and due to the effects of the 1991 split and the ethnicization of the movement, resources also stayed firmly in the grip of the Dinka. The SPLA’s number three, James Wani Igga, who was from Equatoria (a Bari) and the secretary for finance and economic planning, had no financial resources to dispense. The only money was reportedly either in the office of the chairman (Garang) or with the SRRA.83 The heads of the SRRA remained Dinka—from Justin Yac and Elijah Majok to Benjamin Majak and Mario Muor Muor. Thus state-making maximized predation and mostly benefited a new dominant Dinka class, who controlled modes of production and resources.
The SPLA was not necessarily more corrupt than before; rather, its increasing popularity with relief agencies, which prompted observers to nickname the south “NGO-istan,” augmented the influx of resources (aid) into its protostate. After the 1991 split, the UN and other agencies within Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) Southern Sector had entered a dialogue with the southern movements to redefine the humanitarian principles underlying relief. By 2001, South Sudan was the world’s largest humanitarian operation.

More resources flowing into the SPLA went hand in hand with institutional development, in a typical state-making movement. OLS pushed for the development of institutions within the SPLA, to move from relief to development, in the context of a wider intellectual debate about how neutral positioning avoided addressing the roots of the conflict. It did so hoping to democratize the movement, even if it was clear, four years after the 1994 convention, that the SPLA’s promises, made mostly for the benefit of foreign spectators, had not come to fruition. The aid community accepted that predation over relief aid was a given, to the extent that it allowed the SPLM/A, in the 1995 Ground Rules, to tax anyone—Sudanese or foreigner—working for foreign agencies. This trend continued for years, with aid workers complaining that the SRRA was trying “increasingly to identify new opportunities to enrich themselves by milking the NGOs as they have done already successfully with UN/OLS.”

What mattered for the SPLA was giving the international community the impression of trying to build a democratic state. SPLA complaints were consistently voiced during conferences attended by international donors, and meant to justify (not account for) the lack of development at the local level. At the local level, few resources fed anything other than what was related to military operations and/or personal enrichment.

A former Dinka SPLA child soldier summarized the movement that combined institutional growth and predation: “The 1994 civilian administration was a good way for the SPLA to continue these practices on a larger scale: that’s when the system of rationed contribution was set up and looting increased, becoming systematized . . . The 1994 convention in Chukudum involved the same soldiers: the commissioners, payam administrators, judges, were all army officers. Although people with civilian skills were assigned civilian positions, the military orientation of the movement remained much stronger. There were more contributions to the SPLA after 1991 because the SPLA relied more on them. After 1994, it became more systematized with the regional governor, the payam administrator, the county administrator.”

Civilian contributions increased as the guerrilla group relied ever more on them. A former Dinka SPLA battalion commander from Bahr El Ghazal (Lakes) explained, “The civilian administration was created in 1996 and was tasked to
mobilize resources, and then only to administer civilians which included coordinating between civilians, SPLA and NGOs, and resettlement and protection of IDPs, refugees, returnees. He continued to explain how when managing resources, the SPLA seized about 60 percent out of any civilian contribution or NGO donation and supposedly gave the remaining 40 percent to the civilian administration. To funnel the 60 percent, the division commander formed a resource committee headed by three people of his choosing. This resource committee was the top institution, composed of loyalists to the division commander—usually his relatives. The committee reported back to the division commander so he could decide what he kept for himself and reinvested in other ventures, and what he gave his soldiers to sustain his authority and the running of his troops.

The division commander and his resource committee were key spots for resource accumulation. They decided what amount of cattle and what portion of the salaries looted from SAF convoys were to be distributed to soldiers. They also decided what community contributions were to be traded and sold, and what amount of trucks or cars (or other hard items) captured and cattle looted were to be reinvested or traded and sold, including in neighboring countries such as Uganda. SPLA division commanders held a privileged position in the circuit of predation, and as the former commander put it, “they enriched themselves to death.”

