The lives, deaths, and afterlives of John Garang: History-making and politics in Sudan and South Sudan

Danielle Del Vicario
Merton College
University of Oxford

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Short abstract

This thesis is about John Garang de Mabior—leader of the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) which waged a twenty-two-year war against the Sudanese government (1983-2005)—and the political use of history in Sudan and South Sudan. Many SPLM/A members were secessionists and, ultimately, the war created a path for South Sudan's independence from Sudan in 2011. Garang, however, advocated for national reform to create a socially, economically, and politically inclusive 'New Sudan.' I argue that history-making was a core part of Garang's political strategy, as he sought to challenge both the Arab-Islamic nationalism of the Sudanese state and secessionist nationalism within the SPLM/A. I demonstrate that, in his efforts to create usable pasts for himself, the SPLM/A, and the New Sudan, Garang did not just make narratives in the moment—he produced sources and archives which have deeply informed subsequent historical studies of the SPLM/A. Drawing on recent methods in biographical scholarship to consider how Garang performed different identities as he navigated Sudan's political space, I build a new empirical account of Garang—as an intellectual, a maker of history, a social actor, and a soldier-politician—and through him of Sudan and South Sudan. I interweave my study of his transnational education, professional career as a soldier and scholar, and social relationships in different urban milieus with analysis of how he gave meaning to these facets of his life as he built political personas for himself and the nation. Finally, I show how his histories have mattered to, and been challenged or remade by, diverse actors during the liberation struggle and since. Garang died in a helicopter crash in 2005 but, through audio and video sources produced during the war, he continues to impact upon individual, community, and national political imagination in South Sudan.

Long Abstract

This thesis is about John Garang de Mabior—leader of the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) which waged a twenty-two-year war against the Sudanese government (1983-2005)—and the political use of history in Sudan and South Sudan. Many SPLM/A members were secessionists and, ultimately, the war created a path for South Sudan's independence from Sudan in 2011. Garang, however, advocated for national reform to create a socially, economically, and politically inclusive 'New Sudan.' I argue that history-making was a core part of Garang's political strategy, as he sought to challenge both the Arab-Islamic nationalism of the Sudanese state and secessionist nationalism within the SPLM/A. I demonstrate that, in his efforts to create usable pasts for himself, the SPLM/A, and the New Sudan, Garang did not just make narratives in the moment—he produced sources and archives which have deeply informed subsequent historical studies of the SPLM/A. Drawing on recent methods in biographical scholarship to consider how Garang performed different identities as he navigated Sudan's political space, I build a new empirical account of Garang—as an intellectual, a maker of history, a social actor, and a soldier-politician—and through him of Sudan and South Sudan. I interweave my study of his transnational education, professional career as a soldier and scholar, and social relationships in different urban milieus with analysis of how he gave meaning to these facets of his life as he built political personas for himself and the nation. Finally, I show how his histories have mattered to, and been challenged or remade by, diverse actors during the liberation struggle and since. Garang died in a helicopter crash in 2005 but, through audio and video sources produced during the war, he continues to impact upon individual, community, and national political imagination in South Sudan.

Chapter one traces Garang's transnational education in Sudan, East Africa, and the United States from the 1950s to the early 1970s. While Garang's studies outside Sudan are often referenced in oral and written accounts of his intellectualism and Pan-African politics, basic details of this period of his life are poorly documented. Through oral history interviews with Garang's former classmates and teachers and archival sources from Grinnell College in Iowa in the American Midwest, I offer an empirically rigorous account of Garang's student mobility, social relationships, and activism in these years.

Garang's secondary school education was disrupted in late 1962, when he fled Sudan due to worsening educational, political, and security situations caused by Sudan's first civil war. His departure coincided with the independence of Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania, and his pursuit of education in East Africa exposed him to new political ideas and possibilities. This exposure continued at Grinnell College, where Garang studied between 1965 and 1969. Garang majored in economics, but also took African history courses which fostered his interest in the work of Frantz Fanon. In his free time, Garang attended talks by prominent black politicians and explored further political theory through private reading. When Garang returned to East Africa in 1969, his education abroad and ideas about African history and politics afforded him social and political capital, first in the southern Sudanese student community in Nairobi and subsequently in the southern Sudanese rebel movement which Garang joined in late 1970 or 1971. The war ended in 1972 and Garang was absorbed into the national Sudanese army, where he continued to promote southerners' self-sufficiency through education and farming and the study of African history. His perceived capacity to

stir up trouble caused discomfort among his military superiors, which ironically translated to further opportunities to study outside Sudan which would only further his political capital in later years. Arguing that Garang's transnational educational experiences had a formative impact on his political thought and activism, this chapter lays the groundwork for later chapters' analysis of Garang's social relationships, creative adaptation of Pan-Africanist and Afrocentric ideas to the Sudanese context, and self-positioning as a transnational intellectual.

Chapter two covers Garang's return to the US for doctoral studies in the late 1970s and subsequent return to Sudan in the early 1980s, analyzing the everyday mechanics of covert politics undertaken by southern Sudanese during the years leading up to Sudan's second civil war. Challenging a predominant focus on military politics, I trace Garang's changing reputation from that of a more radical young activist into a professional and family man, and show that social and familial networks critically enabled covert political activity in Khartoum and key southern towns. Using Elleke Boehmer's idea of 'performance', I argue that Garang was skilled at curating his public image and successfully built relationships with military and civilian dissidents in Sudan, as well as students and graduates abroad. Attention to these relationships allows me to retell the history of the Bor Mutiny of May 1983, an event commonly recognized as the start of Sudan's second civil war, showing the key role of Garang's social networks in allowing him to reach Bor then subsequently flee to Ethiopia. Leadership of the newly formed SPLM/A was contested by several key players and Garang's relationships with diverse civilian and military constituencies at home and abroad all played a part in enabling his successful leadership bid and subsequently promoting the movement abroad.

By complicating the story of the underground politics which preceded the SPLM/A, chapter two sets up some of the challenges to be faced by Garang as he sought to unite the SPLM/A as a singular movement fighting for reform in a united Sudan, a cause many of his colleagues did not initially—and in many cases, ever—fully support. Chapter three charts Garang's efforts to narrate a new political history for the movement and for Sudan, arguing that Garang consciously created sources and archives to generate usable pasts which supported his political position on two fronts: the fight for a more inclusive Sudanese nationalism and the fight against southern secessionists within and without the SPLM/A. Garang scripted a selective history for the SPLM/A which subsumed other organizations into the SPLM/A umbrella and highlighted the cyclical failures of successive national governments. Several of his speeches were recorded on video or published as stand-alone texts by the SPLM/A or within a collection edited by Mansour Khalid, a respected northern Sudanese intellectual who joined the SPLM/A. Drawing on the insights of chapter one, I show that Garang's interest in historical narrative did not just relate to the events of the war, but also to how ancient history could support his New Sudan vision for both domestic and global audiences. Ultimately, Garang's contributions to making a usable past for himself, the SPLM/A, and Sudan coalesced into a dominant history of the movement and the major events of the war, forming an intertextual corpus without which it is almost impossible to write the history of the SPLM/A or its eclipsed opponents. This resulted in a heated politics of history-writing centred directly on Garang, explored in chapters four and five.

Chapter four offers further insight on how Garang projected himself and his political vision through one of the SPLM/A's key media: radio. Whereas chapter three focuses primarily on Garang's political and historical arguments, here I am interested in how Garang

used technology to constitute his political persona and how others reacted to his public presence. I analyze radio conversations between Garang and his critics—northern Sudanese, southern Sudanese, and international—to argue that radio battles directly shaped the struggle for political authority between Garang and the Sudanese government, and within the SPLM/A elite. The movement's clandestine Radio SPLA allowed Garang to speak to a dispersed audience within and beyond Sudan, publicizing his vision of a New Sudan and asserting his pseudo-sovereign control of SPLM/A-held territory. However, Radio SPLA did not exist in a vacuum; Garang's rivals responded on government and international radio to criticize his leadership in targeted, personal terms. Radio thus powerfully mediated between personal, national, and international politics during the first half of SPLM/A's liberation struggle.

In 1991, two major events rocked the SPLM/A: the movement lost its rear bases and radio transmitter following a change of regime in Ethiopia, and the movement split into rival factions when commanders Riek Machar, Lam Akol, and Gordon Kong attempted to usurp Garang from their stronghold in Nasir, Upper Nile. Chapter five engages with written opposition to Garang, published by rival members of the SPLM/A in the 1990s. In this period, critiques of Garang became both more public and more virulent, in part due to rebel factions' increased access to an international diplomatic and humanitarian audience in Nairobi. Focusing on the anti-Garang content of *Southern Sudan Vision*, a newsletter representing the SPLM/A-Nasir faction led by Riek Machar and Lam Akol from 1992, I argue that demonizing Garang through exposing the silences in his histories was a way for his rivals to make political claims as they sought internal and external legitimacy.

Vision articles show a concerted attempt to establish a broad anti-Garang alliance among diverse ethnic groups by casting Garang as a common enemy. However, this project required the creation of new silences, including the Nasir faction leadership's own involvement in violence perpetrated by the SPLM/A against junior cadres and civilians. A related characteristic of *Vision* articles was the use of an ethnic idiom of Bor Dinka supremacy to present Garang as a parochial 'tribalist'. I argue that this approach produced further silences around the authors' far-left ideological stance in the 1980s, which had unsettled SPLM/A commanders with whom the authors were briefly aligned in the early 1990s. Moreover, Marxist-Leninist claims had little value after 1991, whereas—with increased access to an international humanitarian audience—ethnically framed histories of persecution could hold more emotional and political currency. These narratives were thus shaped by what constituted a useful political history at the time; however, I argue that their impact was quickly undermined by the Nasir faction's own violence against civilians and perceived ethnic discrimination.

Finally, chapters six and seven cover Garang's death and afterlives, exploring the continued political impacts of wartime histories in Southern/South Sudan since 2005. Whereas chapters three, four, and five focus primarily on contested histories and political struggles among political elites, chapters six and seven turn to how citizens have questioned the narrative authority of South Sudanese politicians and the international community as they seek to understand Garang's death and imagine a viable future for South Sudan. Garang's death in a helicopter crash six months after the end of Sudan's second civil war sent shockwaves through Sudan and the international community. The crash was investigated by a technical team of American, Kenyan, Ugandan, Sudanese, and SPLM/A experts who produced a final report concluding that there was no evidence of foul play in

the crash. However, this official investigation did little to quell rumours that Garang was assassinated, not least because the report itself did not circulate widely and is inaccessible today.

Chapter six maps the circulation of ideas about the crash in the absence of the report, focusing on three contexts. First, I show that Ugandan journalists used the crash to critique military corruption within Uganda and allege that their president, Yoweri Museveni, allowed Garang to fly on a 'junk' helicopter that was not fit for purpose. Second, I demonstrate that unresolved suspicions about the cause of the crash created a functional ambiguity for SPLM politicians who would periodically reactivate debate about the crash to denigrate their political colleagues. Finally, I demonstrate that Ugandan media accounts and SPLM politicians' calls for a new investigation have offered the core source material for South Sudanese news articles, books, and blogs which continue to question the nature of the technical evidence used in the investigation. In turn, I argue, these texts pose wider questions about the challenges of producing accurate histories and evoke a generational duty to document the past for future generations.

Chapter seven reflects further on the question of future-facing history-making by exploring Garang's varied 'afterlives' in independent South Sudan. I argue that Garang acts both as an inescapable founding figure for the SPLM and a focal point for his family, classmates, and youth to produce histories of lost futures and advocate for real change. Like other African liberation movements, the SPLM government of South Sudan has promoted a history of liberation which establishes a direct link between militarism and political credentials. I emphasize the challenges of this kind of history-making, showing that decades of shifting alliances among the SPLM/A elite have complicated the task of producing a coherent, dominant history of the struggle, resulting in a history that is of necessity shallow and built on significant silences.

Finally, I demonstrate that this government history has little resonance with many South Sudanese and has done little to prevent the emergence of other afterlives for Garang. Bringing together the work of Chris Moffat and Michel-Rolph Trouillot, I argue that Garang's afterlives are so forceful and so appealing because of Garang's own efforts to shape the sources, archives, and narratives of his life. Notwithstanding South Sudan's independence, the idea of inclusivity embodied in the New Sudan and the possibility of an intellectual politics which it has come to signify remain powerful. Moreover, videos, audio, and textual sources offer the raw material for new imaginations of Garang in film and other creative projects, through which Garang's family, classmates, and young South Sudanese intellectuals explore diverse questions of gender, education, and transnationalism. I thus highlight the interconnected nature of history-making by and about Garang over time, and the way that it continues to shape political imagination in South Sudan.

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List of abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BLSC	Bodleian Libraries Special Collections
CBS	Concerned Black Students
CFIT	Controlled Flight Into Terrain
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CVR	Cockpit Voice Recorder
ERB	Economic Research Bureau
FBIS	Foreign Broadcast Information Service
FDR	Flight Data Recorder
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
FOs	Free Officers
FRELIMO	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Liberation Front of Mozambique)
GHA	General History of Africa
GoNU	Government of National Unity
GUN	General Union of Nubas
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
ISU	Iowa State University
JAPO	Juwama [Juba-Wau-Malakal] African People's Organization
JPA	Jonglei Projects Area
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MK	Umkhonto we Sizwe
NAM	National Action Movement
NBC	National Broadcasting Corporation
NCCK	National Council of Churches of Kenya
NTSB	National Transportation Safety Board
OAU	Organization of African Unity
PAC	Pan African Congress
PAFMECSA	Pan-African Freedom Movement of East, Central and Southern Africa
PAFP	People's Armed Forced Program
PMHC	Political Military High Command
R-ARCSS	Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan
RASS	Relief Association of Southern Sudan
SAD	Sudan Archive Durham
SAF	Sudanese Armed Forces
SANU	Sudan African National Union
SCP	Sudan Communist Party
SPLM/A	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army
SPLM-IO	Sudan People's Liberation Movement-In Opposition
SRRA	Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Society
SSLM	Southern Sudan Liberation Movement
SSNA	South Sudan National Archive
SSU	Sudan Socialist Union
SUNA	Sudan News Agency
SUSS	Student Union of Southern Sudanese in the United Kingdom and Ireland
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organisation

SWB	Summary of World Broadcasts
TMC	Transitional Military Council
UDSM	University of Dar es Salaam
UKNA	United Kingdom National Archives
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UPDF	Uganda People's Defence Forces
USALF	United Sudanese African Liberation Front
VOA	Voice of America
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union

Introduction

John Garang de Mabior was the leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), a rebel movement which fought a 22-year civil war against the Sudanese government and its militias from 1983 to 2005. Garang and a majority of SPLM/A members were from Sudan's south, where there was strong separatist sentiment, but Garang himself did not promote secession. Instead, he advocated for national reform and the separation of religion and state to create a more socially, economically, and politically inclusive 'New Sudan'. Nevertheless, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) which ended the war provided for a referendum on southern independence which resulted in South Sudan seceding from Sudan in 2011. Garang died in a helicopter crash six months after signing the CPA and witnessed neither South Sudan's independence nor the political and armed conflicts which followed. Expressing 'great sorrow' at Garang's death, then United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Kofi Annan labeled Garang and his vision as 'larger than life', a description which aptly captures Garang's centrality to Sudanese and South Sudanese politics.[1]

Garang continues to offer a complicated and revealing touchstone for historical debate in the now independent South Sudan. Understanding the changing uses of Garang over time requires attention to how his larger-than-life status was constituted—by himself, by his political opponents, and a wide mix of other actors—in particular moments and to particular ends. It is not enough to acknowledge, as Chris Moffat does for Indian revolutionary Baghat Singh, that Garang has multiple 'afterlives.'[2] Garang also had multiple *lives*, which he actively performed and documented before and during the liberation struggle. Garang, I argue, was adept at making histories for himself and his envisioned New Sudan. This history-making included articulating 'usable' nationalist pasts, alongside the creation of sources and archives—the stuff of future narratives and politics.[3] By analyzing the process through which these pasts emerged, I build a new empirical account of Garang—as

[1] 'Bolton welcomed as US Ambassador during UN reform', *Scoop Independent News* (1 Aug. 2005), Factiva [30 Jan. 2019].
[2] Chris Moffat, *India's Revolutionary Inheritance: Politics and the Promise of Bhagat Singh* (Cambridge, UK, 2019).
[3] Terence Ranger, 'Towards a usable African past', in Chrisopher Fyfe (ed.), *African Studies Since 1945: A Tribute to Basil Davidson* (Edinburgh, 1976), 17–30; Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, 1995), 31–69.

an intellectual, a maker of history, a social actor, and a soldier-politician—and through him of Sudan and South Sudan. I interweave my study of his transnational education, professional career as a soldier and scholar, and social relationships in different urban milieus with analysis of how he gave meaning to these facets of his life as he built political personas for himself and the nation. Finally, I show how his histories have mattered to, and been challenged or remade by, diverse actors during the liberation struggle and since.

Lomuro's cassette

Like many former SPLM/A guerrillas, Lemi Logwonga Lomuro's life history is entwined with Garang's. In 1984, Lomuro left university to take up arms against the Sudanese government.[4] Lomuro had good reasons to resent the government and the Islamic, Arab nationalism it promoted. In 1971, when Lomuro was around three or four years old, his village was attacked by government soldiers and his cousin, Lowoke Gindalang Lomuro, was killed. An agreement signed in 1972 was supposed to bring peace and increased political autonomy to southern Sudan following civil war between the government and the rebel Anyanya, a southern secessionist movement; however, fighting in rural areas continued throughout the 1970s. As Lomuro progressed through primary, intermediate, and secondary school, he heard rumours that the government intended to settle 1.5 million Egyptian farmers along the Nile and that they were intended to intermarry with local women and gradually erase southern culture. When he arrived at Gezira University in northern Sudan in 1983, Lomuro was told that his name had no meaning in Islamic and Arab culture and that he would be renamed with an Arab one: al-Lamin. In September that year, Sudanese President Jaafar Nimeiri introduced Sharia law. Enough was enough; a few months later, Lomuro and a group of fellow students left Sudan for Ethiopia with the intention of joining the Anyanya-2, a loosely organized secessionist movement primarily made up of disaffected rebels who had fought in Sudan's first civil war and rejected the 1972 agreement. However, before they arrived, they learned that a new organization had been formed in the Ethiopian borderlands: the SPLM/A under the leadership of John Garang.

[4] This account of Lomuro's life draws on several interviews conducted 2019-23.

At the time, Lomuro had never heard of Garang and did not even know how to spell his name. However, he was soon convinced that Garang was the right leader for the SPLM/A because of the 'quality of his wisdom and reasoning', which Lomuro encountered first over the radio and subsequently in person. Lomuro committed himself to the movement and later became one of Garang's bodyguards, travelling with him regionally and globally for over a decade. On 9 January 2005, the CPA ended the war between the SPLM/A and the government, and established Garang as first vice president of Sudan and president of Southern Sudan's new regional government.[5] Six months later, Lomuro was in Juba to secure the city for Garang's return after 22 years of war. It was then that he received the terrible news that Garang had died unexpectedly in a helicopter crash while returning from a meeting with Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, a close ally. In the days immediately after the crash, Salva Kiir took over as first vice president and the world lauded the SPLM/A for avoiding a deadly internal power struggle. However, the SPLM/A had always been plagued by internal divisions and these soon surfaced in the form of three political factions vying for control of the party and government.[6]

After South Sudan separated from Sudan, political and armed conflict continued. In September 2017, Lomuro once again fled his homeland, this time due to political differences with the country's leadership in the wake of a violent power struggle between President Salva Kiir and Vice President Riek Machar. Among the possessions he took with him into exile was a cassette recording of a speech made by Garang at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) in 1989, not long after Lomuro joined Garang's mobile headquarters. Lomuro's cassette is the only copy of this speech I encountered throughout my research on Garang and aptly captures the twin themes of this study: Garang's efforts to create a new history for himself, his movement, and his country, and Garang's enduring importance in South Sudanese political life. The speech's unconventional preservation via Lomuro's cassette also raises methodological questions about how Garang and the SPLM/A documented their struggle, how individuals have preserved the scattered sources produced during the war in

[5] I use 'South Sudan' only to refer to the independent country created in 2011; 'Southern Sudan' for the regional polity created by the CPA and superseded by South Sudan (i.e. 2005-2011); and 'southern Sudan' for the period before 2005.

[6] Øystein Rolandsen and M. Daly, *A History of South Sudan: From Slavery to Independence* (Cambridge, 2016), 154; Daniel Akech Thiong, 'How the politics of fear generated chaos in South Sudan', *African Affairs*, 117/469 (2018), 626.

the absence of an accessible state archive, and how researchers can make use of these sources to study Sudan's conflicts and their interpretive frames.

Garang's speech at UDSM was delivered shortly after a military coup in Khartoum brought an extremist Islamic regime led by Omar al-Bashir to power and disrupted peace negotiations between the government and SPLM/A. Interweaving personal anecdotes and political analysis, Garang called for a 'New Sudan' free of state-promoted racial and religious discrimination. Explaining the need for fundamental changes in national politics, he declared, 'The problem of Sudan is a compound problem, consisting of the problem of a neocolonial state, reinforced by a nationality problem, reinforced by the problem of religion.'[7] He elaborated further that when African colonies gained independence, power was transferred to a narrow elite who continued to exploit 'the masses' and serve the interests of 'international finance capital.' His argument drew on the central tenets of dependency theory, a school of thought popularized for an African context by scholars at UDSM in the late 1960s.[8]

By diagnosing Sudan's political instability as a symptom of neocolonialism, Garang drew parallels to other African states, which he reinforced through references to personal experiences. As he introduced his speech, Garang expressed his happiness to be back in Tanzania, where he had gone to secondary school during Sudan's first civil war. In 1965, Garang left Africa to study in the United States (US) but returned to Tanzania in 1969 for a brief period of research at UDSM before joining the southern rebel movement for the final year of Sudan's first civil war. Delivering this speech at UDSM twenty years later, Garang explained that his time in Tanzania let him meet 'lots of comrades from various liberation movements' and he congratulated Tanzania for its role supporting southern African liberation. Garang's brief digression added a characteristically personal touch to his otherwise analytical political argument, while situating the SPLM/A cause within the rich transnational history of African states' fight for independence and majority rule. This mix of personal and political, and national and transnational, was typical of Garang's speeches

[7] Lemi Logwonga Lomuro personal collection, Cassette recording of speech delivered by John Garang at the University of Dar es Salaam, Aug. 1989.
[8] Sebabatso Manoeli, *Sudan's 'Southern Problem': Race, Rhetoric and International Relations, 1961-1991* (Basingstoke, 2019), 159–66; Edward Thomas, *South Sudan: A Slow Liberation* (London, 2015), 114–20.

and demands attention to the life experiences which informed his ideas and narratives, and to the effects of his political presence.

The value of a biographical approach

Biography occupies a complicated position within Africanist historiography. As Lisa Lindsay has noted, biographies 'are the quintessential Great Man history' and 'often are unabashedly nationalistic, focused on how this particular individual helped to forge his great nation'.[9] This was particularly true in the 1960s-80s when biographies of African nationalists contributed to nation-building projects in newly independent states.[10] My goal is not to produce a 'founding father' history of Garang but rather to explore how, in the fight over the character of Sudanese and South Sudanese nationalism, Garang and his supporters produced biographical content to support his nationalist vision of the New Sudan—and the challenges he faced in the process. In the SPLM/A context, 'writing the leadership *into* the nation' was never a straightforward project and resulted in heated political debate which centred strongly on Garang.[11]

In its recorded form—replete with applause, verbal stumbles, and laughter—Garang's speech at UDSM reminds us that Garang was performing for his audience and in turn invites us to think about how Garang constructed his personal image and the SPLM/A's history in specific contexts. Extending the idea of 'performance' beyond official political speeches, I draw on recent methods in biographical scholarship to consider how Garang performed different identities in everyday social and professional encounters as he navigated Sudan's political space. This approach allows me to make two important contributions to existing scholarship on SPLM/A history and politics. First, I separate the empirical history of the late 1970s and early 1980s underground political activity in Sudan from its subsequent representation by Garang and others, while demonstrating how the realities of multiple, diffuse political networks required the elaboration of a teleological founding history to unite the SPLM/A. Second, I complicate a dominant narrative of ethnic politics by historicizing

[9] Lisa Lindsay, 'Biography in African history', *History in Africa*, 44 (2017), 12.
[10] Ibid., 13; Giacomo Macola, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Africa: A Biography of Harry Mwaanga Nkumbula* (New York, 2010), 2.
[11] Elleke Boehmer, *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in the Postcolonial Nation* (Manchester, 2005), 67.

the emergence of educational, professional, and familial networks which contributed to Garang's successful SPLM/A leadership bid when the movement was founded and which continued to shape SPLM/A politics thereafter. These methodological and empirical insights into the concrete events of Garang's life enable me to explore what was included or excluded in Garang's and others' narratives of his life story, and to consider *why* certain histories were required or desirable at certain times.

A biographical approach is methodologically valuable for illuminating the complex interplay between the public and private, between individual agency and structural forces, and between national and transnational politics, all areas of study where more research is needed in the historiography of Sudan and South Sudan. Blessing-Miles Tendi's biography of Solomon Mujuru, a Zimbabwean liberation fighter, general, and politician who facilitated Robert Mugabe's successful leadership bid in the 1970s, makes a powerful case for 'exploring the public-private link' in the life of an African military leader.[12] Tendi contends that Mujuru's difficult childhood and constant relocation during the liberation war shaped his later behaviour, including sexual relationships which both reinforced a dominant masculine culture in Zimbabwe's national politics and angered political colleagues.[13] Tendi shows the value of biography for illuminating issues of education, gender, and family which rarely figure in traditional military histories. By focusing on the public-private link in a similar vein, I map Garang's self-presentation in different settings, including the key role that his family relationships played in enabling covert politics. Whereas Mujuru was a known womanizer, Garang used his reputation as a 'family man' to his political advantage in the years leading up to the formation of the SPLM/A to provide cover for his covert political activity.

A core argument of my study is that Garang actively managed his public personas according to the demands of different political contexts from the 1960s to his death in 2005. Among supporters and detractors alike, Garang is widely remembered for his 'charisma'—that is, his ability 'to *energize* people' and his talent for speaking, whether one-on-one or in

[12] Blessing-Miles Tendi, *The Army and Politics in Zimbabwe: Mujuru, the Liberation Fighter and Kingmaker* (Cambridge, 2020), 3.
[13] Ibid., 230–7, 247; For another study of a hyper-masculine African military leader, see Mark Leopold, 'Sex, violence and history in the lives of Idi Amin: Postcolonial masculinity as masquerade', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 45/3 (2009), 321–330.

a crowd.[14] In a study of Nelson Mandela, Elleke Boehmer is attentive to how Mandela acted 'as the author or his own image, or how he scripted life's text'.[15] She argues that Mandela's life was actively shaped by an awareness of the power of performance, dress, and symbol-making as they unfolded in real time.[16] This approach echoes the feminist school of 'new biography', which considers how a 'self' is performed in particular settings.[17] The concept of performance, explored in depth in chapters two and three, allows me to analyze how Garang subverted the structural constraints of Sudan's political arena and, in the process, generated and effectively purveyed a new historical narrative for Sudan.

This new narrative was informed by Afrocentric and Pan-Africanist theories Garang encountered as a student in East Africa and the US, highlighting the importance of tracing his transnational intellectual and personal life. Scholars have documented the importance of the SPLM/A's regional and international support over the course of their liberation struggle.[18] However, these studies focus more on geopolitics than on how transnational experiences informed Garang and others' intellectual arguments.[19] Biography offers an effective entry point for writing complex transnational and global histories, as noted by Africanist scholars researching diverse topics and periods.[20] In a context where primary sources are scarce and scattered, Garang offers a focal point for mapping intellectual and political history across time and regions. Like Michael Goebel's study of 'Third World nationalists' in interwar Paris, my account of Garang's intellectual life foregrounds social connections and experiences in different locales, highlighting how intellectual history is

[14] Interviews with Federico Vuni, UK, 20 Apr. 2019; William Mogga, Nairobi, 20 Jun. 2019; SPLM/A veteran, Juba, 7 Aug. 2019.
[15] Elleke Boehmer, *Nelson Mandela: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2008), 8.
[16] Ibid., 15–16.
[17] Jo Margadant, 'Introduction', in Jo Margadant (ed.), *The New Biography: Performing Femininity in Nineteenth-Century France* (Berkeley, 2000), 2.
[18] Hilde Johnson, *Waging Peace in Sudan: The Inside Story of the Negotiations That Ended Africa's Longest Civil War* (Eastbourne, UK, 2011); Lovise Aalen, 'Ethiopian state support to insurgency in Southern Sudan from 1962 to 1983: Local, regional and global connections', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 8/4 (2014), 633, 637; John Young, *South Sudan's Civil War: Violence, Insurgency and Failed Peacemaking* (London, 2019), 38–63.
[19] For a notable excpetion, see Manoeli, *Sudan's 'Southern Problem'*.
[20] Lindsay, 'Biography', 17–18; Laura Mitchell, 'Illustrating empire: A soldier's life and trans-imperial encounters in the eighteenth century', *World History Connected*, 14/1 (2017); Yevette Richards, *Maida Springer: Pan Africanist and International Labor Leader* (Pittsburgh, 2000), 4; Mary Dudziak, *Exporting American Dreams: Thurgood Marshall's African Journey* (Princeton, N.J., 2011), 2; Tendi, *Army and Politics*, 5.

'more firmly rooted in [social history] than is commonly acknowledged.'[21] In the case of Garang's early life, neither social nor intellectual history have received extensive attention. In contrast, I argue that his experiences as a student and young professional had a decisive impact on his rise to power and later politics. In the SPLM/A's early years, Garang leveraged his networks with other southern students and professionals to grow the movement's leadership, advocate for the movement abroad, and gather intelligence in Khartoum. Moreover, the Pan-African, Afrocentric, and socialist ideas which Garang encountered as a student in East Africa and the United States offered an intellectual foundation for his New Sudan vision. I show that these themes are fundamental to understanding the internal dynamics of the SPLM/A, but also to unpacking how and why histories of Garang have been used by varied actors to imagine political communities, contest political authority, and reclaim political agency.

History-making, usable pasts, and competing nationalisms

I use the concept of 'history-making' to explore how Garang, his supporters, and his opponents developed usable pasts for themselves and their cause in three interrelated contexts: nationalist debates in Sudan, disputes within the SPLM/A during the liberation war, and new debates about South Sudan's past and future since independence. In African historiography, the concept of a 'usable past' is most closely associated with the nationalist histories produced by historians at UDSM in newly independent Tanzania in the 1960s, which emphasized 'African initiative, African choice and African adaptation.'[22] In their seminal edited volume, *A History of Tanzania*, UDSM scholars Isario Kimambo and Arnold Tenu emphasized both the demand and 'urgent need' for such work to correct absent or 'distorted' histories of Africans.[23] From the late 1960s, this historiography was challenged by scholars within the UDSM History Department, led by Walter Rodney, who drew on Marxist-influenced underdevelopment theory to argue that African states' independence did

[21] Michael Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis: Interwar Paris and the Seeds of Third World Nationalism* (Cambridge, 2015), 5.
[22] Terence Ranger, 'The "new historiography" in Dar es Salaam: An answer', *African Affairs*, 70/278 (1971), 53; See also Ranger, 'Towards a usable African past'.
[23] Isaria Kimambo and Arnold Temu, 'Introduction', in Isaria Kimambo and Arnold Temu (eds.), *A History of Tanzania* (Nairobi, 1969), xi–xii.

little to end capitalist exploitation.[24] These histories were 'usable' in a different sense, as a way to explain persistent impoverishment and inequality in postcolonial Africa.

Although skeptical that independence brought any material change to African societies, Rodney was attentive in his own way to the question of African historical agency. Drawing on the work of Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi, Rodney argued that colonialism turned Africans into 'objects of history.'[25] Both Rodney and Fanon were among Garang's favourite theorists and, in his speech at UDSM, Garang emphasized 'the historicity of the Sudan' as a foundation for the SPLM/A's commitment to unity over secession:

> We had to reassert ourselves as a historical people. That is, we had to reassert the historicity of the Sudan, contrary to what our detractors have been saying, that Africa came into being or came into history as a result of foreign intrusion. This is not true and we need only to look closely at history to see that Africa has always been there. And really we do not have to prove that much. Our very presence as I see you here, that I see you here means you were there!

This turn to history, Garang argued, was a way to counteract the impact of capitalism and the colonial 'policy of divide and rule' which resulted in unequal development across Sudan under both colonialism and neocolonialism. Scholars have effectively highlighted how Garang used dependency theory to reframe nineteenth- and twentieth-century Sudanese political history and shift political debate away from the 'racial and religious binary [between north and south] that had inadvertently constrained former Southern rebels.'[26] However, Garang's wider interest in—and use of—history remains poorly studied.

