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INSECURE POWER AND VIOLENCE

The Rise and Fall of Paul Malong and the Mathiang Anyoor

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Cover photo

Paul Malong, then the SPLA chief of staff, rides in a car with President Salva Kiir during celebrations for South Sudan's fourth anniversary of independence. Juba, South Sudan, 9 July 2015. Source: Charles Lomodong/AFP Photo

Overview

The ‘Mathiang Anyoor’ is the popular name for military recruits who were mobilized in 2011–12 and later incorporated into South Sudan’s national army, the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA), at the beginning of the civil war in 2013. The Mathiang Anyoor were comprised primarily of Dinka male youth from the Aweil area of Northern Bahr el Ghazal and played a critical role in keeping the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) government of President Salva Kiir in power by providing much-needed manpower following defections from the military at the outbreak of the war. The Mathiang Anyoor forces amplified the ethnic overtones of South Sudan’s civil conflict and are alleged to have committed atrocities against civilians. The Mathiang Anyoor were closely associated with their political patron Paul Malong Awan, the former governor of Northern Bahr el Ghazal state (2008–14). Malong later served as SPLA chief of staff (2014–17), and the Mathiang Anyoor were instrumental in his rise to power and subsequent challenge to Kiir’s leadership in 2015–17. The rise of Malong and the Mathiang Anyoor eventually exacerbated rifts in Kiir’s coalition, resulting in Malong’s sacking and subsequent exile in 2017.

Key findings

- The Mathiang Anyoor fighters originated in Northern Bahr el Ghazal and were trained to protect South Sudan’s border with Sudan and defend local communities. They were later pulled into South Sudan’s national power struggle, largely by Paul Malong, to defend President Salva Kiir’s government following the large-scale defections from the SPLA at the outbreak of the civil war in 2013. Secondary waves of Dinka recruits into the SPLA from 2014 also acquired the name ‘Mathiang Anyoor’ and were frequently deployed as ethnically homogenous Dinka units.
- The importance of the Mathiang Anyoor in the SPLA’s 2013–2016 offensives elevated Malong’s military power, enabling him to challenge Kiir’s rule. This led to an increasingly fractious relationship between Malong and Akol Koor, Kiir’s internal security chief in the National Security Service (NSS), which culminated in Malong’s sacking in 2017 and eventual exile to Kenya. These political dynamics precipitated the rise of Akol’s NSS as the dominant security agency in South Sudan.
- While Mathiang Anyoor members were initially recruited for defensive border protection on the Sudan border, many in Kiir’s Bahr el Ghazal political base accepted—or exploited—a prevailing narrative that the Mathiang Anyoor were mobilized to defend Kiir against a coup attempt by former first vice president and leader of the SPLA-in-Opposition (SPLA-IO), Riek Machar.
- The Mathiang Anyoor’s existence highlights over a decade of flawed donor-backed initiatives to establish an integrated national army and—as of October 2019—a tribalized national army remains an obstacle to resolving the conflict. Political and community elites widely believe armed mobilization is the precondition of political power and local defence in South Sudan, during both war and peace.

Introduction

The term ‘Mathiang Anyoor’¹ describes recruits from Bahr el Ghazal,² primarily Dinka from Northern Bahr el Ghazal’s Aweil area, who were later integrated into the SPLA³ in 2013–14. The Mathiang Anyoor’s trajectory followed that of Paul Malong, their political patron. Having been governor of Northern Bahr el Ghazal state from 2008, Malong was appointed as chief of staff of the SPLA in 2014, in part due to the Mathiang Anyoor’s military strength. He then relied heavily on Mathiang Anyoor forces to wage offensives against armed opposition forces while serving in that role. In 2015–16 Malong continued to draw on Dinka Bahr el Ghazal recruits from Aweil to replenish SPLA units. These new recruits—many of them teenagers, including minors—were placed in largely homogenous Dinka units and called ‘Mathiang Anyoor’.

The Mathiang Anyoor is often described as a militia. This is a misnomer, at least in its present formation. The original units were incorporated into the SPLA after the civil war began in 2013, and the later units were recruited directly into it. Their commanders sat—and continue to sit—atop the SPLA chain of command and have waged the national army’s wars in the majority of its offensives and counter-offensives, including the battles in Bor, Bentiu, and Malakal in 2014, and the counterinsurgencies in Equatoria and Western Bahr el Ghazal in 2015–16. Indeed, ex-combatants bristle at the notion that they were a militia rather than part of the formal military. More specifically, in the vacuum created by the SPLA’s collapse in December 2013, the Mathiang Anyoor arguably became the new SPLA—a fitting coda to a decade of failed security sector reforms⁴ that aimed to transform the SPLA into an army representing a nation-state rather than political elites.⁵

This Briefing Paper does not attempt to describe every detail of the Mathiang Anyoor’s activities in South Sudan during its civil war. Instead, it aims to provide a detailed account of the development of

the Mathiang Anyoor to date and its role in—and relevance to—evolving power dynamics.⁶

The origin and politics of the Mathiang Anyoor (1982–2013)

The Mathiang Anyoor has its roots in the historical links between the SPLA and the *gelweng* (a loose term for armed cattle keepers⁷) of Northern Bahr el Ghazal. During the second Sudanese civil war (1983–2005), Northern Bahr el Ghazal, which is located on the border between northern and southern Sudan (see Map 1), was severely devastated. Consequently, large numbers of people from the heavily populated Greater Aweil area joined the then-rebel SPLA.⁸

When security deteriorated from the late 1980s into the early 1990s, the SPLA forged close ties with the *gelweng*, who acted as regional auxiliaries and arms carriers for the SPLA in exchange for ammunition. In part these ties were forged to coordinate defence against raids by Khartoum-armed nomadic Arabs—the ‘Murahaleen’—from across the old colonial border between northern and southern Sudan.⁹

SPLA ties with the *gelweng* continued throughout the war and after the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement amid ongoing tension between Juba and Khartoum. These ties included informal training of the *gelweng* by the SPLA at Pantit, an SPLA garrison west of Aweil on the road between Nyamlell and Marial Bai. Pantit had long been a training ground for the SPLA and for *gelweng* that the SPLA used informally for border security. According to several former trainees, the *gelweng* would bring their guns to Pantit for several weeks of basic military training and then return to their cattle camps afterwards.¹⁰ This informal programme provided the SPLA with useful links to a trained community force that could act as

proxies and scouts along the Sudanese border as they had during the second civil war.

The true origins of the Mathiang Anyoor are unclear. One former senior military official has claimed that the Mathiang Anyoor arose out of secret negotiations within a regional security committee in Bahr el Ghazal that determined that Bahr el Ghazal needed to strengthen its position inside the SPLA.¹¹ Irrespective of the time and place of its origin, clandestine training for *gelweng* expanded into the training of an informal border guard force amid the border crisis over Mile 14 and South Sudan’s pending secession. This was followed by greater mobilization in Bahr el Ghazal on the heels of the brief Sudan–South Sudan border war over the disputed Heglig region. As power disputes escalated inside South Sudan’s ruling SPLM in 2013, Kiir, Malong, and other Bahr el Ghazal elites instrumentalized this force to defend Kiir’s presidency. (See Box 1 for a timeline of events.)

Border defence against external threats (2010–12)

Mile 14

Mile 14 is a disputed border between Northern Bahr el Ghazal and East Darfur in Sudan; it has been a point of contention between the two countries for many years (HSBA, 2014a). Khartoum views Mile 14 as a strategic logistics corridor that the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), a Darfuri opposition group benefiting from South Sudan support, uses to move across the River Kiir and into Darfur. Following clashes along Mile 14 in 2010–12, this border area remains one of the most politically sensitive among the several still-unresolved border disputes between the two countries.¹²

The 2010–12 Mile 14 border conflict thus sparked a mobilization drive by local community elders in Northern Bahr el Ghazal. They were motivated by a