But most of what was earmarked for the civilian administration went right back into the SPLA’s war-making and self-enrichment machine. Indeed, out of the 40 percent assigned to the civilian administration, at least 60 percent (some even said 90 percent) was given back to the SPLA as community contributions in the form of cattle, relief items, etc. collected by the chiefs.

In this circuit of predation, the richest people at the top of the civilian administration and the SPLA and its relief wing (SRRA) all got a share of the 40 percent earmarked for the administration. Position in this circuit mattered much more in accessing resources than rank. The battalion commanders, finance officers, and logistics officers held key spots since they had a commission on every resource and contract they brought in and administered. The civil/military administrators also held privileged spots as they were the ones to collect the SPLA taxes off the chiefs. Positions such as regional governor, payam administrator, and county administrator were also key nodes in this circuit of predation. The graph below illustrates the circuit of predation.

When OLS officials estimated that up to 50 percent of the aid was diverted, they probably just scratched the surface of it: even the remainder (the other 50 percent) of what they assumed was given to civil administration was mostly not. Yet USAID was adamant about making NGOs understand that they had to accept the SRRA’s siphoning of aid. Zachariah Cherian Mampilly writes,
“The SRRA could also rely on its close relationship with USAID, the source of much aid into the region . . . USAID made it clear to NGOs that sought its support that they would have to go through SRRA structures.”

The World Food Program (WFP) also made its peace with aid diversion, assuming that this relieved some of the pressure on civilians to produce food themselves. But this was most likely not true. WFP also built road infrastructure that facilitated SPLA-run trades. Meanwhile, SPLA commanders created companies such as Lou Co. Ltd (James Hoth’s company), Imatong Co Ltd (Oyii Deng Ajak), and Ghazal Co. Ltd. Aid agencies employed logistical services offered by these companies and those of other wealthy SPLA commanders to deliver aid to areas afflicted by man-made famine, and bought food supplies from SPLA-run farms relying on forced labor.

International politics also combined with aid delivery to foster predation and the rise of globalizing military entrepreneurs in South Sudan. As the SPLA gained popularity in the U.S., especially in view of Khartoum’s harboring of Bin Laden, high-ranking officers in both the SPLA and government-affiliated militias started signing business deals with U.S. companies interested in operating in the country safely, continuing to “globalize” the country’s war economy.

At the same time, the SPLA already felt threatened in its legitimacy and claims of sovereignty by aid agencies. Aid workers back then admitted that “many NGOs wanted to run the country themselves.” The SPLA aimed to coerce NGOs into obeying its rules, its program, and its diversion of aid through threats of expulsion meant to reassert the sovereignty of the SPLA’s protostate. The hostility against aid agencies back then is particularly relevant to understanding the

**FIGURE 3.1.** The circuit of predation.
postwar (2005–) and post-independence (2011–) anxiety at losing sovereignty to aid agencies, whose presence only continued to grow. Research shows that feelings of shame play a decisive role in driving the perpetration of violence. In Sierra Leone, the presence of wealthy aid workers working for relief agencies meant to “develop” the population made the Sierra Leoneans feel that they were “illiterate,” “poor,” “useless,” and “behaving like animals.” This participated in their grievances, which war only fed. In South Sudan, international aid agencies during the war promoted the discourse that the “traditional” society was “breaking down.” Meanwhile, the Dinka from Northern Bahr El Ghazal, displaced to the north by Khartoum’s militias, were expected to abandon, under the influence of international aid agencies in displacement camps, their “backward” cultural practices and finally be “developed.”

Aid agencies thus reenacted colonial discourses and contributed to strengthen the shame and humiliation inherited from centuries of slavery and colonialism. This feeling of humiliation, fueled by neocolonial aid agencies (rulers of the “NGO-istan”), would easily fester into an entitlement ideology. It would play an essential role in making the ideology of the future génocidaires after the war and in sustaining the violence of the third civil war—a point I later return to.

States inherit the features of their making in the longue durée. So the logic of maximizing profits off of people and things, a mode of production inherited from slavery, would root the military elite’s understanding of the functions of a postwar and independent state. The SPLA dominant class’s hijacking of the wartime proto–state-building exercise was a blueprint for how to divert state resources after the war while consolidating class ascendency with increased international support.