Garang was an avid reader and deeply interested in questions of race, heritage, and power. In his quest to articulate a new, inclusive Sudanese nationalism, Garang repeatedly emphasized the ancient diversity and fluidity of Nile Valley peoples, offering an origin story for Sudan's contemporary diversity. With the exception of accounts by Garang's close colleagues, this aspect of his political thought has received little attention.[27] The ancient history of the Nile Valley was itself deeply contested and, from the 1960s, Afrocentric scholars used racialized histories of 'black Egypt' as a usable past to combat Eurocentric

[24] Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (London, 2018 [1972]); For a more detailed overview of these developments, see Gregory H. Maddox, 'The Dar es Salaam School of African History', in Thomas Spear (ed.), *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History* (2018).
[25] Rodney, *How Europe*, 187, 191.
[26] Manoeli, *Sudan's 'Southern Problem'*, 162; See also Thomas, *South Sudan*, 114–20.
[27] Edward Abyei Lino, *Dr John Garang de Mabior Atem* (Juba, 2017), 73; Lual Deng, *Power of Creative Reasoning: The Ideas and Vision of John Garang*, Kindle ed. (Bloomington, 2013), location 138.

histories.[28] My attention to how Garang adapted these arguments for the Sudanese context allows me to show how regional and global debates about race, identity, and history informed Garang's political thought. More importantly, I consider how Garang attempted to position himself within the intellectual heritage of a previous generation of Afrocentric and Pan-African thinkers to build a political persona as a well-educated, transnational, and inclusive leader.

South Sudanese nationalism has often been reductively characterized as 'more an expression of enmity towards the North than of Southern unity.'[29] Accordingly, nationalist sentiment has been seen as incapable of displacing ethnic loyalties which fuel corruption and South Sudan's ongoing conflicts.[30] This interpretation belies the complexity of SPLM/A politics in the 1980s and 1990s, the care taken by covert political organizations which preceded the SPLM/A, and the intellectual efforts of Garang and his opponents to foster nationalist sentiment of different kinds. Combatting the idea of 'negative nationalism' born only out of resistance to outside forces, Nicki Kindersley has mapped the creativity and complexity of 'vernacular political thought' among southern communities in Khartoum before and during Sudan's second civil war.[31] Kindersley effectively argues that 'Political imaginations are inherently pluralistic' and that the intellectual projects of southern communities in Khartoum 'gave moral content and force to multiple, and not necessarily incompatible, ideas of affiliation' which, for some, reflected or supported Garang's idea of the New Sudan.[32]

Kindersley's study is part of a wider body of recent scholarship attentive to the depth and diversity of southern Sudanese intellectual work in the latter half of the twentieth century. In another informative study, Zoe Cormack explores how individuals and

[28] Bogumil Jewsiewicki, 'African historical studies academic knowledge as "usable past" and radical scholarship', *African Studies Review*, 32/3 (1989), 3. The issue of ancient Egyptians' 'race' was contentious. See e.g. G. Mokhtar, 'Introduction', in G. Mokhtar (ed.), *General History of Africa, Vol. 2* (Paris, 1981), 1–26.
[29] Ole Frahm, 'Making borders and identities in South Sudan', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 33/2 (2015), 253; See also Jok Madut Jok, 'Diversity, unity, and nation buliding in South Sudan' (Washington, D.C., 2011), 2.
[30] For an extreme version of this argument, see Clémence Pinaud, *War and Genocide in South Sudan* (Ithaca, 2021).
[31] Nicki Kindersley, 'The fifth column? An intellectual history of Southern Sudanese communities in Khartoum, 1969-2005' (PhD thesis, Durham University, 2016), 14.
[32] Ibid., 28–9, 165–6.

communities in the southern Sudanese town of Gogrial produced historical narratives to reclaim agency during and after conflict:

> The people of Gogrial are well aware of the place of their history in national political narratives of suffering and victimization. But the way that they tell history themselves is very different, and suggests that we need to think more critically not just about how marginalization, displacement and wars are experienced, but about how the production of a historical narrative is in itself a way to redress marginalization and to continually rebuild society and regain agency.[33]

Both Cormack and Kindersley consider the process through which given communities produce, share, and contest historical narratives. Gogrial experienced a high level of violence during Sudan's two civil wars and Cormack's work offers additional insight into the tensions of remembering/forgetting violence rooted in divisions *between* southerners during the second civil war.[34] My study of Garang is primarily one of elite political and intellectual actors and thus contrasts with the community focus of these works. However, I share their interest in the close relationship between making histories and imagining political communities, and in how context shapes which communities are useful to imagine and when. Like Cormack's interlocutors in Gogrial, the South Sudanese intellectuals whom I discuss produced histories to reclaim agency—as individuals and/or for a community or nation—both during Sudan's second civil war and after it.

My study contributes to wider scholarship on the political use of history in postcolonial Africa and on 'competing nationalisms.' Africanist historians have effectively used the concept of 'competing' or 'alternative' nationalisms to explore the complexity of late colonial and postcolonial African politics.[35] This approach highlights that 'struggles over the form and meaning of nationhood continued well after the achievement of formal independence', a point true for both Sudan and South Sudan.[36] Competing nationalisms *within* the SPLM/A offer a unique opportunity for exploring the coexistence of debates about nationalism within a postcolonial state (Sudan) and the character of a liberation movement which eventually claimed independence through secession (South Sudan). Garang's

[33] Zoe Cormack, 'The making and remaking of Gogrial: Landscape, history and memory in South Sudan' (PhD thesis, Durham University, 2014), 16–17.
[34] Ibid., 229; Zoe Cormack, 'The spectacle of death: Visibility and concealment at an unfinished memorial in South Sudan', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 11/1 (2017), 127.
[35] For an overview of this scholarship, see Miles Larmer and Baz Lecocq, 'Historicising nationalism in Africa', *Nations and Nationalism*, 24/4 (2018), 908.
[36] Ibid., 894.

attempts to develop a usable past for the SPLM/A and the New Sudan were simultaneously a subaltern challenge to the government's exclusionary Islamic, Arab nationalism and a project to establish the supremacy of the SPLM/A—and Garang's leadership thereof—over other would-be liberation movements and political challengers in the south.

In the last twenty years, scholars have emphasized how leaders in newly independent African states promoted histories which flattened the complexities of late colonial society and politics into a singular story of nationalist resistance.[37] A subset of this scholarship explores how governing parties born out of armed liberation movements have promoted narrow, 'patriotic' histories of armed struggle to justify their claim to power and delegitimize their opponents.[38] These histories in turn provoked alternative histories from the individuals and organizations they exclude.[39] These hegemonic and oppositional histories often expand upon divisions and discourse deployed during the liberation struggle, further highlighting the importance of studying the long-term processes through which histories are made and remade according to the contexts in which they are shared.[40]

Sudan's second civil war involved 'multiple civil wars', in which a variety of grievances were fueled by military, political, and corporate patrons, and alliances shifted frequently.[41] The challenge for Garang and others was to give these wars political meaning as they sought to redefine the Sudanese or South Sudanese nation and claim leadership of the fractious resistance movement(s). Manoeli has demonstrated that discursive battles were a core—and often overlooked—component of Sudan's postcolonial conflicts and politics. Sudanese governments and rebels drew on internationalist ideas of Pan-Africanism, Afro-

[37] Bethwell Ogot, 'Mau Mau and nationhood: The untold story', in E. S. Atieno Odhiambo and John Lonsdale (eds.), *Mau Mau and Nationhood* (Oxford, 2003), 9; John Lonsdale and E. S. Atieno Odhiambo, 'Introduction', in Lonsdale and Odhiambo (eds.), *Mau Mau & Nationhood*; Daniel Branch, *Defeating Mau Mau, Creating Kenya: Counterinsurgency, Civil War, and Decolonization* (Cambridge, 2009), 11; Jan-Bart Gewald, Marja Hinfelaar, and Giacomo Macola, 'Introduction', in Jan-Bart Gewald, Marja Hinfelaar, and Giacomo Macola (eds.), *One Zambia, Many Histories: Towards a History of Post-Colonial Zambia* (Leiden, 2008), 4.

[38] Terence Ranger, 'Nationalist historiography, patriotic history and the history of the nation: The struggle over the past in Zimbabwe', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 30/2 (2004), 215–234.

[39] Victor Igreja, 'Memories as weapons: The politics of peace and silence in post-civil war Mozambique', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 34/3 (2008), 540; Justin Pearce, 'Contesting the Past in Angolan Politics', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 41/1 (2015), 119; Heike Becker, 'Commemorating heroes in Windhoek and Eenhana: Memory, culture and nationalism in Namibia, 1990-2010', *Africa*, 81/4 (2011), 523; Jocelyn Alexander and JoAnn McGregor, 'War stories: Guerrilla narratives of Zimbabwe's liberation war', *History Workshop Journal*, 57 (2004), 79–100.

[40] Jocelyn Alexander, 'The noisy silence of Gukurahundi: Truth, recognition and belonging', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 47/5 (2021), 764–5.

[41] Douglas Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars: Peace of Truce*, 2nd ed. (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2011), 127.

Asian solidarity, and socialism to seek external legitimacy, with varying degrees of success.[42] Building on Manoeli's work, I argue that Garang consciously presented himself as an archetypal transnational African leader as he sought to legitimize the New Sudan as a politically inclusive Pan-Africanist project. In addition, I explore discursive and intellectual conflicts *within* the SPLM/A, both before and after 1991, the year in which Manoeli concludes her study.

From the formation of the SPLM/A in 1983, Garang's emergence as chairman and commander-in-chief was contested and, throughout the war, he faced numerous internal challenges to his leadership.[43] A major split in the SPLM/A in 1991 precipitated a decade of factional in-fighting among former comrades which continues to shape South Sudanese politics today. Intra-SPLM/A conflicts in the 1990s and civil wars in South Sudan since 2013 have included targeted ethnic rhetoric and violence, from both the government and opposition.[44] However, as Amir Idris notes, there is a dangerous tendency to essentialize ethnic identities in accounts of South Sudan's conflicts:

> Many of these accounts [of South Sudan's post-independence conflicts] seek to claim that the root causes of the conflict can be traced to the ethnic division and mistrust among the population or the state's lack of capacity to manage ethnic diversity and hostilities. Both of these claims represent South Sudan as a space belonging to a "premodern" universe lacking the necessary ingredients of a viable state.[45]

Journalistic and humanitarian accounts of South Sudan's conflicts are particularly prone to focusing on ethnic identities, but academics are also guilty of perpetuating shallow ethnic paradigms.

In 2019, an interviewee emailed me a working paper by Carol Berger, titled 'Ethnocide as a tool of state-building: South Sudan and the never-ending war', explaining it would offer me valuable perspective on South Sudan's predicament. Through selective use of evidence, Berger describes Dinka 'ambitions of dominance' in South Sudan, extending

[42] Manoeli, *Sudan's 'Southern Problem'*, 4–7.
[43] Regassa Bayissa, 'The Derg-SPLM/A cooperation: An aspect of Ethio-Sudan proxy wars', *Ethiopian Journal of the Social Sciences and Humanities*, 5/2 (2007), 24–9; Johnson, *Root Causes*, 65–6, 91; Arop Madut Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road to Peace: A Full Story of the Founding and Development of SPLM/SPLA* (Charlston, South Carolina, 2006), 199–211.
[44] Johnson, *Root Causes*, 114–5; 'Final Report of the African Union Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan' (Addis Ababa, 2014), 110–232.
[45] Amir Idris, 'Historicizing race, ethnicity, and the crisis of citizenship in Sudan and South Sudan', *The Middle East Journal*, 73/4 (2019), 593.

as far as pushing non-Dinka completely out of the country and replacing them with Dinka.[46] The paper includes a short biography of Berger, which establishes her purported authority as an 'independent researcher' with a PhD from the University of Oxford and past experience as a 'researcher/analyst for the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).'[47] The paper circulated widely and was hotly debated among South Sudanese on social media; my own receipt of the paper, via a South Sudanese interlocutor, highlights the close link between scholarship and politics in relation to South Sudan's conflicts. Like other scholars who have critiqued Berger, I do not discount the significance of past or ongoing ethnic violence in South Sudan, including personal experiences shared by my interviewees.[48] But I avoid ethnicity as an exclusive or *a priori* category for analyzing political action and alliances. Instead, I trace the complex social, familial, and professional networks which enabled and constrained Garang's political choices, building on Elena Vezzadini's ground-breaking work on the intersection of socio-professional networks and underground politics in Sudan in an earlier period.[49]

The SPLM/A split of 1991 was followed by an increase in violence against civilians and a rise in divisive ethnic discourse from all SPLM/A factions which exacerbated inter-communal fighting.[50] My intent is not to exonerate Garang from the violence perpetrated by the SPLM/A against civilians, nor to downplay the significant intra-southern conflicts which took place during Sudan's second civil war and since. However, I argue that complicating ethnic or otherwise binary histories of Sudan and South Sudan's conflicts is necessary for understanding and historicizing diverse experiences of the civil wars, the diverse reasons people were attracted to or repulsed by Garang, and the diverse fractures which rocked the SPLM/A. Studies which privilege ethnicity as a motivating force for political and military behaviour often project the highly charged ethnic discourse of the 1990s and 2000s backwards, obscuring more nuanced social and political trends. Clémence Pinaud, for example, claims that all heads of the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association (SRRA),

[46] Carol Berger, 'Ethnocide as a tool of state-building: South Sudan and the never-ending war' (2019), 8, 30.
[47] Ibid., 1n2.
[48] Nicki Kindersley, Naomi Pendle, Zoe Cormack, and Diana da Costa, 'In response to Dr Carol Berger', (1 Apr. 2019), https://medium.com/@Tangawiizi/in-response-to-dr-carol-berger-d4a6d51b50e1 [5 May 2023].
[49] Elena Vezzadini, *Lost Nationalism: Revolution, Memory and Anti-Colonial Resistance in Sudan* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2015), 182, 186.
[50] Jok Madut Jok and Sharon Hutchinson, 'Sudan's prolonged second civil war and the militarization of Nuer and Dinka ethnic identities', *African Studies Review*, 42/2 (1999), 125–45.

the SPLM's humanitarian wing, were Dinka.[51] This claim supports Pinaud's argument about an extended project of Dinka dominance in South Sudan, but is factually incorrect. At least two prominent SRRA Secretary-Generals in Nairobi, Richard Mulla and Kosti Manibe, were Equatorian. Indeed, Mulla's experience within the SPLM/A exemplifies the importance of acknowledging the significance of ethnicity to SPLM/A politics in specific moments, without elevating it above other social factors like class, generation, gender, or education.

In the early 1980s, Mulla—like Garang—was one of several young southern Sudanese men of diverse ethnic identities engaged in various forms of anti-Sudanese government politics while studying abroad.[52] Mulla joined the SPLM/A in 1986, after completing his PhD at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. Describing how he was welcomed by Garang, Mulla explained that his father and Garang were friends, because Mulla's father helped recruit Garang into the Anyanya in Sudan's first civil war. Garang also welcomed Mulla because, at that time, few educated Equatorians were joining the movement.

Mulla's education, time in London, and ethnic identity all shaped his subsequent experiences in the SPLM/A and interactions with Garang. Like other educated SPLM/A cadres, Mulla was quickly commissioned as an officer. He was then appointed SRRA Secretary-General in 1988, in part because his Equatorian features and accent allowed him to blend in while operating in Nairobi more easily than his Dinka predecessor. After a few other postings, Mulla was appointed SPLM spokesperson in London in 1991, because another former student, Steven Madut Baak, recommended him for the role. However, mounting ethnic suspicion within the SPLM/A following the 1991 split complicated Mulla's position within the movement, causing him to temporarily defect from Garang's SPLM/A faction in 1992, before returning and resuming his role as London spokesperson in 1997. Mulla continued to have a fluctuating relationship with the movement throughout the 2000s and, reflecting in 2019 on his wartime experiences and the movement's internal politics, Mulla spoke of both ethnic tensions and how different members of the SPLM/A valued or devalued formal education.

[51] Pinaud, *War and Genocide*, 71.
[52] Interview with Richard Mulla, Juba, 31 July. 2019; 'Richard Mulla', in Kuyok Abol Kuyok, *South Sudan: The Notable Firsts*, Kindle ed. (2015).

Majak D'Agoôt's study of South Sudan's 'Gun Class' begins to account for the complex and fluid relationships between power, military authority, ethnicity, education, and gender in South Sudan. D'Agoôt argues that, during Sudan's second civil war, southern military elites displaced the *effendiyya*—an educated 'native middle class' associated with political administration of the Southern Region between 1972 and 1983—and established a militarized administrative order in which leaders used 'violence, ethnicity, and region as vehicles for mobilization and class power.'[53] I expand on D'Agoôt's approach to further unpack the tensions between intellectual, political, and military authority within the SPLM/A, with particular attention to generational tensions and the position of young, educated cadres within the movement. Garang's rise to leadership cannot be explained through a simple narrative of military rebels displacing an older generation of political administrators. I argue that Garang's success in the early 1980s resulted from his *overlapping* identities as a young intellectual, soldier, and urban professional, explored in detail in chapters one and two.

The role of intellectuals in the SPLM/A was a source of frequent debate and strife, and remains so today, shaping collective and individual views of South Sudan's violent political area and the meaning of 'liberation.' Mulla's example shows the importance of historicizing the emergence of a new class of young, educated professional southern Sudanese in the 1970s and 1980s, and of studying current debates about intellectualism in South Sudan. More broadly, attention to the complex identities and motivations of Garang, Mulla, and others allows for a more nuanced analysis of the political use of history over time. Highlighting how history has been deployed politically to place claims on the Sudanese state, M. A. Mohamed Salih argues for the importance of understanding how authors' ethnic identities shape the narratives they produce.[54] Like Salih, I stress the need to consider the personal histories of authors who have written about Garang; however, I move beyond a focus on ethnicity to consider their wider experiences as students, soldiers, professionals, prisoners, and more. Doing so allows me to reflect on what the ethnically charged anti-Garang discourse promoted by Garang's opponents leaves out—including other leaders'

[53] Majak D'Agoôt, 'Understanding the colossus: The dominant Gun Class and state formation in South Sudan', *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, 47/2 (2020), 114, 139.
[54] M. A. Mohamed Salih, 'Other identities: Politics of Sudanese discursive narratives', *Identities*, 5/1 (1998), 11, 28.

own violent actions against each other and against civilians from across different ethnic groups[55]—and the perceived imperative of doing so to create usable pasts in the search for internal and external legitimacy.

Further, this approach allows me to engage productively with the works of independent South Sudanese researchers like D'Agoôt, who are often writing about historical and political events in which they were personally involved. Following Garang's death in 2005, D'Agoôt and several other SPLM/A officers close to Garang were sidelined from political leadership, as I discuss further in chapters six and seven. Sometimes referred to as 'Garang boys' or 'Garangists', these men have contributed to a growing body of critical scholarship on SPLM/A history and current South Sudanese politics.[56] Academic inquiry on Garang and wider SPLM/A history is thus in itself tied to debates about the value of intellectuals and critical thinking within the SPLM. I elaborate on some of the challenges and opportunities of this politicized scholarship in the next section, as well as the outsized impact of primary and secondary sources generated and controlled by Garang's close followers and longstanding critics.

Sources and silences

Offering both a history of Garang's social, intellectual, and professional life and a study of his lives and afterlives, I analyze the content of my sources and how they were created, circulated, and given meaning by different individuals and constituencies. My approach draws on Michel-Rolph Trouillot's characterization of four phases in the 'process of historical production': the making of sources, the making of archives, the making of narratives, and the granting of retrospective significance to these narratives.[57] These phases are selective, creating 'mentions' and silences' which 'are neither neutral or natural.'[58] I argue that Garang was not just attentive to discursive framing but to the *practice* of making histories. The textual, oral, and video sources discussed in what follows reveal Garang's efforts to self-archive and build legitimacy through cross-referencing past speeches, even if

[55] Daniel Akech Thiong, *The Politics of Fear in South Sudan: Generation Chaos, Creating Conflict* (London, 2021), 10.
[56] For further examples, see the published works of Luka Biong Deng Kuol, Edward Lino, Lual Deng, and Kuol Deng.
[57] Trouillot, *Silencing*, 31–69.
[58] Ibid., 48–9.

these materials have been imperfectly maintained. Garang's opponents within the SPLM/A mirrored many of his tactics, directly challenging silences in Garang's histories of events like the Bor Mutiny by creating sources and narratives of their own. In turn, these oppositional histories imposed new silences which further shape how history is—or is not—talked about in South Sudan today.

A core challenge to studying Garang and the SPLM/A is the absence of an accessible SPLM archive. Some of the movement's archival materials are held in the South Sudanese embassy in Nairobi but I was unsuccessful in a previous attempt to gain access to these materials and did not try again during this research.[59] Several videos of Garang and the SPLM/A are held in the personal collection of General Malak Ayuen, the movement's wartime director of information, in Juba. I attempted to view these materials in 2019 but failed to arrange an appropriate time with Malak; I reflect further on the character of this collection and gendered gatekeeping to historical materials in chapter seven.

Without access to these collections, I gathered copies of Garang's speeches and writings through four main channels. First, copies of published SPLM/A documents are available in different archives and personal collections around the world, if difficult to track. Second, I accessed transcripts of Garang's radio speeches through the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Summary of World Broadcasts, discussed in detail in chapter four. Third, I used video and audio recordings in English and Arabic of Garang's speeches uploaded on YouTube by various posters, including his son, Mabior. Video material is particularly useful for thinking about Garang's talent as a performer and using these sources allows me to compensate for some of the shortcomings of transcripts. Fourth, I draw on a set of anthologies of Garang's letters, radio messages, and speeches gathered and published by PaanLuel Wël, a prolific blogger/author/archivist whose broader work I discuss further below.[60]

[59] At least one SPLM/A member has used this archive. See Dor Malual Ayom, 'Conflict resolution as a learning process: The Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Army 1883-2005' (PhD thesis, King's College London, 2017), 39n37.

[60] PaanLuel Wël, *The Genius of Dr. John Garang: The Essential Writings and Speeches of the Late SPLM/A's Leader, Dr. John Garang de Mabioor*, vol. 1 (Kongor, South Sudan, 2012); PaanLuel Wël, *The Genius of Dr. John Garang: Letters and Radio Messages of the Late SPLM/A's Leader, Dr. John Garang de Mabior*, vol. 2 (Kongor, South Sudan, 2012).

The existence of these sources outside an 'official' archive testify to the efforts of Garang and others to document and circulate the past through actively making sources and archives. Kindersley has drawn attention to the complicated cross-referencing characteristic of 'Khartoum intellectual life' from the late 1960s to 2000s, a practice she sought to reproduce in her own research:

> People cited everything from Dickens' *Tale of Two Cities*, to Holt and Daly's seminal book *A History of Sudan from the Coming of Islam to the Present Day*, and – more commonly – songs, texts, curriculum books, quotations and political speeches. This historiographical work was not just oral, but included reference to […] personal libraries, notes, photogram albums and music catalogues.[61]

Kindersley shows that the educational work undertaken by southern communities in Khartoum 'emphasised the importance of political self-consciousness and critical engagement.' She also highlights how '[t]hese composite works are on-going', subject to adaptation, rewriting, and editing even today.[62]

Similar processes of cross-referencing and personal archiving characterize how Garang is talked about today. Throughout the course of my research, interviewees shared and referenced memoirs, poetry, blog posts, eulogies, videos, and plays they had carefully preserved or creatively accessed. In this way, Lomuro's cassette represents a remarkable—but not unusual—effort of historical archiving. The circulation of cassettes with songs, speech recordings, and messages for family members was common during the war.[63] Lomuro's cassette is thus typical of the ingenuity, care, and generosity of my interviewees, whose efforts to document their personal histories and interactions with Garang made this research possible.

I use these sources in three ways: to provide core historical details of Garang's life and career; to analyze how Garang approached history and archiving; and to consider how others value or devalue Garang. There is a certain tension in my efforts to offer an empirically rigorous account of Garang's education and early political activities, while also arguing that he intentionally curated his personal past to support his political vision of the

[61] Kindersley, 'The fifth column?', 45.
[62] Ibid., 165, 171, 180.
[63] Youth focus group 1, Nairobi, 30 Aug. 2019; Angela Impey, 'Keeping in touch via cassette: Tracing Dinka songs from cattle camp to transnational audio-letter', *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 25/2 (2013), 197–210.

New Sudan.[64] While at times impossible to reconcile, this tension is largely productive. By unpacking how Garang and others made, circulated, and repeated historical narratives and sources, I am able to disentangle a teleological history of the SPLM/A's founding promoted by Garang and since taken up by many others, as well as a common narrative of South Sudan's inevitable return to conflict following independence.

To unpack the relationship *between* sources, I draw on works by Steven Davis and Luise White which focus on the construction of historical knowledge rather than the factual details of a given event. White explores what the tensions within a body of sources can reveal about 'how contemporaries put together their own knowledge of current events, what they privileged and what they omitted'.[65] In a slightly different vein, Davis' history of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) in South Africa explores how successive presentist retellings gradually 'flattened' the history of key episodes in the movement's history.[66] Like Davis, I trace the intertextuality of histories of key events in Sudan's second civil war, with particular attention to the Bor Mutiny and Garang's death. Histories of the Bor Mutiny often directly reproduce Garang's account of what happened, as represented in the SPLM/A's founding *Manifesto* and a key interview published in the Khartoum-based *Heritage* newspaper in 1987, with little attention to the political purpose of these texts. In contrast, accounts of Garang's death and the investigation do not strengthen a dominant 'factual' history. Instead, they solidify the idea that the investigation was flawed and reinforce mistrust of 'official' information. I therefore explore the varied effects of intertextuality on politics, knowledge production, and the making of histories.

However, unlike Davis and White, I am concerned not only with how history is framed and understood, but with the 'facts' of the history itself. Like Sudanese and South Sudanese history more generally, Garang's history suffers from a 'dearth of deeply researched work.'[67] I address a fundamental need for more empirically grounded historical

[64] For comparable discussion in relation to history and memory, see Jocelyn Alexander, JoAnn McGregor, and Terence Ranger, *Violence & Memory: One Hundred Years in the 'Dark Forests' of Matabeleland* (Oxford, 2000), 2.
[65] Luise White, *The Assassination of Herbert Chitepo: Texts and Politics in Zimbabwe* (Bloomington, 2003), 12.
[66] Stephen Davis, *The ANC's War Against Apartheid: Umkhonto We Sizwe and the Liberation of South Africa* (Bloomington, Indiana, 2018), 87.
[67] Nicki Kindersley, 'New Histories of New Nations: South Sudan and Sudanese history', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 18/3 (2017).

research on the SPLM/A and situate history-making as an integral component of the biographical story of Garang's life. To do so, I cross-read published SPLM/A memoirs and biographies of Garang; archival material from South Sudan, the US, and the UK; video and audio recordings of Garang's speeches; and oral history interviews and focus groups with over 135 participants.

Of course, what is so interesting about Garang's contested lives and afterlives presents a fundamental challenge to researching Garang. Several memoirs and histories describing Garang and his political thought have been published in recent years, authored by both allies and opponents who knew him personally.[68] These works contain valuable empirical information which has informed my research and oral history interview questions; however, autobiographical writing is 'a genre fraught with methodological minefields', presenting authors' selective accounts of events.[69] This problem is not unique to Garang or to biography, but it is acute in the South Sudanese context where political divisions run deep, armed conflicts continue, and both primary and secondary sources remain scarce, particularly for periods before 1983.[70]

Even before accounting for politically motivated distortions, basic details of Garang's life are inconsistently documented. Books like James Bandi Shimanyula's *John Garang and the SPLA* or Fred Odhiambo Ngoche's *John Garang de Mabior: Sudan's Peacemaker* offer useful overviews but few or no footnotes, making it difficult to track the origins of factual discrepancies between accounts.[71] A biography of Garang by PaanLuel Wël is the most detailed written to date and has been invaluable to my analysis, but relies heavily on veterans' memoirs and journalistic accounts which are difficult to verify and often contradict each other. In a significant example, Wël has reflected on this problem in relation to the Bor Mutiny of 1983.[72]

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[68] For pro-Garang accounts, see Deng, *Power*; Francis Deng, *Visitations: Conversations with the Ghost of the Chairman* (Trenton, New Jersey, 2020); Lino, *Dr John*; For insider critiques of Garang, see Lam Akol, *SPLM/SPLA: Inside an African Revolution*, 4 ed. (Khartoum, 2018); Amon Wantok, *Invasion of the Nile Valley 3100BC-1804AD* (Ongata Rongai, Kenya, 2019); Daniel Joak, *The Rise and Fall of the SPLM/SPLA Leadership*, Kindle ed. (North Charleston, South Carolina, 2015).

[69] Moses Ochonu, 'Elusive history: Fractured archives, politicized orality, and sensing the postcolonial past', *History in Africa*, 42 (2018), 294.

[70] Rolandsen and Daly, *History of South Sudan*, 79, 94.

[71] James Bandi Shimanyula, *John Garang and the SPLA* (Nairobi, 2005); Fred Odhiambo Ngoche, *John Garang de Mabior: Sudan's Peacemaker*, Kindle ed. (Nairobi, 2008).

[72] PaanLuel Wël, *Who Killed Dr. John Garang* (2015), 114.

Two other studies of Garang which I cite frequently are Lual Deng's *Power of Creative Reasoning: The Ideas and Vision of John Garang* and Edward Lino's *Dr. John Garang de Mabior Atem: A Man to Know*.[73] Both Deng and Lino knew Garang closely and supported his political cause, giving them unique knowledge of Garang while presenting inherent problems of bias. One way in which I have circumvented the challenges of working with these texts is by interviewing the authors to ask for clarification and elaboration on the material in their books. While oral histories can be as subjective as memoirs, conversations with Deng and Lino allowed me to probe more deeply into events they participated in firsthand and to ask questions about where they derived more contextual information. Interviews and correspondence with Wël and Ngoche, both of whom write consciously about the methodological challenges of writing about Garang and South Sudan, offered further clarification on the character and limitations of their source material.

Where available, I have used archival materials beyond those produced by the SPLM/A and its opponents to offer records of Garang's activities at specific times. For example, student and municipal newspapers from Iowa allowed me to give dates for Garang's time at Grinnell and to offer snapshots of his student activism between 1965 and 1969, a period regularly mischaracterized in summary accounts of Garang's education. However, oral history interviews are the backbone of my work and inform my approach to written and audiovisual archives. In 2019, I conducted interviews and focus groups in Juba, Nairobi, and the UK. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, I was unable to continue with in-person interviews, but completed further interviews via phone and video call between 2020 and 2023. Those interviewed included Garang's schoolmates, professors, colleagues, collaborators, and opponents, offering insight into different periods and aspects of Garang's life. Interviews with two of Garang's children, Mabior Garang and Akuol de Mabior, were particularly important. First, Mabior and Akuol shared invaluable personal stories, which enabled me to offer a more personal portrait of Garang and to trace the intricate links between Garang's family life and political action. Second, the stories they shared about Garang's academic interests allowed me to read and listen to Garang's public writings and speeches in new ways and offer a detailed intellectual history of his political thought.

[73] Deng, *Power*; Lino, *Dr John*.

Structure

This thesis is structured chronologically and thematically. Chapter one traces Garang's transnational education in Sudan, East Africa, and the US from the 1950s to early 1970s. Through oral history interviews with Garang's former classmates and teachers and archival sources from Grinnell College in Iowa in the American Midwest, I offer an empirically rigorous account of Garang's student mobility, social relationships, and activism in these years. Arguing that Garang's transnational educational experiences had a formative impact on his political thought and activism, this chapter lays the groundwork for later chapters' analysis of Garang's social relationships, creative adaptation of Pan-Africanist and Afrocentric ideas to the Sudanese context, and self-positioning as a transnational intellectual.

Chapter two analyzes the everyday mechanics of covert politics undertaken by southern Sudanese during the years leading up to Sudan's second civil war, when Garang was a doctoral student in the US and young professional in Khartoum. Challenging a predominant focus on military politics, I trace Garang's changing reputation from that of a more radical young activist into a professional and family man, and show that social and familial networks critically enabled covert political activity in Khartoum and key southern towns. Attention to Garang's ability to curate his image and build diverse relationships allows me to retell the history of the Bor Mutiny of May 1983, an event commonly recognized as the start of Sudan's second civil war, showing the key role of Garang's social networks in allowing him to reach Bor then subsequently flee to Ethiopia and successfully claim leadership of the newly formed SPLM/A.

By complicating the story of the underground politics which preceded the SPLM/A, chapter two sets up some of the challenges to be faced by Garang as he sought to unite the SPLM/A as a singular movement fighting for reform in a united Sudan, a cause many of his colleagues did not initially—and, in many cases, ever—fully support. Chapter three charts Garang's efforts to narrate a new political history for the movement and for Sudan, arguing that Garang consciously created sources and archives to generate usable pasts which supported his political position on two fronts: the fight for a more inclusive Sudanese

nationalism and the fight against southern secessionists within and without the SPLM/A. Chapter four offers further insight on how Garang projected himself and his political vision through one of the SPLM/A's key media: radio. Whereas chapter three focuses primarily on Garang's political and historical arguments, chapter four explores how Garang used technology to constitute his political persona and how others reacted to his public presence. The movement's clandestine Radio SPLA allowed Garang to speak to a dispersed audience within and beyond Sudan, publicizing his vision of a New Sudan and asserting his pseudo-sovereign control of SPLM/A-held territory. However, Radio SPLA did not exist in a vacuum; Garang's rivals responded on government and international radio to criticize his leadership in targeted, personal terms. Radio thus powerfully mediated between personal, national, and international politics during the first half of SPLM/A's liberation struggle.