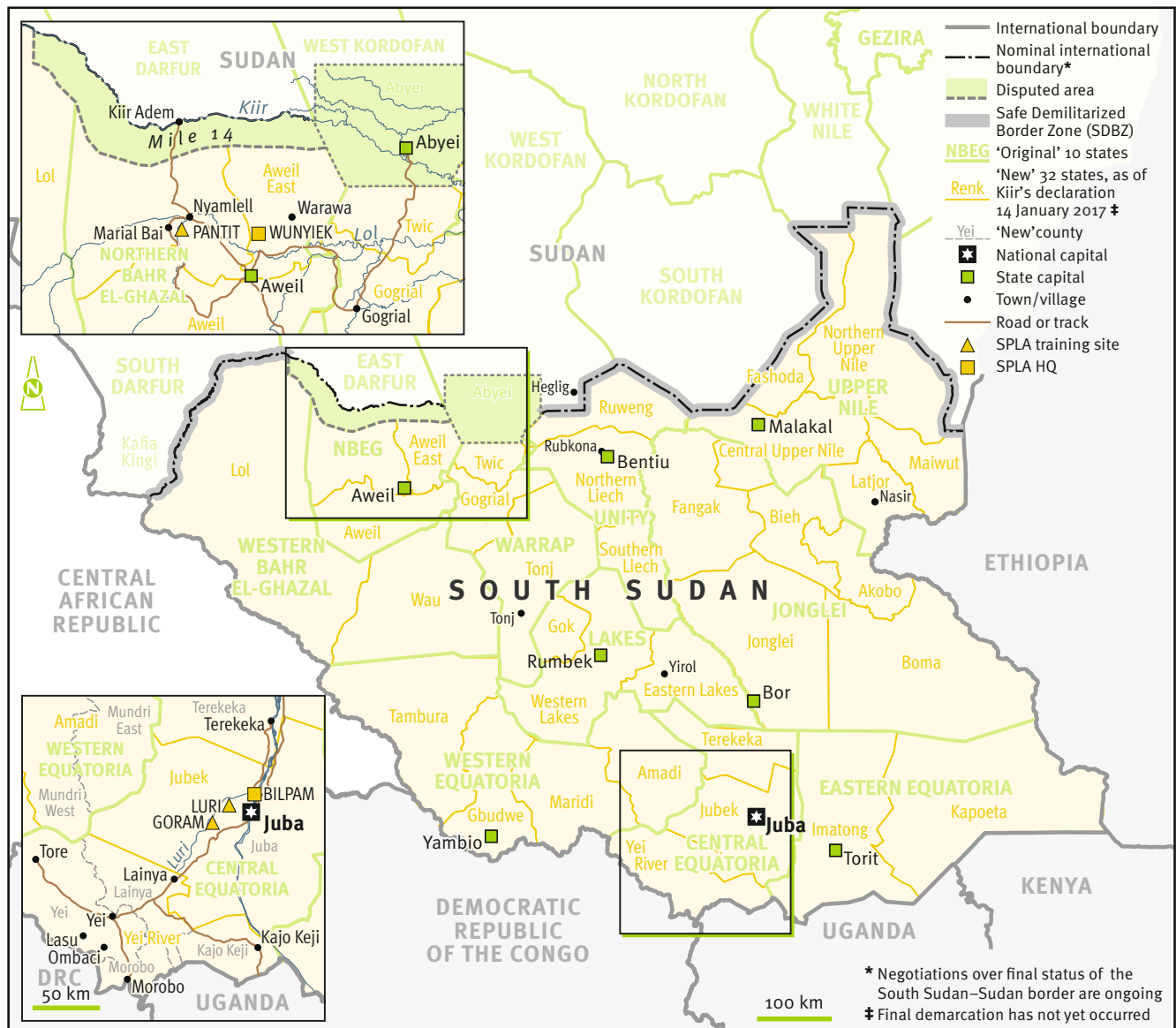
desire to protect themselves from attacks by the Sudanese—or to fight for themselves in a border dispute, even without support from Juba. Recruitment centred on ‘idle’—that is, unemployed and poor—youth in Aweil, which had received many urban returnees from Khartoum upon South Sudan’s independence in July 2011.¹³ According to several former Mathiang Anyoor fighters, these new recruits received training at Pantit (some even claimed to have been at Pantit since 2010).¹⁴ In urban areas, the state authorities coerced idle youth into service, whereas in rural areas, recruitment was primarily channelled through local chiefs and community elders. As one former Pantit trainee described it:

*Most of us went [to Pantit] because it was said that [an] Arab force was coming to try and annex parts of the border. So it was feeling in all the youth that we should defend our territory... If there is any sign of danger, the chiefs will tell the youth that danger is coming. And then the youth will immediately rush into action.*¹⁵

The local Northern Bahr el Ghazal community therefore saw the force at Pantit as serving a primarily local purpose: for border and community defence. ‘We were recruited by [Gen.] Santino Deng Wol [SPLA Division 3 Commander], and we were told we were border guards,’ said one Pantit trainee. ‘We were made to think of nothing but to defend the South Sudan border.’¹⁶

This local mobilization drive aligned with the interests of Malong and the Northern Bahr el Ghazal elite who were angry with Juba for discussing Mile 14’s status with Khartoum in Addis Ababa in 2011–12. South Sudan’s negotiation team had agreed to demilitarize the area as part of the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone (SDBZ), and this was seen as a concession which the Dinka Malual and Dinka Abiem elites of Northern Bahr el Ghazal greatly resisted.¹⁷ Malong declared on state television that if Mile 14 was given

Map 1 South Sudan, with a focus on Northern Bahr el Ghazal and Central Equatoria



to Sudan, the community would defend it on its own (Sudan Tribune, 2012a).

To this end, community chiefs and elders outside Juba spearheaded the mobilization for Northern Bahr el Ghazal state authorities.¹⁸ They were so successful that recruitment appeared to overwhelm authorities' capacity to support the new force. According to a former recruit:

This was at a time of significant hunger. So many people were coming [to join]. While in camp, no one was even taking care of us. We even went out to find firewood to go sell and then go eat. We'd do this in batches. So one group

*would go out for firewood on one day, and then the next one the next day. Like that.*¹⁹

Therefore, the recruitment at Pantit served the interests of several groups at once: it provided a means of sustenance to the reservoir of desperate youth, increased protection for the community along the disputed border, and boosted the power of Malong and the Bahr el Ghazal elite on both the local and national stages.

The Heglig crisis

Heglig is an important oil outpost on the Sudan–South Sudan border with a long-present Sudan military base. In

2012, following clashes with Sudanese soldiers at a de facto border point, the SPLA marched north with JEM.²⁰ The forces captured Heglig and continued their offensive north until international pressure—including from the UN and the United States, then Juba's top ally—persuaded Kiir to pull forces back to the original de facto borders (Boswell, 2012b).

According to South Sudanese officials' accounts, when the clashes broke out, an SPLA order was issued for a country-wide mobilization of a reserve force due to concerns of a broader war with Sudan.²¹ It seems that Paul Malong, the governor of Northern Bahr el Ghazal

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state since 2008 and commander of SPLA forces there since 1993,²² responded eagerly to this call and began recruiting among the Dinka Malual section of Greater Aweil and sending recruits to train at Pantit. The war in Heglig thus gave Malong and other elites the justification to expand the burgeoning Pantit border force.

Although officials sometimes refer to the Mathiang Anyoor as a Greater Bahr el Ghazal force, it was the Dinka—and some Luo—of Northern Bahr el Ghazal that made up the vast majority of these trainees. According to officials, ex-combatants, and ex-trainers, some recruits came from former Warrap state, but a negligible amount came from former Lakes state and none from former Western Bahr el Ghazal state.²³ By 2013 there were an estimated 12,000 recruits²⁴—most of whom were trained and under the command of the SPLA’s Gen. Santino Deng Wol of Division 3. According to one senior SPLA official involved, one brigade of roughly 1,500 men were absorbed into SPLA Division 3, headquartered outside of Aweil. Another 8,500 were brought into the SPLA at the beginning of South Sudan’s civil war in 2013.²⁵

Many officials therefore point to the Heglig mobilization as the beginning of the Mathiang Anyoor. Yet this seemingly official version of events overlooks earlier mobilizations conducted in response to the Mile 14 border dispute. It also omits data that suggests there was a force of between 700 and 2,000 men clandestinely

trained at Pantit before the Heglig crisis by the so-called Abyei ‘police’, which was linked to Pieng Deng, a Ngok Dinka and the SPLA sector commander of Bahr el Ghazal at the time. According to three former senior officials, the Abyei police pre-dated the Mathiang Anyoor as the first formal standing force at Pantit.²⁶

Nevertheless, the Heglig crisis was pivotal in the establishment of the Mathiang Anyoor; by 2012 the original *gelweng* training at Pantit had expanded into the recruitment of a standing force which, unlike the *gelweng* trainees, lacked their own firearms. While the *gelweng* would return home after training, the new standing force consisted primarily of unemployed youth with nowhere to go. This new force of young, unarmed, non-combatants—distinct from the *gelweng*—formed the early core of the future Mathiang Anyoor. They would soon play a leading role in South Sudan’s civil war.

Kiir and the Mathiang Anyoor (2012–13)

Following the Heglig crisis in April 2012, the Ministry of Defence ordered the Mathiang Anyoor to disperse.²⁷ The Deputy Minister of Defence, Majak D’Agoot, Deputy Chief of Staff for Training, Thomas Cirillo, and Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, Deng Wek, were also opposed to maintaining the Mathiang Anyoor.²⁸ Notably, none of these officials

hail from the Bahr el Ghazal region and all cited concerns that the force was irregular and recruited outside the formal military structure.

Several key military figures with personal ties to recruits and the Bahr el Ghazal region, however, did not want to disperse the Mathiang Anyoor. Alongside Paul Malong, Gen. Santino Deng Wol and Pieng Deng both backed maintaining the Mathiang Anyoor as a reserve force.²⁹ As SPLA headquarters did not agree to support the force, Malong resorted to mobilizing resources from local communities to feed the recruits. According to some former senior officials, Malong later received funds directly from the office of the president.³⁰ One former senior official claimed that the president’s office directly funded the four Bahr el Ghazal governors in order to support the Mathiang Anyoor’s upkeep.³¹ As narrated by Pieng Deng:

In the Ministry of Defence, there was an agreement for these troops [at Pantit] to go back [home]. [Santino] Deng [Wol] said, ‘Let’s not disperse them.’ In fact, he convinced me of that. But we had a problem of logistics because General Headquarters was not providing support. So I said, ‘Deng, you can’t have this many without logistics.’ So Deng said, ‘Let’s go to [Paul] Malong.’ Malong immediately got grains and cows. Then I went to General Headquarters and told [James] Hoth [Mai] and Majak [D’Agoot], and they said we can’t support [it]. So there was no agreement in General Headquarters, but the president said to continue training.’³²

Multiple current and former senior officials involved in the events confirmed that some in the military command refused to endorse the new force. In response the president’s office provided support, bypassing the military and Ministry of Defence. Kiir’s own long-term political struggles certainly explain his rationale for backing the Mathiang Anyoor despite

the resistance of some of his top military officials.

Following Juba's rapprochement on oil revenues with Khartoum in September 2012 (Laessing, 2012), Kiir sacked many of those in Juba whom Khartoum considered centrally involved in the Heglig offensive, including Garang-ists—a group of elites with close ties to the late John Garang—and Taban Deng Gai, who was then the governor of Unity state. Kiir moved closer to those with Khartoum ties, including Bona Malwal, who served as an interlocutor between Kiir and then Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, and Riek Gai, a former senior official in Bashir's National Congress Party. Kiir had therefore gained friends in Khartoum but lost key allies in Juba.