**Trade and the Rise of Military Entrepreneurs**

Ultimately, wartime predation resulted in a process of social class formation dominated by the military elite. To a certain extent, the transformation of SPLA commanders into a dominant class was a necessary feature of war-making that culminated in state-making. Yet the trade that sustained the incoming flow of resources within and outside the country also eventually threatened the protostate through the rise of warlords, “businessmen of war.”

The SPLA’s trade monopolies demonstrated its attempts at defending nascent class interests and the fact that it was developing a class of its own. From the inception of its armed struggle in Ethiopia, the SPLA and the officers controlling the trade of relief goods out of Itang refugee camp established a monopoly on this trade to prevent the rise of a competing bourgeoisie. The SPLA enforced
violent monopoly strategies in Equatoria’s various trades as well.\textsuperscript{115} By using collusion and intimidation, the SPLA behaved in all its trade endeavors in a similar fashion to the government, in the “forced” markets of its garrison towns.\textsuperscript{116}

Such trade monopolies were typical of state-building projects.\textsuperscript{117} Already in Ethiopia, trade went hand-in-hand with state-making, since the SRRA was involved in accumulating and distributing the loot. At the time, a human rights report described that “in Itang, the main beneficiaries remained those who controlled the allocations of relief. The SPLA was acquiring some of the characteristics of a centralized state, allocating the resources it controlled for its own policy ends, while certain individuals extracted benefits from their positions.”\textsuperscript{118}

Both Khartoum and the SPLA profiteered off civilians, sometimes in strikingly similar fashion. Once the SPLA controlled areas in the south, trading opportunities expanded along looting avenues. SPLA soldiers traded the clothes they stole from civilians and the food civilians received from relief agencies (mostly cooking oil and lentils) into Uganda and Kenya’s markets.\textsuperscript{119} Much like the Sudanese government, the SPLA was implicated in creating the conditions for famine, and its trade followed a similar pattern to trade in government-controlled areas.\textsuperscript{120}

The SPLA’s presence increased in eastern Equatoria after its ousting of Ethiopia in 1991 and the Bor massacre, which pushed Dinka civilians south and precipitated their migration into areas such as Narus, New Kush, New Site, Natinga, Kapoeta, or Chukudum. These areas were not just connected to neighboring markets but also served as transit points to the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. Over the years, both combatants and civilians were joined by relatives and settled in the region. There emerged a local “military-commercial network.”\textsuperscript{121} Anne Walraet noted that “while this network cannot be equalised with the Dinka migrant community as a whole, it was perceived as such by many interviewees.”\textsuperscript{122} Members of the Dinka diaspora also sent remittances during the war, which played a role in the emergence of a rising class of Dinka businessmen associated with the SPLA in both Kenya and eastern Equatoria.\textsuperscript{123}