In 1991, two major events rocked the SPLM/A: the movement lost its rear bases and radio transmitter following a change of regime in Ethiopia, and the movement split into rival factions when commanders Riek Machar, Lam Akol, and Gordon Kong attempted to usurp Garang from their stronghold in Nasir, Upper Nile. Chapter five engages with written opposition to Garang, published by rival members of the SPLM/A in the 1990s. In this period, critiques of Garang became both more public and more virulent, in part due to rebel factions' increased access to an international diplomatic and humanitarian audience in Nairobi. Focusing on the anti-Garang content of *Southern Sudan Vision*, a newsletter representing the SPLM/A-Nasir faction led by Riek Machar and Lam Akol from 1992, I argue that demonizing Garang through exposing the silences in his histories was a way for his rivals to make political claims as they sought internal and external legitimacy. However, this process produced new silences about ideological debates in the 1980s and the Nasir faction leadership's own involvement in violence perpetrated by the SPLM/A against junior cadres and civilians.

Finally, chapters six and seven cover Garang's death and afterlives, exploring the continued political impacts of wartime histories in Southern/South Sudan since 2005. Whereas chapters three, four, and five focus primarily on contested histories and political struggles among political-military elites, chapters six and seven turn to how ordinary South Sudanese have questioned the narrative authority of South Sudanese politicians and the

international community as they seek to understand Garang's death and imagine a viable future for South Sudan. Chapter six focuses on debates about Garang's fatal crash and the way it was investigated, demonstrating how political context has shaped histories of the crash. I argue that South Sudanese texts about Garang's death pose wider questions about the challenges of producing accurate histories and evoke a generational duty to document the past for the future.

Chapter seven reflects further on the question of future-facing history-making by exploring Garang's varied 'afterlives' in independent South Sudan. Drawing on Moffat's characterization of afterlives in terms of a political ancestor's enduring 'presence' in postcolonial politics, I argue that Garang acts both as an inescapable founding figure for the SPLM and a focal point for his family, classmates, and youth to produce histories of lost futures and advocate for real change.[74] I show that video, audio, and textual sources produced by or about Garang during the war offer the raw material for new imaginations of Garang in film and other creative projects, through which these groups explore diverse questions of gender, education, and transnationalism. I thus highlight the interconnected nature of history-making by and about Garang over time, and the way that it continues to shape political imagination in South Sudan.

[74] Moffat, *India's Revolutionary Inheritance*, 4–5.

Ch. 1: 'Eager to learn': John Garang's transnational education in East Africa and the United States

In 1966, John Garang wrote an article for his student newspaper at Grinnell College in Iowa, in the American Midwest. The article described the plight of southern Sudanese student refugees displaced by Sudan's first civil war (c. 1963-1972), as part of a fundraising effort to bring some of them to study in the United States (US):[75]

> From such a wild state of affairs, refugees (I am one of them) have fled into neighboring countries: Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, the Central African Republic, the Congos, and Chad […] Some of these refugees are in camps under nominal U.N. inspection, but the majority of them are crammed, sometimes 30 to a hut, in border villages. Others are students eager to learn with nobody to support them financially. My present interest lies in these young men.[76]

Garang and those he described belonged to a generation of mostly male southern Sudanese students who left Sudan to pursue their primary and secondary education abroad in the 1960s. In the first instance, this was in neighbouring East African states and, for a select number including Garang, this led to university scholarships further afield.

Garang's transnational education features prominently in oral and written accounts of his intellectual acumen and Pan-Africanist politics; however, precise details of his educational experiences are hazy, even to family members and close colleagues.[77] This chapter traces Garang's education from primary school to the completion of his first postsecondary degree, across Sudan, East Africa, and the US. The value in doing so is twofold. First, I bring southern Sudanese histories of transnational education into dialogue with a growing literature on African student mobility and scholarship on 'global East Africa' in the 1950s and 1960s.[78] Garang's education was geographically transnational, in the sense that he frequently crossed borders in search of new opportunities. In addition, I argue, Garang actively imagined and articulated his student activism in transnational terms, with immediate and long-term political effects. Second, by clarifying and elaborating on common

[75] On dating Sudan's first civil war, see Johnson, *Root Causes*, 31; Øystein Rolandsen, 'A false start: Between war and peace in the Southern Sudan, 1956–62', *The Journal of African History*, 52/1 (2011), 105–123.
[76] John [Garang] de Mabior, 'Refugee asks fast support', *Scarlet & Black (S&B)* (18 Nov. 1966), p. 2.
[77] For example, in interviews, Garang's son Mabior reflected on his father's many anecdotes about crossing East African borders and Edward Lino mistakenly claimed that Garang completed his undergraduate degree at UDSM.
[78] See overview of the collaborative project, *Another World? East Africa and the Global 1960s*, https://globaleastafrica.org/about [accessed 2 Dec. 2021]

tropes in nationalist stories about Garang's early life, I lay the foundations for subsequent chapters' discussion of Garang's interest in, and use of, historical narrative later in his career.

East Africa—used here and by my interviewees to refer to Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania—was a key geographical and political reference point for students like Garang, who in the 1960s were increasingly forced out of Sudan. From 1958, the Sudanese government used aggressive policies to 'Arabize' and 'Islamize' the south, including replacing English with Arabic as the language of instruction in southern schools and changing the official day of rest from Sunday to Friday. Such initiatives exacerbated already inadequate learning conditions in the south and pushed students to leave the country to join a nascent southern rebel movement in exile or pursue their educations in a safer environment. Access to quality education is widely recognized as a core grievance in southern Sudan's successive rebellions; however, existing studies provide little detail on the personal journeys of students who studied outside Sudan during the first civil war or how these fit within regional histories, mirroring limitations in the historiography of education in colonial Sudan.[79] Partial exceptions include Lilian and Neville Sanderson's account of student strikes in 1960 and 1962; Øystein Rolandsen's account of student involvement in a southern rebel attack on Pochalla in 1963; and Sebabatso Manoeli's discussion of how students furthered the discourse of a racially oppressed 'southern Sudan' promoted by the Sudan African National Union (SANU) during the first civil war.[80] I expand on these episodes by looking at Garang's personal journey not only in relation to Sudanese politics, but to wider African and global trends which shaped his opportunities and ideas.

Across East Africa, the 1950s witnessed a period of 'unprecedented discrepancy between [students'] aspirations and opportunities', prompting students to seek both official and unofficial routes out of the colonial state and onward to universities around the world.[81] By the end of the decade, Cold War rivalry helped spur the expansion of both 'Western' and 'Eastern' scholarship schemes, offered to about-to-be or newly independent African states,

[79] Cf. Iris Seri-hersch, 'Education in Colonial Sudan , 1900 – 1957', in Thomas Spear (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of African History* (Oxford, 2016), 15–16.
[80] Lilian Passmore Sanderson and Neville Sanderson, *Education, Religion & Poliics in Soiuthern Sudan, 1899-1964* (London, 1981), 369–70; Øystein Rolandsen, 'The making of the Anya-Nya insurgency in the Southern Sudan, 1961–64', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 5/2 (2011), 294; Manoeli, *Sudan's 'Southern Problem'*, 68–72.
[81] Eric Burton, 'Decolonization, the Cold War, and Africans' routes to higher education overseas, 1957–65', *Journal of Global History*, 15/1 (2020), 173.

and to southern African liberation movements operating in exile. Eric Burton's study of different geographical routes taken by East African students seeking higher education abroad has shown the importance of non-state actors, including students themselves, in expanding educational mobility.[82] Understanding the diversity of routes and strategies through which African students studied abroad in the 1960s is especially important when studying students like Garang who received little material support from their government or aspirant rebel leadership.

In contrast to southern African liberation movements that solicited African and international backing for education in exile, the political leadership of southern Sudan's resistance movement lacked the political legitimacy and connections to run schools or arrange university scholarships for their student constituents.[83] In a telling example of southern politicians' difficulty in gaining regional support, their application to join the Pan-African Freedom Movement of East, Central and Southern Africa (PAFMECSA) was denied.[84] Moreover, the Sudanese government effectively deployed its Pan-Africanist credentials to deflect attention from the war in the south and discredit southern claims of Arab racism.[85] Sudan gained independence in 1956 and Khartoum acted as a transit point for students travelling from colonial East Africa to Egypt in the late 1950s.[86] At the same time that Sudan's civil war intensified in the 1960s, the governments of Ibrahim Abboud and Mohamed Mahgoub played a leading diplomatic role in supporting liberation movements in Portuguese colonies and southern Africa.[87] Thus, until Garang graduated from Grinnell College in 1969, the two principal forces which shaped his trajectory reflected older entwinements of educational networks in southern Sudan: student relationships, including across ethnic lines, and the church. Nevertheless, Garang's opinions and opportunities were shaped by the optimism of independence in Uganda, Kenya, and

[82] Burton, 'Decolonization'.
[83] Christian Williams, 'Education in exile: International scholarships, Cold War politics, and conflicts among SWAPO members in Tanzania, 1961–1968', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 43/1 (2017), 131; Sean Morrow, Brown Maaba, and Loyiso Pulumani, *Education in Exile: SOMAFCO, the African National Congress School in Tanzania, 1978 to 1992* (Cape Town, South Africa, 2004), 14–15; Joanna Tague, *Displaced Mozambicans in Postcolonial Tanzania: Refugee Power, Mobility, Education, and Rural Development* (Abingdon, UK, 2019), 32–78.
[84] R. Cox, *Pan-Africanism in Practice: PAFMECSA 1958-1964* (London, 1964), 62.
[85] Manoeli, *Sudan's 'Southern Problem'*, 113–32.
[86] Daniel Branch, 'Political traffic: Kenyan students in eastern and central Europe, 1958-69', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 53/4 (2018), 815; Burton, 'Decolonization', 175–80.
[87] Manoeli, *Sudan's 'Southern Problem'*, 117–26.

Tanzania, and the networks of educational, political, and social exchange which connected East Africa with the US from the late 1950s. Garang's case therefore provides an opportunity for thinking about education and activism alongside, but not defined by, the imperatives of nationalist politics.[88]

My account expands on recent scholarship exploring the personal experiences of African students who studied abroad in the 1950s-70s to highlight Garang's agency, intellectual imagination, and political activism at different stages of his educational journey. Anton Tarradellas and Sara Pugach have considered the varied ways in which African students understood, envisioned, and—in some cases—rejected the link between education and modernization in the US and East Germany, respectively.[89] Constantin Katsakioris, Daniel Branch, and Tanja Müller have offered country-specific studies of what students educated in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe experienced upon returning home.[90] Katsakioris has also highlighted the racism encountered by African students in the Soviet Union.[91] In an important study, Dan Hodgkinson has focused on 'political studenthood' during Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. This concept encompasses 'how becoming a student activist shaped young people's behaviour, ideas, and aspirations; opened up routes to enter the political mainstream; and continued to inform their political lives thereafter.'[92] This approach allows Hodgkinson to include 'globally dispersed refugee activists' in 'the political geography of [Zimbabwe's] liberation struggle.' This exercise is equally important for Sudan, where Garang and other students were at the forefront of underground dissident politics in the 1970s and early 1980s, and emerged as leaders and diplomats for the newly formed SPLM/A after 1983. In this and subsequent chapters, I build on Hodgkinson's work

[88] For an illustrative study adopting a similar approach, see Ismay Milford, 'Harnessing the wind: East and Central African activists and anticolonial cultures in a decolonising world, 1952-64' (PhD thesis, European University Instiute, 2019), 2–3.
[89] Anton Tarradellas, '"A glorious future" for Africa: Development, higher education and the making of African elites in the United States (1961–1971)', *Paedagogica Historica*, 57/3 (2021), 287–90; Sara Pugach, 'Eleven Nigerian students in Cold War East Germany: Visions of science, modernity, and decolonization', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 54/3 (2019), 551–572.
[90] Constantin Katsakioris, 'Return from the USSR: Soviet-educated Africans, politics and work, 1960s–2000s', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 55/2 (2021), 267–286; Branch, 'Political traffic'; Tanja Müller, 'From rebel governance to state consolidation: Dynamics of loyalty and the securitisation of the state in Eritrea', *Geoforum*, 43/4 (2012), 793–803.
[91] Constantin Katsakioris, 'Nkrumah's elite: Ghanaian students in the Soviet Union in the Cold War', *Paedagogica Historica*, 57/3 (2020), 1–17; Constantin Katsakioris, 'The Lumumba University in Moscow: Higher education for a Soviet-Third World alliance, 1960-91', *Journal of Global History*, 14/2 (2019), 288.
[92] Dan Hodgkinson, 'Politics on liberation's frontiers: Student activist refugees, international solidarity, and the struggle for Zimbabwe, 1965–79', *The Journal of African History*, 62/1 (2021), 99–123.

to argue that Garang's student experiences reshaped the (southern) Sudanese liberation struggle and continue to impact individual and national politics in South Sudan today.

The remainder of this chapter progresses chronologically in four sections. The first provides an overview of Garang's education in late colonial and early postcolonial Sudan. I explain the events which led to Garang and other students' exodus from Sudan while highlighting how narrow access to education created tight-knit student communities which re-emerged in exile. The second maps Garang's complex journeys as a student refugee, emphasizing the role played by the church in facilitating his continued schooling and, by extension, his engagement with new political and intellectual trends across a range of anticolonial East African 'hubs.'[93] Without discounting students' desire to contribute to southern Sudan's ongoing military and political struggle, I focus on the practical measures taken by Garang and others to pursue their educations and the diverse ideas they encountered in the process. The third covers Garang's undergraduate studies at Grinnell College in the US, a period of his life which is often misrepresented. My account of how Garang experienced the American Civil Rights Movement complicates a sometimes simplistic literature focused on solidarity between African American and African students at American universities.[94] Garang was not made welcome by Grinnell's newly formed Concerned Black Students (CBS) group; however, he benefited from Grinnell's liberal environment through his formal tuition, by attending talks given by prominent black speakers, and by capitalizing on institutional structures to support his own African-facing advocacy. Focusing on Garang's experiences and pursuits at Grinnell thus reveals a snapshot of the diverse political tactics employed by African students in the US during this period. The fourth discusses Garang's return to East Africa, then Sudan, after graduating from Grinnell in 1969. Notwithstanding the challenges faced by Garang at Grinnell, I argue that participation in regional and global intellectual networks conferred important status on him in southern Sudan, not only as a university graduate but as a participant in the broader nexus of African liberation.

[93] On hubs, see Eric Burton, 'Hubs of decolonization: African liberation Mmvements and "Eastern" connections in Cairo, Accra, and Dar es Salaam', in Lena Dallywater, Chris Saunders, and Helder Fonseca (eds.), *Southern African Liberation Movements and the Global Cold War 'East'* (Berlin, 2019), 25–56.
[94] E.g. Jason Parker, '"Made-in-America revolutions"? The "Black University" and the American role in the decolonization of the Black Atlantic', *Journal of American History*, 96/3 (2009), 727–750; Jim Harper, *Western-Educated Elites in Kenya, 1900-1963: The African American Factor* (New York, 2006).

Like other transnational studies, this chapter draws on a range of archival and oral history sources. Although ongoing categorization work in the South Sudan National Archive has allowed new and important work on the first civil war period, significant gaps in documentation remain.[95] I have therefore used the Sudan Archive Durham to sketch brief institutional histories of Garang's schools, as well as archival material from Grinnell College and the personal papers of former Grinnell staff and students. I supplement this limited material with oral histories. Most of those interviewed spent time with Garang in one or two locations only—for example at Rumbek Secondary, at Bombo refugee camp in Uganda, in the student community in Nairobi or at Grinnell College—but their perspectives on the challenges, opportunities, and feelings associated with specific times and places are central to this chapter.

Education in colonial and postcolonial Sudan

Opportunities for southern Sudanese students to access education in the first half of the twentieth century were extremely limited. This had two important effects: education and politics were closely linked, and students and graduates belonged to a narrow group with shared histories attending the south's single secondary school and handful of intermediate schools. Like in other British colonies in Africa, the distribution of schools in colonial Sudan was highly uneven.[96] Under joint Anglo-Egyptian rule from 1898 but effectively administered by the British, Sudan was governed along separate lines in the north and the south in order to prevent 'Arab' influence from spreading to the 'African' south.[97] Before World War Two, southern education was left entirely to missionaries and restricted both quantitatively and qualitatively.[98] Some change took place in the 1940s as it became increasingly apparent that southerners had been woefully underprepared to hold their own vis-à-vis the north should Sudan become independent. This led to the opening of a limited number of government-run schools, particularly in Upper Nile which had been underserved

[95] In particular, Rolandsen, 'The making of the Anya-Nya'; Øystein Rolandsen and Nicki Kindersley, 'The nasty war: Organised violence during the Anya-Nya insurgency in South Sudan, 1963-72', *Journal of African History*, 60/1 (2019), 87–107.
[96] Corrie Decker and Elisabeth McMahon, *The Idea of Development in Africa: A History* (Cambridge, 2020), 216.
[97] For a concise overview of Sudan's unique status as an Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, see Heather Sharkey, *Living with Colonialism: Nationalism and Culture in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan* (Los Angeles, 2003), 4–7.
[98] Sanderson and Sanderson, *Education*, 213; Rolandsen and Daly, *History of South Sudan*, 53, 58.

by missionaries, and of the south's first senior secondary school in Rumbek in 1949.[99] This was, however, 'too little too late.'[100] Following Sudan's independence in 1956, the lack of educational opportunities in the south became a core grievance in Sudan's two civil wars, particularly for young men.

Garang started school in the early 1950s and experienced the tense politics of southern education in the years immediately before and after independence; however, Garang remained more focused on his studies than on politics. Garang was born in 1945 to a Twic Dinka family of cattle herders in the rural village of Wangkulei.[101] Both of his parents died when he was a child and, in 1952 or 1953, Garang was taken by his cousin, Athithei Aruai Atem, who worked in Tonj, Bahr el Ghazal, to enroll in Tonj Elementary school.[102] Garang was the first in his immediate family to attend school, at a time when education among the Dinka remained rare.[103] Speaking to SPLA officers years later about the importance of education, Garang said he went to school only because he was forced: 'It was not my will nor the will of my parents'.[104] The journey to Tonj with his cousin was his first time travelling by car and steamer and, when they arrived, he tried to escape, declaring he was going home to Bor.[105]

First discussed in 1938 but only opened in 1944, Tonj Elementary was the south's first government-run school.[106] The school's opening reflected British fears about missionary education's 'detribalizing' effects and the perceived danger of a politicized educated class.[107] Targeting the Bahr el Ghazal Dinka, Tonj Elementary was envisioned as 'a Dinka school based on Dinka social ideas and institutions' and was to fulfill 'the definite object of producing community leaders – as (a) Chiefs (b) Teachers (c) others with

[99] Sanderson and Sanderson, *Education*, 262–3.
[100] Rolandsen and Daly, *History of South Sudan*, 58.
[101] Lino, *Dr John*, 17; Wël, *Who Killed*, 43.
[102] Dates vary in other published accounts of Garang's life. Because Garang did not spend any time at a 'bush school' before going to Tonj, he would have completed four years of elementary school; however, schools were closed for almost a year following the Torit Mutiny in 1955, likely delaying Garang's completion.
[103] Wël cites Rebecca Nyandeng's description of this period on the official website of Dr. John Garang International School, which I was unable to locate at time of writing (December 2021). See Wël, *Who Killed*, 46.
[104] Awan Kuol Awan, 'Dr John Garang de Mabior addressing the new graduate army officers', YouTube, uploaded 26 Jun. 2017, https://youtu.be/Z_eTjKKz7fs [30 Jun. 2021]. Arabic phrases in video were translated by Sunday Beiag.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Sanderson and Sanderson, *Education*, 262–3.
[107] Ibid., 177, 181; Rolandsen and Daly, *History of South Sudan*, 46–7; Johnson, *Root Causes*, 15.

specialised knowledge and skills of different kinds.'[108] Notwithstanding accommodations for Dinka culture, the school had a British headmaster and Francis Mading Deng, who attended Tonj Elementary in its early years, described it as 'very regimented […] like typical public school in England.'[109] Teaching was in English and, as was the case in Khartoum's prestigious Gordon College, the school's students were mainly sons of chiefs and senior government officials.[110] In these ways, Tonj Elementary is exemplary of British ideas about the link between education, ethnicity, and politics, and of how schools acted as incubators of a narrow educated elite. At Tonj Elementary, this was a Dinka elite but, as students progressed to intermediate and secondary school, they joined more ethnically diverse cohorts.

By the time Garang proceeded to Bussere South Intermediate School in 1957, where he spent four years before sitting the highly competitive entrance exams for Rumbek Senior Secondary School, southern schools were emerging as a nexus of political discontent. In the lead up to independence, 'Sudanisation' of government positions formerly held by the British had overwhelmingly benefited northerners. In the army, this contributed to a mutiny in 1955 by southern soldiers in Torit against their northern officers, an event often presented in South Sudanese nationalist accounts as the start of the first civil war.[111] Most southern schools were still run by missions and so were not initially impacted by Sudanisation.[112] However, with the nationalisation of schools in 1957 and the coming to power of a military regime led by General Ibrahim Abboud in 1958, schools and students became targets of government efforts to 'Arabize' and 'Islamize' the south. The major event in Garang's time at Bussere was the government decision to change the official day of rest from Sunday to Friday in February 1960. The decision prompted strikes among students at Rumbek Secondary and many intermediate schools. However, Daniel Awet Akot, who joined Garang at Bussere that year, stressed that Bussere students were less 'politically minded' than those

[108] Sudan Archive, Durham, UK (SAD) 664/9/4-10, G. Jonson-Smith, Inspector of Education, Wau, 'Note of various discussions between D. Hawkesworth and G. Johnson-Smith with regard to Desiderata for a Government Dinka School.' See also Sanderson and Sanderson, *Education*, 264.
[109] Interview with Francis Mading Deng, Juba, 19 Jul. 2019. See also Martin Marial Takpiny, *My Journey Through Turbulent Times of Life* (Perth, 2017), 37–8.
[110] Interview with Francis Mading Deng.
[111] On dating of first civil war, see Rolandsen, 'False start'.
[112] Rolandsen and Daly, *History of South Sudan*, 70.

at Rumbek and that the school's Catholic priests (who would be expelled from Sudan in 1964) discouraged politics in the school.[113]

This was not the case at other intermediate schools, whose students mixed with those from Bussere at Rumbek Secondary. Lawrence Modi Tombe, who attended Okaru Intermediate School and entered Rumbek Secondary a year before Garang and Awet, explained that he and other 'town' students at Okaru politicized their peers from rural areas, telling them about the 'problem of southern Sudan'.[114] Moreover, while Garang's teachers at Bussere South were mainly northerners,[115] the headmaster at Okaru from 1959 was Joseph Oduho, then already renowned as an outspoken southern politician. According to Tombe, Oduho warned his students against participating in the Sunday strike, saying, 'You wait for your time. We will need you, Southern Sudan does not have educated people.'[116] When his students went on strike anyway, he protected the ringleaders—Tombe included—from expulsion by instead issuing them lashes to show he had punished them. When schools closed after exams that December, Oduho left Sudan without telling his students, joining Father Saturnino Lohure and Aggrey Jaden to form a nascent political resistance in exile. Thus, Tombe described that, when he arrived at Rumbek Secondary the following year, 'it was a politically charged atmosphere. With our politicians already gone, 1961 was nothing other than politics.' And it was into this charged atmosphere that Garang entered Rumbek Secondary in July 1962.

Well-known today for having produced the bulk of southern Sudan's educated political elite, Rumbek Secondary was a hotbed of student strikes almost from the day it opened.[117] Based on a British model including chapel, debate, and regular sport, the school was envisioned as the first educational site to prepare southerners 'to proceed to Khartoum University or abroad for professional training' and students were prepared for the Overseas Cambridge School Certificate.[118] As entry was so competitive, it was, in the words of one student and close friend to Garang, doubly 'charged', 'with both academic interests as well

[113] On expulsion of missionaries, see Deng Akol Ruay, *The Politics of Two Sudans: The South and the North 1821-1969* (Uppsala, 1994), 99.
[114] Interview with Lawrence Modi Tombe, London, 25 Apr. 2019.
[115] Interview with Daniel Awet Akot, Juba, 2 Aug. 2019.
[116] Interview with Lawrence Modi Tombe.
[117] Various strikes from the early 1950s are described in correspondence from Thomas Owen, then Governor of Bahr al-Ghazal. See SAD 647/2/45-7; SAD 529/10/44-6.
[118] SAD 779/2/1-6, H. L. Stevens, 'Rumbek Secondary School, Bahr el Ghazal, Southern Sudan', Aug. 1989.

as political interests.'[119] In 1961 and 1962, Rumbek students—many of whom, particularly among the Dinka, were in their twenties by the time they came to Rumbek—were in touch with the politicians in exile through various intermediaries who carried letters which were read aloud at meetings held by the students in the middle of the night in the bush around the school.[120] Garang, however, remained disengaged from politics and focused on his education.[121] Garang's schoolmates remember that he always had his nose in a book and that he read far beyond what was required:

> Of course by then we had so many novels, so many novels to read: Charles Dickens, *Things Fall Apart* and, uh, many others – but in addition to this, he was much much interested in reading. Books! I should say he was a bookist.[122]

Even during the school's mandatory time for sports, Garang would carry his book down to the field and read.[123] This focus on both formal and personal study would continue throughout Garang's life, as the following sections and chapters explore further.

Notably, Rumbek Secondary drew students from across the south and inculcated both interethnic and ethnic affiliations.[124] Those who attended Rumbek with Garang stressed that 'you cannot say this is from this tribe, this is from that tribe; by then we were all South Sudanese without differences!'[125] While some Bor Dinka students befriended Garang because of their shared identity,[126] the creation of an interethnic community at Rumbek Secondary was an important precursor to the student communities which Garang would be part of in Uganda's Bombo refugee camp and in Nairobi over the next few years. As Tounsel has noted, Rumbek students were also aware of, and felt solidarity with, 'conditions elsewhere in East Africa.'[127] Whereas Tounsel gives an example from 1954 regarding comparisons between southern Sudan and Kenya's 'colour bar', Garang's contemporaries

[119] Interview with Col Dau Ding, phone, 21 May 2021.
[120] Interview with Lawrence Modi Tombe.
[121] Interview with Timothy Wani Logali, Levi Sebit Nigo, and Jonathan Wani Jumi, Juba, 26 Jul. 2019.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Interviews with Aggrey Ayuen, Juba, 29 Jul. 2019; Barnaba Marial Benjamin, Juba, 24 Jul. 2019.
[124] Christopher Tounsel, '"God will crown us": The construction of religious nationalism in southern Sudan, 1898-2011' (PhD thesis, University of Michigan, 2015), 164, 168–9.
[125] Interview with Timothy Wani Logali, Levi Sebit Nigo, and Jonathan Wani Jumi. A similar sentiment was expressed by Lawrence Modi Tombe.
[126] Interview with Aggrey Ayuen.
[127] Tounsel, 'God will crown us', 166.

remember that they used to keenly debate the 'crisis' in the Congo, as well as 'the situation in South Sudan and the way the Arabs were oppressing us.'[128]

Garang's time at Rumbek, however, was short-lived. In October 1962, another widespread student strike rocked the south. The strike was precipitated by letters from Marco Rume, then secretary-general of the nascent exile movement, who wrote to students telling them 'that a Southern liberation army would enter the Sudan upon the independence of Uganda in October 1962' and those who had not left by then would risk government reprisals targeted at the southern intelligentsia.[129] The letters also alleged—falsely—that the exile movement had amassed guns at the Ugandan border and simply needed people to wield them.[130] For the more political students, these were sufficient reasons to leave Sudan; others were more cautious or caught unaware and unprepared to join the exodus.[131] Among Garang's former classmates, accounts vary as to whether Garang departed southern Sudan immediately after the strike or when schools closed for the December break.[132]

Whether in October or December, Garang left Rumbek with several other students from Bor, ostensibly to travel home. They travelled through Yirol to Shambe, a town on the edge of the Nile River, where instead of taking the steamer south towards Bor, they went the other direction to Malakal.[133] Col Dau Ding recalls that, from Malakal, he and Garang travelled by lorry to Khartoum, where they parted ways. Staying with a family member, Garang worked briefly in Omdurman and then in Blue Nile, before crossing into Ethiopia sometime in early 1963.[134] At the time, a number of southern students were arriving in western Ethiopia, but the southern politicians were based in Uganda and Congo, and the schoolboys faced police harassment and the threat of being forced back to Sudan.[135] Garang

[128] Interview with Timothy Wani Logali, Levi Sebit Nigo, and Jonathan Wani Jumi. For further discussion of Rumbek's debate culture, see Joseph Lagu, *Sudan: Odyssey Through a State: From Hope to Ruin* (Omdurman, 2006), 54–5; Tounsel, 'God will crown us', 165–6.
[129] Rolandsen, 'The making of the Anya-Nya', 219; See also Sanderson and Sanderson, *Education*, 369 SAD 919/6/101, Robert Collins, draft book chapters on political developments in the Sudan.
[130] Interview with Timothy Wani Logali, Levi Sebit Nigo, and Jonathan Wani Jumi; personal communication with Atem Yaak Atem, 11 Oct. 2021.
[131] Interview with Timothy Wani Logali, Levi Sebit Nigo, and Jonathan Wani Jumi.
[132] Interviews with Col Dau Ding, phone, 31 Aug. 2021; Daniel Awet Akot; Aggrey Ayuen; and Atem Yaak Atem, phone, 7 Jun. 2021. Ding (who travelled north with Garang) and Akot (who shared a sleeping block with Garang) remember him leaving during the strike. Ayuen (who also travelled north with Garang, as far as Malakal) remembers leaving for the holidays and Atem remembers journeying back to Rumbek with Garang after the holidays.
[133] Interview with Aggrey Ayuen.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Rolandsen, 'The making of the Anya-Nya', 224.

is usually said to have joined the Anyanya at this stage but the students and other refugees congregating in western Ethiopia in early 1963 were not very organized and did not make their first significant attack until October.[136] By this time, Garang had already moved on, travelling south to Kenya where he was apprehended by the colonial police for crossing the border without papers in Moyale and taken to Kamiti prison in Nairobi.[137]

Student mobility and political awakening in East Africa

When the first southern Sudanese students had arrived in Uganda, Ethiopia, and the Congo in late 1962, they quickly realized that the guns and imminent invasion promised by the politicians were a fabrication.[138] Many of those who left Sudan with the intention of joining a powerful rebel army were instead told by the leadership to pursue their educations at schools in East Africa. For others, pursuing an education in less repressive circumstances was a prime motivator for fleeing Sudan in the first place. Personal narratives from this time reflect the material hardships of refugee life and the difficulty of finding schools; in many cases, students joined lower-level classes than the ones they had left in Sudan and worked their way up the educational ladder in whichever new country they found themselves.[139] Notwithstanding these difficulties, those who knew Garang during this period speak of it as a time of political awakening and ethnic acceptance among southern Sudanese student refugees. Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania were about to or had recently become independent and the students witnessed these states' transitions with excitement.[140] As one student described, 'this thing ignited fire in us for seeing Nairobi run by *Africans*, black Africans.'[141]

While the southern politicians had lied about Ugandan independence being the signal for an armed rebel incursion into Sudan, the temporal effect of Rume's letters was that the first wave of the student exodus coincided with Uganda's independence (12 October 1962), followed a year later by Kenya's (12 December 1963).[142] For Garang, Kenya's

[136] Ibid., 224–5.
[137] Gakuu Mathenge, 'Garang: Lessons from Kenya', *The Nation/All Africa* (10 Jan. 2005), Factiva [30 Jan. 2019].
[138] Interviews with Timothy Wani Logali, Levi Sebit Nigo and Jonathan Wani Jumi; Lawrence Modi Tombe; 'Michael', phone, 17 May 2021.
[139] Interviews with Jonathan Wani Jumi, Juba, 14 Aug. 2019; William Mogga.
[140] Interview with Aggrey Ayuen.
[141] Interview with Joseph Abuk, Juba, 22 Jul. 2019.
[142] Interview with Lawrence Modi Tombe.

independence was particularly significant; in notable contrast to popular emphasis on the allegedly formative impact of Garang's time in Dar es Salaam, oral histories reveal the importance of the southern Sudanese student community in Nairobi, which Garang visited for holidays when studying in neighbouring Tanzania. Nairobi is not usually described as an anticolonial 'hub' in the same way as Dar es Salaam, Cairo, or Accra, but—for Garang and his companions—Nairobi was a crucial site for exploring new political ideas and engaging with southern Sudan's rebel leadership.[143]

The 1960s were a period of global connectivity and political innovation in Kenya. Although Kenya's political space narrowed towards the end of the decade, the timing of Garang's arrival launched him into an intellectual environment rife with discussions about the format and promise of African independence.[144] From the late 1950s, over two thousand Kenyan students went abroad to pursue higher education through scholarship schemes in the US and in eastern and central Europe, arranged by prominent politicians Tom Mboya and Oginga Odinga, respectively.[145] Mboya, whose political speeches figure in southern Sudanese memories of refugee life in Kenya, had himself studied in the US and was well-connected in international labour activism, and Kenya's first president, Jomo Kenyatta, had studied in the UK. Exchange also happened in the other direction, with the Kenyan struggle for independence attracting solidarity from African Americans.[146] Within the region, discussions raged about the possibility of an East African Federation and, more ambitiously, Ghanaian President Kwame Nkrumah sent representatives to advocate for a continental African union until his overthrow in 1966.[147] In the late 1950s, Nkrumah spearheaded the call for a Pan-Africanist union but, by 1962, he was sidelined from conversations which ultimately led to the creation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). His pseudo-diplomatic advocacy was an attempt to reassert his position as a Pan-Africanist leader. These machinations exposed Garang and his companions to new Pan-Africanist and anticolonial discourses, highlighted in the published and oral histories of Garang's peers.