Outside of his home of Bahr el Ghazal, Kiir also had no pure base. He had failed to attract deep political support among Equatorians. This was due, in part, to bitter legacies of the SPLA's abusive operations in Equatoria during the second civil war, as well as the political fallout of a campaign by Equatorian politicians in the early 1980s to seek greater political autonomy. This campaign resulted in the 'Kokora' division of southern Sudan into three regions in 1983, an outcome partially responsible for the Dinka-led SPLA rebellion.³³ Even after independence, many Equatorians believed that their territory remained occupied by the hostile Dinka and Nuer SPLA.³⁴

Therefore, only a year after South Sudan achieved independence, Kiir faced mounting isolation and internal pressure within the SPLM. Moreover, he did not trust the military leadership—populated with Garang-ists—or its rank-and-file soldiers, the majority of whom were believed to be Nuer.³⁵

Within this context, many senior officials therefore viewed the build-up of the Mathiang Anyoor as a tool of the Bahr el Ghazal elite in the SPLA to keep Kiir in power despite the dual threats of the Garang-ist wing in the SPLA and the Nuer-led challenge of Riek Machar following

the erosion of Kiir's alliance with the South Sudan Defence Forces (SSDF).³⁶ As noted above, however, accounts on the ground and the timeline of events suggest that the mobilization of what became the Mathiang Anyoor force was primarily driven by local politics and a Malong-led power play against Juba in relation to Mile 14; it was only later instrumentalized for the internal SPLM political crisis as it began escalating in 2013.

This interpretation of events is supported by data that suggests that, in 2011–12, fears of a renewed border war between Sudan and South Sudan outweighed concerns of an immediate civil war in South Sudan, especially among the SPLM elite.³⁷ Whether or not Kiir was involved in the creation of the Mathiang Anyoor prior to 2011–12, he did give them political backing, and possibly financial support, prior to the civil war in 2013, and he certainly made use of them after the conflict broke out, as the following section will show.

The start of the civil war and the collapse of the SPLA (2013–14)

In 2013 power disputes in the SPLM came to a head as the party prepared for its first leadership meeting since independence. A bloc of SPLM elites rose to challenge Kiir's chairmanship and the future presidency. The challengers clustered into two main camps: one led by Machar and consisting primarily of an ethnic Nuer-led coalition; the other Garang-ists led by SPLM Secretary-General Pagan Amum and Garang's widow, Rebecca Nyandeng (AUCISS, 2014; HSBA, 2014c).

Competing ambitions for power and longstanding distrust would keep the internal SPLM opposition from ever truly uniting, but at the time, the two sides found a common cause to remove Kiir. The Garang-ist wing gave Machar much-needed leverage within an often hostile SPLM and military elite, and Machar and

his Nuer followers gave the Garang-ists credible leverage due to the Nuer strength in the SPLA (Young, 2006) and the sizable Nuer political constituency with whom the Garang-ists had weak or severed ties.

Tensions peaked in December 2013 when the National Liberation Council was boycotted by Kiir's challengers.³⁸ On 15 December fighting within the presidential guard unit erupted largely along ethnic lines. With both the presidential guard and the SPLA split internally, Dinka elites and the NSS organized ad hoc security operations in Juba which included widespread massacres of the Nuer.³⁹ This purge is claimed to have been carried out by Dinka units, the formation of which may have been spontaneous,⁴⁰ and likely included members of the Mathiang Anyoor (UNSC, 2016, p. 15). While many South Sudanese suspect the violence in Juba was planned in advance, a wide selection of senior accounts together with the timeline of events suggest that while there were escalating political and security tensions revolving around the SPLM leadership conference, there was not necessarily a planned initiation of violence.

Several former senior officials blamed the Mathiang Anyoor for the outbreak of civil war, either directly, by taking part in the initial violence, or indirectly, by creating the conditions for the political crisis in Juba to escalate.⁴¹ According to one official, Malong began making frequent trips to Juba to meet with an informal group of security elite and other Bahr el Ghazal elites to strategize against the internal challenges to Kiir's rule.⁴² Within this context, the Mathiang Anyoor 'became a cause of the crisis due to the assumption that the Mathiang Anyoor were prepared and ready [to fight],' said the former senior official, who joined the opposition after the war started.⁴³

Malong has since acknowledged that the Mathiang Anyoor were positioned in the city prior to the 2013 fighting.⁴⁴ Yet Malong also insisted that he was not involved, citing his position as a civilian governor at the time. Malong's influence

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and de facto leadership of the Mathiang Anyoor, however—even prior to his appointment as SPLA chief of staff—was stressed repeatedly by other military elites.⁴⁵ His presence at leadership meetings at the SPLA headquarters at Bilpam in the days following would also indicate his influential military role while still serving as governor of Northern Bahr el Ghazal.⁴⁶

Whether or not Malong was involved in the outbreak of the conflict, Kiir needed the Mathiang Anyoor, an ethnic Dinka force from his political base that he could trust and swiftly deploy. In the immediate aftermath of the December 2013 fighting, the formal SPLA chain of command was severely diminished by desertions, infighting, and distrust among ethnic groups; the SPLA, therefore, valued the Mathiang Anyoor’s ethnic homogeneity and strength. Trainees from Pantit soon arrived at the front lines at Bor and Bentiu, and from there, they deployed to Malakal in 2014.

In retrospect, some Aweil residents expressed anger that the community militia mobilized for the defence of its border with Sudan was co-opted to wage war against other South Sudanese.⁴⁷ Yet, at the time, the purpose of the Mathiang Anyoor appears to have shifted from ‘defence against Sudan’ to ‘defence against Riek Machar’ with limited frictional cost.

This defensive posture is owed, in no small measure, to the success of the narrative that a coup attempt by Machar caused the conflict.⁴⁸ Indeed, perhaps no single element was more critical to the government’s early war efforts than this narrative because it justified and enabled the mobilization of the Mathiang Anyoor by Malong and Juba elites.

This co-option came at a high price for the Mathiang Anyoor, whose casualty estimates have been consistently characterized as ‘very high’ among former fighters.⁴⁹ One Mathiang Anyoor sergeant said that of the 33 men under his command in Bor in 2014, only two remained active upon the next deployment to Malakal a short time later; nine were injured while the rest had died.⁵⁰ Disease also added to the death toll. According to one soldier deployed in Malakal at the beginning of the war, combatants lacked basic latrines or sanitation, and infections were so rampant that it was unsafe to walk barefoot in camp.⁵¹

Those who survived these early battles did not escape the war’s brutality. One fighter who was deployed to fight near Bentiu described two sides with ‘no mercy’ for the other:

We would burn villages. You chase the people and destroy all the properties. Also, if we captured a camp, we just destroyed everything. We

*did that from bitterness, because everyone is injured, mentally or physically... Both sides were doing the same, burning camps and villages.*⁵²

It is widely believed, including by survivors, that few of the original Mathiang Anyoor now survive:

*All of the Mathiang Anyoor are finished. The name has remained. There are only a handful in Juba. But just the name is remaining. Most of us [that] trained in Pantit are finished...*⁵³

The ‘new’ Mathiang Anyoor and Malong’s rise to power (2014–15)

As soon as the war broke out, Kiir’s close Dinka allies scrambled to mobilize more fighters. Therefore the term ‘Mathiang Anyoor’ not only denotes the original group trained in Pantit prior to December 2013, but also refers to the new intake that were recruited immediately at the beginning of the war to replenish the SPLA ranks amid high casualty figures, extreme defection rates, and the collapse of the SPLA proper.⁵⁴

A top aide and political fixer for Malong in Aweil described several waves of recruits to the ‘new’ Mathiang Anyoor totalling 10,000 men: reinforcements in batches of 4,000, 3,200, and 2,800.⁵⁵ Youth were also mobilized elsewhere, especially as the war progressed and Kiir’s inner circle grew distrustful of Malong and fearful of the regime’s reliance on the power accrued by Aweil elites.

Local elites could also recruit fighters by pointing to another fear closer to home, which led to the rapid mobilization of community *gelweng* forces. According to residents of Northern Bahr el Ghazal, the early defection of the SPLA’s Division 4 in Unity state under Gen. James Koang bred fear of a Nuer offensive into Warrap and Northern Bahr el Ghazal states, and

it made mobilizing the neighbouring Dinka of Bahr el Ghazal a more urgent priority for the SPLA.⁵⁶

The belief among ex-combatants was that fighting was necessary to prevent the civil war from spilling over into Bahr el Ghazal. One ex-fighter rationalized the widespread mobilization in Northern Bahr el Ghazal after the outbreak of war:

The idea was that if you stayed behind, [the community] would say your age mates⁵⁷ had died and you are a coward. It is very shameful to stay behind. We all felt that it was sort of a community call. It was a matter of community pride [...] I blame nobody. It was a matter of tragedy. If that force had not gone, perhaps Bahr el Ghazal would have been overrun by Nuer and we might have prevented that.⁵⁸

According to some, training in Pantit continued, but now openly for the purpose of joining the war.⁵⁹ Much of the subsequent waves of recruits, however—including *gelweng* from former Warrap state—received little to no training, and few had any prior combat experience or knowledge of areas outside their homelands. Only a small number had any significant experience interacting with South Sudan's other ethnic groups. The Mathiang Anyoor were a provincial force, but they were called on to fight the national war. The same fighter explained:

In [the] beginning, there were few [recruits], but after war broke out, there were very many flocking in. Not for training, for combat. There was no training. The ones who had been trained were taken as soon as the war broke out. But everyone who came to Pantit after that, they were taken as soon as there was enough. From the beginning of 2014, there was no training. The majority with me were not trained at all. Some didn't even know how to reload a gun. After firing a magazine, they were unable to reload.⁶⁰

Several people interviewed said that Aweil and Gogrial states provided the bulk of these new fighters, with the majority coming from Aweil.⁶¹ Senior security officials were expected to mobilize from their respective areas, so additional fighters were mobilized from Tonj and Twic areas of former Warrap state as well as former Lakes state. The military trained some of these recruits in Goram, near Juba,⁶² but several of the same interviewees said that many of these fighters quickly defected with their guns and returned home. Subsequently, many of these areas slipped into cycles of intercommunal fighting and tit-for-tat cattle raids after the start of the war.