The commerce in eastern Equatoria was multifaceted. The Bor Dinka commanders prominent in the region after 1991 generally controlled these trades with Uganda and ran them through their Dinka soldiers. This reinforced the locals’ view of an army of occupation at the service of wealth extortion and accumulation.\textsuperscript{124} The SPLA “big men” collaborated with local chiefs to contribute to their own economic interests and military power.\textsuperscript{125} They controlled both cattle raiding and cross-border cattle trade in eastern Equatoria (Budi county) after 1991, while involved in the Ugandan markets.\textsuperscript{126} They brutally seized local crops, such as the tobacco of the local Didinga, to trade in exchange for more cattle from the Toposa or in markets such as Agoro’s in Uganda’s Acholi corridor.\textsuperscript{127}
They also enforced a monopoly over the Didinga’s cattle and tobacco, when not confiscating, by forcing them to sell at a disadvantageous price—just like they did to the Toposa for gold.\footnote{128} The cross-border trade itself generated income, as SPLA commanders issued departure orders and money was collected at border points and redistributed back to them.\footnote{129} A former SPLA soldier from Ikotos (eastern Equatoria) who worked in the finance department described the system of cross-border cattle trade: “I was in Kapoeta county. I worked most in the payam, in the finance department, in Narus. The resources were: they (SPLA) taxed those who brought cattle to Narus and taxed goods from Kenya and Kapoeta. From the SPLA, they distributed money to those on the frontlines and these high-ranking officers. Cattle taxed was brought from Kapoeta to Narus and then from Kapoeta to Ikotos to Agoro—to be auctioned. That was the cattle of the Toposa. Agoro was a big market where Ugandan and South Sudanese exchanged goods and cattle. Cattle was sold. High-ranking officers would get the money. Money was made on cattle taxes and Kenyan goods taxed.”\footnote{130} But money was also made on the backs of laborers on the SPLA farms. A Kakwa civilian recalled of Lobone’s farm in Magwi county, “Big people used the farm for their interests, getting their food from there. They sold the food for their own interests—it transited in Nimule and they also sold it for themselves in Uganda.”\footnote{131} The SPLA also sold agricultural products from its farms in Yambio to international organizations.\footnote{132} Thus aid organizations “fed” the war economy. The SPLA logged the teak forests too in the entire Equatoria region—in Yambio, Maridi, Yei, Nimule, Chukudum, and Narus (all SPLA bases)—to sell to Uganda, and beyond: “Logs from Yei were taken to India, China, the USA. Money was taken by big commanders.”\footnote{133} The SPLA commanders also got involved in the drug trade. In fact, they competed with Khartoum.\footnote{134} Khartoum wanted to control the marijuana trade in western and central Equatoria (in Tambura, Ezo, and Yeı)—not only for northern consumption but also to profit from trade spilling over to the DRC. Yeı was the commercial hub for products from the Congo and Uganda, including marijuana and ivory. SPLA commanders controlling areas of passage taxed the marijuana entering the DRC and sold in Aba.\footnote{135} A Dinka former SPLA child soldier recalled that “marijuana was traded to DRC with the knowledge of the SPLA, from Kalgulu to Aba in the DRC. Commanders in control of areas of passage taxed any trade, including marijuana. The Government of Sudan was involved too, but less than the SPLA, since the SPLA controlled the areas outside of Yeı.”\footnote{136} Some commanders like Kuol Manyang also organized the farming of opium in eastern Equatoria to sustain the troops on the frontlines. Yet he was more notorious for his involvement in gold mining.\footnote{137}
Gold was a key component of the SPLA’s war economy in greater Equatoria, and beyond. For example, in Blue Nile in 1998, “according to the SPLA Governor of Kurmuk, Malik Agar, records seized at the mine showed an annual net production of US $11 million a figure that has not been independently confirmed.” Though Agar may have been exaggerating, the SPLA was certainly already exploiting the belt from Kurmuk to Kapoeta. The guerrilla group dominated the gold trade in eastern (Kapoeta) and central Equatoria (Ye’i). The gold trade had been historically much more developed in eastern Equatoria. There, in Kapoeta, gold, cattle, and guns had been traded even before the start of the second civil war (1983). Once the SPLA controlled this area, it took an interest in this trade. The SPLA leadership partnered with foreign companies to mine the area without involving the local population in decisions. It tried to control the gold trade by preventing local inhabitants from continuing to mine on their own from the rivers. But local mining continued, on a small scale. Gold was bought in Chukudum (Eastern Equatoria) in Lauro/Nyaguro (in Budi county), to be sold in Kenya.

Garang and members of his inner circle, such as the SPLA commander Kuol Manyang (who controlled Kapoeta), reaped the benefits of this trade. Other individuals, such as Luis Lobong, the postwar governor of the area, also made a profit. A former SPLA soldier who was working for the finance department in Kapoeta explained, “Luis Lobong was the chief commander and commissioner in Kapoeta and he was the only high-ranking officer there so he made a lot of money. He’s a son of the soil (land)—a Toposa. During the war, he sold relief food and used that money to buy gold and resell it in Uganda and Kenya. He would not take it directly from relief agencies, he would tax it from the people and said it was for the SPLA, but it was for his own use. That’s how he became rich. One gram of gold was cheap. It was being sold for ten times more in Uganda.” A Kakwa civilian from Kaya also remembered that in Kapoeta and Lobone, “relatives of SPLA big people managed the extraction of the gold. Junior officers got gold and gave it to big officers and got their share. The gold was sold to Kenya and even outside Africa. They traded it for luxurious goods—hummers and cars and houses in Nairobi [and] Uganda. They bought new houses. It was coming out through Kaya, and when they pushed the Arabs out of Ye’i (1997) and through Nimule.”