[143] Burton, 'Hubs of decolonization'.
[144] Branch, 'Political traffic', 829.
[145] Ibid., 813.
[146] Gerald Horne, *Mau Mau in Harlem?: The U.S. and the Liberation of Kenya* (Basingstoke, 2009); Dudziak, *Exporting American Dreams*; Harper, *Western-Educated Elites*, 77–83.
[147] Chris Vaughan, 'The politics of regionalism and federation in East Africa, 1958–1964', *The Historical Journal*, 62/2 (2019), 519–540; Matteo Grilli, *Nkrumaism and African Nationalism: Ghana's Pan-African Foreign Policy in the Age of Decolonization* (Cham, Switzerland, 2018), 265–70.

Southern Sudanese students also described benefiting from the sympathy of Kenyan politicians, who legitimated their presence in Nairobi along with other students, nationalists, and Pan-Africanists from abroad. For Garang, this period of '[e]xcitement and optimism' began while he was still incarcerated, in the twilight hours of Kenya's colonial regime.[148] While in Kamiti prison, Garang met and befriended Kenyan political activist Arthur Ochwada.[149] Garang explained his plight and the southern Sudanese cause to Ochwada who, when released, spoke on Garang's behalf to Odinga, then Minister for Home Affairs in Kenya's self-government and soon to be independent Kenya's first Vice-President. Odinga was moved by the young refugees' predicament and arranged with Ugandan Prime Minister Milton Obote to have them granted asylum in Uganda rather than repatriated to Sudan. Although difficult to verify, this series of events is captured in several sources and chimes with British colonial anxiety about student mobility during these years.[150] From the 1950s, educational opportunities for African students expanded from colonial metropoles to new locales in North Africa, South Asia, and the Eastern Bloc.[151] Concerned that students would return with radical anticolonial literature and ideas, colonial authorities tried to prevent travel to communist states. However, Sudan's independence in 1956 offered a land route by which students could travel north to Egypt without papers, then onward to other destinations. Repatriation was one tactic employed by British authorities to regulate 'illegal' student mobility, including enlisting Sudanese authorities to repatriate East African students found 'without valid papers' in the southern Sudanese towns of Juba and Nimule, which were transit points on the 'Nile route' to Cairo.[152] It is therefore plausible that Garang could have been similarly apprehended for travelling without formal documentation.

While southern Sudanese politicians operating in East Africa struggled to win diplomatic support, Garang and other student refugees attracted more sympathy from

[148] John Garang, quoted in Mathenge, 'Garang: Lessons'.
[149] Versions of this episode are captured in several accounts. See ibid.; Jon Pen, 'In the lion's den: How Oginga Odinga rescued young John Garang from deporation and execution early 1960s!', *WeakLeaks* (24 Oct. 2018), https://weakleak.wordpress.com/2018/10/24/in-the-lions-den-how-oginga-odinga-rescued-young-john-garang-from-deportation-and-execution-in-late-1960s/ [11 Feb. 2021]; Wël, *Who Killed*, 53; Lino, *Dr John*, 19. In addition, Daniel Deng Athorbei (interview, Juba, 17 Jul. 2019), described Garang relating that Odinga Oginga aided him when he was imprisoned in Kenya.
[150] Ismay Milford, '"Shining vistas" and false passports: Recipes for an anticolonial hub', *Afro-Asian Visions* (27 Feb. 2017), https://medium.com/afro-asian-visions/shining-vistas-and-false-passports-recipes-for-an-anticolonial-hub-f631e19b1046 [13 Mar. 2023].
[151] Burton, 'Decolonization', 174–5.
[152] Ibid., 179.

Sudan's neighbours. Sometime in mid- to late 1963, Garang and his peers were released from Kamiti and sent to Bombo refugee camp in Uganda, evocatively described by Joseph Abuk, who first met Garang in the camp and was later reunited with him in Nairobi:

> Bombo is a place that is about twenty-one miles from Kampala […] we were put to live in the barracks of the British Army which had resided in Uganda during the colonial administration of Uganda. […] I was landed in a *huuuge* body of students wearing the khaki uniforms of the soldiers that had left the place, and were swarming around with different types of languages. And that was the first place that I met Garang in.[153]

Within this 'huge body of students', former relationships from Rumbek Secondary resurfaced alongside familial and ethnic ties. Abuk met Garang through his cousin, Gajuk, who had studied with Garang at Rumbek. Debating was an important part of intellectual and social life at Rumbek, and students took their 'rhetorical skills' with them into these new political environments.[154] Abuk remembers that, when Gajuk and Garang were reunited in Bombo, they spent hours locked in vigorous discussion. Garang was still 'very quiet' but was beginning to be recognized as someone 'very eloquent […] very nice to listen to' and won a formal debate on 'something to do with the South Sudan' organized at the Bombo police station public hall.[155]

Throughout these years, church support was central to southern Sudanese students' survival and education. The first students to arrive in Uganda in early 1962 faced significant barriers, including arrest and repatriation by the Ugandan police; this changed when churches sounded 'alarm bells' about the dire refugee situation in Uganda and the World Council of Churches offered to sponsor southern Sudanese students who found schools in Uganda.[156] Even with church support, the hunt for schools was difficult, particularly for Dinka students like Garang whose physical appearance—taller and darker than most Ugandans—prevented them from blending in as easily as did their Equatorian counterparts. Perhaps because of these difficulties, Garang only stayed in Bombo a few months before moving on in search of somewhere to complete his secondary schooling.[157] Although Tanzania was more hostile to southern Sudanese refugees than were Uganda, Kenya, and the Congo, he ended up in Mgulani refugee camp, on the outskirts of Dar es Salaam, from

[153] Interview with Joseph Abuk.
[154] Tounsel, 'God will crown us', 165.
[155] Interview with Alfred Sebit Lokuji, phone, 28 May 2021.
[156] Interview with Lawrence Modi Tombe.
[157] Interview with Joseph Abuk.

where he managed to get church sponsorship to attend Magamba Senior Secondary in northeastern Tanzania.[158] He was promoted rapidly to form four, finishing his secondary schooling after one year.[159]

During holidays, Garang travelled to Kenya, staying with other southern Sudanese students in Nairobi.[160] Like in Uganda, the students in Nairobi were registered with the UNHCR but sponsored through the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK) and stayed in shared hostels in Nairobi's Eastleigh district.[161] They were also given a modest weekly stipend.[162] Although basic and often cramped, these hostels allowed the students in Nairobi to take in visiting friends from Tanzania and Uganda.[163] A crucial point in students' memories of this time in Kenya was that their presence was sanctioned by Odinga. They could move relatively freely and observed the Kenyan democratic model by attending speeches given by Kenyatta, Odinga, and Mboya. They also lobbied African presidents for support for fellow students and interacted with political representatives from Sudan and beyond.[164] The result was that students' quest for formal education in East African schools went hand in hand with political education.

Alfred Ladu Gore, well-known today for his leftist views, explained that he 'got in touch with […] militant students in Kenya' who had been sent to study in the Soviet Union by Odinga then returned to work in schools and newspapers; seeing that 'the country was now in the hands of the blacks', the Sudanese students began asking themselves, 'when are we going to have our own country?'[165] Similarly, Joseph Abuk described his encounters with Ghanaians in Nairobi who spoke 'mellifluously' and 'were all in the streets of Nairobi campaigning, trying to influence the general thinking of Africans about the importance of what could be a continental government that would unite Africans.'[166] Nairobi was also a

[158] Lino, *Dr John*, 19–20; Lemi Logwonga Lomuro personal collection, Cassette recording of speech delivered by John Garang at UDSM, Aug. 1989; Jacqueline Stolze, 'Who is John Garang? Sudan's rebel leader returns to Grinnell', *Grinnell Magazine* (2002), 8-11.
[159] Mathenge, 'Garang: Lessons'. While Garang's description of finishing his schooling so quickly seems exaggerated, this is the only way the timeline aligns.
[160] Interviews with Jonathan Wani Jumi; Jones Lukandu, Juba, conducted by Machot Amuom Malou, 18 Dec. 2020.
[161] Interview with Jonathan Wani Jumi.
[162] Interviews with ibid.; Joseph Abuk.
[163] Interview with Jonathan Wani Jumi.
[164] Interviews with Jonathan Wani Jumi; Joseph Abuk; Alfred Ladu Gore, Juba, 15 Aug. 2019.
[165] Interview with Alfred Ladu Gore, 15 Aug. 2019.
[166] Interview with Joseph Abuk.

place where southern Sudanese political leaders passing through the city would brief students on events in Sudan.[167] All these factors would have been attractions to Garang.

When Garang graduated from Magamba, the church again facilitated his educational mobility, this time to attend university in the US. While at Magamba, Garang was taught by Eunice and Bill Robbins, American missionaries from Tracy, Minnesota. They were impressed by Garang and connected him with members of their home congregation at Tracy Lutheran Church, who supported Garang to attend Grinnell College.[168] Congregation member Leona Palm paid Garang's fees and gave him a home during holidays, and he wore second-hand clothes from other church members to avoid spending money on himself. A local newspaper article from 1997 quotes Eunice Robbins and Palm recalling Garang's selflessness and determination to serve his people.[169] As is discussed further in the following section, through Garang's arrangement, the Tracy community later sponsored at least eight other southern Sudanese students to attend high schools in Africa.

In between completing his secondary schooling at Magamba and leaving for the US a year later, Garang returned to Kenya and became a teacher at Gatunganga Secondary School in Karatina, near Nyeri. During this time, he continued to travel frequently to Nairobi.[170] Garang is said to have been a thoughtful and caring teacher, allowing students to attend his classes without paying fees and replacing corporal punishment with manual labour to increase the number of school latrines.[171] It is also possible that Garang moved more widely across East African borders between arriving in Kenya in 1963 and his departure for the US in 1965, though the details of these journeys are unclear. Garang's son, Mabior, recalls his father telling him various stories about crossing borders (though he too is unsure of precise details) and Muzong Kodi, a Congolese student who met Garang at Grinnell

[167] Interview with Jonathan Wani Jumi.
[168] Mary Ann Lickteig, 'An Iowa education helped shape rebel leader', *The Des Moines Register* (22 Apr. 1997), 6.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Gakuu Mathenge, 'Garang: Lessons from Kenya' (10 Jan. 2005), *The Nation/All Africa*, accessed via Factiva.
[171] The most detailed descriptions of Garang's time in Karatina come from Mathenge's 2005 interview (see ibid.) and a Kenyan-authored children's biography of Garang which appears to draw on Mathenge. See Ngoche, *John Garang*. Both accounts claim that Garang in fact replaced the existing head teacher of the school and encouraged the community to take ownership of the school (previously owned by an Indian family in Nairobi). I made initial contact with residents in Karatina who remembered Garang in March 2020, but my planned travel to the area was interrupted by Covid-19.

College, explained that Garang told him he had spent time in northern Congo and 'still had a few phrases in Lingala.'[172]

Through a combination of the well-established educational relationships between southern Sudanese and the church; students' own hard work to find schools and support their peers; and, as one of Garang's peers put it, simply being 'lucky', Garang's two and a half years in East Africa were ones of surprising mobility and political exploration.[173] These experiences not only introduced Garang and his contemporaries to new modes of political expression, but also left Garang with a repertoire of personal anecdotes and affiliations which he used in later years to position himself as a seasoned Pan-Africanist who had built transnational relationships and witnessed key moments in the African transition to independence.

Grinnell College

Following Garang's encounters with anticolonial and Pan-Africanist politics as a refugee in East Africa, his time at Grinnell College offered further exposure to a range of black and Pan-African literature which shaped his political thought. While references to Garang's experience of the Civil Rights Movement are commonplace, this section reflects critically on the interaction between civil rights issues at Grinnell and Garang's African-facing political ideas.[174] In doing so, it challenges the presupposition that Garang's interactions with organized African American activism at Grinnell were purely positive.

Scholarship on African students who studied in the US from the 1960s onward has focused largely on the relationship between education and American Cold War diplomacy.[175] A handful of studies consider the role of black universities like Howard and Lincoln in fostering transnational solidarity and educating Africans who became prominent in the independence movements of their home countries, but these too fall short of capturing varied African student experiences in the US.[176] In contrast, Tom Shachtman notes a

[172] Interviews with Mabior Garang, video call, 18 Mar. 2021; Muzong Kodi, phone, 11 Jun. 2021.
[173] Interview with Jonathan Wani Jumi.
[174] E.g. Andrew Natsios, *Sudan, South Sudan, and Darfur: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford, 2012), 62–4; Wël, *Who Killed*, 27.
[175] Anton Tarradellas, 'Pan-African networks, Cold War politics, and postcolonial opportunities: The African Scholarship Program of American Universities, 1961–75', *The Journal of African History*, 63/1 (2022), 76.
[176] Parker, 'Made-in-America'; Harper, *Western-Educated Elites*.

'universal feeling' among East Africans studying in the US in the late 1950s and 1960s 'that African-Americans treated them with indifference rather than as brothers and sisters.'[177] While such a feeling was perhaps not 'universal', it was experienced by Garang and the small number of other African students at Grinnell. Certainly, Garang was surrounded throughout his time at Grinnell by the racialized politics of late 1960s America. In 1968, three years after Garang's enrollment, the college had around 48 black students, only 4.6% of the student total.[178] Grinnell was known as a liberal, left-leaning institution and hosted several prominent black speakers of different political orientations during Garang's four-year degree, including Martin Luther King Jr, Clayton Powell Jr, Ernest Chambers, and Charles Hamilton.[179] Although the principal issue of the day was the war in Vietnam, questions of race, rights, and resistance were important topics of debate among the student body and King's lecture in October 1967 prompted black students to form a group called Concerned Black Students (CBS), which still exists today.[180] Garang's open participation in civil rights activism was, however, minimal. His close friends were a small cohort of fellow African students and his focus remained getting an education to serve his people.

The majority of Garang's classmates interviewed for this research remember him as someone with a 'soft-spoken intellect and quiet charisma', slightly reserved in his interactions; in contrast, Congolese student Muzong Kodi remembers Garang as open, 'very enthusiastic', and extremely well-networked in the wider Iowa community.[181] When Kodi arrived at Grinnell in January 1967, he was immediately introduced to Garang and they remained friends throughout their shared two years at Grinnell. Kodi explained that the student body at Grinnell was very active politically and 'very much on the left'.[182] The campus was an 'isolated environment' and they had little to do with Grinnell town. Nevertheless, he and Garang felt the impact of racism and discrimination:

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[177] Tom Shachtman, *Airlift to America: How Barack Obama, Sr., John F. Kennedy, Tom Mboya, and 800 East African Students Changed Their World and Ours* (New York, 2009), 111.
[178] 'CBS chooses slate, plans 9 proposals', *S&B* (27 Sept. 1968), 1; interview with Alan Wheat, video call, 27 Jul. 2021.
[179] Sue Miller, 'King preaches awakening', *S&B* (1 Nov. 1967), 1; 'Powell stresses Black Power, youth rebellion before 2,000', *S&B* (11 Oct. 1968), 1; 'Chambers visits campus; reports on Black Power', *S&B* (29 Nov. 1968), 1; William Pollak personal papers, 'A program of special studies as a memorial to the life and principles of Martin Luther King, Jr.' (Grinnell College, 29 Apr.-1 May 1968).
[180] Tequia Burt, 'Legacy of activism' (8 Jun. 2016), https://www.grinnell.edu/news/legacy-activism [12 Dec. 2021]; focus group with retired Grinnell faculty, video call, 24 Jun. 2021.
[181] Email from William Shaul, 9 Apr. 2020; interview with Muzong Kodi.
[182] This and following quotes from interviews with Muzong Kodi, 11 Jun. 2021 and 14 Oct. 2021.

> So of course we experienced some of it, from some of our colleagues even, but we took it in stride because we knew that our stay in that country was limited in time and that our big battles will be on the continent when we go back. We were involved in the discussion of Vietnam and what was happening in other parts of the world, but all in all people were not very receptive to us when we criticized the US for what was happening in other parts of the world.

The American parochialism encountered by Garang and Kodi contrasted with the far-flung international involvement of both the Black Panthers and the more moderate American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa in the same period.[183] This parochialism also shaped their interactions with African American students. While Garang and Kodi viewed the African American cause 'as [their] fight as well' and attended the inaugural meeting of CBS in 1968, they 'were not welcome':

> I remember very clearly when the first meeting of the Concerned Black Students was convened, both of us went to the meeting. And we were not welcome. It was made quite clear to us that that was not the place for us. That that was for just black Americans. And that was the end of our involvement, direct involvement with it. But we *were* sympathetic of their cause because we ourselves, even as foreigners, felt the impact of racism at that time.

As a result, Garang and Kodi kept their discussion largely between themselves, regarding matters in the US and internationally.[184]

However, Garang remained interested in the wider events and intellectual innovations of the civil rights era. He and Kodi attended the campus lectures given by black speakers. Indeed, King's lecture, 'Staying awake through a revolution', stands out in Kodi's memories of that time, as it does for many students:[185]

> It was a very high moment in the history of the college. At a time when black speakers were not welcome in many places and not the likes of Martin Luther King, it was very uplifting to hear him. The *whole* college attended and even people from the town attended it […] Grinnell was a very special place when it came to bringing in speakers, high level speakers like Martin Luther King. And for black students especially, *including* ourselves, it was a moment to be proud.

King's lecture had an important impact on Kodi and Garang, but was balanced by the varied views presented by black speakers more critical of King's non-violent approach, like Charles

[183] Sean Malloy, *Out of Oakland: Black Panther Party Internationalism during the Cold War* (Ithaca, 2018), 107–29; James Farquharson, '"To the benefit of Africa, the world, and ourselves": The American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa (ANLCA) Mission to Nigeria, 1966–1968', *Journal of Global History*, (2021), 1–20.

[184] Alan Wheat, an African American Grinnell alum three years below Garang, reflected that Garang was likely even more isolated than his African Americans classmates, who 'tended to cluster'. Wheat recalled that 'Garang was not part of that group.' Interview with Alan Wheat.

[185] A copy of King's speech was reproduced in 'Remaining awake through a revolution, *Grinnell Magazine* (Summer 1968), 17-20.

Hamilton, who co-authored *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* (1967) with prominent Black Power activist Stokely Carmichael.[186] Kodi reflected that 'it was good to hear all these sides' while at Grinnell and that he and Garang 'saw merit in both [non-violent and violent approaches].'

The other sides of Garang's political education while at Grinnell were his formal learning and self-guided reading. To the extent that Garang's post-secondary education receives discussion in the existing literature, the focus is on his background as a development economist and particularly his adoption of the 'Dar es Salaam school' of development theory exemplified by the work of Walter Rodney.[187] However, before taking up his (notably brief) position as a research associate at UDSM, Garang received a healthy introduction to the writings of Lenin and Fanon while a student at Grinnell. At the same time, he developed close relationships with faculty who would directly support his activities in East Africa and Sudan after Garang graduated from Grinnell.

For a midwestern college in the 1960s, Grinnell had a relatively high number of staff working on Africa and Garang was a bright, well-liked student. A small liberal arts college of around 1200 students, Grinnell's environment facilitated close interaction between staff and students, with staff going 'out of their way to help.'[188] Garang became particularly close with economics professors Jack Dawson and, to a lesser extent, Robert Voertman, both of whom were skeptical of the mainstream, neoclassical economics of their time.[189] Dawson often had dinner or coffee with Garang, sometimes with other faculty who also came to know Garang better than most students.[190] From 1969 to 1971, Dawson was a visiting professor in economics at Makerere University in Uganda and, when Garang returned to East Africa in 1969, he used Dawson's Kampala home as a base when in Uganda.[191] They recreated this practice in the late 1970s in Iowa, when Garang returned to pursue his

[186] Interviews with Muzong Kodi; Mabior Garang, 25 Mar. 2021. Kodi remembered hearing Stokely Carmichael speak, but I was unable to verify this. Charles Hamilton's visit is documented in William Pollak personal papers, 'A program of special studies as a memorial to the life and principles of Martin Luther King, Jr.' (Grinnell College, 29 Apr.-1 May 1968).
[187] Deng, *Power*, 115; Thomas, *South Sudan*, 114–25.
[188] Interview with Muzong Kodi.
[189] Interview with William Pollak, phone, 17 Jun. 2021.
[190] Interview with Robert Grey, video call, 16 Jun. 2021.
[191] Interview with Roger Koenker, video call, 13 Apr. 2020; Stolze, 'Who is John Garang'; 'In memoriam: John "Jack" C. Dawson', *Grinnell Magazine* (2017), https://magazine.grinnell.edu/in-memoriam?page=6 [12 Dec. 2021].

doctorate at Iowa State University in Ames and stayed with Dawson and his wife when visiting Grinnell.[192] When Garang went back to Sudan after completing his doctorate in 1981, Dawson and Voertman helped him purchase agricultural equipment for a farming project in Bor.[193]

Beyond his major in economics, Garang took at least two African history courses taught by Professor Raymond Betts. Those who took Betts' courses alongside Garang remember the quality of Betts' teaching and the liveliness of class discussions.[194] From the limited record of Betts' curriculum, a few points stand out. Betts' second semester class, 'African history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries', would have either introduced Garang to the political writing of Frantz Fanon and Kwame Nkrumah or, if he had encountered these previously in East Africa, allowed him to explore them further. The course catalogue summarized the course:

> A topical analysis of Africa in the colonial and post-colonial phases of its development. Particular attention will be given to European colonial systems, the rise of African nationalism, and the problems of political and economic modernization.[195]

The syllabus included Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, as well as Vladimir Lenin's *Imperialism* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. One of Garang's classmates remembered that 'Fanon was a favorite of Betts.'[196] Garang also liked Fanon and, as the following section discusses in more detail, later encouraged his southern Sudanese colleagues to read *The Wretched of the Earth*. These core texts were supplemented by Garang's private reading; Bob Haveman, another of Garang's professors, invited Garang to stay with him and his family in Washington, D. C. one summer and remembers Garang 'reading things like Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, Martin Luther King.'[197]

In addition to these more commonly studied texts, Garang's time at Grinnell likely contributed to his interest in the ancient history of the Nile Valley. Betts' first semester class covered 'African history to the nineteenth century' and was described in the course catalogue of 1968-9 as follows:

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[192] Interview with William Pollak.
[193] Interviews with ibid.; Robert Grey.
[194] Interviews with Muzong Kodi; John Frederick Schwaller, video call, 29 Apr. 2021; email from Anne Taylor Schwaller, 7 Jun. 2021; email from William Shaul.
[195] Grinnell Special Collections, Course Catalogue 1968-9.
[196] Emails from John Frederick Schwaller, 3 Jun. 2021; Anne Taylor Schwaller.
[197] Interview with Robert Haveman, phone, 13 Jul. 2021.

> A topical analysis of Africa from Pharaonic Egypt until the beginning of European imperialism. The course will stress types of political and social organization, the growth of commerce and trade centers, and the effects of the early intrusions by Islamic and European civilizations.[198]

While it is impossible to know exactly how Garang engaged with the material, this historical period offered an important foundation for Garang's core rhetoric of a diverse New Sudan in later years.

At some point while at Grinnell or during his graduate studies in the late 1970s, Garang developed an interest in Afrocentrism which lasted until his death. Around 2012, Garang's son Mabior took possession of a trunk of books from Garang's various sojourns in the US.[199] The trunk contained an array of books, including many novels, but Mabior highlighted a handful of authors central to the emergence of the Afrocentric school in the 1960s and 1970s: Cheikh Anta Diop, Chancellor Williams, and Yosef Ben-Jochannan. While black history, encompassing both the African continent and the diaspora, was established as 'a serious intellectual discipline' by the early twentieth century, Afrocentrism offered 'a forceful ideological response to Eurocentric historiography.'[200] Diop, whose works are often seen as 'the ideological bedrock of the Afrocentric genre', argued forcefully that ancient Egyptians were black and that ancient Egypt had an indelible influence on ancient Greece, thus making black Egypt the birthplace of civilization.[201]

In the preface to the English translation of *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality* (1974), Diop wrote:

> The ancient Egyptians were Negroes. The moral fruit of their civilization is to be counted among the assets of the Black world. Instead of presenting itself to history as an insolvent debtor, that Black world is the very initiator of the "western" civilization flaunted before our eyes today.[202]

This explicit replacement of a Eurocentric paradigm with an Afrocentric alternative has been critiqued, both in Diop's time and since, for ahistoricism, for reifying a timeless and

[198] Grinnell Special Collections, Course Catalogue 1968-9.
[199] Interview with Mabior Garang, 25 Mar. 2021.
[200] Tunde Adeleke, 'Afrocentric intellectuals and the burden of history', in Brian D. Behnken, Gregory D. Smithers, and Simon Wendt (eds.), *Black Intellectual Thought in Modern America* (Jackson, Mississippi, 2017), 211–12.
[201] Ibid., 214; For a wider discussion of Diop's theories, see Kevin C. MacDonald, 'Cheikh Anta Diop and ancient Egypt in Africa', in David O'Connor and Andrew Reid (eds.), *Ancient Egypt in Africa* (Walnut Creek, California, 2003), 93–106.
[202] Cheikh Anta Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality* (Chicago, 1974), xiv.

monolithic black identity, and for perpetuating a racialized approach to the past.[203] However, Nile Valley history's distortion and neglect have been emphasized more recently as defining features of scholarship on ancient Nubia, as has the violence of colonial epistemology, and it is these aspects of Afrocentrism that Garang adapted in his later political rhetoric.[204]

Garang's interest in African history was mirrored by active engagement with contemporary events on the continent. Whereas Garang's involvement in civil rights politics at Grinnell was mostly passive, he engaged with the wider student body through Sudan- and Africa-facing advocacy, capitalizing on Grinnell's liberal environment and support from his sponsors in Tracy. First and foremost, Garang supported the education of other southern Sudanese, establishing a 'campus chapter of the Sudanese Refugee Fund' at Grinnell.[205] Using the student newspaper, *Scarlet & Black* (*S&B*), to advertise, Garang organized two student fasts to raise money to sponsor the education of other southern Sudanese students.[206] Garang wrote a short article for *S&B* in November 1966 which explained the devastating impact of Sudan's war on education and reveals the extent of Garang's networking in support of fellow southern Sudanese students:

> Some of my friends in Tracy, Minnesota and San Francisco are now sponsoring eight of these refugee students in African high schools […] Some of these students will be qualified for U.S. college studies by next month, and I hope to be able to find enough funds from sympathetic sources to bring them over to study in the U.S. The Grinnell College Student Senate has already endorsed a proposal to have a fast on campus. The money will go toward this cause.[207]

The fast, also advertised in student halls, was a success. 880 students—approximately three quarters of the student body—took part, raising $448.80, and Garang organized a second

[203] For a well-known contemporaneus critique of Afrocentrism, see Mary Lefkowitz, *Not Out of Africa: How Afrocentrism Became an Excuse to Teach Myth as History* (New York, 1996). For critiques from black scholars, see Kwame Anthony Appiah, 'Race, pluralism and Afrocentricity', *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 19 (1998), 116–18; Adeleke, 'Afrocentric intellectuals and the burden of history'. For a summary of, and insightful commentary on, another core Afrocentric text (Bernal's *Black Athena*), see Martin Bernal, 'Afrocentrism and historical models for the foundation of ancient Greece', in O'Connor and Reid (eds.), *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, 23–30; John North, 'Attributing colour to the ancient Egyptians: Reflections on Black Athena', in O'Connor and Reid (eds.), *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, 31–8.
[204] Jane Humphris, Rebecca Bradshaw, and Geoff Emberling, 'Archaeological practice in the 21st century', in Geoff Emberling and Bruce Williams (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Nubia* (Oxford, 2021), 1126–1147; Claudia Näser, 'Past, present, future: The archaeology of Nubia', in Emberling and Williams (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Nubia*, 29–47; Salah Mohamed Ahmed, 'History of archaeological work in the Middle Nile Region', in Emberling and Williams (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Nubia*, 5–28.
[205] Leisa Knettle, 'Background on Gareng', *S&B* (19 February 1985), 13.
[206] John de Mabior, 'Refugee asks fast support', *S&B* (18 November 1966), 2.
[207] Ibid.

fast in April 1967.[208] Before the April fast, *S&B* again explained that Garang hoped to raise funds to bring southern Sudanese students to study in the US:

> He hopes two or three students will be able to come next fall, probably at least one to Grinnell. He will have raised enough money by then to cover room and board costs for at least two students. Tuition will be waived by the colleges concerned. [209]

The following year, at least one student, Daniel Mamer, did come to the US with Garang's assistance, joining Garang and Kodi at Grinnell.[210] Kodi affirmed that Garang had 'powerful connections' well beyond those of an average undergraduate, including with the editor-in-chief of the *Des Moines Register*, the largest newspaper in Iowa, who helped Kodi get his first summer job.

It is clear from Kodi's account and the limited archival record that Garang was adept at capitalizing on available opportunities. In addition to his commitment to Sudan, Garang remained keenly interested in wider events in Africa. Because of the poor international coverage of radio and TV in Iowa, he and Kodi purchased shortwave radios to listen to the Voice of America (VOA)'s and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)'s African programming. In perhaps the most political act of his time at Grinnell, Garang co-organized a weekend of events in October 1968 dedicated to discussion of the Biafran crisis. As Kodi remembers, Garang supported the Biafran cause while Kodi—who had witnessed the suffering caused by Katanga's attempted secession from the Republic of the Congo in 1960—favoured Nigerian unity.

The weekend's opening panel discussion included Mamer and political science professor Robert Grey, who knew Garang well.[211] Garang also arranged for Nigerians in the US to speak throughout the weekend. An article in *S&B* lists Benedict Umezurike, Secretary of the Massachusetts branch of the Biafran Association of America, and Biafran and Nigerian students from nearby Iowa State University and University of Iowa as speakers and panel discussants.[212] The topic for the weekend's final panel discussion was 'The relevancy of the black man's struggle in this country to the struggle of black and colored

[208] 'Fast nets $448.80', *S&B* (25 November 1966), 6; 'Fast on April 21 will aid Sudanese refugees', *S&B* (14 April 1967), 2.
[209] 'Fast on April 21 will aid Sudanese refugees', *S&B* (14 April 1967), 2.
[210] Interview with Muzong Kodi.
[211] 'Events listed for Biafra weekend', *S&B* (18 Oct. 1968), 2.
[212] Ibid.

people of the world (with particular emphasis on the Biafra-Nigeria crisis).'[213] The limited archival record does not capture who came up with the panel topics, but the clear attempt to link the African American and African struggles is interesting in light of what Kodi describes as the general indifference he and Garang encountered from African American students at Grinnell.

The student fast, fundraising, and Biafra event demonstrate Garang's skill at operating within existing social and institutional structures to pursue his own political and activist agenda. When Garang graduated from Grinnell in 1969, he was awarded a Thomas Watson fellowship in the programme's first year of awards, receiving 6,000 USD 'for a year of independent study and travel abroad' which would end with Garang joining the rebel Anyanya.[214] Deferring an offer to study a PhD in Economics at the University of California, Berkeley, he accepted the Watson fellowship and travelled to the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) in Tanzania, ostensibly with the intention of returning to the US the following year. However, Garang would not return to the US until 1974, as a captain in the Sudanese Army sent for training abroad.

Return to East Africa

From the late 1960s to the mid-1970s, UDSM was a hub for Pan-Africanist intellectuals, liberation movements, and Cold War diplomacy, and existing histories invoke in mythical terms Garang's encounters with a pantheon of intellectual and political 'heroes', including renowned Guyanese scholar Walter Rodney and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni.[215] However, there is debate about whom Garang actually met during this period—most significantly, whether his short stint at UDSM did or did not overlap with Museveni's—and the extent of Garang's involvement in academic and activist life at UDSM is unclear.[216] In late 1970, Garang produced a research paper, 'Co-operative marketing of non-traditional co-operative commodities in Tanzania', for the policy-focused Economic Research Bureau (ERB) and, on evidence of his later writing, his time at UDSM seems to have deepened his

[213] Ibid.
[214] 'Two receive Watson grant', *S&B* (11 Apr. 1969), 15. For more on the Watson Foundation, see https://watson.foundation/about/history [7 Jan. 2021].
[215] E.g. Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road*, 424; For discussion, see Wël, *Who Killed*, 54.
[216] Interview with Mabior Garang, 25 Mar. 2021. See also Gérard Prunier, 'Rebel movements and proxy warfare: Uganda, Sudan and the Congo (1986–99)', *African Affairs*, 103/412 (2004), 364.

interest in dependency theory.[217] However, ERB fellows whose time at UDSM should have overlapped with Garang's do not remember meeting him, nor do two prominent members of the University Students' African Revolutionary Front.[218]

Arguably the more significant result of Garang's Watson fellowship was that it brought him back to East Africa as a newly minted graduate with fresh ideas about African and Sudanese history. Either during or after his time at UDSM—and possibly at several points—Garang returned to Nairobi and Kampala. Again, Dar es Salaam—the traditional 'hub' for anticolonial politics in this period—was for Garang less important than cities with a more significant southern Sudanese student population. In Nairobi, he struck up a friendship with Alfred Ladu Gore, a Bari student who would later have a complicated relationship with both Garang and the SPLM/A.[219] Garang stayed with Gore and four or five others for about one month in a room in Majengo sponsored, like the rooms Garang stayed in five years earlier, by the NCCK.[220] Gore remembers being impressed by the way Garang 'talked to us about the struggle in America and other places,' suggesting that—notwithstanding Garang's exclusion from CBS—his time in the US gave him new social and intellectual authority among southern Sudanese back in East Africa.