As the war dragged into 2014, recruitment widened. *Gelweng* from former Warrap and Northern Bahr el Ghazal states that had previously been trained by the SPLA were strongly pressured to join the war, and chiefs and peers made appeals by mobile phone promising officer positions for new recruits. Whereas Mathiang Anyoor fighters, both new and old, were formally integrated into the SPLA system and given ranks and pay, ex-fighters report that the *gelweng* continued to be outside the formal chain of command and were directed by their own leaders and not offered salaries.⁶³ Like other new recruits, however, these *gelweng* also frequently deserted due to demoralization and lack of pay; one ex-combatant described fighting in Unity state and then walking some 600 km to Nasir, near Ethiopia, before defecting. By late 2015 so few *gelweng* remained on the front lines that the dwindled force was formally absorbed into the SPLA, according to one account.⁶⁴

This amalgamation of the SPLA, the *gelweng*, the original Mathiang Anyoor forces from Pantit, and the new ethnic Dinka recruits was viewed by enemies of the SPLA as a new cohesive unit representing the government's tilt towards an ethnic Dinka army. As a result, the term 'Mathiang Anyoor' has come to signify the wider phenomenon of concentrated

recruitment of ethnic Dinka fighters upon whom the government became more reliant during the civil war. The war's circular logic therefore tightened: as fighting forces became increasingly ethnically homogeneous, civil conflict expanded, furthering the unfolding national crisis along ethnic lines.

Indeed, as new recruits joined the depleted original Mathiang Anyoor force, the influxes of ethnic Dinka reinforcements began to change the nature of the SPLA. Former soldiers describe a self-segregation in the military along ethnic lines into homogenous, and hence 'trustworthy', units. As one ex-fighter described:

Reinforcements were always brought from Pantit. There was no confidence in the make-up of [the regular SPLA] battalions because if there was any fighting, if there were Nuer or Shilluk, they would shoot us. And then I would find that those in our command had joined the rebels. So we learned to isolate ourselves and keep ourselves alone so that no one would shoot us in the back. We would find that in the end, it was only us of Bahr el Ghazal remaining. We were fighting to protect the government. But others were fighting for certain factions. So eventually, the new reinforcements coming from Aweil, they stopped being mixed with the new people. We were very cautious now. We didn't let anyone else in our ranks because we didn't trust anyone.⁶⁵

Officers were pulled from SPLA Division 3 based outside Aweil and commanded by Gen. Santino Deng Wol to manage these forces, creating a de facto new wing of the SPLA with its own chain of command to the top. This group was almost entirely pulled from the predominantly Dinka Malual community of Greater Aweil and Northern Bahr el Ghazal.

Therefore, while the original Mathiang Anyoor trained at Pantit as a reserve force,

Box 1 Timeline: Paul Malong and the Mathiang Anyoor (1982–2019)

1982–2005	NBeG devastated by second Sudanese civil war
Late 1980s	<i>Gelweng</i> cattle herders from NBeG develop ties with SPLA to defend Sudan–South Sudan border from Arab ‘Murahaleen’ raids
1993	Paul Malong appointed as commander of SPLA forces in NBeG (according to Malong)
2005	January: CPA between Sudan and South Sudan signed, but tensions remain NBeG and <i>gelweng</i> ties with SPLA continue
2008	March: Malong appointed as governor of NBeG (until 2014)
2010	Fear of Sudan–South Sudan war due to clashes along disputed Mile 14 border The <i>gelweng</i> ’s training at Pantit begins to expand amid fears of border conflict—this later transforms into the first wave of Mathiang Anyoor (MA)
2011	July: South Sudan secedes from Sudan, but tensions continue
2012	April: mass MA recruitment during Heglig border scuffle between Sudan and South Sudan. Their importance grows and Malong and local NBeG elites take a hard line on community border defence. Official narrative says MA created at this time November: bombing of Kiir Adem by SAF SPLM/A officials disagree about fate of the MA, primarily pitting top security officials against Bahr el Ghazal elites and the office of the president, who continues to support the MA
2013	According to some accounts, some MA pre-deployed to Juba as SPLM political tensions rise December: outbreak of civil war and collapse of SPLA. MA allegedly play a role in Nuer massacres in Juba. MA incorporated into SPLA, ostensibly to replenish SPLA ranks and defend Machar’s SPLA-IO ‘coup’ against Kiir’s SPLM
2014	Secondary waves of Dinka, <i>gelweng</i> , and others recruited directly into SPLA and kept as homogeneous ethnic units, referred to as ‘MA’ May (since December 2013): MA play key role in battles for Bor, Bentiu, and Malakal April: Malong appointed as SPLA chief of staff
2015	August: the IGAD-mediated ARCSS peace accord is signed by Kiir and Machar; Malong—dissatisfied at Juba’s ‘submission’ to ARCSS—apparently seeks support to challenge Kiir
2016	Until July: contrary to the ARCSS, Malong and MA play key role in triggering clashes against SPLA-IO and civilians in Equatoria and Western Bahr el Ghazal July: SPLA–SPLA-IO clashes in Juba prompt Machar to flee to the DRC. Malong is allegedly granted USD 5 million for operations to kill Machar
2017	May: Malong is fired from SPLA; en route to NBeG, he is halted at Yirol May: Malong returns to Juba and is put under house arrest until November. His allies are slowly co-opted or neutralized November: Malong exiled to Nairobi, Kenya, where he remains politically active
2018	September: R-ARCSS peace deal signed by Kiir and Machar
2019	(as of October) MA remains part of SPLA, stationed in Yei and elsewhere. Recruitment among Dinka continues, including in Gogrial, Tonj, and Twic states

new recruits were integrated directly into the military, sent to the front lines, and given ranks and a regular salary. The new Mathiang Anyoor was thus less a militia or reserve force than the new SPLA, under the direct control of the SPLA’s new chief of staff, Paul Malong.

The ARCSS and its aftermath (2015–16)

Despite playing a key part in defending Kiir’s SPLM government in 2013–14, the role of the Mathiang Anyoor shifted in the aftermath of the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS) peace accord between Kiir and Machar (IGAD, 2015). This was largely due to Malong’s hard-line anti-accord position as the peace talks in Addis Ababa neared their conclusion.

One former US diplomat claimed that Malong even threatened to kill Kiir if he signed the accord (Vertin, 2018a, p. 9). Other US officials were told that when Kiir equivocated on going to Addis Ababa to sign the accord, Malong had threatened, ‘If Salva goes to Addis, he should not plan on returning’ (Vertin, 2018b, p. 275). When a peace ceremony was scheduled on 26 August in Juba, US officials were told that Malong ‘leaned on the president into the wee hours of the morning, once again talking him out of signature’ (Vertin, 2018b, p. 279). Kiir, under heavy international pressure and the explicit threat of sanctions if he did not attend the ceremony, eventually signed but with ‘serious reservations’ that were listed as a series of unilateral revisions and amendments to the accord (Vertin, 2018b, p. 279).

Frustrated, Malong began sabotaging the peace process: in early 2016, a few months after the accord had been signed, Malong deployed the Mathiang Anyoor along the Juba–Yei road and elsewhere in Yei county in advance of Machar’s return to Juba as vice president.⁶⁶ Central Equatoria, including Yei county, is a historical

stronghold of the SPLA with a large and longstanding Dinka population. South Sudanese refugees interviewed in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Uganda claimed that the Mathiang Anyoor were present not only in Yei, but also in Kajo Keji, Lasu, Morobo, Ombaci, and Tore.⁶⁷

In other places, Malong subverted the normal SPLA command structure to rely on Dinka Aweil commanders. In Torit, for example, Malong relied on Chan Garang, who was technically a deputy to a Nuer commander.⁶⁸ In Yambio, Governor Patrick Raphael Zamoi told UN and church officials that Malong had also ignored the official chain of command and personally ordered attacks against opposition forces, allegedly to intentionally undermine a local peace process.⁶⁹

Malong also led resistance to the SPLA-IO's establishment of cantonment sites outside of the Greater Upper Nile region—made up of former Unity, Upper Nile, and Jonglei states—which the ARCSS recognized as the conflict-affected area (IGAD, 2015, para. 15.1, p. 17).⁷⁰ The SPLA-IO had indeed used concessions in the peace deal to mobilize fighters outside of Greater Upper Nile, in Wau and former Western Equatoria state. Malong therefore deployed the Mathiang Anyoor to Wau and Western Equatoria to combat SPLA-IO units demanding cantonment and inclusion into the accord's security provisions. In Western Equatoria, Malong again circumvented the formal chain of command to order attacks on opposition fighters.

UN investigators also pegged Malong as the chief protagonist of the July 2016 fighting in Juba which ended with the collapse of the peace deal and the exit of Machar from the city (UNSC, 2018b). Kiir's spokesman, Ateny Awek, later claimed that the government had paid Malong USD 5 million to kill Machar after he withdrew south from Juba after the clashes (Radio Tamazuj, 2018d). Although Malong's SPLA trailed Machar and ambushed his forces, they did not cut them

“ The ethnic homogenization of the military was a result of Dinka recruitment in 2014 and Malong's use of the Mathiang Anyoor across the country in 2015–16.”

off before Machar crossed into the DRC (Boswell, 2017).