The SPLA extended its search for gold to central Equatoria, between the border and Kajo Keji, and the western part of the state (Tombura), where it also found diamonds (around Ezo and Ibamdu). There, the SPLA governor for Equatoria, the Zande Samuel Abu-John, was also personally involved in various trades, from looted aid relief supplies in western Equatoria to timber in Ye’i and gold, and diamonds in Ezo. His accomplices included Pascal Bandindi, the first SRRA
secretary in Yambio and then secretary for agriculture and animal resources.146  

The National Economic Commission was also instrumental in forcing communities to sell resources at a reduced rate and at facilitating trade throughout the Equatoria region.147  

The case of Samuel Abu-John, the Zande SPLA governor of Equatoria, demonstrated that some non-Dinka commanders were just as predatory (including sexually) as Dinka commanders, and remained in place for a long time (eleven years in his case), though Abu-John’s constituents considered his appointment mere “ethnic window-dressing” and accused him of reinforcing anti-Dinka sentiments.148 The fact remains that predation was practiced by all, no matter what their ethnicity was. The SPLA “big men” were not the only ones to benefit from trading looted resources in Equatoria. Local militia men, local cattle raiders, and chiefs consenting to it also benefited from it.149  

Yet Dinka officers particularly benefited from the war economy because of ethnic discrimination in military promotions. In other words, structural inequalities based on ethnic ranking were such that they conditioned the accumulation of capital, which in turn reinforced these structural inequalities. In this movement, capital was patrimonial and marriages key in social climbing.150  

The leadership actively promoted the rise of the dominant class. For example, in 2002, when the SPLA took Kapoeta’s old town, Garang himself distributed the few brick buildings left by Arab traders and others to his commanders. After the war, these buildings housed companies that SPLA commanders were involved in, thanks to capital they accumulated through the trans-border economy. This culminated in 2005, when the war ended, with the creation of the Jonglei Trade Association in Kapoeta town—of which Garang’s wife, Rebecca Nyandeng, was an active member.151  

But the Bor Dinka monopoly on trade eventually contributed to tensions within the SPLA. The Dinka from Bahr El Ghazal, who by now made up the bulk of the troops, came to see the Bor Dinka as mostly traders merely leeching off the movement that they (those from Bahr El Ghazal) really supported. High-ranking Dinka officials from Bahr El Ghazal were equally skilled at running trade, however. Indeed, a well-oiled system of intermediaries also operated the trade from cattle paid in taxes by civilians in the Bahr El Ghazal region. Similarly, cattle from Dinka civilians were sold in Uganda to buy ammunitions and fuel.152 But there was also a major SPLA-controlled cattle trade with the northern markets. In Northern Bahr El Ghazal and Warrap, the SPLA commander Paul Malong ran a trade tied with northern Sudan so efficiently that it bore long-term political implications. The trade he ran irrigated the entire region, as a Dinka civilian from the area noted: “Malong opened a market in Warawar in 1991 to bring the Misseryia and that’s why he refused to be redeployed (by Garang). Traders from
Meiram, Muglad, in south Kordofan, were coming using camels, horses to carry goods to the market of Warawar, the main market of Northern Bahr El Ghazal and the closest to the border. Malong’s followers brought goods from Warawar market to sell in other markets of Malualkon, Malith Aladiai, and Akuem markets. Malong made profits and used them to finance Salva Kiir. It was difficult to get financial support at that time.”