The friendship between Gore and Garang soon proved auspicious. The pair travelled to Kampala and then north to the Sudanese-Ugandan border to see Gore's father. They spent a month in southern Sudan and Gore described that Garang had the opportunity to see the courage of the Anyanya guerrillas firsthand. After returning to Kampala, Garang decided to join the rebel movement and returned to the border area to meet with the movement's leadership. Garang then undertook a brief period of military training under Israeli oversight and was commissioned as a captain, the rank given to university graduates who enlisted in the Sudanese Army.[221] Gore, whose primary and secondary education had taken longer than Garang's, left to attend university.

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[217] Thomas, *South Sudan*, 114–25.
[218] Personal communication, George Roberts, 6 Dec. 2018.
[219] In 1984, Gore abandoned his doctoral studies at the University of Manchester to join the SPLA after receiving a direct invitation from Garang. In 1989, he was detained by SPLA forces and, following his release in 1991, was a member of various SPLM/A splinter groups. See 'Alfred Ladu Gore' in Kuyok, *South Sudan*.
[220] I encountered several variations in written and oral accounts of Gore's friendship with Garang in the 1960s. The version I present here derives mainly from two interviews with Gore, 18 Jul. 2019 and 15 Aug. 2019.
[221] Lagu, *Sudan*, 311.

A letter from Garang to Dominic Akech Mohammed, a friend and fellow southern Sudanese student studying in the US, from early February 1972 captures some of Garang's reasons for swapping his student identity for that of a soldier.[222] Explaining that he had been offered and declined a role as 'Information Officer' in the Anyanya, he emphasized the primacy of combat to African liberation, echoing Fanon. Like some of the Zimbabwean students at Makerere University in Uganda studied by Hodgkinson, Garang believed that the armed struggle was where he could make the most significant difference.[223] However, this did not mean that his 'political studenthood' became irrelevant. Garang joined the Anyanya less than two years before the end of the war, but he stood out because of his education and ideas. Like in other liberation movements, this combination brought him into confrontation with his less well-educated commanding officers in the Anyanya and, after the war, in the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF).[224]

American videographer Allan Reed, who filmed a feature about the Anyanya for the American National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), met Garang briefly in 1971 and recalls that 'Garang was interested in education and political education in the bush, and enabling people to understand their history.'[225] He wanted to 'present Southern Sudanese history as it had not been presented in the Mission Schools and in the Sudanese government schools' and he even wrote a petition to the OAU outlining a history of southern Sudan's exploitation at the hands of successive extractive regimes.[226] Garang's interest in African history and liberation theory was shared—and likely nourished—by Commander Joseph Akuon Ater in Upper Nile, where Garang was posted, who was also thoughtful and well-read, with 'a collection of Che Guevara and other Marxist literature on guerrilla warfare.'[227] Beyond Sudan, Che was highly regarded and emulated by liberation movements in the 1960s and

[222] 'Captain John Garang's 1972 letter to Dominic Akech Mohammed' (5 Feb. 1972), in Wël, *Genius of Dr. John*, vol. 2. While the authenticity of this letter is difficult to verify, Wël believes it to be real. The tone is consistent with Garang's other writings and Garang's friendship with Mohammed was confirmed by Lual Deng. In addition, the letter describes an encounter with Allan Reed, an American videographer. Reed does not remember the specifics shared by Garang in the letter, but confirmed meeting Garang at this time.
[223] Hodgkinson, 'Politics'.
[224] Williams, 'Education in exile: International scholarships, Cold War politics, and conflicts among SWAPO members in Tanzania, 1961–1968', 140; Tendi, *Army and Politics*, 44.
[225] Interview with Allan Reed, phone, 14 Jul. 2020. See also Allan Reed (dir.), *First Tuesday: The secret war in the Sudan* (NBC News, 1971).
[226] Allan Reed, 'The Anya-Nya: Ten months' travel with its forces inside the southern Sudan', *Munger Africana Library Notes*, 1/11 (1972), 17, 26–7.
[227] 'John Garang' and 'Joseph Akuon', in Kuyok, *South Sudan*; interview with Allan Reed.

1970s.[228] Like for these other movements, Garang's engagement with diverse anticolonial examples offered 'a source of inspiration, theoretical grounding for the practice of revolutionary violence, and a symbolic point of connection with other militant groups around the world.'[229]

In January 1972, Garang wrote an open letter to the leader of the Anyanya, Joseph Lagu, criticizing the peace negotiations then taking place in Addis Ababa. Garang identified the 'Central Problem in the Sudanese War' as 'the dominance of Arab Nationalism' and, again showing his interest in Fanon, declared that the Anyanya 'must not be tricked into committing suicide to lay down our instrument of liberation, arms.'[230] Nonetheless, the Addis Ababa Agreement was signed and ratified one month later, creating a semi-autonomous regional government in the south and an interim 'Southern Command' consisting of 6,000 soldiers from the south and 6,000 from outside.[231] Some 4,000 additional Anyanya were absorbed into police, prison and wildlife services.[232] Although lauded at the time as the first peace agreement of its kind negotiated to end an African conflict, the Agreement was criticized by several Anyanya officers and by southern Sudanese students who complained that the negotiations had been conducted in secret and amounted to a sellout by Lagu and his team.[233] Garang and other officers met and drafted a document which they circulated to Anyanya camps across the south, urging the Anyanya to reject the Agreement and continue fighting. However, the plan was revealed by Lt. Col. Saturnino Ariha and, thereafter, Garang accepted absorption in the Sudanese Army where, because of his education, he retained his rank of captain.[234]

Like in the student community in Nairobi, Garang's status as a graduate gave him authority in Sudan. As a graduate who joined the armed rebels, rather than pursuing a

[228] Jeremy Prestholdt, 'Resurrecting Che: Radicalism, the transnational imagination, and the politics of heroes', *Journal of Global History*, 7/3 (2012), 520–6; Jocelyn Alexander and JoAnn McGregor, 'Adelante! Military imaginaries, the Cold War, and southern Africa's liberation armies', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 62/3 (2020), 639.
[229] Prestholdt, 'Resurrecting Che', 525.
[230] 'Captain John Garang's 1972 letter to General Joseph Lagu of Anyanya One', in Wël, *Who Killed*.
[231] *The Addis Ababa Agreement on the Problem of South Sudan* (1972), 23.
[232] Palace Green Special Collections, Durham, UK, Southern Region Provisional High Executive Council (PHEC), *Progress Report of the Provisional High Executive Council for the Period April 1972 to October 1973* (Juba, 1974).
[233] Interviews with Atem Yaak Atem, 7 Jun. 2021; Lawrence Modi Tombe, London, 2 May 2019.
[234] Slightly different accounts of this meeting are given by Lagu (who says it happened in Bor) and Arop (who says it happened in Lobone). Lagu, *Sudan*, 210; Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road*, 19.

professional or political career, Garang sparked the interest of students like Lual Deng, who had recently graduated from the University of Khartoum when he met Garang in March 1974:

> So when [Garang] came back [after the Addis Ababa Agreement], when they were absorbed to Sudan Army after '72, most of us were interested to meet him, to know what are really his plans […] He thought that there was no reason for people to be in a hurry. He wanted really people to pursue higher degrees, and also encourage[d] people to *read*, especially African history, progressive literature and all those kinds of things.[235]

Garang encouraged Lual and others to read Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* and Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa.*[236] For Lual, these readings supported Garang's central thinking that the problem was not that the south needed to separate but rather 'was a developmental problem, more than anything.'[237] Garang encouraged those around him to continue their studies, either at the University of Juba or abroad in the US and UK.[238] Lual explained that Garang wanted to ensure they would have a 'core group of educated South Sudanese' to address the country's political challenges.[239]

Meanwhile, Garang's status as a southern officer in the Sudanese army offered new forms of mobility within Sudan and abroad. Almost immediately following the peace agreement, senior commanders suspected Garang of fomenting unrest among the absorbed Anyanya and he was relocated several times.[240] In the Bussere garrison, south of Wau, Garang challenged the status quo by establishing an agricultural project among the absorbed Anyanya. The project's dual aims were to discourage family dependents from hanging around the garrisons (by making them till the fields if they did) and to foster self-sufficiency among the former Anyanya so that they would not have to rely on 'handouts from the northern army.'[241] Garang was also accused of involvement in a series of grenade attacks on buildings in Wau in 1974. He was arrested alongside Steven Madut Baak and Brigadier Kuol Amum and tried by a court established by the High Command in Khartoum.[242] The officers were acquitted thanks to an alibi provided by the court intelligence officer, Captain Mathiang

[235] Interview with Lual Deng, Juba, 16 Jul. 2019.
[236] Interview with Lual Deng, video call, 12 May 2021.
[237] Interview with Lual Deng, 16 Jul. 2019.
[238] Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road to Peace*, 25; Lino, *Dr John*, 27; interview with Lual Deng, 19 May 2021.
[239] Interview with Lual Deng, 19 May 2021.
[240] Lagu, *Sudan*, 311–14.
[241] Interview with Allan Reed. See also Lino, *Dr John*, 27.
[242] Interview with Mathiang Malual Mabur, phone, 7 Oct. 2022.

Malual Mabur, who was a close friend to Garang.[243] Investigations into the incidents never determined a perpetrator.

Because of his existing credentials, Garang's perceived tendency to cause trouble translated to further opportunities for training and education. Partway through 1974, Garang was selected by Lagu to attend a one-year infantry training course at Fort Benning in Georgia in the US. He returned to Sudan in 1975 but, in 1977, travelled again to the US to begin a PhD in economics at Iowa State University. Several accounts view Khartoum's willingness to send Garang for further studies as a way of keeping him out of Sudan.[244] Lagu's own account claims he wanted to foster Garang's potential.[245] Likely, both versions have some truth. Garang was the first infantry officer in SAF to return to school for a doctorate.[246] However, more widely during the 1970s, many southern government officials were released with pay to study at the University of Khartoum and abroad.[247] The result was that southerners like Garang with preliminary university degrees benefited from opportunities for further study. In the process, they continued to coalesce as a southern political constituency with international fluency. When Sudan returned to civil war in 1983, they played a central role in determining the political orientation of the new SPLM/A, led by Garang, and mobilizing support for it.

Conclusion

Regional and global intellectual movements about anticolonialism, Black Power, Pan-Africanism, and Afrocentrism had both material and intellectual impacts on Garang's education. Arrested because of British anxiety about 'subversive' student mobility, Garang was incarcerated with a Kenyan nationalist whose intervention indirectly ensured he would continue his education in a period of political excitement and experimentation in East Africa. Notwithstanding southern Sudanese politicians' ambivalent standing in East African

[243] Ibid.; South Sudan National Archive (SSNA) HEC/28, file SG/HEC/36.G.1, 259-63, Abel Alier, 'Report on incidents in Bahr el Ghazal Province', 19 Aug. 1974. See also 'John Garang', in Kuyok, *South Sudan*.
[244] E.g. Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road*, 426; interview with Allan Reed.
[245] Lagu, *Sudan*, 314.
[246] John Garang de Mabior, 'Identifying, selecting, and implementing rural development strategies for socio-economic development in the Jonglei Projects Area, Southern Region, Sudan' (PhD thesis, Iowa State University, 1981), 242.
[247] Interviews with Atem Yaak Atem, 7 Jun. 2021; Timothy Tot Chol, Juba, 10 Aug. 2019. There are many records of release for studies in SSNA. See box HEC/10, file HEC/1.A.2; box HEC/7, all files.

countries in the early to mid-1960s, students like Garang benefited from a degree of sympathy from Kenyan leaders and crucial financial support from the church, allowing them to continue their educations in East Africa. This support eventually took Garang to Grinnell College, where he had the access, resources, and time to explore diverse black political theory and movements through course curricula, campus events, and private study.

In the big picture of East African states' independence and debates about East African or continental federalism, Garang and his peers are inconsequential actors. However, my account of Garang's educational journey reveals the effects of these movements on a key African political thinker and furthers calls for serious study of this period of 1960s African politics.[248] Garang's lived experiences and personal study during these years had a formative impact on his political thought and self-positioning as a worldly activist in the months immediately following his graduation from Grinnell but also in political speeches made after 1983. When Garang returned to East Africa in 1969, he translated his global education into social and political capital. Garang's experiences abroad made him a person of interest to fellow students, in part because university graduates were expected to join politics or pursue professional careers, not join the armed rebellion, and his journey thus did not conform to 'a recognisable form of political studenthood.'[249] As was the case in other African liberation struggles, this non-conformity came with constraints. Garang's decision to join the Anyanya and subsequently the Sudanese army were considered anomalous among university educated southern Sudanese and Garang's activist efforts to promote southerners' education and self-sufficiency were never fully welcomed by General Lagu. Ironically, this resulted in further chances for Garang to study abroad and form key political relationships in the process, explored in the next chapter.

[248] E.g. Vaughan, 'The politics of regionalism and federation in East Africa, 1958–1964'.
[249] Hodgkinson, 'Politics'.

Ch. 2: 'John is a good boy': Professionalism, social life, and underground politics, 1977-1984

This chapter uses a reassessment of John Garang's biography to show how social relations, personal networks, and the demands of public life sat at the heart of 'underground' politics in the late 1970s and early 1980s as Sudan returned to civil war. This approach allows me to retell the standard political and military narrative of this period, emphasizing the dynamic underground movements that then characterized Sudan. Within this underground, Garang built on his status as student and soldier, explored in chapter one, to construct a subversive public persona as a *waled kues* or 'good boy'. At the same time, he built personal and political networks which allowed him to act effectively in the growing opposition to President Nimeiri and ultimately to make a successful leadership bid in the newly formed SPLM/A.

Biography is an effective method for studying how an identity or 'self' is performed according to 'the demands and options of different settings.'[250] A rich tradition of feminist biography has highlighted how prominent women navigated the 'intricate relationship' between their private and public lives.[251] In her study of Nelly Roussel, a feminist speaker and writer who advocated for birth control in the early twentieth century, Elinor Accampo argues that Roussel's 'careful and deliberate presentation of her public image [as a "proper woman"] contributed to the subversive power of her challenge to state authority and the moral assumptions that underpinned it.'[252] This literature's attention to questions of gender, family, and morality are equally applicable when studying how men shape their public image, particularly in settings where belonging is determined by race and class. Studies of Nelson Mandela by Tom Lodge, Deborah Posel, and Elleke Boehmer have shown that attention to African leaders' acts of 'performance' facilitate understanding of how 'founding father' narratives are constructed in real time and how gendered public images shape

[250] Margadant, 'Introduction', 7.
[251] Elinor A. Accampo, 'Private life, public image: Motherhood and militancy in the self-construction of Nelly Roussel, 1900-1922', in Margadant (ed.), *The New Biography*, 220; See also Lois W. Banner, 'Biography as history', *American Historical Review*, 114/3 (2009), 579–586; Alice Kessler-Harris, 'Why Biography?', *The American Historical Review*, 114/3 (2009), 625–630.
[252] Accampo, 'Private life', 220.

political possibility.[253] Boehmer demonstrates that, as a young lawyer in Johannesburg, Mandela and his wife, Winnie, embodied a particular kind of sophisticated black style.[254] Mandela knew 'how to choreograph an image in order to press a political point' and, Boehmer argues, he 'perceived that an assured masculine style could effectively counter the prevailing stereotypes of blacks as backward, rural and the like.'[255]

For Garang, like Mandela, particular presentations of professional and family relationships, and the accoutrements of middleclass life, made politics possible in the different spheres of the university, the military, and urban Khartoum. In the highly securitized Sudanese state, these relationships were a starting point for building trust and allowed Garang and others to share information without detection.

Underground politics in Sudan

Researching covert politics during the period between Sudan's civil wars is methodologically challenging. Major events like student protests and army mutinies surface in government and foreign archives; however, the archives are largely silent on how anti-government protests and associations were organized and run. The main sources available for understanding the daily politics of this period's underground movements and networks are a limited number of memoirs and oral histories, but these too pose problems. As is the case for other African liberation movements, political memoirs by SPLM/A veterans reflect past and ongoing competition over liberation credentials and, by extension, government or party positions.[256] Memoirs are exercises of 'strategic and selective remembering' and, like FRELIMO members in Mozambique, it is unlikely many SPLM/A veterans have personal papers to use as memory aids.[257] Oral histories are subject to many of the same distortions

[253] Tom Lodge, *Mandela: A Critical Life* (Oxford, 2006), ix; Deborah Posel, '"Madiba magic": Politics as enchantment', in Rita Barnard (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Nelson Mandela* (Cambridge, 2014), 74–5; Boehmer, *Nelson Mandela*, 8.
[254] Boehmer, *Nelson Mandela*, 118.
[255] Ibid., 121.
[256] Cf. Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Wendy Willems, 'Reinvoking the past in the present: Changing identities and appropriations of Joshua Nkomo in post-colonial Zimbabwe', *African Identities*, 8/3 (2010), 196; Davis, *The ANC's War*, xviii.
[257] Ochonu, 'Elusive history', 194; Colin Darch and David Hedges, 'Liberation and biographical narrative in Mozambican historiography: The struggle in Cabo Delgado, 1962–1974', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 47/4 (2021), 608. Atem Yaak Atem still regrets losing his personal papers and photos upon leaving Ethiopia in 1991. Lam Akol, whose books are more factually detailed than most and reproduce radio messages sent during the war, likely has personal materials to refer to.

as memoirs, whether out of misremembrance, the desire to tell a cohesive story, or the pursuit of political gain.[258] Such distortions can usefully tell us about later politics, but often 'flatten' the details of the original events or movements in question.[259] Even where personal accounts can be triangulated with other sources, the nature of covert politics is such that individual accounts offer only a snapshot of a wider social and political landscape. Moreover, most SPLM/A memoirs say more about overarching political and military trends than the daily reality of social and political life. With only a handful of exceptions, little has been written about *how* South Sudanese activists shared letters or verbal information, structured their movements, or evaded detection by security.[260]

Secondary scholarship on popular and clandestine politics during this period is also limited. In what follows, I draw on a small body of key literature on the interwar period and formation of the SPLM/A. Douglas Johnson and Gerard Prunier offer some of the most detailed early accounts of Sudan's interwar politics and return to civil war.[261] However, they make no mention of nascent underground organizations like the National Action Movement (NAM). Kuyok Abol Kuyok's biographical research on South Sudan's 'Notable Firsts' offers essential information on the clandestine movements which predated the SPLM/A.[262] Drawing mainly from interviews with these groups' lead members, some of whom have since passed away, Kuyok's work contains some of the same discrepancies and inconsistencies I encountered in my own interviews, but remains invaluable for its breadth and attention to both civilian and military mobilization. Finally, Peter Biar Ajak's recent doctoral thesis introduces new empirical detail about the founding of the SPLM/A from a wide selection of interviewees, including an Ethiopian official who worked directly with

[258] On memory and storytelling in relation to oral history, see Alistair Thomson, 'Memory and remembering in oral history', in Donald A. Ritchie (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History* (Oxford, 2010), 77–95; Michael Jackson, *The Politics of Storytelling: Variations on a Theme by Hannah Arendt*, 2nd ed. (Copenhagen, 2013).
[259] Davis, *The ANC's War*, xvi.
[260] For one exception, see Edward Lino's more descriptive writing, including account of receiving a message from Philip Abbas concealed in a Benson cigarette box: Lino, *Dr John*, 43.
[261] Gérard Prunier, 'From peace to war: The Southern Sudan 1972-1984', *Occasional Papers, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, University of Hull*, 3 (1984); Douglas Johnson, 'The Sudan People's Liberation Army and the problem of factionalism', in Christopher Clapham (ed.), *African Guerrillas* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1998), 53–72; Douglas Johnson and Gérard Prunier, 'The foundation and expansion of the Sudan People's Liberation Army', in M. Daly and Ahmad Sikainga (eds.), *Civil War in the Sudan* (London, 1993), 117–141.
[262] Kuyok, *South Sudan*.

southern Sudanese dissidents in Gambella.[263] Ajak, however, minimizes the ideological and organizational differences between the southern groups of the late 1970s to early 1980s. This approach precludes analysis of the everyday mechanics of social and political activism in the 1970s. It also obscures the innovative narrative work undertaken by Garang in the 1980s to fashion a usable personal and collective past for himself and the SPLM/A.

Sudan has a long history of underground politics, in which the lines between social and political organization were often blurred. I argue that Garang's successful emergence as leader of the SPLM/A resulted from his ability to build relationships with different social and professional constituencies, in a period of widespread discontent with the regional and national governments. Rather than viewing the events of the late 1970s and early 1980s as precursors to the SPLM/A and its war against the Sudanese government, I contextualize Garang's actions in relation to Sudan's culture of covert political organization, dating back to the 1920s.

Vezzadini's ground-breaking scholarship on Sudan's 1924 Revolution offers a starting point for studying the history and form of underground politics in Sudan, and deserves summary. In June 1924, a movement called the White Flag League organized petitions and demonstrations calling for Sudanese unity with Egypt and the end of British colonialism. The League was committed 'to stay within a legal framework' and stopped organizing protests following a ban on June 22.[264] Nevertheless, more demonstrations took place and spread to towns across Sudan, raising important questions about the League's membership and support. By August, when the protests peaked, the League's leaders were in prison; however, even after their imprisonment, 'members or close supporters of the League were always within reach if not at the very heart of riots and demonstrations'.[265] After a lull in September and October, British attempts to withdraw Egyptian army battalions from Sudan—there as part of the 1899 Condominium agreement between Britain and Egypt—sparked mutinies among Sudanese officers. The most notable, by the 11th Sudanese Battalion, was put down only after four hours of British shelling against mutineers sheltered in the Military Hospital of Khartoum. Three of the four Sudanese officers involved were

[263] Peter Biar Ajak, 'Building on sand: The Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) and state formation in South Sudan' (PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 2017), 65–77.
[264] Vezzadini, *Lost Nationalism*, 72–3.
[265] Ibid., 96.

executed, effectively ending the 1924 revolution, and afterwards the Egyptian army was expelled from Sudan.[266]

Combatting a dominant historiography which sees the League as a narrow, elite movement, Vezzadini describes its 'complex and multi-layered structure'.[267] The League's leader was 'Ali 'Abd al-Latīf, whose mother was Dinka and whose father was a former slave soldier from the Nuba Mountains.[268] From the start, the League 'was comprised of people of diverse status and professional backgrounds', and their skills could determine the role they played in the League. Those with technical abilities—like telegraphers and telephone operators—did not openly participate in demonstrations so that they were less likely to be arrested and could continue to play 'a vital role in helping circulate information among members'.[269] The League also purposefully refused membership to notable individuals who could support them from the outside, and to army officers and soldiers, who were legally prohibited from participating in politics but who could help by not reacting to demonstrations.

Another of the League's strategies was to mobilize existing anti-British sentiment among other groups.[270] Vezzadini's analysis, grounded in social history, is particularly useful for thinking about dynamic landscapes of social and political organization:

> [A]bove all, the 1924 Revolution is a story of complex and shifting alliances among disparate social groups; of swift changes in leadership and direction within the national movement; and of several uprisings rolled into one revolution. This study proposes that all these complexities, far from being signs of the immaturity or fatuity of the movement, are common to any broad social movement and evidence of its wide scope.[271]

Between 1919 and 1923, Sudan had several 'secret societies', discussion groups and associations. Membership in one of these organizations did not preclude membership in others. For example, pro-Egyptian activists associated with the League signed a pro-British declaration just before the start of the 1924 demonstrations. More generally, 'people came and went in different political associations' and the associations themselves evolved as

[266] Ibid., 85, 93–5; Ahmad Sikainga, 'Military slavery and the emergence of a southern Sudanese diaspora in the northern Sudan, 1884-1954', in Jay Spaulding and Stephanie Beswick (eds.), *White Nile, Black Blood: War, Leadership, and Ethnicity from Khartoum to Kampala* (Lawrenceville, NJ, 2000), 27.
[267] Vezzadini, *Lost Nationalism*, 97.
[268] Ibid., 7.
[269] Ibid., 103–6.
[270] Ibid., 108.
[271] Ibid., 27.

members broke away to form new societies or as old associations were reformed under new names.[272]

Crucially, Vezzadini highlights that recruitment to these organizations 'usually works through relatively tight and previously established networks: friends, neighbours or colleagues'.[273] Civilian government employees and army officers were two key groups in the League and Vezzadini shows how their shared experiences of colonial education and frequent transfers around Sudan allowed them to 'get to know each other and create bonds.'[274] Like Vezzadini, I am interested in the intersection between social networks and underground politics, and the institutions which shape these.[275] As I elaborate below, Garang's education and military position afforded him both status and mobility, albeit in a different political context to members of the White Flag League, allowing him to build relationships among disgruntled southern military officers and an increasingly globally connected young southern intelligentsia.

Underground organization remained a core feature of Sudanese politics throughout the twentieth century, evolving alongside changing political debates. After 1924, political power became increasingly concentrated among 'a small northern elite'; however, former slaves and army officers who originated from the south, Darfur, and Nuba Mountains were emerging as an important urban constituency and formed their own social and political associations. One of these was the *Kutla as-Suda* (Black Bloc), formed in the 1930s-40s by Adam Ahdam, a Darfuri medical officer in Khartoum.[276] The Bloc advocated for the unity and interests of black people in Sudan, and originated as a social organization. Ahdam wanted to register the Bloc as a political party but the British refused and temporarily closed the Bloc's clubs. Subsequently, '[t]he movement went underground in 1954 as the Free Negroes Secret Organisation, but this soon broke into Separate Nuba and Beja wings.'[277]

[272] Ibid., 31–2, 60–2.
[273] Ibid., 182.
[274] Ibid., 186.
[275] Ibid., 178–81.
[276] Abbas claims the Black Bloc was founded in 1938 but Sikainga says it was founded in 1948, out of the earlier Black Co-operative Society. See Sikainga, 'Military slavery', 32; Philip Abbas, 'Growth of black political consciousness in northern Sudan', *Africa Today*, 20/3 (1973), 32; For further discussion, see Kindersley, 'The fifth column?', 67–70.
[277] Abbas, 'Growth', 32–3.

Sudan's independence in 1956 briefly allowed for more open politics. However, when a military government took power in 1958, these organizations were forced back underground, while 'continuing with social activities as a legal front.'[278] Sudan's return to electoral democracy in 1964 allowed the movements to regroup and contest elections as the General Union of Nubas (GUN) and Beja Congress. In parliament, these parties' MPs banded with southerners to try to block the government's attempts to push forward an Islamic constitution, prompting the government to dissolve the assembly and call for new elections in 1968.[279] In parallel, five 'secret organizations' of black Sudanese were operating in northern Sudan and banded together in April 1969 to form the United Sudanese African Liberation Front (USALF). According to Philip Abbas, a bishop and politician from the Nuba Mountains personally involved in covert politics throughout his career, USALF organized two failed coups just after the successful coup by Nimeiri in 1969. As a result, some of the movement's leaders were arrested but most 'remained undetected' and USALF managed to regroup 'on a firmer basis', including creating links with the southern Anyanya, the main rebel movement of the first civil war.[280]

The distinction between social groups, formal political parties, and underground movements was fluid. In Sudan's rapidly changing political arena and against the backdrop of urban migration and the first civil war, political action ranged from discussion and financial support for association members, to formal participation in elections and parliament. During the first civil war, political action among southerners in Khartoum and other major towns was equally dynamic. After the war ended in 1972, political competition between southerners codified the difference between 'insiders' who had remained in Sudan throughout the war, often participating in government, and 'outsiders' who had gone into exile, waging guerrilla war and organizing nebulous 'provisional governments' to represent the south from abroad. However, the distinction between insiders and outsiders was never clear cut. Many 'insiders' had maintained contact with the guerrillas during the war and, if exposed, joined them.[281]

[278] Ibid., 36.
[279] Ibid., 37, 40–1.
[280] Ibid., 41–3.
[281] Johnson, *Root Causes*, 52.

Southerners active in this underground 'circuit' interviewed by John Howell described a cell structure of groups of three or four people, although there was 'quite widespread knowledge about who were the most important links and which senior southern administrators were sympathetic and which were not.'[282] According to Howell, activists' main work was passing messages about events in Sudan to those outside, although Johnson claims they also forwarded guns and supplies to the guerrillas.[283] Either way, information-sharing was a risky activity in its own right, as educated southerners were targeted by government security. Conversations therefore took place 'in the course of strolling about' in southern towns or 'in taxis or public gardens' in Khartoum.[284] Students also participated in information-sharing, using their mobility between school and home to act as 'scouts' who could deliver messages to and from the rebels.[285] When Abboud was overthrown in 1964, some members of the underground movement transitioned to open politics as the Southern Front, in a pattern which mirrors that of the GUN and Beja Congress.[286] Other movements experienced similar transitions in and out of underground politics, including the Sudan Communist Party (SCP), whose cell structure was the most elaborate of Sudan's covert organizations.[287]

Following Nimeiri's successful military coup in 1969 and the establishment of a one-party state under the Sudan Socialist Union (SSU), politics in the 1970s once again went underground; however, as this overview has shown, covert organization was far from new. As Kindersley argues,

> This 'underground politics' – whether practical or conceptual – had long been the normal form of political expression for southern and other marginalised groups in Sudan, rather than political parties.[288]

Recognizing that this kind of political action was characterized by flexibility and transition facilitates a shift away from the teleology of the rise of the SPLM/A and Garang's emergence as Chairman and Commander-in-Chief of the movement. Although it is probable

[282] John Howell, 'Political leadership and organization in the southern Sudan' (PhD thesis, University of Reading, 1978), 197–8.
[283] Johnson, *Root Causes*, 52.
[284] Howell, 'Political leadership', 198.
[285] Interviews with Lawrence Modi Tombe, 25 Apr. 2019; William Mogga.
[286] Howell, 'Political leadership', 198.
[287] On cadre life in the SCP, see Abdelwahab Himmat, 'A history of the Sudanese Communist Party' (PhD thesis, University of South Wales, 2019), 132–85.
[288] Kindersley, 'The fifth column?', 76.

that Garang and others had some form of plan for rebellion against the Sudanese government, it is effectively impossible to determine how much this plan has been embellished in the retrospective accounts of Garang and others. Even Edward Lino—who was staunchly pro-Garang—wrote that '[n]o person in the Movement can claim there was a leader who fixed a specific date for the SPLM/SPLA to be born.'[289] Instead, in the following sections, I trace Garang's social and professional engagements with three southern constituencies: postgraduate students abroad; educated professionals in Khartoum and major southern towns; and southern army officers, including career soldiers who graduated from the Military College in Omdurman, former Anyanya absorbed into the national army, and former Anyanya who rejected the peace agreement and remained in the bush or exile. Given the fine line between social and political organization, these engagements are key to understanding Garang's successful emergence as leader of the SPLM/A in 1983.

Finally, focusing on the intersection of the social and the political allows me to integrate discussion of family life *as part of* my analysis of Garang's political action during this period, rather than as an appendix to his political pursuits. Whereas Garang's student mobility and spontaneity described in chapter one was that of a bachelor, by the late 1970s, Garang was married and building a family. Challenging analyses which focus purely on military planning, I argue that Garang's nuclear and extended family connections enabled political opportunities, by obscuring Garang's and others' subversive encounters.

Iowa State University

In 1977, Garang returned to Iowa to begin a doctorate in economics at Iowa State University (ISU), working under the supervision of Professor John Timmons. There is little about this time in the US that could be classified as politically radical. Garang did not share plans for a revolution or rebellion with any of his fellow students and his doctoral thesis largely aligned with the mainstream emphasis on modernization and development then characteristic of Sudanese government policy.[290] Garang did, however, engage in social and academic discussions about development and maintained correspondence with other southern Sudanese graduate students studying in the US and UK. These interactions were

[289] Lino, *Dr John*, 51.
[290] Thomas, *South Sudan*, 104.

politically significant; through them, Garang and other graduate students continued to coalesce as an educated professional constituency, fluent in both the technical and political languages of development.

My interviews with Garang's non-Sudanese classmates offer a useful snapshot of Garang's social and intellectual charisma. While the ISU alumni I interviewed were aware of Garang's subsequent leadership of the SPLM/A, they had little personal stake in characterizing Garang as destined for greatness. Their responses are therefore of value for understanding how Garang built relationships and led discussion. One of Garang's classmates at ISU, Brian d'Silva, later became involved in Sudanese politics; however, he did not participate in the focus group or interviews described here.[291]

Unlike Garang's undergraduate cohort at Grinnell, the economics department at ISU had a high number of international students. A fellow student, Jim Overdahl, explained that Garang stood out for his maturity and confidence:

> John enjoyed conversation and was always approachable […] He always seemed confident and authoritative in talking about any subject and always seemed to have the bearing of a genuine leader. He was always poised and always seemed to be more than just smart—he seemed wise.[292]

Another student, Mark Denbaly, remembered that they first met in the library when Garang helped him with an economics problem; Denbaly described how Garang 'always showed a sign of caring for other students and always had ideas about what the students can do to improve the programme.'[293]

Garang's classmates explained that he would 'hold court' in a small coffee area on a third-floor walkway connecting the economics and sociology buildings.[294] There they discussed a range of issues, often from articles in the Christian Science Monitor which had good 'international coverage.' In these conversations, Garang talked often about Sudan, saying that 'what was going on […] wasn't right, that somebody needed to take leadership of, and change, the situation.' Several of Garang's friends and colleagues related similar memories of conversations with Garang during this period: 'He wanted a unified Sudan, he

[291] Rebecca Hamilton, 'The wonks who sold Washington on South Sudan', *Reuters* (11 Jul. 2012), https://www.reuters.com/article/us-south-sudan-midwives-idUSBRE86A0GC20120711 [12 Jul. 2023].
[292] Interview with Jim Overdahl, video call, 6 Jul. 2021.
[293] Focus group with Iowa State University (ISU) alumni, video call, 12 Jul. 2021.
[294] Ibid; interview with Jim Overdahl.

wanted to get things moving […] He talked in part about economics […] how that was important for what he saw as the future of Sudan.'[295] The focus of these conversations was on Sudanese unity and economic development, and aligned with the arguments made by Garang in his doctoral thesis.