With the end of the peace deal, fighting broke out across Yei county between the SPLA-IO and the SPLA, including the Mathiang Anyoor. Satellite imagery captured the widespread destruction around Yei, where an estimated 18,000 structures were destroyed primarily by fire (UNITAR, 2017). A rise in anti-Dinka violence in the Equatorias, and especially in Yei town, led to the evacuation of the Yei Dinka population to Juba in October 2016 (UNMISS and OHCHR, 2017, para. 49, p. 19). More Mathiang Anyoor were deployed to Yei town after the evacuations, escalating tensions.⁷¹

Through these activities, Malong and the Mathiang Anyoor became associated with large-scale atrocities in and around Yei town as well as in former Yei and Lainya counties, where there was widespread destruction of villages and the mass displacement of entire communities (UNMISS and OHCHR, 2017, para. 58, p. 21). Indeed, refugees who fled the violence in Central Equatoria widely blamed the Mathiang Anyoor for their displacement.⁷²

The ethnic homogenization of the military was a result of Dinka recruitment in 2014 and Malong's use of the Mathiang Anyoor across the country in 2015–16. This further deepened resentment among non-Dinka groups against Dinka-dominated power structures. Although many of the SPLA units deployed in Equatoria remained ethnically mixed, refugees

from Equatoria repeatedly described the aggressors they were fleeing as simply 'the Dinka'.⁷³ Congolese and Ugandan border officials also frequently characterized the conflict as Dinka against Equatorians.⁷⁴ As a result, the withdrawal of the Mathiang Anyoor often became a chief demand in local peace initiatives.⁷⁵

The fall of Paul Malong (2017)

Malong's accumulation and abuse of power eventually led to his downfall. When the immediate threat of the SPLA-IO began to recede from early 2017 onwards, Malong's heavy reliance on predominantly Dinka fighting forces proved a liability for the government. Equatoria had become a new bastion of armed rebellion against the state, and Kiir feared that Malong would turn his aim inward towards the country's leadership in Juba.

Consequently, Kiir fired Malong as SPLA chief of staff in May 2017, prompting Malong to flee Juba in a 13-vehicle convoy⁷⁶ towards his home in Aweil in Northern Bahr el Ghazal.⁷⁷ Malong called the governor of Eastern Lakes, Bor Philip Wutchok Bor, asking for passage north but Bor refused, offering instead to mediate talks for Malong in Yirol.⁷⁸ Malong maintained that he simply wanted to return home to rest and farm, but others in Juba suspected Malong wished to return to his stronghold to foment a rebellion.⁷⁹

When Malong's convoy entered Yirol, officials blocked the road. Malong was

“ Many rank-and-file fighters never saw themselves as part of a Malong-commanded militia despite public perceptions to the contrary and Malong’s own views.”

engaged by local officials, local chiefs, as well as a wide range of Dinka elites, elders, and chiefs while there. Others, including erstwhile-ally Gen. Santino Deng Wol, tried to mediate between Kiir and Malong, with Deng Wol advising Malong to return to Juba.⁸⁰ Malong agreed to return to Juba where he was welcomed on 13 May by a cheering crowd at the airport (Sudan Tribune, 2017). He was then placed under house arrest, but he continued to have contact with his loyalists and other elites, including opposition figures (Patinkin, 2017).

Malong blames his fallout with Kiir on the NSS chief, Akol Koor.⁸¹ Malong believes Koor was positioning himself to replace Kiir, precipitated by—in Malong’s telling—the president’s declining physical and mental health. Malong accused Koor of fabricating allegations that he was seeking regional support for a coup against Kiir.⁸² A former senior Ethiopian official, however, confirmed that Malong had indeed sought support from Ethiopia and others in the region to orchestrate a coup, which was rejected.⁸³

Malong remained a controversial figure during his house arrest from May to November 2017. He retained some popularity among ethnic Dinka, who saw him as a strongman who saved the Dinka presidency from a Nuer power grab and foreign pressure to concede more power. Malong also benefited from widespread dissatisfaction with Kiir, who many viewed as weak and ineffectual. In addition, as an elite of the SPLA old guard,

Malong had significant standing among some security elite, although there was still antagonism between the Garang-ists and Malong dating back to the 1990s. Nevertheless, even his allies knew that Malong had overplayed his hand. One senior SPLA general noted that Machar had taken six months to rebel after being sacked as first vice president in 2013, while Malong turned into a rebel ‘overnight’.⁸⁴

As Malong continued to try to mobilize politically and engage with opposition figures throughout 2017, Kiir tightened the screws into Malong. Malong loyalists were harassed, detained, or worse;⁸⁵ others were accommodated and lured out of his political orbit. Malong’s network had been deep and wide but was steadily disempowered and dismantled, limiting Malong’s options. Matters came to a head in October 2017 when Kiir ordered Malong’s total confinement, a ban on visitors, the arrest of his bodyguards, and sanctioned ‘reasonable force’ to be used to enforce these orders.⁸⁶

Naturally, Kiir’s efforts to neutralize Malong faced some resistance in the SPLA and from other elites who feared a conflagration if Malong was forced too tightly into a corner. A group of Dinka elites, as well as the UN, sought to mediate the crisis,⁸⁷ and eventually Kiir relented and Malong was granted exile to Nairobi, Kenya, in November 2017. Malong then formed the South Sudan United Front (SSUF), which had no known impact on the ground until 2019 (see

below) and was denied participation in the peace negotiations led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the High-Level Revitalisation Forum, which signed a new ceasefire in December 2017. Notably, the Mathiang Anyoor forces did not rebel upon hearing about Malong’s house-arrest or exile, nor did they desert *en masse*. Instead, they remained formally integrated in the SPLA and on its payroll.

Malong’s miscalculations are a matter of speculation. He may have overestimated the allegiance(s) to his own persona. Many rank-and-file fighters never saw themselves as part of a Malong-commanded militia despite public perceptions to the contrary and Malong’s own views. One former Mathiang Anyoor fighter was even unaware—weeks after the fact—that Malong had been sacked as SPLA chief of staff.⁸⁸ Former combatants noted repeatedly that they saw themselves as SPLA—ranks and salaries reinforced this idea.⁸⁹ Further, their loyalties appeared anchored to their home communities rather than to Malong.⁹⁰

Kiir’s consolidation of power (2017–18)

After Malong’s fall from power, Kiir sidelined—but did not alienate—Malong’s network of supporters. Gen. Santino Deng Wol, the direct Mathiang Anyoor commander, did not defect, and he urged Malong not to revolt. This was critical for Kiir because it, in effect, cut Malong off from what he saw as his Aweil army. Later, in December 2017, Deng Wol was promoted to the Bilpam headquarters outside Juba—away from Aweil—and he assumed the post of overall commander of the SPLA ground forces (Radio Tamazuj, 2018b). He was replaced as division commander in Aweil by long-time Malong rival, Gen. Dau Aturjong (Patinkin, 2017; Radio Tamazuj, 2018b).⁹¹ In May 2017, Kiir also adroitly replaced Malong as head of the SPLA with James Ajongo, another Aweil general and erstwhile Malong ally.

Ajongo passed away from health complications in April 2018 and was replaced by Gabriel Jok Riak, a Dinka Bor (Dumo, 2018).

Kiir and his supporters in Juba also worked to quickly counter Malong's influence in Aweil by promoting other elites who had grown resentful of Malong's hegemonic hold on regional politics. Besides replacing Deng Wol with Aturjong, Kiir also empowered the governor of Aweil East state, Deng Deng Akuei—nephew of Aldo Ajo, a veteran South Sudanese politician and a leader of the influential Jieng Council of Elders⁹²—to gradually counter and dismember Malong's power networks in Aweil East. For example, Malong had maintained a stranglehold at the Aweil East–Darfur border market at Warawar, his hometown, which was a major source of revenue. These moves by Kiir and other national and local elites helped stave off a complete rupture within Kiir's coalition. They blunted the force of Malong's removal and granted Kiir and Akol Koor the political space needed to contain the immediate fallout. Furthermore, while Kiir was able to neutralize some of Malong's supporters, others removed themselves. Several of Malong's closest allies, including Manut Yel Lual, his former revenue officer, fled into the bush to join the South Sudan Patriotic Movement/Army (SSPM/A) forces of Agany Abdelbagi Ayii (Radio Tamazuj, 2018a).⁹³ Malong had maintained, at times, a loose but unofficial alliance with the SSPM/A.

Kiir's new power base also began to side-line Yirol elites, some of whom backed Malong or were involved in negotiating his safe return to Juba. Kiir then sacked several top security and political officials from Yirol, including Gen. Marial Chanuog, commander of the so-called 'Tiger Division' presidential guard; Marial Nuor, the chief of military intelligence; as well as Bor Philip, the Yirol governor at the time of Malong's flight. Telar Ring Deng, a former top advisor to Kiir serving as South Sudan's ambassador to Russia, also supported Malong and resigned his post (Radio Tamazuj, 2018c).

Since 2018, the government has negotiated a return of some of Malong's supporters. The first was Ajang Ajang, the leader of the South Sudan United Front/Army. He was followed in August 2018 by Chan Garang, Malong's ally who had ostensibly defected to the SPLA-IO (Radio Tamazuj, 2018e), and Telar Ring Deng (Radio Tamazuj, 2018f).

Rather than splinter his base by removing Malong, Kiir instead consolidated his power. Although Kiir's coalition looked to be shrinking in early 2018—as he appointed a string of loyalists from Gogrial, Tonj, and Twic to the most sensitive senior positions in the government—the 2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) peace deal granted him legitimacy and political capital (IGAD, 2018). Power now appears more widely distributed across Kiir's security services as the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF)—the newly branded SPLA—has lost much of its political and military power to the NSS and the presidential guard (Deng, 2018, p. 10; UNSC, 2018a, para. 20, p. 7).⁹⁴

Despite Malong's fall and Kiir's consolidation of power, the Mathiang Anyoor live on. As of October 2019, they were located around the outskirts of Yei town—surrounded by hostile forces without clear routes out for desertion or rebellion.⁹⁵ According to opposition fighters, they also remain active outside Wau.⁹⁶ However, the legacy of the Mathiang Anyoor continues, in new forms. Prior to Malong's sacking in early 2017, the SPLA had already shifted recruitment towards other Dinka centres in Bahr el Ghazal as well as to Yirol and Rumbek. In September 2018, after the signing of the R-ARCSS, the SPLA launched a new mass recruitment drive in Gogrial, Tonj, and Twic states (that make up former Warrap state). This mass mobilization, overseen once again by Gen. Santino Deng Wol, violated the peace deal provisions against recruitment.⁹⁷ Some in the Gogrial community have even complained that youth, some still students, are being forcibly conscripted (ICG, 2019; Apach, 2018; UNSC, 2019).