Malong made such profits that he impacted SPLA politics. He provided financial support to his former boss, Salva Kiir, who used to be the greater Bahr El Ghazal zonal commander back in Yei and New Site. Kiir had been promoted to deputy in command, but tensions had grown with Garang, as detailed in the last chapter. Malong’s support to Kiir, originating in his grip over Northern Bahr El Ghazal’s war economy, was key in creating a long-lasting debt from Kiir, who would eventually become president of South Sudan.

Besides, Malong’s local prominence through his control of the war economy also enabled him to challenge Garang’s authority. He refused Garang’s order to be rotated in 2004 after the Rumbek conference. Garang’s policy of rotating commanders before they established a local fiefdom had sought to contain the rise of warlords. The rebel leader was a state-builder, an exercise that consisted in “eliminating, subjugating, dividing, conquering, cajoling, buying as the occasions presented themselves.” But Garang failed with Malong, whose control over the local war economy went unchecked long enough that it could no longer be contained.

Malong also participated with others in his area in a scam that would fester tensions with Garang and the Bor constituency. The scam dated back, according to SPLA officials who denounced it, to at least 1994, right around when the guerrilla group sought to improve its image and boosted its protostate institutions. In fact, the head of the SRRA was involved in the scam as well. A former SPLA commander from Bor explained how the scam—a slave buy-back program—worked: “Malong collected children in villages. Those redeemed were not actual slaves. Malong collected women and children and called his Messiriya friends—and sometimes he called Akech Tong Aleu, dressed him with a jalabiya (traditional dress typically associated with Arab traders) and he (Aleu) would act as a go-between, freeing the slaves. They (led by John Eibner) would come with a camera from the Christian organizations . . . Eibner would come with a quarter million US dollars in one trip. And this money would be given to the Misseryia, and then Malong, who divided it, and Salva was a beneficiary . . . Bona Malual came with those of John Eibner so every time he would travel with them, and they used Christian Solidarity International [CSI] to mobilize planes and installations . . . It continued until 2003.”

Here again, successfully extracting resources (through whatever means) was supposed to neutralize and co-opt what Tilly refers to as the “great lord’s rivals,”
which typically led to state-making. For Garang, this type of co-optation may have worked for several years in Northern Bahr El Ghazal. But soon (circa 1994), through this scam, a rival coalition reemerged around Bona Malual. Paul Malong, Bona Malual, Justin Yac Arop, and Akech Tong Aleu were those most notably involved. They were all from Bahr El Ghazal, some from Warrap, Kiir’s home area. And they did not seem particularly sorry to be caught with their hands in the cookie jar when foreign journalists uncovered the scandal, as a *Washington Post* article citing Justin Yac suggested:

“There was a lot that has been done with the money, with the profits from the currency exchange,” said Yaac. He listed rebel officials’ purchases in just two of three affected counties: 26 Toyota Land Cruisers, more than 7,000 uniforms, plus fuel—all purchased for the war effort, Yaac emphasized, brushing aside allegations of personal enrichment . . . “It is none of the business of CSI,” Yaac said, “because if I exchange money with you, it is none of your business to know what I am going to do with it.”

Such remarks were quite telling of the feelings of group entitlement in this coalition. It is not surprising then that the slave-redemption scam became the subject of arguments within the SPLA. In December 1999, during a National Liberation Council (NLC) meeting, Bona Malual and Justin Yac’s names surfaced. According to the same former Bor Dinka SPLA commander cited above, the scam became part of the problem between Kiir and Garang: “Then came the issue of the slave redemption—Bona, Salva, and Malong were big beneficiaries in Bahr El Ghazal . . . There was tension between Garang and this group—because it became obvious it was a scam and he wanted it to stop. This escalated the situation . . . When Garang started to express some harsh views on this, the relationship became lukewarm . . . This was one of the factors behind the tensions with Garang. Salva was Chief of Staff and vice-chairman—the next most powerful. Bona and Justin Yac wanted to use him as a steel point to help them break through leadership.”