Garang's doctoral research concerned the Jonglei Canal area, a controversial development project intended to drain some of the seasonal swampland along the Nile in southern Sudan to increase water flow to Egypt. In October 1974, southern Sudanese students protested the canal amid rumours that the project was a scheme to settle 2.5 million Egyptians in southern Sudan and that the canal would be guarded by 6,000 Egyptian soldiers.[296] Garang's thesis acknowledged these rumours, highlighting that 'the canal project is pregnant with serious political implications.'[297] Garang, however, was not against the canal; indeed, this was not a pertinent question in his thesis.[298] Rather, he warned that the planned development projects for residents in the Jonglei area would amount to little more than 'misery management.'[299] He argued that the area needed 'modern agricultural development', made possible through 'modern drainage and irrigation works', mechanical technology, new forms of land tenure, and 'spatial reorganization of the countryside into more compact villages.'[300] Doing so, he contended, would not only benefit residents of the area but allow for national agricultural expansion by capitalizing on the high rainfall in the south compared to the north.[301]

As noted by Thomas, Garang's thesis makes only passing mention of dependency theory, which later provided an effective framework for articulating Sudan's political inequalities in the SPLM/A *Manifesto* of 1983.[302] Overall, Garang's doctoral analysis reflected ISU's prevailing academic focus on econometrics and quantitative applied economics, and the modernizing state developmentalism then prominent in Sudan.[303]

[295] Ibid; interviews with Frank and Sheena Thomas, video call, 6 Apr. 2020; Lual Deng, 16 Jul. 2019.
[296] See extensive reports and discussion of October 1974 protests and wider concerns about Jonglei Canal in SSNA, Box HEC/28, file SG/HEC/36.G.1, 264-420.
[297] de Mabior, 'Identifying', 52.
[298] Cf. LeRiche and Arnold, who state without a source that Garang was opposed to the Jonglei Canal. Matthew LeRiche and Matthew Arnold, *South Sudan: From Revolution to Independence* (London, 2012), 260n25.
[299] de Mabior, 'Identifying', 164.
[300] Ibid., 42, 227.
[301] Ibid., 219.
[302] Ibid., 163; Thomas, *South Sudan*, 115.
[303] Focus group with ISU alumni. On the entrenchment of state developmentalism in Sudan during the regional government period, see Thomas, *South Sudan*, 104.

However, Garang did draw attention to the political implications of what he called 'differential' or 'dualistic' development. Highlighting the pragmatic need for any prospective development project for the Jonglei area to be attractive and fundable in the long-term without foreign aid, he warned,

> [T]he fact that IRD [integrated rural development] in the JPA [Jonglei Projects Area] is formulated outside the broader framework of the national development goal of turning the country into a "Breadbasket of the Middle East" places the JPA in a rather peripheral position with respect to national priorities and allocations.[304]

Garang advocated that the JPA be developed as part of a national strategy and described Sudan's first civil war as the result of the south's 'neglect' under colonialism and 'what Southern Sudanese saw as imminent domination by Northern Sudanese.'[305]

Garang had never fully supported the Addis Ababa Agreement and, by the time he was writing his thesis, the Agreement's shortcomings were clear. The Agreement had given limited economic authority to the south, leaving it vulnerable to external forces and unaccountable to its constituents. The regional government could raise taxes, but taxation accounted for only 15% of the region's revenue in 1975-76.[306] Most funding came from Khartoum and all economic planning remained under central government authority.[307] Khartoum failed to deliver on promised funds and development programmes, leaving government payroll as the most important source of income for southerners with few other options for employment.[308] As Sudan faced the 1970s global financial crisis and crippling debt, development funding for the south plummeted further in the late 1970s. Garang's argument to integrate development in the Jonglei area within Sudan's national economic strategy was an attempt to address the south's marginality vis-à-vis national priorities.

Garang's interest in development solutions extended beyond his academic work to personal conversations with other Sudanese students at ISU. Lual Deng, whom Garang encouraged to study in the US, began an MSc in economics at ISU in 1980.[309] Lual looked up to Garang and described him as a leader in their small Sudanese community in Ames:

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[304] de Mabior, 'Identifying', 178–9.
[305] Ibid., 182.
[306] Thomas, *South Sudan*, 92.
[307] *The Addis Ababa Agreement on the Problem of South Sudan* (1972), Ch. VIII, art. 26.
[308] Thomas, *South Sudan*, 93–5.
[309] Deng, *Power*, location 700.

> His family, my family were the only southerners. The rest were northern Sudanese. But we all felt […] that John provided leadership. No politics, we would never talk about politics – [we talked about] issues of development, how to transfer the oil, that kind of thing […] because most of the people who were there were northern Sudanese in the economics, the rest were engineering, agriculture, veterinary, they were scientists doing their doctorates and they very much agree with what John was [asking]: how can we transfer [oil] to develop Sudan and make Sudan the breadbasket of the Arab and African world? That was the talk.[310]

Lual recounted that 'development' offered a common professional language among ISU's Sudanese students. In early 1980, oil was discovered in Bentiu, just south of the boundary between northern and southern Sudan. The discovery exacerbated north-south tensions as Nimeiri attempted to redraw the boundary to include the oil fields in the north and to build a refinery in the northern town of Kosti.[311] Lual, however, indicated a different focus for the debates he and Garang had with their fellow students: how could oil fund wider development? Lual's description of their conversations—which notably took place in a mixed Sudanese community of southerners and northerners—reflects the dominant debates about Sudan's agricultural development and 'breadbasket' strategy addressed in Garang's thesis.

For Lual, Garang's leadership was not only academic but social and cultural. Beyond discussing the future of Sudan, Garang offered guidance on navigating and experiencing American culture. This is natural given his previous time in the US, but also speaks to his awareness of how to navigate different social environments and build trust. In December 1975, Garang had married Rebecca Nyandeng, then a secondary school student eleven years his junior.[312] They had their first child, Mabior, in April 1977 in Sudan and left for the US that November. In 1980, Nyandeng returned to Sudan to give birth to their second son, Chol, then returned to the US.[313] The other Sudanese graduate students were also married and Lual described how Garang fostered a sense of community among the families. Garang encouraged everyone to work hard Sunday through Friday, but Saturdays were for relaxation and exploration:

> We had enough [Sudanese families], yeah, and people are working hard. So [there was] no time for idleness, except when people look forward [to] Saturdays. And we drive out, we always, you know, those parks, especially during the summer—of course it's miserable in

[310] Interview with Lual Deng, 16 Jul. 2019.
[311] Mom Kou Nhial Arou, 'Regional devolution in the Southern Sudan 1972-1981' (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1982), 172, 180–1.
[312] 'Republic of South Sudan Vice President H.E. Mama Rebecca Nyandeng de Mabior' (n.d.), https://ross-gov-ssd.org/about/ [7 Sep. 2022].
[313] Interview with Mabior Garang, 11 Mar. 2021.

> January and winter […] Americans they also play in the snow and all those things, and [John] encouraged our children to ski […] So there's no bad season.[314]

Although they were eager to return to Sudan and apply what they learned, Garang urged people to embrace American life. He explained social norms, for example by giving advice on when it was acceptable to take children to events: from 7pm, children should be left with whichever Sudanese family was not going out that evening.[315]

Lual's account of embracing American culture is echoed by Mabior, though his memories of this time are vague because he was so young. What he remembers is mainly 'family life', including birthdays, barbecues, and other gatherings among the Sudanese community: 'It was the most normal time, you know, we were almost like an American family. My first birthday was at McDonalds.'[316] Mabior went to school and completed kindergarten, as did other Sudanese children whose fathers studied at ISU. Lual explained that they wanted to 'bring [their children] up Sudanese but know those who aren't Sudanese.' In these ways, the small community of Sudanese studying at ISU was brought together not only by their shared interest in Sudan's development but by family life and practical considerations like babysitting.

The family's time in the US also offered opportunities to Nyandeng which would have been less available in Sudan. Upon first arriving in the country in 1977, Nyandeng, Garang, and Mabior spent Thanksgiving with Allan Reed and his family in Washington, DC.[317] It was Nyandeng's first time out of Sudan and she spoke no English but, during her years in the US, she learned the language and obtained her General Educational Development certificate.[318] According to Lual, Garang encouraged Nyandeng in her studies; in later years, Nyandeng became an important SPLM leader in her own right and, ultimately, a vice president of South Sudan. However, while in the US, there were limits to how far gender norms were stretched. Garang's conversations about development remained mostly male-dominated and he did not tell Nyandeng about his revolutionary plans.[319] Moreover, ISU's economics department was predominantly male and Overdahl remembers that, at

[314] Interview with Lual Deng, 16 Jul. 2019.
[315] Ibid.
[316] Interview with Mabior, 11 Mar. 2021.
[317] Interview with Allan Reed.
[318] 'Republic of South Sudan Vice President H.E. Mama Rebecca Nyandeng de Mabior'.
[319] Interview with Francis Mading Deng.

Garang's farewell dinner, the women and men sat separately. When Overdahl went to speak with the women, his African classmates told him this was culturally disrespectful.[320]

Stories of social life in and beyond ISU show Garang's adaptability in different environments. Without arguing that he was a born leader, it is clear he was skilled at building interpersonal relationships. In the early 1970s, Garang had often been at odds with his superiors, first in the Anyanya and then in SAF. By the end of the decade, Garang's behaviour was at least superficially in line with government priorities. He was an emerging professional with a young family, speaking the government's language of development.

When Garang completed his PhD in 1981, he and his family took a final holiday up the American east coast to Canada.[321] Before leaving the US in early 1982, Garang sold his car to fellow ISU student Abebayehu Tegene, explaining he wanted to be a farmer and buy a tractor.[322] With additional financial help from his former Grinnell professors, Garang did so and imported it to Sudan to start a farming project in his home area in Bor, although he was employed in Khartoum.[323] His flight back to Sudan connected through London, giving Garang time to briefly meet with friends in the UK.[324] While in the US, Garang had remained in communication with southern students in the UK, including Col Dau Ding and Barnaba Marial Benjamin, whom he had known since secondary school. In 1980, these students formed the Student Union of Southern Sudanese in the United Kingdom and Ireland (SUSS) on the basis that the existing Sudanese Students Union was 'dominated mainly by the Northern Sudanese Scholars', offered southern students 'little or no help', and excluded them from the union's leadership.[325] SUSS was politically engaged and wrote 'letters of protest' to the Sudanese government, copied to the OAU and UN.[326]

Like Lual, Benjamin and Ding said that Garang did not articulate a clear plan during these years, though they discussed 'that something *must* be done.'[327] However, despite only

[320] Interview with Jim Overdahl.
[321] Interview with Mabior Garang, 11 Mar. 2021.
[322] Focus group with ISU alumni.
[323] Interview with William Pollak.
[324] Interviews with Atem Yaak Atem, 7 Jun. 2021; Barnaba Marial Benjamin. Benjamin said Garang's return to Sudan from the US took place in early 1983, but the flight took place in 1982.
[325] 'Letter from Southern Sudanese students in the United Kingdom to Abel Alier, on the formation of a separate union' (14 Dec. 1980), in Yosa Wawa, *Southern Sudanese Pursuits of Self-Determination: Documents in Political History* (Kampala, 2005), 278–83.
[326] Interview with Col Dau Ding, 31 Aug. 2021.
[327] Quote from interview with Col Dau Ding, 21 May 2021.

learning about the SPLM/A after it was formed, they subsequently played key roles in representing the SPLM/A abroad, elaborated below. Like Vezzadini's colonially educated civil servants and army officers, these men belonged to a narrow group with shared social and professional backgrounds.[328] Many knew Garang personally from studying together at Rumbek Secondary or sharing rooms as refugees in East Africa during the first civil war. They spoke fluent academic English, held multiple post-secondary degrees, owned cars, and travelled internationally. Like an earlier generation of (primarily northern) Sudanese graduates who attended Khartoum's prestigious Gordon College, they maintained a level of 'group cohesion' even when scattered.[329] Shared markers of professionalism both signalled and reinforced a community which became politically efficacious during the war. While the founding disputes over who would lead the SPLM/A's military and political wings in Ethiopia are intensely debated, the early history of the SPLM/A's diplomacy receives little attention. Focusing on Garang's wider social 'entanglements' reveals the different avenues which contributed to his early success.[330] Garang's networks within Sudan were equally important, explored in the following sections.

The 'underground resistance': Professional and military networks in Sudan

When Garang returned to Sudan in early 1982, the country faced a spiralling financial crisis and Nimeiri was confronting widespread discontent across the country. In the south, slow development and the outsized importance of government positions as a source of income had encouraged identity politics, first between 'insiders' who remained in Sudan throughout the first civil war and 'outsiders' who went into exile, and later along ethnic lines.[331] Nimeiri exacerbated these divisions, repeatedly intervening in southern politics and pitting southern politicians against each other. From 1980, a key issue was 'redivision' of the south into three regions corresponding to the old colonial provinces. For southern divisionists, led by former Anyanya leader Joseph Lagu, redivision offered a way to combat perceived 'Dinka domination' in the regional government and to catalyze 'decentralization for

[328] See Vezzadini, *Lost Nationalism*, 182–233.
[329] Sharkey, *Living with Colonialism*, 60.
[330] Vezzadini, *Lost Nationalism*, 183.
[331] Thomas, *South Sudan*, 93–5, 98–101.

development'.[332] For Nimeiri, redivision would pacify northern politicians who had never supported southern autonomy and would neutralize the political and economic power of the south, particularly after the discovery of oil in the southern region. In March 1981, the Regional Assembly debated and rejected redivision; in October, Nimeiri dissolved the National and Regional Assemblies and appointed a military caretaker government in the south.

In December 1981, a group of prominent southern politicians were arrested for forming the Council for the Unity of South Sudan (CUSS) and writing to the government to protest plans for redivision. They were quickly released but the incident exemplified Nimeiri's increasingly harsh hand in the south. In January 1982, school and university students in Khartoum protested austerity measures imposed at the end of 1981 to meet the conditions of an International Monetary Fund standby credit.[333] Police responded with tear gas and 'eventually opened fire in several parts of the town', killing a student. After six days, the demonstrations ended with the army occupying the University of Khartoum. Schools and universities were closed, but students' return to their home areas sparked new demonstrations across the country in which at least eleven people were killed. In the same week, serious anti-division demonstrations took place in Juba, Wau, and Malakal, involving approximately eleven more deaths. The combination of protests across the country opened Nimeiri to a wave of criticism from within his government, the SSU, and the army, including from a group of senior military officers who demanded that he step down. In response, Nimeiri sacked Abdel Majid Hamid Khalil, who was First Vice-President, Minister of Defence, and the Army Commander-in-Chief, and the group of army officers who had rallied against him.

With few employment opportunities in the private sector, government jobs were the main source of income for educated southerners in Sudan. These roles required a certain level of cultural and political assimilation, but also brought a new, younger generation of southern professionals into Khartoum and major southern towns following the end of the first civil war, placing them in positions of relative authority. In a 1987 interview with Arop

[332] See Johnson, *Root Causes*, 53–4.
[333] United Kingdom National Archives (UKNA), FCO 93.3198, P. S. Collecott, British Embassy, Khartoum, to D. A. Roycroft, FCO, London, 'The events of January 1982' (3 Feb. 1982).

Madut Arop for *Heritage*, a Khartoum-based newspaper run by southerners, Garang described his involvement in Sudan's 'underground' politics leading up to the Bor Mutiny of 16 May 1983, highlighting how he cultivated close relationships with his superiors so that they would not suspect his involvement in anti-government activity:

> Of course, when you are planning illegal or under-ground activities it is always best to be close to the Authority. So in Khartoum I was very close to Generals Yousif Ahmed Yousif and Sowar el Dahab. I was also very close to General Abu Kadok, the army top brass. We used to have dinners together. My calculation was that if there were intelligent reports about my activities, their reaction would be ……. "John waled kues wa mumumkin Yamoul Hajat zeeda…" John is a good boy, and it is not possible for him to do things like this.[334]

Mabior, who turned six in April 1983, described Garang's attention to his public image in similar language:

> He was trying to create an image for himself during this period, like of having a successful family, being a PhD, having a job in government. He was trying to build an image of a leader. […] That image he was portraying, I remember a story he once told me, that he had portrayed an image of a 'good boy.' Because like racism in the southern United States, a small, young white person can call a grown, old black person a boy. So this kind of culture existed also in the Sudan.

Mathiang Malual Mabur, a southern intelligence officer in SAF, confirmed Garang's close relationship with Generals Tawfiq Abu Kadok and Yusif Ahmed Yusif, as well as Generals Abdelazim Sadig and Bashir Mohamed Ali.[335] Possible narrative exaggeration aside, the racial and historical connotations of the term *waled kues* or 'good boy' draw our attention to the performative demands of urban life for Garang and other southern professionals in Khartoum and southern towns.

In a 1983 seminar paper for the University of Khartoum's Development Studies and Research Centre, Walter Kunijwok Gwado Ayoker described the plight of educated 'black' Sudanese who depended on the state for employment. Ayoker belonged to the same socio-professional circuit as Garang. Before taking up his post at the University of Khartoum, he completed an MA at the University of Manchester and a PhD at the University of Oxford, and served as SUSS's information officer while in the UK. His paper defined the Sudanese state as 'a politically organised body of aliens who occupied the country of the blacks at different times of invasion' and criticized the historic link between development and the

[334] 'Dr. John Garang's 1987 Heritage Interview with Arop Madut', initially published 2 Nov. 1987 in *Heritage*. Reproduced on PaanLuel Wël blog, https://paanluelwel.com/2011/07/24/dr-john-garangs-1987-heritage-interview-with-arop-madut/ [10 Jan. 2020]
[335] Interview with Mathiang Malual Mabur.

extractive state.[336] Independence and the Addis Ababa Agreement failed to reshape Sudan's core inequalities and the state remained 'virtually the only source of livelihood for almost all school-taught blacks':

> Once inside the state's superstructure of power circles, the individual black person is systematically made to lose the known basic freedoms: servitude is hence institutionalised and accordingly paid for by the state. The salary […] is therefore an insurance policy against freedom of speech and thought: the good waled is a silent and obedient black man.[337]

Kunijwok argued that development should go beyond economic metrics to encompass 'life-sustenance', 'self-esteem', and 'freedom', which the Sudanese state denied to its black citizens by forcing them into positions where their livelihoods depended on their silence.[338]

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Sudanese students, protesters, and politicians were regularly arrested for real or perceived anti-government activity. Prominent southern politicians like Joseph Oduho and Benjamin Bol Akok, both suspected of involvement in the Wau garrison mutiny of 1976, went in and out of prison several times.[339] Acting the part of the 'good *waled*' was thus a necessary part of underground politics. In an illustrative example, Edward Lino explained that when he and Lam Akol were doing covert work for the SPLM/A in Khartoum in the early years of the war, they met at the University of Khartoum's Staff Club where their fluency in Arabic helped deflect suspicion from their meetings: 'Both of us were fluent in Arabic and [northern Sudanese] like that. People think this is closing the gap between south and north [*chuckles*].' Assimilation provided a cover for their clandestine activities.

Secrecy was a top priority for Sudan's underground movements.[340] Recruitment and discussion progressed cautiously, often through existing family and social networks. Formally, soldiers like Garang were not supposed to participate in politics.[341] Garang was cautious about discussing concrete plans for anti-government activity outside of a tight inner circle. When his family visited Canada before returning to Sudan, they had dinner with

[336] Kunijwok Gwado Ayoker, 'State and development in the Black Sudan', *DSRC Seminar*, No. 34 (1983), 2–3.
[337] Ibid., 26; See also Thomas, *South Sudan*, 103.
[338] Ayoker, 'State and development', 22–4.
[339] Interview with Ohiyok David Oduho, phone, 29 Aug. 2022; Arou, 'Regional devolution', 202–5.
[340] Interviews with Anyanya veteran, phone, 4 Sept. 2022; Majok Dut Muorwel, Juba, 8 Aug. 2019.
[341] Interviews with Peter Adwok Nyaba, Juba, 22 Jul. 2019; Daniel Deng Monydit, Juba, 8 Aug. 2019. Cf. Vezzadini, *Lost Nationalism*, 106.

Francis Deng, there as Sudan's ambassador. Deng asked Garang what he thought about the worsening situation in Sudan and was surprised by Garang's 'evasive' answer:

> By then Nimeiri was beginning to dismantle the Addis Ababa Agreement. And it was quite obvious […] And so at dinner I said to [Garang], you people [the Anyanya] rebelled in the first place, objecting to the status quo. Now the Addis Ababa Agreement is being dismantled, it means we are returning to the old order. What do you say, those who have rebelled to change things? To my surprise […] he was evasive. So I took that to mean this man has been coopted, has joined the army, has a good position; he is no longer cause oriented.[342]

Bona Malwal, who became vocally anti-Garang in the early 2000s, has also described Garang's reticence to discuss politics. After returning to Sudan, Garang socialized with senior southern politicians in Khartoum but, according to Malwal, would 'never say a word' during their 'rowdy political conversations.'[343] Garang's comments to American friends before his departure show that his silence and caution were intentional. Garang warned Sheena and Frank Thomas, old friends from Grinnell, that he did not want to put them in danger. Frank explained, '[Garang] thought he was being careful of our safety, to make sure that we were not being implicated. He knew he was being watched and that he had a dangerous life.'[344] Garang gave a similar warning to his former host family in Minnesota and asked them to avoid contacting him.[345]

Where Garang did engage in politics, he did so selectively, in encounters made possible through wider professional, social, and family relationships. Upon his return to Sudan, Garang was promoted to colonel and appointed Deputy Director of Military Research at the SAF headquarters in Khartoum.[346] He also took a job as a lecturer in agricultural economics at the University of Khartoum. These roles gave him social footholds in the army and university, two important centres of anti-government sentiment. My interviews and South Sudanese memoirs reveal a complex landscape of different underground and student movements active in the 1970s and 1980s. Like the earlier movements described above, the names of these groups changed frequently and people could belong to more than one, either simultaneously or over time. Sometimes grouped under the broad heading of the

[342] Interview with Francis Mading Deng.
[343] Bona Malwal, *Sudan and South Sudan: From One to Two* (London, 2015), 158.
[344] Interview with Frank and Sheena Thomas.
[345] Interview with Mabior Garang, 11 Mar. 2021.
[346] Deng, *Power*, location 1314; Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road*, 426; Wël, *Who Killed*, 96–7.

'underground resistance', most of these groups are poorly understood.[347] Peter Biar Ajak argues, on the basis of description from SPLM/A veterans, that 'various dissatisfied Southern groups […] were all collaborating to forge a common outfit to challenge the Numeiry regime', meaning that 'they were essentially one group without discernible ideological differences.'[348] Certainly, there was widespread anti-Nimeiri feeling, but conflating groups which were organizationally distinct obscures the mechanics of everyday underground politics and the ideological nuances of their thinking.

Garang interacted mainly with two underground organizations: a group of young southern army officers and a group of young professionals and students called the National Action Movement (NAM). There are two broad origin stories for the southern officer group. The first traces the group to the disruptive activities of former Anyanya soldiers absorbed into the SAF garrison in Bussere in c. 1974, including Garang, Baak, Albino Akol Akol, and Emmanuel Abur.[349] The second claims the group was formed by southern military officers who graduated from the military college in Omdurman, led by Daniel Awet Akot and Martin Manyiel, and only later expanded to include former Anyanya.[350] While some of my sources said the group did not have a formal name, Kuyok calls this group the Free Officers (FOs), a name with implicit generational and ideological resonances with the Free Officers who brought Nimeiri to power in 1969. This name is given further credence by Ohiyok David Oduho, the son of well-known southern politician Joseph Oduho, who remembers receiving a letter addressed to his father signed by حركة ضباط الأحرار (Free Officers Movement) in 1979.[351]

It is unclear when the FOs expanded to include both former Anyanya and career officers. Immediately after the Addis Ababa Agreement, there was distrust between some absorbed Anyanya officers and their southern counterparts who had remained in Sudan during the civil war and graduated from the military college. Atem Yaak Atem described that, in 1973, he met socially with Garang and Baak in the officers' mess in Malakal. Atem

[347] E.g. Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road*, 43.
[348] Ajak, 'Building on sand', 68–9.
[349] Interview with Anyanya veteran, 4 Sept. 2022; 'What ten (10) year – independence holds for South Sudan people' (c. 2021), private document shared with author; Wël, *Who Killed*, 74 ;81–2.
[350] This version comes mainly from Kuyok's biographies of former FOs, which draw on interview material with core members, including Faustino Atem Gualdit, Salva Mathok, and El Tahir Bior. 'Faustino Atem Gualdit', 'Arok Thon Arok', and 'Martin Manyiel', in Kuyok, *South Sudan*.
[351] Interview with Ohiyok David Oduho.

witnessed 'mutual suspicion' between the young southern officers' who had progressed through the military college, including Arok Thon Arok, and those who had joined the Anyanya.[352] However, there is general agreement that by the late 1970s or early 1980s, the FOs were led by Albino Akol Akol, a popular senior Anyanya veteran who opposed the Addis Ababa Agreement. Membership at this time included prominent former Anyanya officers Francis Ngor, Kerubino Kuanyin, William Nyuon, and Salva Kiir.[353] Ngor was a lieutenant colonel in the infantry division in Malakal; Kuanyin was a major in Pochalla; Nyuon was a major in Ayod; and Kiir was a major in the SAF intelligence unit in Malakal. Members who graduated from the military college included Arok Thon Arok, Faustino Atem Gualdit, Daniel Awet Akot, Martin Manyiel, and El Tahir Bior.[354]

Kuyok describes a subsequent split between Albino Akol Akol and 'the majority of the FOs', around the time of Garang's return. According to Kuyok's interviews with former FOs, Akol Akol wanted to delay military action until more young people finished school and could be militarily trained, whereas Garang and others 'felt that it would be irresponsible on their part to procrastinate any further.'[355] This marked a significant—but understandable—change from Garang's earlier emphasis on education and capacity-building. By early 1982, Sudan was on the brink of economic and political collapse, justifying more rapid action.

In addition to political problems in Khartoum and other major towns, scattered guerrilla activity was becoming a more serious security threat in Bahr el Ghazal, Lakes, Jonglei, and Upper Nile.[356] These guerrillas were referred to collectively as the Anyanya-2 but operated in small bands which did not constitute a unified movement, and, before the 1980s, often attacked civilians. Below, I describe links between the Anyanya-2 and FOs; however, these groups differed in political outlook and action, and should not be conflated. The Anyanya-2 were more active in rural areas and already using violence in the late 1970s. The FOs included members in urban and military centres and were at this stage more focused on discussion and political mobilization.

[352] Interview with Atem Yaak Atem, 7 Jun. 2021.
[353] 'Albino Akol Akol', 'Francis Ngor', and 'William Nyuon', in Kuyok, *South Sudan*.
[354] Interview with Daniel Awet Akot; 'Daniel Awet Akot' and 'Martin Manyiel', in Kuyok, *South Sudan*.
[355] 'John Garang', in Kuyok, *South Sudan*.
[356] Johnson and Prunier, 'Foundation', 122–3.

Initially, the Anyanya-2 who operated from the Ethiopian-Sudanese borderlands received little external backing. However, their fortunes improved following the overthrow of Ethiopia's Haile Selassie in 1974 by a socialist movement led by Mengistu Haile Mariam and the Akobo mutiny of 1975, which brought 50 to 60 former Anyanya officers to Ethiopia. From this time, southern Sudanese dissidents in Ethiopia began to receive support—including, according to one Anyanya-2 member, Kalashnikovs but no heavy weaponry—under Ethiopia's covert 'Project 07'.[357] However, Thowath Pal, Secretary General of Ethiopia's Workers Party in Gambella, claimed the Anyanya-2 lacked discipline and had to be disarmed twice.[358] Significantly, until the early 1980s, former Anyanya officers like Kuanyin and William Nyuon, who had been 'absorbed' into SAF, led SAF's defense against the Anyanya-2.[359]

In parallel to the FOs and Anyanya-2, several civilian and student movements began to organize from the mid-1970s. Sitona Abdulla Osman, an activist involved in student politics at the University of Cairo, described,

> All of us we have the same notion that 'Ah ah no! This is a marginalization; we have to fight against it. We have to not let this Chevron to have the oil. We should not have this Jonglei canal.' All these issues, all of us as a southerner, we discuss it. But maybe in different forums.[360]

While discontent among southerners was widespread, these 'different forums' remained distinct. Osman was a family friend to Garang and Nyandeng but never spoke with them about political issues. Indeed, it was possible to belong to a movement while knowing very little about its leadership or other members, as Ohiyok David Oduho explained of the FOs:

> It was quite of a remote movement, if you like […] I became a member of that movement so easy. A letter came to my dad [Joseph Oduho] and he was not at home. […] So I opened that letter and immediately read it through, and I came to understand that this was a very serious movement that probably would engulf the entire country. And you don't need to be known, by the way, that's why I call it remote. The movement was asking you to get ready, you know, for the zero hour.[361]

Ohiyok explained that belonging to the movement simply meant being ready to contribute when the time came.

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[357] Interview with Anyanya veteran, 4 Sept. 2022; Aalen, 'Ethiopian state support', 632.
[358] Ajak, 'Building on sand', 68, 70–1.
[359] Interview with Anyanya veteran, 4 Sept. 2022; Johnson, *Root Causes*, 60.
[360] Interview with Sitona Abdulla Osman, Juba, 9 Aug. 2019.
[361] Interview with Ohiyok David Oduho.

One of the more prominent underground movements was the National Action Movement (NAM), formed in c. 1978. NAM operated in Khartoum and across the south, with the broad aim of educating and politicizing southerners to prepare for a later armed struggle. Several sources testify to NAM's strong general membership among school and university students, including Kuyok's biography of his own sister.[362] NAM's first chairman was Benjamin Bol Akok, a popular young southern politician arrested in 1976 for his alleged role in orchestrating the Wau mutiny, and its core leadership included Edward Lino, George Maker Benjamin, Sirr Anai Kelueljang, Amon Wantok, Marko Maciec, and Costa Lual Secondo.[363] Kelueljang was a journalist, poet, and essayist who wrote critically about Sudanese politics. Lino and Maker had previously been members of the Sudanese Communist Party.[364]

Like histories of the FOs, accounts of NAM's foundation, membership, and leadership contain several discrepancies, including whether Garang was a member. In part, these discrepancies reflect the difficulty of researching Sudan's fluid underground politics and the way in which belonging to NAM has become a catchall for a broad array of political conversation and activism during this period. For example, Kuyok lists Lam Akol as a NAM member but, in his own writing, Lam explains his main underground connection was with the Juwama [Juba-Wau-Malakal] African People's Organization (JAPO) formed by James Wani Igga and other students studying in Egypt.[365] But assumptions that Lam was part of NAM are unsurprising given his wider political work. Lam encountered NAM's 'propaganda leaflets' from the late 1970s and, from the end of October 1983, Lam worked alongside prominent NAM member Edward Lino to covertly represent the SPLM/A in Khartoum.[366]

More serious discrepancies vis-à-vis NAM's membership reflect later fault lines between its members. In interviews and recently published memoirs, both Lino and Wantok describe a key meeting of NAM leaders held in February 1982. Lino had been close with Garang since 1974 and remained a staunch Garang supporter until his death in 2020. In

[362] 'Suzana Anieb Marial', in Kuyok, *South Sudan*.
[363] Lino, *Dr John*, 32.
[364] 'Edward Lino', in Kuyok, *South Sudan*.
[365] Akol, *SPLM/SPLA: Inside*, 3–4.
[366] Ibid., 19–22.

contrast, Wantok fell out with Garang in the mid-1980s, was detained by the SPLM/A from 1987 to 1992, and subsequently contributed to anti-Garang publications.[367] In Lino's account, NAM's leadership invited Garang to dinner in Juba's Unity Garden and asked him to lead the newly formed National Action Movement Liberation Army, a decision they had agreed upon while Garang was still abroad in the US.[368] Wantok stressed that NAM was a purely civilian organization, focused on political sensitization of the masses *before* armed struggle.[369] In Wantok's version of this meeting, Garang showed up uninvited and was turned away because he was a military man. Whether Lino's or Wantok's account of this meeting is accurate, Lino's close relationship with Garang meant that Garang would benefit from Lino's networks in Khartoum. Crucially, Lino knew the Ethiopian consul and used this link to notify the Ethiopians about Garang following the Bor Mutiny, a point I return to below.