Meanwhile, there have been formal complaints to the ceasefire monitoring body, the Ceasefire Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, that Deng Wol ordered recruitment of 15,000 new soldiers (CTSAMVM, 2018, p. 9). The allegations specified that some youth are now in Juba in order to escape the conscription in Tonj. In December 2018, NSS officers, including a brigadier general, assaulted ceasefire monitors—military officers from Ethiopia, Kenya, and Sudan—while they were attempting to verify allegations that some of these recruits, including children, were being trained at Luri (ICG, 2019; UNSC, 2019, paras. 65 and 66, p. 19). These new recruits replenished the military ranks in strategic areas, including Juba, rebuilt a new core army loyal to the president, and replaced Aweil officers in the presidential guard. Malong succeeded in creating a new, tribalized army—but in the end, it was not an army loyal to him.

Malong in 2019: Down, not out?

As of October 2019, Malong remains a significant political actor but of waning strength and increasing isolation. He remains locked out of the 2018 R-ARCSS peace deal and previous bids to join the South Sudan Opposition Alliance (SSOA) have failed.⁹⁸ In August 2019, his SSUF joined two other R-ARCSS non-signatory groups, Thomas Cirillo's South Sudan National Democratic Alliance (SSNDA) and a faction of the FD comprising Pagan Amum, Oyai Deng, and Cirino Hiteng (under the new name of 'Real-SPLM'), for a 'Declaration of Principles' under the banner of the South Sudan Opposition Movements at The Hague.⁹⁹ Yet, earlier the same month, the core unit of his rebel movement suffered a devastating defeat in clashes inside South Sudan, which led to the death of longtime close aide Manut Yel and others, and the capture of his chief of staff (Radio Tamazuj, 2019a; 2019b).¹⁰⁰ The South Sudanese military

then claimed it routed an SSUF attack near Raja, allegedly killing seven and capturing 34, on 27-28 August (Radio Tamazuj, 2019c). Following these events, the secretary general of the SSUF disavowed Malong's leadership and was quickly backed by secretary general of the party's Khartoum office, who cited discontent at Malong's decision to launch the attacks in Northern Bahr el Ghazal and Raja.¹⁰¹

To many South Sudanese, Malong is an irredeemable figure as the chief instigator of widespread atrocities and saboteur of the 2015 ARCSS peace deal. Malong does retain the power of the purse, however. An alliance with Malong thus has the potential allure of financial support for South Sudanese elites whose wealth has dried up during the conflict. But his wealth has also fallen under scrutiny as Kenyan media have investigated the arrangement of Malong's residence in Nairobi, and while Kenyan civil society continue campaigning against allegations of corruption and illicit financial flows into Nairobi from South Sudan.¹⁰²

For several decades, Malong has meticulously built a personal empire of wealth, kinship, patronage, political alliances, and social capital. He remains a significant player, but this stature will diminish as power remains elusive and as access to additional resources declines. Many analysts expect Malong to eventually negotiate his way back into the government. Malong, too, is aware of this expectation, declaring, 'The government feels that my being out is a split of the tribe. And that I should come [back] so the tribe can unite'.¹⁰³

Conclusion

The Mathiang Anyoor played a chief role in South Sudan's civil war from 2013 to 2018. It is questionable whether Kiir could have moved against Machar's opposition so decisively were it not for this reserve force and, more broadly, a political and military power base from Bahr el Ghazal

willing to mobilise to protect its insecure grip on power. The Mathiang Anyoor phenomenon is rooted in the flip sides of this insecure power: fear and entitlement, manifested in extreme violence.

Indeed, the Mathiang Anyoor salvaged Kiir's regime at a period of great vulnerability, but at great cost to South Sudan's own fledgling nationhood. The Mathiang Anyoor made viable, if only briefly and crudely, a coercive South Sudanese state forged through Dinka manpower, but in the process, they exacerbated South Sudan's own internal divisions. Kiir's wider coalition continues to expand and contract, but his power is maintained at its core by a group of loyalists confined within shrinking concentric circles of Dinka factions, clans, and kin. With the rise of Akol Koor's NSS and the decline in Machar's own capacity to wage high-intensity warfare, Kiir no longer leans as heavily on the Malong style of blunt force to maintain power. Few regimes have the time and political space, as Juba has, to tinker with maintaining and protecting a core state stripped down to its bare minimum. It is adept at survival and self-perpetuation—at least in the absence of a concerted coercive external force or regime split.

The Mathiang Anyoor was both more and less than its caricature as an irregular Dinka militia loyal to Paul Malong. It was instead a community defence force that largely perished in 2013. It then evolved into a broader umbrella for Dinka ethno-nationalism in 2014, and, as the intra-coalition feuds rose to the fore from 2015 onwards, for parochial Aweil interests. For millions of other South Sudanese, the Mathiang Anyoor became a gun-toting symbol of their government. Far from an irregular aberration, the Mathiang Anyoor was arguably the state's most naked manifestation. The SPLA never transformed from its ethnic and warlord-ist roots, nor did the South Sudanese state transcend the captured interests of the elite jockeying for positions within it.

What is perhaps most striking about the Mathiang Anyoor is how indistinguish-

able it is from other armed groups in the war: it was mobilized primarily on the rationale of community defence and then utilized in a campaign directed over the political centre.¹⁰⁴ This is not, fundamentally, a failing of South Sudan's security sector makeup, but rather a consequence of its ongoing—and troubled—politics of state formation. The formation of a representative national army in South Sudan must follow either the consolidation of power or a more stable political settlement among its rival constituent groups. The former option would likely require decades of violent coercion. The latter option, requiring wider and shared distribution of state power and resources, is the immediate and less violent path.

Ethnic violence did not destroy South Sudan; rather, competition for capturing the new South Sudanese state produced extreme ethnic and political violence. Thus, a political structure pulling local 'defence forces' across the country into the national conflict should receive the most scrutiny as the primary driver of the war. By this measure, the 2018 peace deal, like the 2015 accord it 'revitalizes', is modest—a wobbly truce that defers, rather than resolves, the winner-takes-all power dispute between Kiir and Machar's camps.¹⁰⁵ The string of negotiated truces characterising the mediation efforts since 2014 are unlikely to redress this core fragility in the absence of a deeper, more stable political settlement. ●

Abbreviations and acronyms

- ARCSS** Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan
- CPA** Comprehensive Peace Agreement
- CTSAMVM** Ceasefire Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism
- DRC** Democratic Republic of the Congo
- FD** Former Detainees
- IGAD** Intergovernmental Authority on Development
- JEM** Justice and Equality Movement
- MA** Mathiang Anyoor

NBeG Northern Bahr el Ghazal
NSS National Security Service
R-ARCSS Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan
SAF Sudanese Armed Forces
SDBZ Safe Demilitarized Border Zone
SPLA-IO Sudan People's Liberation Army-in-Opposition
SPLM/A Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army
SSDF South Sudan Defence Forces
SSNA South Sudan News Agency
SSNDA South Sudan National Democratic Alliance
SSOA South Sudan Opposition Alliance
SSPM/A South Sudan Patriotic Movement/Army
SSPDF South Sudan People's Defence Forces
SSR Security sector reform
SSUF South Sudan United Front
UN United Nations