And break through the leadership they did. At the time, if the SPLA spokesperson—Samson Kwaje—admitted that the racket came “right from the top,” he also pointed out that Garang had limited power to do anything about it, fearing to further antagonize those commanders. After the December 1999 NLC meeting, Garang reportedly forbade the escorts involved in the scam from travelling with CSI director John Eibner to Northern Bahr El Ghazal. He instructed the chief of the SRRA to escort him instead. But since the chief of the SRRA was reportedly one of the original escorts of Eibner to the slave-redemption sites, Kwaje was quoted as saying, “You may be changing one mafia for another.”
Control over the war economy related to military power in multiple ways. This scam spoke volumes about Garang’s loss of control over commanders like Malong. Malong was already posing a real threat to Garang and his constituency, and the SPLA was a pressure cooker by the late 1990s. Malong reinvested money obtained from the scam into the expansion of his military kinship network. At that time, he already had about forty wives. Kwaje called Malong a “warlord” outright and admitted, “There are some commanders who you, more or less, call them warlords.” He continued, “They can more or less do things without accountability.”

On all sides, South Sudan’s military elite had bewildering skills at amassing wealth. It practiced two types of reinvestment, a former Dinka SPLA battalion commander recounted:

Garang had companies. So did Riek Machar and Paulino Matiep in Khartoum. They had a share in the oil companies. . . . The smart commanders reinvested their wealth in companies and buildings and got rid of the cattle. Oyii or Hoth or Manyang didn’t keep the cattle, Malong did. Smart commanders distributed cows to their soldiers to sustain themselves or marry. They kept the hard items like cars or trucks to sell to Uganda or to invest in companies. Visible and captured wealth was redistributed to soldiers by the commanders. Invisible money, such as donation by NGOs, international community, Diaspora, gifts from the leadership, were invisible and were invested in bank accounts in Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia. Bank accounts were opened under wives or children’s names for discretion.

Material “gift giving” to soldiers was key in creating and retaining military allegiance. So the commanders (like Malong or Matiep) who retained more material wealth than others and reinvested it into expanding their kinship networks, could still be considered great military strategists.

The enrichment of the elite destroyed the SPLA’s legitimacy in several ways. The lure of gain attracted soldiers to join the struggle and try to become officers, but it created tensions too. A lot of soldiers thought that commanders kept too large a chunk of civilian contributions in bulls and heifers or food rations to themselves. A former Dinka SPLA child soldier commented, “Certain people became rich, in gold, teak, cattle. The commanders in Bahr El Ghazal had a lot of cattle. Some of the cattle (maybe a quarter or more) could stay in the hands of the commanders and not ever reach the movement or soldiers. The same went for what was collected as rations.”

A lot of commanders did not redistribute nearly as much to their soldiers as they did to their immediate kinship networks. Soldiers saw commanders send
their riches out of the country to relatives.\textsuperscript{175} Commanders were especially under pressure to redistribute to their relatives when they had built large kinship networks through large-scale polygamy.\textsuperscript{176} There was no distinction between the funds meant for the SPLA and those sent to relatives or used for their own personal wealth. Some of the lieutenants in Garang’s inner circle kept the funds of the movement in their personal accounts.\textsuperscript{177}

Some commanders lived, as Julia Aker Duany noted, “removed from the field of battle . . . in luxury homes in the suburbs of Nairobi and Kampala.”\textsuperscript{178} The perception that the commanders spent too much time outside taking care of their own ventures resulted into a crisis of confidence in the SPLA leadership.\textsuperscript{179} Khartoum also exploited some commanders’ thirst for (or anxiety about) economic gains by encouraging them to split through bribery, corruption, or blackmail. This impacted allegiances and alliances and ultimately eroded any southern nationalist project in favor of the commanders’ small economic gains.\textsuperscript{180}

By the end of the war, the enrichment and subsequent exile of many SPLA commanders had resulted in desertions and a general loss of political legitimacy that would never be recovered—if it was ever strong to begin with. A Dinka civilian from Aweil shared the view of many other civilians, considering most of the SPLA’s cadres to be thieves at best, if not criminals: “Most SPLA commanders had gone out to Australia and other places. They were gone out of the frontlines. Very few people in the SPLA were there for political reasons. Most of them were criminals. The end of the war was not in sight so a lot of people left the SPLA and went out. Soldiers were not paid.”\textsuperscript{181}