The membership and activities of the FOs, NAM, and Anyanya-2 overlapped in important ways. From the late 1970s, members of NAM communicated with Anyanya-2 when visiting Addis Ababa and Nairobi. According to an Anyanya-2 member, they shared information about what was going on inside Sudan and passed documents back and forth.[370] NAM politicians also encouraged them to accept defecting soldiers, despite the tensions caused by Anyanya-2 clashes with former Anyanya units absorbed into SAF in Jonglei and Upper Nile. In 1982, the relationship between former Anyanya serving in SAF and Anyanya-2 began to warm. Samuel Gai Tut, then Wildlife Minister in the regional government, and John Kwong, the Provincial Commissioner of Jonglei, were arrested for attempting to smuggle arms to the Anyanya-2.[371] Garang and William Abdallah Cuol may also have been involved but were not caught.[372] The Anyanya-2 also had contacts with the southern Sudanese diaspora, who helped them raise money to buy arms and ship them to northern Kenya, from where they were carried by donkey across the border and into

[367] Wantok, *Invasion*, 156; See also SAD 985/1/93-123, A group of former political detainees, 'For a strong SPLM/A: What is to be done?' (1992); A group of former political detainees, 'The diseases that ail the SPLM/A' (2002).
[368] Interview with Edward Lino, Nairobi, 22 Aug. 2019; Lino, *Dr John*, 32–3.
[369] Interview with Amon Mon Wantok, 23 Jun. 2019; Wantok, *Invasion*, 101–2.
[370] Interview with Anyanya veteran, 4 Sept. 2022.
[371] Prunier, 'From peace', 49.
[372] Johnson, *Root Causes*, 61.

Sudan.[373] A crucial contributor to this operation was Dominic Akech Mohammed, an academic at Miami University and, as noted in chapter one, Garang's friend since the 1960s. Mohammed subsequently became the first SPLM representative in the US and Canada.[374] Finally, there were links between the FOs and NAM, including Garang (through direct membership or simply through his friendship with Lino) and Arok, a SAF intelligence officer selected in 1982 as a member of parliament representing the armed forces in the regional government.[375] These relationships shaped the events of 1983 in important ways; however, they did not guarantee a unified front against the government, as subsequent disputes over ideology and leadership of the nascent resistance movement would show.

Social life, family, and the Bor Mutiny

Social and family connections were central to this broad landscape of underground politics. Returning to Sudan marked a new chapter for Garang and his family, in which they had to settle into life in Khartoum with two sons previously raised largely in the US. Mabior remembers this time as another relatively 'normal' period of 'family life.'[376] When the family arrived in Khartoum, they stayed with Garang's cousin, Kosia Kuany Mabior. They later moved into a rented house in Haj Yousif, a neighbourhood in Khartoum North with a high number of southern, Nuba, and Darfuri residents. A family friend described how Garang made sure to have breakfast and lunch with his family daily.[377] Mabior, now five years old, started primary school at St. Francis School.[378] Garang acquired a used car from an American diplomat and, according to Arop, 'would tell his guests [at lunch parties] that he needed the car for the transport of his children.'[379] Among his supporters, Garang has retained his reputation as a 'family man' who cared for his wife and children. These descriptions have a moralistic dimension, implicitly or explicitly comparing Garang to South Sudanese leaders who have paid the bridewealth of multiple wives using money or cows gained through corruption. However, these descriptions also reflect the personal experiences

[373] Interview with Anyanya veteran, 4 Sept. 2022.
[374] Ibid.; SAD 945/4/8, John Garang, 'Appointment of Professor Dominic Akec Mohamed', 12 Aug. 1984
[375] 'Arok Thon Arok' in Kuyok, *South Sudan*.
[376] Interview with Mabior Garang, 11 Mar. 2021.
[377] Interview with Sitona Abdulla Osman.
[378] Mabior Garang, 'Bio', *Mabior Garang Speaks* (5 Jul. 2020), https://mabiorgarangspeaks.com/bio/ [19 Sept. 2022]
[379] Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road*, 43.

of those closest to Garang. Garang's daughter Akuol remembered that he was 'quite present' as a father, even during the war; he helped her with her schoolwork and called regularly when he was not with them.[380]

In Sudan, Garang's inner circle remained exclusively male and predominantly military. However, politics went together with the private space of the home. Haj Yousif's population had doubled between 1969 and 1976, and it was 'a political heartland for black and regional organisations.'[381] Garang's house was a social meeting place to discuss politics.[382] Mabior remembers attending barbecues which he now interprets as part of his father's clandestine activities:

> I didn't know about the underground, what was going on. Even though I was always around the meetings, as a small boy [...] Because they used to discuss at barbecues and all sorts of things. They would have barbecues but it was not really a barbecue going on; they were discussing the issues of the underground movement.[383]

Several core FOs were based in Malakal, but were able to communicate with Garang through Chagai Atem, who used his position as a businessman to travel between Khartoum and Malakal without attracting undue attention.[384] Ngor, an FO and security officer in Malakal, also visited the house in Haj Yousif and Mabior claimed that William Abdalla Chuol, who linked the FOs with the Anyanya-2, stayed at the house for three weeks in February 1983.[385]

Extended family ties facilitated political relationships. Lino, a civilian, befriended Garang through mutual family and social connections. Garang was the best man at the wedding of Mathiang Malual Mabur to Lino's sister, Ann Nyandeng Wuor, and was close with Gibril Makoi, a former Anyanya officer absorbed into SAF who was also friends with Lino.[386] Through these links, Lino and Garang became friends in 1974 and subsequently collaborated closely in Sudan's underground political scene. Family commitments were also a tool utilized by the FOs to deflect attention from their activities. Mabur was a southern intelligence officer in Khartoum and worked closely with the FOs and NAM through Lino.

[380] Interview with Akuol de Mabior, video call, 2 May 2021.
[381] Kindersley, 'The fifth column?', 83.
[382] Interview with Mathiang Malual Mabur.
[383] Interview with Mabior Garang, 11 Mar. 2021.
[384] Ibid.; interview with Mabior Garang, 15 Apr. 2021; Ajak, 'Building on sand', 72.
[385] Interview with Mabior Garang, 11 Mar. 2021. Lam Akol remembers encountering Garang at the airport seeing off Francis Ngor. See Akol, *SPLM/SPLA: Inside*, 21; Wël, *Who Killed*, 106.
[386] Lino, *Dr John*, 24–6.

Because Mabur and Lino were brothers-in-law, they could meet regularly without raising suspicion.[387]

Figure 1: Kuanyin with elephant tusks in Pochalla, 1982. Courtesy of Oswald Iten.

In another significant example—albeit one that is difficult to verify—Garang described a meeting with Chagai in Khartoum in February 1983, where plans were made for an armed rebellion to coincide with the anniversary of the Torit Mutiny of 18 August 1955.[388] After Chagai returned to Malakal, the Malakal FOs are said to have sent a telegram to Garang stating that his brother was very ill and asking him to visit Malakal immediately.

[387] Interview with Mathiang Malual Mabur.
[388] 'Dr. John Garang's 1987 Heritage Interview'. See also Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road*, 44–5.

Garang did not have a brother in Malakal but used the telegram as an excuse to travel; in Malakal, the FOs allegedly finalized plans for the 18 August uprising and agreed to send William Abdalla and Chagai to notify the Anyanya-2 to be ready.

As the FOs were laying plans in the early months of 1983, a crisis was brewing among the absorbed Anyanya unit in Bor, which would require that Garang and his contacts deploy every strategy available to deflect suspicion, including using family commitments and connections as a front for political action. Before turning in detail to these strategies, it is worth reconstructing the events of January to May 1983, as this period is among the most politicized and contested in histories of the SPLM/A's founding.

In January, Battalion 105 refused military orders to transfer north.[389] Battalion 105 was part of SAF's First Division or 'Southern Command' and had garrisons in Bor, Pibor, and Pochalla, commanded by former Anyanya officers: Captain Bullen Alier in Bor and Major Kuanyin in Pochalla.[390] Kuanyin was an FO known for his quick temper and flamboyant violence.[391] In March 1982, Swedish journalist Oswald Iten met Kuanyin in Pochalla while researching trophy hunting (Figure 1).[392] Iten photographed Kuanyin with a collection of elephant tusks which Kuanyin said he was selling to 'buy guns and start the war again.' Kuanyin's posting in Pochalla was lucrative; he hunted big game and traded ammunition with the Anyuak King Agada in exchange for leopard skins. Kuanyin had close relationships with General Yousif and Major General Siddiq al-Banna, head of the Southern Command, to whom he sold the skins and tusks.[393] For Kuanyin, these partnerships with King Agada and northern commanders were opportunistic. After photographing Kuanyin smiling with King Agada, Iten asked Kuanyin what he thought of the king. Kuanyin replied, 'Why do we need such people like *him*? They call him a king and people crawl in front of him. When I will be a big shot in Sudan, I'll shoot him. Yes, this has to be stopped.'[394] In

[389] Johnson, *Root Causes*, 61; Abel Alier, *Southern Sudan: Too Many Agreements Dishonoured*, 2nd ed. (Reading, 1992), 242.
[390] Alier, *Southern Sudan*, 242; Kuanyin is often described as the Bor commander, with no mention of Bullen Alier, as critiqued in 'The man who fired the first shot in Bor on May 16, 1983', *Aftaboss Intntnl* (17 May 2019), https://aftaboss.wordpress.com/2019/05/17/the-man-who-fired-the-first-shot-in-bor-on-may-16-1983/ [16 Mar. 2023].
[391] Peter Martell, *First Raise a Flag: How South Sudan Won the Longest War but Lost the Peace* (London, 2018), 106–7.
[392] Interview with Oswald Iten, phone, 16 Sept. 2022.
[393] Ibid.; Conradin Perner, *Why Did You Come If You Leave Again?*, Kindle ed. (2016), location 3005.
[394] Interview with Oswald Iten. Iten noted this quote directly in his diary, which Iten referred to during the interview.

December 1982, Iten published the photograph of Kuanyin with his ivory; Kuanyin was far from impressed. In February or March 1983, Kuanyin told Swiss ethnographer Conradin Perner that if he ever met Iten again, he would kill him.[395] Kuanyin was not angry that the photo had been published but that Iten wrote he was poaching for profit and omitted Kuanyin's statement that he was selling ivory to restart the war.[396]

In March 1983, the Southern Command headquarters in Juba asked Battalion 105 about 'what was observed as progressive monthly rises in salaries in the battalion'.[397] Bullen Alier said everything was in order and asked unsuccessfully for the March salaries; several high-level delegations attempted to mediate between Juba and Bor, but to little effect. On 23 March, Kuanyin arrived in Bor from Pochalla.[398] Many of the former Anyanya in Bor looked up to Kuanyin and he took over command of the garrison.[399] According to Arop and Lino, Kuanyin was able to travel between Bor and Juba until early May and used his relationship with al-Banna to secure advance supplies of ammunition and food for his troops under the pretense of needing them to defend against the Anyanya-2 in the upcoming rainy season.[400]

As the salary dispute stretched on, Kuanyin and his men were 'in virtual control' of Bor.[401] In early May, they killed a security officer who came to Bor and turned away an Armoured Division company travelling from Khartoum to Juba which they suspected wanted to disarm the southern troops in Bor.[402] It was clear to the Bor soldiers that an attack from Juba or Malakal was imminent and they built foxholes for defense.[403] As events progressed, Lino was kept informed in Khartoum through at least two channels. The first was through the army officers, who had long-range radios. The second was through the

[395] Perner, *Why Did You Come*, location 5912.
[396] Interview with Oswald Iten.
[397] Alier, *Southern Sudan*, 264.
[398] Perner, *Why Did You Come*, location 6242. Although this date is earlier than other accounts, Perner accompanied Kuanyin from Pochalla to Bor, lending his account more credence.
[399] Interview with Mathiang Malual Mabur. The details of when and why Kuanyin took over command from Bullen Alier are not clear. Kuanyin outranked Alier and Iten indicated there were already discussions about moving Kuanyin to a larger garrison in 1982, but at the time Kuanyin was reluctant to leave Pochalla. Arop says Kuanyin took over command because Alier was out of town when he arrived. Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road*, 46.
[400] Ibid.; Lino, *Dr John*, 34.
[401] Alier, *Southern Sudan*, 264.
[402] Ibid.
[403] Martell, *First Raise a Flag*, 108.

radios of the Jonglei project, which had offices in Bor, Panyagor, and Khartoum.[404] Deng Majang, a NAM member, worked in the Khartoum office. We can assume any information shared with Lino would have also reached Garang. In addition, Garang claimed that Chagai visited him in Khartoum in May and told him 'that the situation [in Bor] was deteriorating fast.'[405]

About a week before the mutinous Bor soldiers were attacked from Juba, Garang travelled to Bor. There are two main versions of this history.[406] In the first, Garang was sent to Bor by Nimeiri to calm the mutineers but then switched sides and joined them. In the second, Garang was on holiday in Bor when the fighting erupted and decided to join the mutineers. My interviews and Garang's own description of what happened suggest a version closer to the second, though Garang's northern commanders did ask him to speak with the Bor soldiers. Garang had planned to travel to Bor with his family and Brian d'Silva, a friend from ISU who had taken a job at the University of Khartoum. Mabior explained that he and his family 'were just going on holiday like we always go on holiday.'[407] At the last minute, there was a change of plans and the Garang family travelled without the d'Silva family, although Garang made sure to hand over his students' marked exam papers to d'Silva before leaving.[408] According to Mabur, it was Yusif and Kodak who granted Garang permission to go on leave and, because he was travelling to Bor, they asked him to do what he could to calm the disgruntled Bor soldiers.[409]

Garang travelled to Juba, sending Nyandeng and his two sons ahead to Bor.[410] After a few days in Juba, Garang asked al-Banna permission to travel to Bor. Garang's description of his conversation with al-Banna for *Heritage* was likely dramatized, but centred on family. Garang told al-Banna he was travelling to Bor and when al-Banna warned that those in Bor were now considered rebels, Garang claimed it was 'very necessary' that he go to Bor to fetch his family and bring them to safety.[411] Garang was allowed to travel and arrived in Bor

[404] Interview with Edward Lino, Nairobi, 3 Sept. 2019.
[405] 'Dr. John Garang's 1987 Heritage Interview'.
[406] For examples of how this episode has been depicted, see summaries in Wël, *Who Killed*, 114–5.
[407] Interview with Mabior Garang, 11 Mar. 2021.
[408] SouthernSudanese, 'DR JOHN GARANG AT IOWA STATE 2002 – PART 3/15', YouTube, uploaded 20 Jul. 2009, https://youtu.be/eZMf-n8_j70 [27 Jun. 2022].
[409] Interview with Mathiang Malual Mabur.
[410] Interview with Mabior Garang, 11 Mar. 2021.
[411] 'Dr. John Garang's 1987 Heritage Interview'. Mabior offered a very similar description of the exchange between Garang and al-Banna.

on 13 May, where he joined his family at the house of Dr Lueth Garang (no relation to John Garang), which was doubling as the southern officers' command centre. The next day, they received notice from Salva Kiir in Malakal that the army was planning to attack from Juba in the next forty-eight hours.

At dawn on 16 May, forces from Juba led by Dominic Kassiano attacked Bor. The official reason for the attack was to arrest Kuanyin and 'coax the battalion under him to move to Shendi in northern Sudan.'[412] Abel Alier attributes the decision to four factions: Islamic fundamentalists who wanted to destroy the Addis Ababa Agreement; those who thought the Dinkas were responsible for problems in the south and wanted to teach Dinka soldiers in Bor a lesson; those concerned with indiscipline among the absorbed Anyanya; and, finally, Nimeiri, who sought support from the other groups.[413]

The 200-strong Bor garrison was outnumbered and, after over a day of fighting, retreated to head for the Ethiopian border. Mabior vividly remembers sheltering under a bed as the fighting reached Bor town:

> [W]hen the attack reached Bor, now bullets were flying everywhere, so my father and Kerubino came into the house and they told everybody to get under the beds. And so I remember this vividly, scrambling and getting under the bed. And the image that's stuck in my head up to now is of looking from the split between the floor and the bedsheet, I was seeing boots, army boots walking. And this image is burnt into my memory.[414]

In the fighting, Kuanyin was injured in the arm but was able to retreat after receiving treatment in Bor hospital. Before leaving, Kuanyin entrusted his eldest son, Malang Kerubino, to Garang. Garang and his family left separately from the Bor soldiers, taking Lueth Garang's Land Rover 109 pickup. Travelling with them were Malang Kerubino; two of Garang's cousins, Mabior Kuir and Thon Akec; and Maker Deng Malou, a former Anyanya officer originally from Duk Padiet north of Bor. Garang initially wanted to leave Nyandeng, Mabior, and Chol in a village where they could hide safely before potentially returning to the US but Nyandeng insisted that they accompany him.

The family drove towards Ethiopia, continuing even after the tires were worn out. The Land Rover broke down at Ulang, a town near Nasir, from where they had to walk to

[412] Lagu, *Sudan*, 417.
[413] Alier, *Southern Sudan*, 263. Alier's comments about anti-Dinka sentiment likely refer to Lagu, who was present when the decision was taken to attack Bor; Lagu claims he advocated against the use of force. Battalion 105 was also not exclusively Dinka. See, Lagu, *Sudan: Odyssey*, 416; Johnson, *Root Causes*, 61n3.
[414] Following description is from interview with Mabior Garang, 11 Mar. 2021.

the Ethiopian border. As they walked, they once again had to deceive security. Mabior explained:

> A Sudanese Army helicopter was pursuing us […] so I remember everybody was forced to strip their clothes. My dad told us, told everybody to get naked. And we got naked and we huddled under a big tamarind tree. And the helicopter came, hovered above the tree for a while and then left. And he told me later that the reason he did that was so that […] they will not know that these are the people who left Bor. They will think that it's just civilians fleeing the conflict. But if there are people wearing military ranks and like who are dressed, you know, they will know that these are the people who left Bor and they would have shot at us.[415]

Having previously played the part of a deferential professional, Garang now adopted the guise of a refugee to evade detection.

While Garang shaped his family's image, first to travel to Bor and then to hide from his pursuers, Lino was at work controlling the narrative of the Bor Mutiny for Garang's prospective Ethiopian sponsors. Lino had a strong relationship with Ethiopia's consul in Khartoum, Ismail Hassan, to whom he fed information about the situation in southern Sudan.[416] Lino's intelligence networks allowed him to follow events in Bor in close to real time. He and Mabur quickly met with Hassan to tell him what had happened, emphasizing that Garang was on his way to the Ethiopian border with his family. A few days later, Hassan requested another meeting with Lino and asked him to write a message about what happened in Bor and a résumé for Garang. Lino did so and added a note asking for Garang to be allowed five minutes to meet directly with Mengistu. The request was well-received and the Ethiopians deployed a team to the border to watch for Garang's arrival and escort him to Adura, in Ethiopia's Gambella region.[417]

Garang was never the default leader of the nascent resistance movement growing in Ethiopia. Arop identifies three main power centres among the southern Sudanese gathering in Gambella: Bilpam, under the leadership of Gordon Kong; Bukteng, under the leadership of Samuel Gai Tut and Akuot Atem; and Adura, also known as Thiajak, under Garang.[418] In addition, the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM), a student movement led by Pagan Amum, Lado Lokurnyang and Nyachigak Nyachiluk, established a base near Jebel Reit. The SSLM launched an attack on Boma in July 1983, allegedly with 'military support

[415] Ibid.
[416] Interviews with Edward Lino.
[417] Ajak, 'Building on sand', 71; Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road*, 68.
[418] Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road*, 67–8.

and men' provided by Kuanyin.[419] In this context, and like other African liberation movements, Mengistu's personal support for Garang over other candidates to head the movement was important in establishing his leadership.

From Adura, Garang was taken by helicopter to Gambella to meet with a 'high-level' Ethiopian delegation and his family was flown to Itang.[420] After this, representatives of the different rebel outfits convened in Itang 'to discuss the objectives of the rebellion and how to unite themselves.'[421] By June, further mutinies and defections had brought Nyuon and Kiir to Ethiopia. In early July, Mengistu arranged for a delegation of southern Sudanese to meet with him in Addis Ababa. The delegation included Garang, Gai Tut, Akuot Atem, and Kiir. Ethiopian intelligence also arranged for veteran politician Joseph Oduho, then in Nairobi, to join the delegation in Addis Ababa.[422] This group produced the first iteration of the SPLM/A's *Manifesto*, discussed further in chapter three, and secured Ethiopian backing for the movement. Mengistu was particularly impressed by Garang and is said to have spoken with him privately, either before or after the meeting.[423]

Following the meeting in Addis Ababa, a struggle for leadership emerged between Garang and Atem and Tut. The prospective leaders differed on core organizational and ideological points. Atem and Tut wanted to maintain the old Anyanya hierarchy, placing them above Garang, and to fight for southern secession. Garang argued that they should fight for reform in a united Sudan. He and the Ethiopians also wanted to establish a younger leadership.[424] As described in chapter one, Garang was an avid reader and, according to Lual Deng, was 'obsessed' with Fanon's argument that 'each generation must identify its mission and fulfill it'.[425] There was a distinct generational component to Garang's politics, which intersected with his ideas about class. The *Manifesto* critiqued 'the Southern elite' for betraying the masses for 'ministerial titles and similar positions in the army and Civil Service.'[426] Garang distrusted the Sudanese government but also its institutional structures; he therefore sought a 'clean slate' by building the movement around young people who had

[419] 'Nyacigak Nyachiluk', in Kuyok, *South Sudan*.
[420] Interviews with Edward Lino; Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road*, 69; Ajak, 'Building on sand', 71.
[421] Ajak, 'Building on sand', 72.
[422] Ibid.
[423] Ibid., 74; interviews with Edward Lino.
[424] Johnson and Prunier, 'Foundation', 125–6.
[425] Interview with Lual Deng, 19 May 2021.
[426] SPLM, *Sudan People's Liberation Movement Manifesto* (1983), ch. 4.

not participated in it.[427] Garang made an effort to explain the *Manifesto* to the students and graduates gathered in Itang and gained their support.[428] With the exception of Lokurnyang, the SSLM leadership agreed to dissolve their movement and join the SPLM/A. Garang received further support from members of the Abyei Liberation Front, including graduate Deng Alor, who was specifically advised by Lino, whom he knew and trusted, to 'join Garang rather than Anya-Nya II.'[429]

Tut and Atem attempted to organize a leadership election in Itang, but Garang's faction boycotted the process. Garang had the support of Kuanyin, Nyuon, and their troops, as well as backing from Ethiopia. As a result, Atem and Tut left Itang and returned to Sudan with their supporters.[430] In September 1983, the split between the different factions turned violent when a group loyal to Garang and commanded by Nyuon attacked an Anyanya-2 camp in Bilpam with military assistance from Ethiopia. The survivors fled to join Tut. After further confrontations, Tut and Atem were killed in May and August 1984, respectively. Ethiopia's backing and the removal of his main southern Sudanese opponents allowed Garang to consolidate the SPLM/A command and expand the movement.

The conflict between the SPLM/A and Anyanya-2 is sometimes described as an ethnic split between Nuer and Dinka; however, Atem was a Dinka from the same region as Garang and Nuer fought on both sides in these battles.[431] Several alternative factors explain this turn to lethal violence between rival political groups. First, until 1982, Kuanyin and Nyuon were fighting against the Anyanya-2 and, according to Johnson, 'were reported to have felt somewhat uneasy about their reception by their former enemies in 1983.'[432] Further to this, Arop has alleged that Kuanyin shot a young recruit 'for insubordination and impudent behaviour' during the leadership debates which precipitated Atem and Tut's departure from Itang.[433] Arop offers no source for this story but claims that Atem and Tut told their supporters 'that the incident was a plain conspiracy by Garang's group against

[427] Interview with Atem Yaak Atem, 7 Jun. 2021.
[428] Ajak, 'Building on sand', 74.
[429] Deng Alor Kuol, 'A diplomat turned warrior', in Francis Mading Deng, Luka Kuol, and Daniel Deng (eds.), *Abyei: Between the Two Sudans* (Trenton, N.J., 2020), 42; For further background on the Abyei Liberation Front, see Luka B. Deng Kuol, 'Political violence and the emergence of the dispute over Abyei, Sudan, 1950–1983', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 8/4 (2014), 584–5.
[430] Johnson and Prunier, 'Foundation', 126–7.
[431] For discussion of ethnicity and recruitment, see ibid., 126–9.
[432] Johnson, *Root Causes*, 60, 65.
[433] Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road*, 73–4.

them' and accused Garang of working for Khartoum to ruin the movement. Second, Bilpam was located strategically close to Itang, the SPLM/A's initial political base and the main refugee camp for southern Sudanese who had fled the war (Figure 2), and the SPLM/A wanted it for a training site.[434] Leaving Bilpam in control of a rival political organization would have posed significant logistical and security challenges for the SPLM/A. Third, Ethiopian authorities were fed up with the 'indiscipline' shown by Anyanya-2 and willing to deploy Ethiopian soldiers to secure Garang's leadership.[435] Finally, Garang distrusted the old guard and disagreed fundamentally with their secessionist ideology.

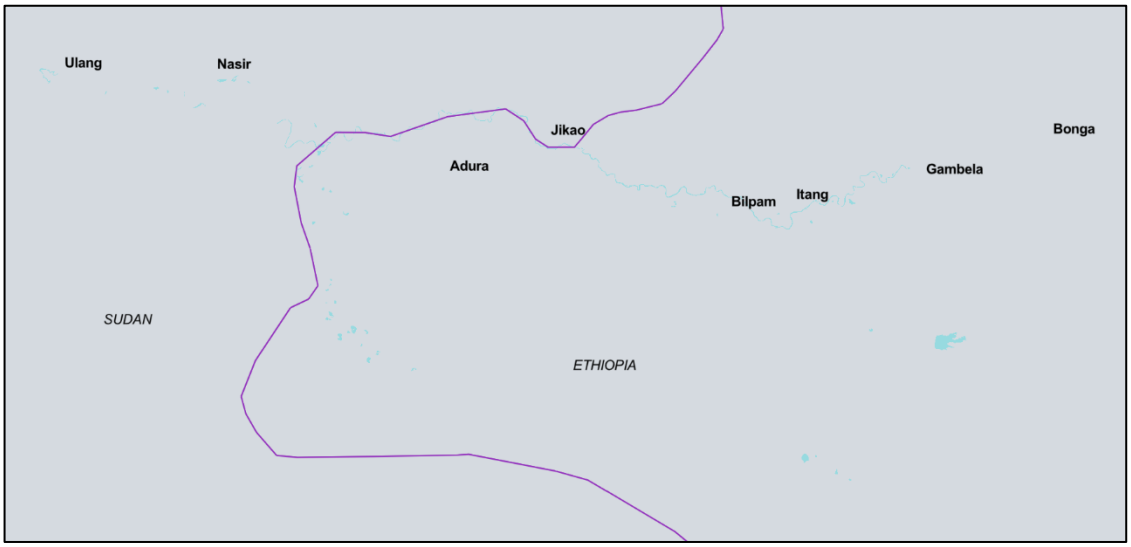

Figure 2: Approximate location of key sites in Gambella region along Sudanese-Ethiopian border, created by author. Locations are based on interview discussions and are not exact.

Garang's networks in Khartoum and abroad were equally important in allowing Garang to establish and protect his leadership. In Khartoum, Mabur and Lino played a key role in gathering intelligence for the SPLM, liaising with the Ethiopian embassy, and helping recruits leave for Ethiopia.[436] Abroad, the SUSS students opened an SPLM office in London to advocate for the movement. Col Dau Ding said that, after communicating with Garang in c. November 1983, the students met to discuss whether they should represent Garang or one of the movement's other prospective leaders, like Atem or Tut. According to Ding, they agreed on Garang because he combined several important qualities: he was an academic, he was a 'military man', he had been part of the Anyanya, and he was a 'nice family man.'[437]

[434] Ajak, 'Building on sand', 75–6.
[435] Ibid., 76.
[436] Interviews with Edward Lino; Mathiang Malual Mabur.
[437] Interview with Col Dau Ding, 14 Sept. 2021.

Barnaba Marial travelled to Ethiopia in August 1983 then returned to assist on the diplomatic front in London. In 1988, he established an SPLM office in Harare, from which he solicited political and material support from several southern African governments. Richard Mulla, another UK student, joined Barnaba to represent the SPLM/A at the Interaction Council meeting in Harare in 1988.[438] Earlier that year, Mulla had, upon Garang's orders, taken over as Secretary General of the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association (SRRA), the SPLM's humanitarian wing, in Nairobi.[439] Alfred Ladu Gore, who was studying at the University of Manchester when the war started, joined the movement after receiving a letter from Garang in 1984 and made diplomatic visits to Kenya, Tanzania, and Cuba.[440] Among students in the US, Garang asked Dominic Akech Mohammed to represent the SPLM in the US and Canada, and advised Lual Deng to seek employment with the World Bank and African Development Bank, to demonstrate the capacity of southern Sudanese professionals.[441] A detailed account of SPLM diplomacy is beyond the scope of this thesis, but these examples show the importance of Garang's social and professional connections, beyond the strictly military sphere of the absorbed Anyanya. Attention to these connections reveals how and why Garang's underground networks operated successfully in the period before and during the SPLM/A's foundation.

Conclusion

Personal accounts of underground politics in the 1970s and 1980s show that social connections were at the heart of successful covert activity. As Vezzadini has demonstrated, underground mobilization depends on existing relationships of trust. Family and other close connections also had a more practical purpose in southerners' politics, allowing them to meet without attracting undue attention from government security. Understanding Garang's politics in this period therefore requires attention to his personal life, friendships, and extended family ties. Underground politics are inherently risky and southern dissidents who evaded government detection did so through a range of performative tactics, including

[438] Interview with Barnaba Marial Benjamin.
[439] Interview with Richard Mulla.
[440] Interview with Alfred Ladu Gore, 18 Jul. 2019.
[441] Interview with Lual Deng, 12 May 2021; SAD 945/4/8, John Garang, 'Appointment of Professor Dominic Akec Mohamed', 12 Aug. 1984.

linguistic assimilation and (feigned) deference to northern commanders. Garang was skilled at curating his public image and building relationships across social and professional settings, giving him credibility with his military superiors and a wide range of contacts on whom to draw following the Bor Mutiny.

The constraints of covert politics also explain the multiplicity of movements which emerged in this period, with different ideologies and political aims. Through interviews with diverse people who interacted with Garang in the late 1970s and early 1980s—including Sudanese and non-Sudanese, and soldiers and civilians—I have revealed a shifting landscape of political conversations and activities elided by references to a singular underground movement. When the SPLM/A was formed in July 1983, Garang's rise to power depended on his connections to both the military FOs and civilian NAM, as well as students and graduates educated abroad. Lino's close relationship with Ismail Hassan allowed him to assert Garang's leadership to the Ethiopians in the immediate wake of the Bor Mutiny, facilitating Garang's capture of full Ethiopian support in a context where the Ethiopians were frustrated with the Anyanya-2's poor discipline. With Ethiopian backing, Garang forcibly consolidated his authority over the nascent SPLM/A, eliminating or absorbing rival groups gathered in Gambella. However, this process would not be without negative effects; Ajak has described the decision to attack Tut and Atem as the 'original sin' of violent problem-solving in the SPLM/A, with 'long lasting consequences on the evolution of the Movement.'[442] This violence, and the SPLM/A's tumultuous emergence out of several disparate groups with their own loyalties and agenda, meant that further work was needed to develop a cohesive story for the movement.

[442] Ajak, 'Building on sand', 77.