Endnotes

- 1 Mathiang Anyoor is a Dinka name for a brown caterpillar that eats through the soil.
- 2 'Bahr el Ghazal' refers to the area taken up by former Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Western Bahr el Ghazal, Warrap, and Lakes states. See Map 1.
- 3 In October 2018 President Salva Kiir issued a decree renaming the SPLA the 'South Sudan People's Defence Forces' (SSPDF). As this paper references events both before and after this decree, however, the name SPLA will be used throughout.
- 4 Security sector reform (SSR) describes efforts to reform state security organs and units into disciplined and 'modern' structures, usually in conjunction with a political state-building project. See, for example, DCAF (n.d.).
- 5 For a review of these reform initiatives for the SPLA prior to its independence, see Rands (2010). For a review of the same period of reform efforts from a South Sudanese military insider, see Gedima (2011). For a later review of these programmes after independence but before the civil war, see Snowden (2012). The price tags for these efforts were enormous and set to climb higher. Rands estimated US contributions at USD 150–300 million by 2010 (p. 32). Snowden references plans for a USD 1.3 billion disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programme (p. 23).
- 6 This Briefing Paper is based on field research conducted by the author in South Sudan and the broader region since 2015, including Northern Bahr el Ghazal in mid-2017, as well as repeated research in Juba, in the wider Equatoria region, and with South Sudanese refugees in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) from 2016 to 2018. Direct accounts of the Mathiang Anyoor are based upon interviews with former combatants, former trainers, and many of the senior SPLA and defence officials centrally involved in these events. The paper focuses on using primary sources, seeking to add depth and veracity to a much-discussed but little-documented subject. Special care has been taken to take into critical consideration the political agenda of each interviewee.
- 7 Some interviewees used the word *titweng* in place of *gelweng*. The two terms were used interchangeably, with *gelweng* in dominant use. For the history and relationship of the two terms, see Pendle (2015). This paper will use the term *gelweng*, literally 'cattle guard' in Bahr el Ghazal Dinka, to avoid confusion.
- 8 Author interviews with officials, traditional authorities, and residents of former Northern Bahr el Ghazal state, June 2017. See also Kindersley (2018).
- 9 For a detailed history of the *gelweng* in Bahr el Ghazal and their relationship with the SPLA, see Pendle (2015, pp. 415–21).
- 10 Author interviews with ex-Pantit trainees in Aweil and remotely, June–August 2017.
- 11 Author interview with former senior military official, location withheld, 2018. This paper utilizes 'former senior official' throughout to describe sources that held a senior rank during the events they are now describing. In addition to Malong himself, of the former senior officials attributed to in this paper, two never joined the opposition—to the knowledge of the author—two joined the group known as the Former Detainees (FD), and one remains a leader in the armed opposition. Interviews also included 'current' senior officials still inside the government, including Santino Deng Wol and another current-serving senior military official, as well as both current and former senior political officials in Northern Bahr el Ghazal.
- 12 These clashes included repeated fighting over the strategic bridge at Kiir Adem from 2010 to 2012 (Craze, 2014, p. 21), including the bombing of Kiir Adem by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) in November 2012, which received significant press coverage (e.g. Holland, 2012; Sudan Tribune, 2012b).
- 13 One Aweil state official, close to Malong, credited the recruitment drive for improving security in Aweil town. 'It was like a public service because many youths were in town, and this [town] is small, so crime was going up. Instead of loitering and causing problems, they were taken there [to Pantit]. And then when war came, there was already an army [here], so they were taken there [to fight].' Author interview with Aweil state official, Aweil, June 2017.
- 14 Author interviews with ex-Pantit trainees in Aweil and remotely, June–August 2017.
- 15 Author interview with ex-Mathiang Anyoor, Aweil, June 2017.
- 16 Author interview with ex-Pantit trainee, Aweil, June 2017.
- 17 For more on the SDBZ, see HSBA (2014b).
- 18 Author interviews with ex-Pantit trainees in Aweil and remotely, June–August 2017.
- 19 Author interview with ex-Mathiang Anyoor, Aweil, June 2017.
- 20 For more on the battle for Heglig and the collaboration between SPLA and JEM, see Boswell (2012a).
- 21 Author interviews with South Sudanese officials and former officials, various locations, 2015–18.
- 22 Author interview with Paul Malong, Nairobi, January 2018. Malong said in the same interview that he had joined the SPLA in 1984.
- 23 Author interviews with officials, ex-combatants, and ex-trainers in Aweil, Juba, and northern Uganda, 2017–18.
- 24 Author interviews with senior officials, Aweil and Juba, 2017. While the figure of 12,000 is often repeated, it has not been verified. Administrative counts of manpower in military units in South Sudan are usually unreliable and generally inflated.
- 25 Author interview with senior official, Aweil and Juba, 2017.
- 26 Author interviews with three former senior security officials, Juba and other locations (withheld), 2017–18.

- 27 Author interview with former senior security official involved in discussions regarding the status of the Mathiang Anyoor in 2012, location withheld, July 2018.
- 28 Author interviews with deputy minister of defence Majak D'Agoot, Nairobi, 2017; deputy chief of staff for training, Thomas Cirillo, Addis Ababa, 2018; and deputy chief of staff for operations, Deng Wek, Kampala, 2017.
- 29 Author interview with Pieng Deng, Juba, August 2017.
- 30 Author interviews with former SPLA officials in senior positions over the Pantit training camps, locations withheld, 2017–18.
- 31 Author interview with former senior security official, location withheld, July 2018.
- 32 Author interview with Pieng Deng, Juba, August 2017.
- 33 For information about the Kokora division and its aftermath, see Willems and Deng (2015).
- 34 Author interviews with Equatorian elite, traditional leaders, opposition fighters, government officials, and civilians, South Sudan, Uganda, and DRC, 2015–18.
- 35 Author interviews with current and former senior security officials in South Sudan, various locations, 2015–18. The Nuer predominance in the SPLA rank and file was a legacy of the 2006 Juba Declaration. For more on the Juba Declaration, see Young (2006).
- 36 Following John Garang's death in July 2005, Kiir had shored up his own new leadership position by forging an unlikely alliance with Paulino Matiep's SSDF, which were predominantly Khartoum-backed Nuer militias that had long since waged war against the SPLA. Kiir's SSDF alliance brought closer ties between himself and Khartoum, but his gamble began to sour over time as the Nuer forces drifted towards Machar's political orbit as co-ethnic Nuer, especially following Matiep's death in August 2012.
- 37 The overlay of interests related to Abyei and an offensive posture against Khartoum provide reasons to cast doubt on the early resistance of the elite who later, after the outbreak of civil war in 2013, distanced themselves from the Mathiang Anyoor phenomenon. Many of those who would fall out with Kiir during the civil war were also those pushing the internal agenda against Khartoum, especially those who later formed the Former Detainees (FD) group. Many became sources critical of Kiir and Malong in the African Union Commission of Inquiry into the December 2013 killings (AUCISS, 2014). For instance, Mac Paul, South Sudan's Military Intelligence chief, oversaw the Heglig offensive from its operational headquarters in Rubkona in 2012. He later became a vocal critic of the Mathiang Anyoor after his arrest in December 2013 and subsequent formation of the opposition FD. It is worth questioning whether resistance to the Pantit training camp was present from the beginning or as staunch as now relayed, or whether this resistance crystallized only after it became apparent that Bahr el Ghazal elites planned to instrumentalize the Mathiang Anyoor for internal politics.
- 38 For a more detailed timeline of events leading up to the outbreak of war see HSBA (2014c).
- 39 Author interviews with eyewitnesses in Juba, former and current South Sudanese security officials, and analysts, multiple locations, 2013–18.
- 40 Some of these units were led by Bol Akot, who at the time was based at the training site at Luri, a presidential ranch in walking distance of Juba. Some have described Bol Akot as leader of the Dut Ku Beny—a Dinka phrase variably translated as 'protect' or 'rescue the leader'—a Dinka group usually attributed to forces receiving special training at Luri. One trainer attested that Bol was a commander overseeing the activities in Luri, which conducted 'refresher' and VIP protection training. After the violence broke out in Juba, this trainer said that Bol and the Luri trainees marched to Juba to participate (author interview with a former trainer at Luri, location withheld, 2017). Another account disputed Bol's role, stating rather that the Dut Ku Beny fell under the command of Marial Chanuong, commander of the presidential guard (author interview with former senior official, location withheld, 2017). The former senior official continued: 'Bol was using some of his bodyguards, elements from commandos, those from Bahr el Ghazal, even some of the SPLA in Juba came under him. There was no strict adherence to chain of command in that hour.'
- 41 Author interviews with former senior security officials, 2017–18.
- 42 Author interview with former senior security official, location withheld, August 2017.
- 43 Author interview with former senior security official, location withheld, August 2017.
- 44 Author interview with Paul Malong, Nairobi, September 2018. Some, such as Thomas Cirillo, deputy chief of staff at the time, disputed claims that the Mathiang Anyoor deployed to Juba prior to outbreak of fighting (author interview with Thomas Cirillo, Addis Ababa, December 2018). There is also disagreement among senior officials about the involvement of the so-called Dut Ku Beny (see note 40). The most common narrative among them is that some of the trainees in Pantit were taken for training as special units in Luri—around 70, by the estimate of a senior military official involved—suggesting some overlap between the Mathiang Anyoor and the Dut Ku Beny. The preponderance of accounts of the government militias at play in the initial December 2013 violence in Juba suggests a muddled reality rather than a clean narrative. This is reminiscent of the fighting at the presidential palace (commonly known as J1) in July 2016, which collapsed the short-lived power-sharing government under the August 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS) peace deal (Boswell, 2017). In both cases, December 2013 and July 2016, the spark may have been unplanned, even if the tinder was prepared in advance.
- 45 Author interview with current and former senior military officials, various locations, 2016–18.
- 46 Malong was at a Bilpam meeting on 19 December, according to one source who was at Bilpam at the time (author interview with former aide to then-deputy chief of staff, Thomas Cirillo, Juba, February 2016). Cirillo also recounted that Malong, as governor, arrived in Juba in the days following the outbreak of violence and sat down next to the Hoth Mai, the chief of staff, in general headquarter meetings (author interview with Thomas Cirillo, Addis Ababa, December 2018). Cirillo said Malong did not participate in army senior leadership meetings prior to the outbreak of violence in December 2013.
- 47 Author interviews with community representatives, former Northern Bahr el Ghazal state, June 2017.