**State-Making, Social Class Formation, and Group Ownership**

The Making of the Protostate and Dominant Class

Looking back, the war economy in SPLA areas triggered long-term sociopolitical processes: it created both the state and various other groups. Reminiscent of other processes of state-formation in Europe’s *longue durée*, war-making, resource extraction, and organization contributed to build the protostate in SPLA areas.\textsuperscript{182} The SPLA needed to strengthen its military machine to become a serious contender against Khartoum, have a seat at the negotiations, and eventually rule the future independent country. This required military force, which demanded organizing the war economy to support it, and started the process of creating the SPLA state. The international community, by looking more favorably at the guerrilla group in the mid-1990s, flushing the south with quickly diverted aid, and pushing for the movement’s institutionalization, participated
to state-making. Already, it started to “swell” the state—which contributed to the process of class formation.183

State-formation went hand in hand with dominant class formation.184 This dominant class owned the guerrilla group and turned it into an engine for social class formation and ethnic domination. Despite tensions between the leadership and warlords, monopolies on coercion and trade demonstrated shared class interests. Monopolies and the practice of kinship expansion also illustrated class consciousness and coherence. The dominant class used the accumulation of things and people to consolidate and transmit class status through generations, thus enlarging itself.

The wartime SPLA protostate was so ethnically ranked that it borrowed elements from both the feudal and slavery systems.185 Warlords presided over local war economies functioning on the back of forced laborers. The legacy of war impacts the shape of states: according to Tilly, “Relative balance among war-making, protection, extraction, and state making significantly affected the organization of the states that emerged from the four activities.”186 Faced with poorly disciplined foes confined to garrison towns and government-controlled areas, the SPLA engaged into fewer battles as war went on. It did what many other governments and armed groups did in other countries, from Sierra Leone to Vietnam to Afghanistan: while publicly expressing its intention to defeat its enemy, using cheap propaganda, the SPLA leadership also took advantage of the lengthy war to engage in lucrative abuse, which attracted only little international criticism.187

As the war went on, the SPLA concentrated more on extraction, mafia-like protection, and state-making rather than on war-making and service-provision. Wartime predation forecasted postwar endemic state corruption. Because the SPLA leadership was involved in a “war system,” it needed its foes to function, and the same was true of them.188 Similar processes of class formation and state-making occurred in SSDF areas, and different dominant classes came together into a temporary “fusion of elites” in the capital of Juba after the war.

Group-Making and Group Ownership

The war economy did not just foster social class formation—it also reinforced ethnic group-making. Much like slavery reinforced groups, so did forced labor, violent expropriations and resource extraction.189 The SPLA accumulated resources to the detriment of other ethnic groups. Because the SPLA was mostly Dinka but controlled non-Dinka areas (such as Equatoria) that were key to its war economy, forced labor became ethnically ranked in those areas as well. Forced labor, ethnic ranking in access to military training, and ethnic discrimination in access to positions of resource control against the few non-Dinka officers
reinforced anti-Dinka sentiments and bolstered the coalescing Equatorians and Nuer groups who opposed the SPLA.

The SPLA’s war economy also reinforced the Dinka’s own group-making and group legitimacy: not only did the Dinka fight for the liberation of the country, but they literally came to “own” it. As such, the socioeconomic transformations springing from the organization of the SPLA’s war economy, an ethically differentiated mode of production rooted in the longue durée of racism and slavery, impacted the development of an ideology of group entitlement too.

By contributing to the literal sense of “ownership,” the war economy reinforced Dinka group legitimacy and ultimately entitlement. The slave-redemption scam in Northern Bahr El Ghazal from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s also demonstrated how the local Dinka “military-commercial network” itself felt an increased sense of group entitlement, thus contributing to reinforce the group-ness of the two competing Dinka constituencies.