- 48 Author interviews with community representatives, former Northern Bahr el Ghazal state, June 2017.
- 49 Author interviews with community representatives, former Northern Bahr el Ghazal state, June 2017; author interviews with ex-combatants, Aweil and remotely, June–August 2017.
- 50 Author interview with ex-Mathiang Anyoor combatant, Aweil, June 2017. He continued: ‘The death rates in Malakal were as high as Bor, because Bor was a lot of casualties in a very short period, but Malakal was over a longer period.’
- 51 Author interview with ex-Mathiang Anyoor combatant, Aweil, June 2017.
- 52 Author interview with ex-Mathiang Anyoor combatant, Aweil, June 2017.
- 53 Author interview with ex-Mathiang Anyoor combatant, Aweil, June 2017.
- 54 According to HRW, between 60 and 70 per cent of the SPLA may have defected in 2013–14 (HRW, 2014).
- 55 Author interview with top Malong aide, Aweil, June 2017. This is likely the high end of any estimates about the number of recruits from Aweil, and it may also include recruitment into the NSS and presidential guard. In 2014, a recruitment drive targeting those with school certificates promised officer training into the NSS. These recruits were taken to Owiny Ki-bul, a village about 200 km south of Juba, where many were instead trained as presidential guards and deployed to fight.
- 56 Author interviews with community representatives, former Northern Bahr el Ghazal state, June 2017.
- 57 See Pendle (2015, p. 417–18) for a discussion of ‘age mates’ (which she calls ‘age sets’).
- 58 Author Skype interview with ex-Mathiang Anyoor combatant, Aweil, August 2017.
- 59 Following the Mathiang Anyoor, a group of Pantit trainees graduated under the name of the ‘Amiath-Noon’, a reference to young grass that is felled during rainstorms. These Amiath-Noon were popularly considered part of the ‘new’ Mathiang Anyoor.
- 60 Author Skype interview with ex-Mathiang Anyoor combatant, Aweil, August 2017.
- 61 Author interviews with ex-combatants and South Sudanese security officials, 2015–2018.
- 62 According to Malong, Goram was the SPLA training site during the war, while Luri was operated by the NSS (author interview with Paul Malong, Nairobi, January 2018.)
- 63 Author interviews with ex-combatants in Aweil and remotely, June–August 2017.
- 64 Author Skype interview with ex-*gelweng* fighter, Aweil, August 2017.
- 65 Author interview with ex-Mathiang Anyoor combatant, Aweil, June 2017.
- 66 It seems that a new batch of Mathiang Anyoor were trained in Goram during this time, according to at least one detailed account provided by a trainer who was present in Goram. Author interview with former SPLA trainer, location withheld, 2017.
- 67 Author interviews with South Sudanese refugees, Aba, DRC; Arua and Yumbe districts, Uganda; both 2016–18.
- 68 Chan Garang later defected from Juba in 2017, fled into active SPLA-IO territories, and pledged allegiance to the SPLA-IO. See Radio Tamazuj (2017a). In an interview with the author, Malong distanced himself from Chan Garang’s rebellion and said that Chan rebelled after hearing he was going to be arrested. Author interview with Paul Malong, Nairobi, January 2018. Chan later negotiated a return to the government in August 2018. See below and Radio Tamazuj (2018e).
- 69 Author interviews with civil society and UN and church officials, Yambio, 2016.
- 70 Malong said that the 2015 ARCSS peace deal only prescribed cantonment in Greater Upper Nile: ‘They extended cantonment, which was not in the agreement.’ He also accused the opposition of mobilizing non-fighters who lacked firearms: ‘They [opposition mobilizers] just went to the village and, whoever, they went to cantonment. Cantonment was meant for fighters.’ Author interview with Paul Malong, Nairobi, January 2018.
- 71 Author interviews with South Sudanese refugees, Aba, DRC; Arua and Yumbe districts, Uganda; both 2016–18. Author interviews with Yei residents, Yei, June 2018.
- 72 Author interviews with South Sudanese refugees, Aba, DRC; Arua and Yumbe districts, Uganda; both 2016–2018. Author interviews with Yei residents, Yei, June 2018. A former resident described the Mathiang Anyoor fighters as ‘school children’. One teacher in rural Yei described taking in some of the Mathiang Anyoor as primary school students after they de-
- ployed to his area. Author interview with former Ombasi boma headteacher, Yumbe district, Uganda, April 2018.
- 73 Author interviews with South Sudan refugees in Uganda and DRC, 2016–18.
- 74 Author interviews with Congolese officials, Aba, Dungu, and Doruma, 2016; with Ugandan border officials at Oraba, Busia, and Afoji, 2017.
- 75 The withdrawal of Mathiang Anyoor forces from Yei River state was a chief demand of the small SPLA-IO splinter group under Hilary Yakani that signed an agreement with the Yei River state government in Kampala in 2017. ‘Phase II Grassroots Peace Agreement’, 30 April, 2017, on file with author. ‘The Minutes of the Joint Security Meeting between the government security sector coordination committee and the SPLA-IO Yei River State on the Yei River State Grassroots Peace Initiatives, June 2017’, Kampala, Uganda, on file with author.
- 76 Author interview with deputy governor Nhial Enoch, Yirol, September 2017.
- 77 Author interviews with senior officials involved, Juba and Aweil, 2017.
- 78 Author interview with Eastern Lakes state governor Bor Philip Wutchock Bor, Juba, September 2017.
- 79 Other accounts specified that Malong was informed that he would be ambushed near Rumbek by forces under the command of Western Lakes state governor Matur Chut if he proceeded towards Aweil. Author interviews with Malong allies and officials, Aweil and elsewhere, 2017.
- 80 ‘We didn’t want [Malong] to become like Riek [Machar],’ said Deng Wol. Deng Wol said that he, together with other Aweil elites, ‘refused’ Malong’s return to Aweil and that he was actively in phone communication with Malong, Kiir, and James Ajongo ‘the whole night [Malong] left Juba’. Author interview with Santino Deng Wol, SPLA Division 3 headquarters outside of Aweil, June 2017. The deputy governor of Eastern Lakes confirmed to author that Deng Wol played a ‘very big role’ in mediating between Kiir and Malong at this time. Author interview with deputy governor Nhial Enoch, Yirol, September 2017.
- 81 Nhial Deng Nhial is widely seen among the South Sudanese elite as Koor’s preferred successor for Kiir—both Nhial Deng and Koor hail from Tonj in former Warrap

- state. In Aweil, many viewed this as a potential Warrap power grab against them, despite the heavier burden taken on during the war by Aweil through the Mathiang Anyoor. Indeed, Kiir's government increasingly appears run by a core alliance of Gogrial–Tonj–Twic—the three rural Dinka states which made up former Warrap state.
- 82 'Akol, he knows that the president is outgoing, either alive or dead. Akol knows who will be the problem, if the president is outgoing, to take power in country. He knows it is me. So Akol needed the president to destroy me while [he is] still there. Akol has a programme, and he will not do that programme if I am in the government. So he has to tell Salva that I am one that will take power from him. [He told President Kiir that h]e has info[rmation] that I talked to President Uhuru [of Kenya] about taking over from the president. Talked to [President] Museveni [of Uganda]. Talked to [President] Kagame [of Rwanda]. [Former Prime Minister] Hailemariam [of Ethiopia]. All the same, [he told Kiir] that I asked them to take over the government. If those four heads of state were my alliance to take over the power [in Juba], why are they not now helping me to take over? It was just a lie. It was a plan.' Author interview with Paul Malong, Nairobi, January 2018.
- 83 Author interview with retired senior Ethiopian general, Addis Ababa, 2016. US officials apparently also heard rumours that Malong, among others, were coup-plotting in 2014 and 2015, see Vertin, 2018b, pp. 260–61.
- 84 Author interview with senior security official, Juba, August 2017.
- 85 Malong and his close aides claimed that government security agents had killed some of those who were accused of having ties to him. Author interviews with Malong and his close aides, various locations, 2018. See also Radio Tamazuj (2017b), which reports that Bol Deng Miyen, from Aweil, was shot in Juba in November 2017.
- 86 Digital copy of Kiir's signed order, obtained by author. 'Republican Order No. 26 / 2017 for the Issuance of Orders to the Chief of Defence Forces of the SPLA, 2017 A.D.', 30 October 2017.
- 87 Dinka elders sought to mediate under the rubric Concerned Citizens' Committee for Peace, chaired by Francis Deng. See Putsoa (2017).
- 88 Author interview with ex-combatant, Aweil, June 2017.
- 89 Author interviews with ex-combatants, Aweil and remotely, June–August 2017.
- 90 Gen. Santino Deng Wol, described by many as the direct commander of the Mathiang Anyoor, stressed repeatedly that the Mathiang Anyoor is just one unit of the regular army, not a community militia. 'The Mathiang Anyoor may have started as a border force, but where did they get their weapons?' he rhetorically asked the author. He also acknowledged the dominant contribution of Northern Bahr el Ghazal to the SPLA. 'Mading Aweil [a colloquial term for the people of Greater Aweil] is actually the backbone of the army,' while acknowledging that 'sensitisation is needed' since 'other tribes feel marginalized.' Author interview with Santino Deng Wol, SPLA Division 3 headquarters outside Aweil, June 2017.
- 91 Dau Aturjong, the nephew of paramount chief Santo Deng Nyuol of Aweil North, competed against Malong in the 2010 gubernatorial elections but lost amid widespread electoral irregularities. Dau joined the SPLA-IO but re-joined the government after the July 2016 collapse of the ARCSS peace accord.
- 92 Deng Deng Akuei was appointed the first governor of the new Aweil East state in December 2015. See SSNA (2015).
- 93 Before his defection, Manut accused Kiir of 'utter nonsense' for blocking Malong from returning to Juba after being fired. Author interview with Manut Yel, Aweil, June 2017.
- 94 Such a practice is often called 'coup-proofing'. See discussion of the coup-proofing concept and academic literature in Roessler (2016). For a discussion on the most common coup-proofing—or 'anti-coup'—measures, see Luttwak (2016).
- 95 Author interviews with local government officials and civil society officials, Yei, February 2019.
- 96 Author interviews with opposition military officers, Wau, September 2019.
- 97 'All Parties agree to cease security forces recruitment and training of late recruits' R-ARCSS, clause 2.1.8 (IGAD, 2018).
- 98 The SSOA is a signatory to the R-ARCSS deal.
- 99 South Sudan Opposition Movements, 'Declaration of Principles', 30 August 2019. Copy on file with author.
- 100 Manut Yel's death was also confirmed by Malong in a public statement on Facebook on 25 August 2019 (SSUF, 2019).
- 101 Public statement by David Nok Marial, Secretary General of SSUF, 30 August 2019 (copy on file with author); public statement by Chuor Yak Pior, Secretary General of Khartoum office, SSUF, 5 September 2019 (copy on file with author). Malong acknowledged David Nok's defection but called claims he had been unseated as SSUF chairman as 'fake news'. Public statement by Malong, 5 September 2019.
- 102 This public campaign has centred around the 'The Profiteers' documentary which scrutinizes Malong's wealth and exile in Kenya, among other allegedly corrupt South Sudanese elite. For all three episodes of the documentary, see Africa Uncensored (2018).
- 103 Author interview with Paul Malong, Nairobi, September 2018.
- 104 Most of the opposition SPLA-IO coalition of armed groups is also composed of community militias with origins as a defence force, including the SPLA-IO's early reliance on the White Army (Young, 2007), the Agwelek in Upper Nile (Craze, 2019), and SPLA-IO forces in former Western Equatoria (HSBA, 2016).
- 105 For more of the author's analysis of the 2018 R-ARCSS peace deal, see ICG (2019).

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