Ch. 3: 'An anchor in history': History-making for the New Sudan

As leader of the SPLM/A from 1983, John Garang scripted a selective history of the movement in real time, highlighting key events in speeches, in seminars, and on the movement's clandestine radio station. In addition, he elaborated a deep 'usable past' which contrasted Sudan's ancient diversity with the governing elite's comparatively new 'Arabo-Islamic' nationalism.[443] This history was a way to address the movement's fractious emergence out of the diverse organizations discussed in chapter two and drew on the Pan-Africanist and Afrocentric ideas he explored as a student, discussed in chapter one. Through these active efforts of history-making, Garang positioned himself as a revolutionary fighting for national reform in a 'New Sudan' and as a Pan-Africanist fighting neocolonialism and secessionism. Challenging a dominant literature which reduces Garang's political discourse to Cold War geopolitics, I argue that Garang was attentive to 'the means and process of historical production' and consciously articulated new histories to challenge the political narratives of both the Sudanese government and his southern rivals.[444] This approach allows me to consider the importance of Garang's 'New Sudan' as a 'competing' nationalist vision in two spheres: postcolonial politics in Sudan and secessionist nationalism in what became South Sudan.[445]

Issues of national and regional identity were central to Sudan's anticolonial politics and post-independence civil wars. Through a centuries-long process of migration and slavery, Arab identity in Sudan at the onset of Anglo-Egyptian colonial rule in 1898 was associated with freedom and high status, while to be *sudani* or 'black' denoted slave origins and low status.[446] Colonial officials reinforced this social stratification by favouring Arab elites of high pedigree for political positions and education at Sudan's prestigious Gordon College. Following the crackdown on the White Flag League in 1924, a dominant nationalism emerged that was 'both introspective within the northern context and expansive to the outside world in identification with Arabism and Islam.'[447] Young, educated

[443] Ranger, 'Towards a usable African past'.
[444] Trouillot, *Silencing*, 44.
[445] Larmer and Lecocq, 'Historicising', 908.
[446] Heather Sharkey, 'Arab identity and ideology in Sudan: The politics of language, ethnicity, and race', *African Affairs*, 107/426 (2008), 21–43.
[447] Francis Deng, *War of Visions: Conflict of Identities in the Sudan* (Washington, D.C., 1995), 114.

nationalists began to speak and write of a 'Sudanese Arab', previously a contradiction, and Arabic became the language of nationalist literary debate.[448] When Sudan gained independence in 1956, Arabic was perceived by the government as a tool to unify Sudan. In practice, government 'Arabization' policies were aggressive and alienating, as shown in chapter one.[449] In reaction to government attempts to impose an Arab identity across the country, southern politicians in Sudan's first civil war in the 1960s adopted a discursive approach which constructed the 'Arab' north and 'African' south as inherently racially different to call for southern secession using the language of racial persecution and the right to self-determination.[450]

The SPLM/A's founding *Manifesto*—which features prominently in studies of Garang's politics—made a significant departure from the Arab/African binary, instead promoting national reform in a 'United Socialist Sudan.'[451] Ethiopia's socialist Derg offered crucial support for the SPLM/A until 1991 and the Cold War was an important impetus for international concern with Garang's actions, both within East Africa and further afield. In this context, several scholars have dismissed the *Manifesto* as a product of Ethiopian influence, saying little about the networks of intellectual exchange in which Garang actively participated from the 1960s or the process of writing the *Manifesto*.[452]

Challenging this literature's singular focus on Ethiopia, Manoeli has argued that 'the *Manifesto* was a product of historical bricolage, not short-term mimicry', which 'could have drawn from multiple influences that [the SPLM] perceived to have currency abroad.'[453] Manoeli and Thomas highlight Garang's use of dependency theory to reframe nineteenth- and twentieth-century Sudanese political history.[454] However, they do not consider the full gamut of influences on Garang's political and historical thought and mention revisions to the *Manifesto* only in passing.[455] In contrast, a handful of studies by authors who knew or

[448] Sharkey, 'Arab identity', 31.
[449] Ibid., 33–5.
[450] Manoeli, *Sudan's 'Southern Problem'*, 31–50.
[451] SPLM, *Manifesto*, ch. 11.
[452] Øystein Rolandsen, *Guerrilla Government: Political Changes in the Southern Sudan during the 1990s* (Uppsala, 2005), 27; Peter Nyaba, *Politics of Liberation in South Sudan: An Insider's View* (Kampala, 1997), 33, 36; LeRiche and Arnold, *South Sudan*, 64. Johnson highlights that, while some of the *Manifesto*'s discourse may have been borrowed, its 'analysis of specific events and developments in Sudan was not', see Johnson, *Root Causes*, 63.
[453] Manoeli, *Sudan's 'Southern Problem'*, 161.
[454] Ibid., 159–66; Thomas, *South Sudan*, 114–20.
[455] Manoeli, *Sudan's 'Southern Problem'*, 159.

interviewed Garang point to his wider intellectual interests, including the history of ancient Kush and the works of Cheikh Anta Diop.[456] In perhaps the most nuanced analysis of Garang's interest in historical narrative, Idris has highlighted the importance of the New Sudan vision as a 'postcolonial critique of [Sudan's] citizenship crisis':

> The New Sudan vision took into consideration the abundance of history that goes beyond the binary opposition of identity formation. It recognized the complexity of the human experience and its role in making and remaking identity in the midst of a contested and shared history.[457]

Building on these studies and my account of Garang's education in chapter one, I make two core contributions to scholarship on Garang's political thought. First, I offer an intellectual history of Garang's interest in the historiography of the ancient Nile Valley, showing its centrality to Garang's political concept of a united New Sudan. Second, I argue that Garang was interested not only in historical *narrative*, but in historical *practice*—that is, the making of history in the short and long term, and history's relationship to political power.

In his seminal work on 'power and the production of history', Trouillot identified four phases in producing and silencing history: the making of sources, the making of archives, the making of narratives, and the granting of retrospective significance to these narratives.[458] These phases offer a useful framework for thinking about the strategies employed by Garang to produce, control, and challenge historical narratives, and the political imperatives of doing so. As explored in the previous chapter, the demands of covert politics in urban Sudan during the 1970s and early 1980s required that southerners manage others' perceptions of their social and political lives. In his position as chairman and commander-in-chief of the SPLM/A, Garang continued to shape his image, including by making historical sources and archives. Drawing on Trouillot's description of sources as 'instances of inclusion', I show that Garang included *himself* in the historical record, through a mix of personal storytelling and political theorizing.[459]

In newly independent African states, autobiographies and biographies of nationalist leaders have been directly tied to nation-building projects.[460] For Garang, biographical

[456] Deng, *Power*, location 137; Lino, *Dr John*, 73; Shimanyula, *John Garang*, 23.
[457] Idris, 'Historicizing race', 603, 605.
[458] Trouillot, *Silencing*, 31–69.
[459] Ibid., 48.
[460] Lindsay, 'Biography', 13; Boehmer, *Stories of Women*, 67.

storytelling offered a means to promote an alternative nationalist vision not only after but during Sudan's second civil war. Using the idea of 'competing' or 'rival' nationalisms, Africanist scholars have increasingly 'identified the fallacy of African national unity before and after independence.'[461] Giacomo Macola's political biography of Harry Mwaanga Nkumbula—a Zambian nationalist and post-independence opposition leader who was 'conveniently forgotten' or dismissed as a 'minor "tribal" irritant' by Zambia's ruling United National Independence Party after independence in 1964—shows how focusing on the intellectual politics of African leaders enriches study of divergent political projects both during and after independence.[462] Garang differs from Nkumbula in that he was never deposed as leader of the SPLM/A, despite the attempts of his internal rivals. However, Garang's nationalist vision for statewide reform in a united Sudan never came to full fruition and has accordingly received too little attention.

In an insightful study of Isaac Bangani Tabata, leader of South Africa's anti-Apartheid Unity Movement, Ciraj Rassool emphasizes the link between biographical writing and the movement's 'political work in exile.'[463] Tabata initially believed in 'collective leadership' for the movement and therefore avoided drawing attention to himself as a leader or author. Over time, however, he embraced named authorship and a biography which 'described him as "the leading political theorist of the South African liberation movement"' as the Unity Movement sought recognition from postcolonial African governments and the OAU, and to raise funds in the US.[464] In Garang's case, biographical information was usually shared orally rather than through written texts, but nevertheless played an important part in constituting his New Sudan vision. Garang shared personal stories of his transnational education to evoke Pan-Africanist solidarity and position himself against secessionism. Meanwhile, he sought to present himself as a credible, national politician and thereby dismiss the government's claims that Sudan's conflict derived from southern parochialism.

Beyond the much-studied SPLM/A *Manifesto*, Garang's discursive output included speeches to recruits, officers, and local and international audiences, given on radio or in

[461] Larmer and Lecocq, 'Historicising', 908–9.
[462] Macola, *Liberal Nationalism*, 3.
[463] Ciraj Rassool, 'Writing, authorship and I.B. Tabata's biography: From collective leadership to presidentialism', *Kronos*, 34/1 (2008), 183.
[464] Ibid., 213.

person; interviews with Sudanese and foreign journalists; and, towards the end of the war, written SPLM/A policy documents. His speeches were often captured on video and several are available today on YouTube thanks to Garang's son, Mabior, and other posters. Mabior explained that his father 'was very conscious of record-keeping':

> There was a video department always recording. So he was conscious of documenting whatever was being done. And he also used to say that we are doing this for posterity. It's a recurring line that I used to hear, that whatever we are doing is for posterity. And so I appreciate, there's very many cassette tapes, many VHS tapes of everything that was done, you know. And of course the [radio] messages to all units and all that. Some of them are being eaten by rats and stuff right now but the documentation was there.[465]

These videos were important during the war and as future records. Videos were 'smuggled' to Khartoum, where southern journalists sympathetic to the SPLM/A secretly showed them to young people.[466] In the absence of an accessible and official SPLM/A archive today, it is difficult to gauge the full extent and character of this documentation. What is certain, however, is that Garang was aware of, and actively participated in, these acts of history-making in real-time. Moreover, I argue that Garang thought about these sources in archival terms—that is, as a selection of 'the stories that matter' for use by later historians.[467] In an obvious example, Garang published a collection of his speeches in 1987 and a revised edition in 1992. Garang also frequently cross-referenced his speeches and writings, evoking *the idea* of an archive which showed his political commitment and consistency.

Although haphazardly preserved, available video and audio recordings of Garang's speeches testify that this strategy of producing sources was at least partially successful. These recordings offer a unique and underused set of material for studying Garang's arguments about ancient and recent Sudanese history, particularly when combined with oral history. My analysis of this audiovisual archive is informed by several interviews about Garang's personal interests and behaviour with his son, Mabior, and daughter, Akuol. These interviews capture Garang's interest in narrative and language—he gave Mabior a thesaurus for his sixteenth birthday—while the videos offer insight into Garang's rhetorical style and rhythm, often lost in transcription.[468] Together, the interviews and recordings allow me to

[465] Interview with Mabior Garang, 1 Apr. 2021.
[466] Interview with Mustafa Biong, Nairobi, 21 Aug. 2019.
[467] Trouillot, *Silencing*, 52.
[468] On transcription and oral history, see Alessandro Portelli, 'What makes oral history different', in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (London, 2015), 49–50.

study both the content and performance of Garang's political rhetoric. Where video/audio of Garang speaking is not available, I draw on anthologies of Garang's speeches and writings published by Wël, BBC international monitoring reports, and a handful of speeches and SPLM publications scattered in archives and personal collections around the world, to offer a fuller picture of Garang's intellectual output.[469]

One limitation of these sources is that they tell us little about how Garang's different audiences interpreted or were influenced by his speeches. Audio and video recordings reveal more than typed transcripts, sometimes capturing applause, laughter, ululations, and—more rarely—video shots of the audience, but still require extensive oral history research to understand what people thought of Garang. In this chapter, I focus on Garang's ideas about history and practices of historical production, and touch only briefly on how his speeches were interpreted by his audiences. Where I discuss audience, it is primarily to think about how Garang tailored his language and argument in different settings, and how he conjured the idea of an intertextual historical and political corpus. The following chapter returns to the audience question more fully in a case study of radio as a key medium of Garang's politics.

'We have become pink': Ideology and history in the SPLM/A's *Manifesto*

As the SPLM/A's founding ideological treatise, the *Manifesto* deserves close study not only for its political content but for its treatment of history and position as the SPLM/A's foremost historical 'source.' The *Manifesto*'s little studied origins reveal Garang's ideological flexibility and early attempts to deflect attention from the movement's tumultuous founding. The version of the *Manifesto* commonly known today was a second or third iteration, likely released in early 1984 and backdated to 31 July 1983. The revised version described the SPLM/A's goal as a 'socialist' instead of 'Marxist-Leninist' Sudan,

[469] Wël's anthologies pose certain problems as sources. Wël admits he had no way of verifying the veracity of the documents others showed him. Speeches which he transcribed from video or audio sources contain some errors, omissions, and additions (e.g. the elaborate addition of further Biblical references in Garang's CPA speech), and choices of punctuation, capitalization, and italicization are editorial. However, these limitations do not seriously impact the overall meaning of the texts and the anthologies remain an essential collection of Garang's written and oral output, without which this chapter would not have been possible. Wël also provided additional information on source material and contacts. I am indebted to him for this work and his generous assistance during my research.

and replaced 'Arab' with 'pseudo-Arab' to dampen both Communist and racial messaging.[470]

Precise details about when and by whom the *Manifesto* was written are unclear. Atem Yaak Atem, who joined the movement in May 1984 when the revised *Manifesto* was already circulating, believes the first version may have been the joint work of Garang and other members of the military underground movement of the early 1980s.[471] Atem explained that some members of this group genuinely believed that a Marxist-Leninist ideology 'would cut across ethnicity and religion' while others simply sought to ensure Ethiopian support. Arop has offered a slightly different account, describing how the southern rebel leadership was asked to write a position paper during their first meeting with Ethiopian authorities. When the Ethiopians declared the first attempt, produced by one of Garang's soon-to-be rivals, 'badly written' and without 'substance', Garang agreed to write a new paper on the condition that the movement fight for a united Sudan.[472] Arop also suggests that Garang might have drawn 'from the manifesto of the long-planned underground movement' but, unlike Atem, makes no mention of a divide between Marxist-Leninists and more moderate socialists.[473] Finally, Ajak has described a collaborative writing effort by southern rebel leaders in Ethiopia, led by Garang but involving others.[474]

Regardless of exactly how the first draft was written, interviews and SPLM/A memoirs show that the movement's political ideology was an early source of internal contention. Garang sent a copy of the original *Manifesto* to Pio Yukwan, SAF's commanding officer in Nasir to encourage him to defect to the SPLM/A.[475] Instead, Yukwan forwarded the *Manifesto* to President Nimeiri and attempted to lead Garang and his forces into a trap near Nasir, which they narrowly escaped. Nimeiri subsequently used the *Manifesto* to discredit the SPLM/A as communists to Sudan's Western allies and as racists to allies in the Arab world.[476] Around the same time, members of the southern Sudanese

[470] Akol, *SPLM/SPLA: Inside*, 293.
[471] Interview with Atem Yaak Atem, 26 Sept. 2021.
[472] Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road*, 69–70.
[473] Ibid., 70.
[474] Ajak, 'Building on sand', 72.
[475] Interview with Atem Yaak Atem, 26 Sept. 2021; Majak D'Agoôt, 'Reappraising the effectiveness of intelligence methods of a violent non-state sovereignty: A case-study of the SPLA insurgency in the Sudan (1983-2005)', *Intelligence and National Security*, 36/3 (2021), 398; 'Pio Yukwan' in Kuyok, *South Sudan*.
[476] Ibid.

students' movement in London, who would soon form the SPLM's UK chapter, also rejected the *Manifesto*. According to Col Dau Ding,

> We [students] all protested the first version. Because it was not good for us. The image was not acceptable. It was red communists. And we said this is not true because our war has nothing to do with ideology. Our war is about human rights.[477]

The London group therefore 'shelved' the *Manifesto*, telling the SPLM/A headquarters in Addis Ababa that 'this can't go, this is impossible.'[478]

The SPLM/A leadership responded quickly to feedback from Khartoum and abroad. The *Manifesto* was revised to remove Marxist-Leninist and racial terminology; the SPLM/A claimed that the *Manifesto* flaunted by Nimeiri was a forgery; and the London students reassured western embassies that the new *Manifesto* was the correct version.[479] Amon Mon Wantok remembers that, when Garang arrived in Itang from Addis Ababa with copies of the revised version ready for distribution, he quipped, 'we were no longer red; we have become pink', a reference to the new document's orange-pink cover and ideological shift away from Marxism-Leninism.[480] In March/April 1985, Garang shifted further from socialist language. In radio speeches, Garang stopped referring to a 'united socialist Sudan' and called instead for a 'New Sudan' or 'united democratic Sudan.'[481] By March 1986, Garang was explaining, 'we have to form a new Sudan so that our starting point is Sudanese and not capitalism, socialism or whatever. Our starting point is Sudanism.'[482]

In Wantok's retrospective account, the *Manifesto*'s revision is presented as evidence of Garang's disregard for collective decision-making through committees.[483] Similarly, Akol describes the revision as proof that 'the SPLM was unprincipled and could change

[477] Interview with Col Dau Ding, 14 Sept. 2021.
[478] Ibid.
[479] Ibid.; Akol, *SPLM/SPLA: Inside*, 293–4; Wantok, *Invasion*, 115.
[480] Wantok, *Invasion*, 115.
[481] In a radio speech on 22 March 1985, Garang said the SPLM fought for 'a democratic and socialist Sudan' and called for discussion about how to end the war and 'form a new Sudan.' He used the phrase 'new Sudan' in his 1972 letter to Joseph Lagu (see chapter one), but this marks its first use in available sources for the post-1983 period. (Cf. Rolandsen's erroneous claim that the phrase 'United New Sudan' dates to the 1983 *Manifesto*. Rolandsen, *Guerrilla Government*, 118.) From April 1985, Garang stopped using 'socialist Sudan' on radio. British Broadcasting Corporation Summary of World Broadcasts (SWB), online via Nexis UK, Part 4: The Middle East, Africa and Latin America, ME/7909/A/1, 'SPLA leader's "address to the Sudanese people', *Radio SPLA*, 22 Mar. 1985.
[482] SWB ME/8220/A/1, 'Sudanese rebel leader addresses conference in Ethiopia', *Radio SPLA*, 25 Mar. 1986. Unless otherwise stated, Radio SPLA broadcasts cited were broadcast in English.
[483] Wantok, *Invasion*, 115.

colours if and when the going gets tough.'[484] This is true to the extent that the SPLM/A leadership very quickly abandoned a Marxist-Leninist rhetoric they thought would bring more reputational harm than benefit. However, the *Manifesto*'s core interpretation of Sudanese history as a crisis of unequal development remained unaltered, indicating that formal ideological labels mattered less to Garang than challenging Sudan's dominant historical discourse of 'the southern problem.'

Notably, the revised *Manifesto* was backdated to 31 July 1983, presumably to promote the idea that the SPLM/A and its aims were well established from this date and to avoid evidence of the revision. In this, the *Manifesto*'s dating reflects Garang's wider efforts to generate a usable and appropriately documented past for the SPLM/A. As Manoeli has argued, the *Manifesto* played a central role in shifting the discursive terrain of Sudanese politics.[485] It offered a materialist reading of history to denounce successive governments' neglect of Sudan's marginalized regions and dismissed southern secessionists past and present as being preoccupied with personal advancement.[486] More subtly, the *Manifesto* created a founding history for the SPLM/A which directly benefited Garang and other absorbed Anyanya officers.

As we have seen, the SPLM/A emerged out of different underground organizations following the ad hoc Bor Mutiny. It was therefore important that the *Manifesto* script a coherent origin story to establish the SPLM/A as *the* representative movement of the Sudanese people. The *Manifesto* described 'two contingency plans' developed by 'prominent absorbed Anynya [*sic*] I officers' in reaction to successive government attempts to dismantle the Addis Ababa Agreement:

> The first plan was to attack and capture Juba, Capital of the Southern Region. This plan was to be executed by Battalion 105 with re-inforcement from Torit and Kapoeta, and from Anya-nya II who were to assemble near Ayod and Pachalla. A socialist government was to be established in Juba and measures taken to assist in transforming the situation in Khartoum.
>
> The second plan, in the event that Khartoum attacked first displacing and dislodging Battalions 105 and 104 from their bases, was to regroup and reorganize to wage a protracted armed struggle for the total liberation of the Sudan. It is the second plan that has become

[484] Akol, *SPLM/SPLA: Inside*, 294.
[485] Manoeli, *Sudan's 'Southern Problem'*, 159.
[486] Ibid., 160–1.

> necessary. Khartoum attacked Bor and Pibor Garrisons on 16/5/1983, and later the Ayod Garrison attacked Khartoum forces that were sent to arrest the Commander.[487]

Embedding these plans within the *Manifesto* achieved several effects. In the first and preferred plan, it established the organization and initiative of underground Anyanya officers planning to seize Khartoum. In the second, it presented the events of May 1983 as the inevitable result of Khartoum's brutality, brushing over Kerubino Kuanyin's illicit poaching in Pochalla and the possible financial mismanagement of Battalion 105. It also established 16 May 1983 as the most important date in the genesis of the resistance, a point since contested.

The *Manifesto* did mention some of the other political groups active in the 1970s and early 1980s described in chapter two, including NAM, CUSS, Movement for Total Liberation of Southern Sudan, and Equatoria Central Committee. However, they were subsumed within the history of the SPLM/A when the *Manifesto* claimed, 'Elements of the military and political organizations in paragraphs 15 and 18 have established [SPLA] and [SPLM].'

Garang's construction of this history was important in asserting his leadership of the SPLM/A and discrediting his secessionist rivals. In a 1987 interview in *Heritage*, a Khartoum-based newspaper run by southerners, journalist Arop Madut Arop asked Garang a probing question about whether the war was 'imposed' on him when 'on annual leave in Bor town when the battalion 105 mutiny took place'.[488] In response, Garang elaborated on the two plans presented in the *Manifesto*:

> It is not true that the war was imposed on me by the circumstances you have just described. […] For your information, the Bor incident of May 1983 was not a mutiny by Battalion 105 as it is being claimed in certain quarters. […] Our plan was to move onto Juba, capture it and make it our springboard to launch the movement. If the movement had started in Bor it was because Major General Siddiq Al Banna, the then commander of the Southern Command who wanted to pre-empt our move struck first. In reality, our plan to launch the present movement started in February 1983.

Like in the *Manifesto*, Garang asserted the advance planning of a core group of Anyanya officers and al Banna's 'pre-emptive' attack. He then described how he outsmarted his northern commanders in the days before and during the events in Bor, to dispel any notion that the SPLM/A—or his leadership of it—were products of chance.

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[487] SPLM, *Manifesto*, ch. 6.
[488] 'Dr. John Garang's 1987 Heritage Interview'.

As an act of history-making for public consumption, Garang's interview with Arop shows his discursive strategy of repeating past information, often almost word for word, to establish consistency in the joint historical narratives of the movement and his own life. In the absence of detailed research on southern politics in the 1970s-80s, this interview has had an outsized impact on other representations of the 'underground resistance'.[489] In post-independence South Sudan, like in other post-liberation contexts, this has contributed to an insular circularity which obscures more detailed inquiry into other underground movements active in the 1970s eclipsed by the SPLM/A.[490] As the war progressed, Garang continued to script Sudanese history in response to events as they happened, not only to establish his leadership of the SPLM/A but to delegitimize the Sudanese government.

Making and archiving a usable past

In his speeches, Garang drew on recent historical examples to highlight the cyclical failures of successive 'Khartoum cliques.'[491] In contrast, he presented the SPLM/A as the solution to Sudan's underdevelopment and in-built discrimination, the 'vanguard' or 'catalyst' of a wider, historically rooted 'mass' revolution.[492] This focus on recent events is especially prevalent in the speeches he gave on the movement's Radio SPLA between 1984 and 1991. Like the *Manifesto*'s emphasis on 16 May as a historical event, several of his radio speeches marked the anniversaries of significant occasions such as the founding of the SPLM/A and Nimeiri's overthrow.[493] Giving speeches on these days reinforced the idea that the SPLM/A had a history with landmark moments to be celebrated.

As the war progressed, one way in which Garang broke from an older discourse which pitted the 'Arab North' against the 'African South' while maintaining a historically recognizable enemy was by emphasizing continuities of policy and personalities among

[489] Drawing on this interview with Garang and other interviews conducted during his journalistic career, Arop subsequently published a 400-page book, which remains one of the most thorough accounts of the movement and has been much-cited since. See Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road*.
[490] Davis, *The ANC's War*, 87.
[491] SWB ME/7800/A/1, 'Sudanese rebel leader's appeal to the people', *Radio SPLA*, 10 Nov. 1984; SWB ME/7962/A/1, 'Garang address to Sudanese people: Views on new Khartoum regime unchanged', *Radio SPLA*, 26 May 1985.
[492] SWB ME/7922/A/1, 'Sudanese rebel leader's threat to continue struggle', *Radio SPLA*, 9 Apr. 1985; SWB ME/0537/A/1, 'SPLA's four-point peace plan', *Radio SPLA*, 15 Aug. 1989.
[493] E.g. SWB ME/7800/A/1, 'Sudanese rebel leader's appeal to the people', *Radio SPLA*, 10 Nov. 1984; SWB ME/8087/A/1, 'Sudanese rebel leader's address to the nation', *Radio SPLA*, 19 Oct. 1985; SWB ME/8227A/1, 'Sudanese rebel leader's anniversary address', *Radio SPLA*, 6 Apr. 1986.

Khartoum's ruling elite. Despite the alleged revolutions signalled by the overthrow of President Jaafar Nimeiri in 1985, the partial elections of 1986, the civilian coalitions of the late 1980s, and finally Omar al-Bashir's military coup of 1989, Garang drew explicit links across the politics of successive regimes, referring to each with derogatory nicknames. From the start of the war, he criticized Nimeiri's 'one-man no-system dictatorship'.[494] When Nimeiri was overthrown, Garang referred to the generals of the Transitional Military Council (TMC) as either 'the gang of four' or 'May II', highlighting their involvement as generals in Nimeiri's recently overthrown 'May regime'.[495] When Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi allied with Hassan al-Turabi and Ahmad Ali al-Mirghani in 1988 to form a Government of National Unity, Garang called them 'the government of national disunity' or 'the unholy trinity', accusing them of rejecting the SPLM/A's peace initiatives and viewing 'death and human suffering' as 'mere statistics'.[496] Finally, when Sadiq was overthrown in a military coup led by Bashir, Garang referred to Bashir's government as simply 'the junta', emphasizing Sudan's history of military coups and asking who would guarantee that a peace agreement between the SPLM/A and Bashir 'will not be cancelled by some Umar two who may take over tomorrow?'[497] Beyond simply demonizing the government, these nicknames underwrote a usable history of minority rule and oppression, defined not by southerners' abuse by 'the Arabs' but by successive governments' 'sectarianism', 'warmongering', and dictatorship.

In contrast, Garang emphasized continuity in his own political programme, referring to past speeches as evidence of his consistency.[498] This cross-referencing acted as an oral archive which evoked a coherent body of political argument. In 1987, this oral archive took material form with the publication of a selection of Garang's speeches and letters in *John Garang Speaks*, edited by Mansour Khalid, a well-regarded northern Sudanese academic and diplomat who had joined the SPLM. The book was published one year after the Koka Dam Declaration committed the SPLM and the National Alliance for National Salvation—a group of northern professionals, academics and trade unionists loosely affiliated with the

[494] SWB ME/7909/A/1, 'SPLA leader's "address to Sudanese people"', *Radio SPLA*, 22 Mar. 1985.
[495] SWB ME/7922/A/1, 'Sudanese rebel leader's threat to continue struggle', *Radio SPLA*, 9 Apr. 1985.
[496] SWB ME/0204/A/1, 'Sudan Garang says SPLA is "stronger than ever before", *Radio SPLA*, 12 Jul. 1988.
[497] SWB ME/0536/A/1, 'Sudan SPLA leader on coup d'etat and new regime's attitude to peace process', *Radio SPLA*, 14 Aug. 1989.
[498] For example, ibid. refers to speech given 27 May 1985.

ruling TMC—to convening a 'National Constitutional Conference'. In the context of the Koka Dam Declaration, *John Garang Speaks* endeavored 'to explain the genesis and objectives' of the SPLM/A and to offer 'evidence' to refute 'the claim that the SPLM has persistently refused to talk to other Sudanese political groups who were genuinely seeking a solution to the country's problems.'[499] In his editorial preface, Khalid highlighted the example of Garang's opening speech in Koka Dam:

> Surprisingly, that speech, recorded in sound and vision, was never shown in Khartoum, while large space was given in radio, television and the press, to statements by political and intellectual nonentities who laboured hard to abort the peace process. That happened at the same time as Khartoum claimed that its public fora were open to the SPLM, were the Movement to decide to use the media to make its case known to the Sudanese people.[500]

Signalling the SPLM's careful acts of documentation, Khalid drew a stark contrast between the duplicitous actions of Khartoum and the SPLM/A's self-professed consistency and readiness for dialogue.

Khalid explained that the book's appeal was 'primarily made to the educated Sudanese, the pacesetters', and that it would contribute to '[laying] bare the confusion caused by the double talk of those who seek to mystify, and the simplistic interpretations of those whose minds are free from serious thought.'[501] Notwithstanding the SPLM/A's own attempts to 'mystify', Khalid appealed to historical 'evidence' to validate Garang's and the SPLM/A's consistency and historically informed political programme. In 1992, *John Garang Speaks* was republished under the new title *The Call for Democracy in Sudan*, with an updated set of sources. With Bashir's 'nightmarish government' in power in Khartoum following the coup of 1989, Khalid's new preface expressed his regret that the non-SPLM/A signatories of the Koka Dam Declaration had failed to abide by the spirit of its provisions.[502] Reiterating the need for publicly available historical sources in the context of the inconsistency of successive Khartoum governments, Khalid declared,

> [T]he idea behind the book was not merely to retell events, but to make available to researchers and serious students of Sudanese affairs textual resources that are badly needed on a subject that is often misrepresented, misunderstood and deliberately maligned.[503]

[499] John Garang and Manṣūr Khālid, *John Garang Speaks* (London, 1987), vii.
[500] Ibid., viii.
[501] Ibid., xix.
[502] John Garang and Manṣūr Khālid, *The Call for Democracy in Sudan*, 2nd ed. (London, 1992), xx–xxi.
[503] Ibid., xxv.

As a project of making key sources accessible in archival form, *John Garang Speaks* and *The Call for Democracy* reflect Garang's wider commitment to (selective) documentation for 'posterity.'

'Down the corridors of history': Ancient origins for a New Sudan

In addition to creating a record of recent events in SPLM/A history, Garang had a longstanding interest in ancient African history, as seen in chapter one. Understanding Garang's historical rhetoric requires attention to his synthesis of diverse intellectual sources and to the global networks of black, Pan-African, and liberation theory which Garang encountered throughout his life. Like Garang's schoolmates, Mabior and Akuol emphasized their father's intellectualism and large collection of books. Akuol remembered that Garang 'would never answer questions directly, he was very thoughtful.'[504] Similarly, Mabior stressed that Garang was opposed to 'dogma' of any kind. Applying these insights to Garang's speeches, I demonstrate in this section and the following one that Garang was attentive to, and challenged, the active 'silences' of racist histories of the ancient Nile Valley.[505]

When Mabior was around sixteen or seventeen, Garang gave him and his friends an intellectual exercise:

> He saw that we are young people who are very interested in the movement and all this. So he was trying to guide us in his own way. And he gave us an exercise and he said for us to define Africa. You know, what is Africa? And I have been answering that question up to today.[506]

Mabior recalled that, at the time, the answer seemed obvious: that Africa was the place of 'black people'. However, Garang pushed them to think more critically, asking them about white South Africans and Indians in East Africa who had migrated a long time ago. Mabior explained that his father 'forced [him and his friends] not to take textbook definitions and think for ourselves.' Defining Africa, Mabior explained, required thinking about 'how Africa was populated', 'how the world was populated out of Africa', how Pan-Africanism was initially 'foreign to Africa', and how blackness was a 'new identity' formed in the

[504] Interview with Akuol de Mabior.
[505] Trouillot, *Silencing*, 53.
[506] Interview with Mabior Garang, 25 Mar. 2021.

context of a history of lost identity and humanity among African peoples, dating back to the Greco-Roman conquest of Egypt.[507]

This question—what is Africa?—speaks to Garang's preoccupation with history and identity in Sudan, and reflects wider debates about Pan-Africanism at the time, particularly in the lead up to the 7th Pan African Congress (PAC) in April 1994, attended by Garang.[508] Scholarship on ancient Egypt and its relationship with Africa has often 'been an exercise in ideological definition', in which Egypt has been presented as an origin of 'western civilization' and hence presented as 'in Africa, but not of Africa.'[509] The idea of Egypt as an African exception has had important impacts in Sudan, shaping inequalities of colonial governance,[510] but also the disciplinary boundaries of colonial knowledge production, privileging archaeology in the north and anthropology in the south.[511] To this day, the archaeology of South Sudan remains seriously understudied.[512]

A handful of recent histories counteract a prevailing idea of South Sudan's 'isolation' by drawing attention to 'a common pool of ideas and symbols' shared by 'modern and ancient Nile Basin societies,' if not necessarily 'a direct unbroken relationship.'[513] Garang was making these comparisons by the early 1970s, if not sooner, and they were central to his New Sudan vision. From his days as an undergraduate student and young Anyanya captain through to his death in 2005, Garang considered how to prevent what he described in 1972 as

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[507] Ibid.

[508] 'Rebuilding the Pan African Movement, a report on the 7th Pan African Congress', *African Journal of Political Science*, 1/1 (1996), 2; See also Hakim Adi, *Pan-Africanism: A History* (London, 2018), 1–6, 208–12.

[509] David O'Connor and Andrew Reid, 'Introduction', in O'Connor and Reid (eds.), *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, 2–4, drawing from V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge* (London, 1988). The broader point of Africa's 'invention' as antithesis to Western 'civilization' has been made repeatedly. See e.g. Chinua Achebe, 'An image of Africa', *The Massachusetts Review*, 18/4 (1977), 782–794, and, more recently, Binyavanga Wainaina, 'How to write about Africa' (2 May 2019), https://granta.com/how-to-write-about-africa/ [accessed 28 May 2021]

[510] Oliver Albino, *The Sudan: A Southern Viewpoint* (London, 1970), 19–23; Lam Akol, *South Sudan: From Colonial Neglect to National Misrule*, 2nd ed. (2014).

[511] David Wengrow, 'Landscapes of knowledge, idioms of power: The African foundations of Ancient Egyptian civilization reconsidered', in O'Connor and Reid (eds.), *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, 122–3.

[512] David Kay, Samuel Lunn-Rockliffe, and Matthew Davies, 'The archaeology of South Sudan from c. 3000 BC to AD 1500', *Azania*, 54/4 (2019), 516–537.

[513] Douglas Johnson, *South Sudan: A New History for a New Nation* (Athens, 2016), 18–19, 41. See also Martell, *First Raise a Flag*, 11–15; K. J. Liah, *The Progenies of the Babylonian Empire* (2019); Lewis Anei Madut Kuendit, *The Dinka History: The Ancients of Sudan* (2010).

> …the universal law that in whatever multi-nationality country where one of the nationalities is economically and politically (and therefore socially and culturally) dominant over other nationalities, that country is pregnant with instability, discontent and crisis, eventually erupting in warfare.[514]

Economically, Garang's solution was to develop the 'peripheries.' Culturally, he sought a historical narrative of both grandeur and cultural diversity which pre-dated Arab domination.

Mabior emphasized that the disruption of 'cultural continuity' in the Nile Valley was an issue which Garang thought about deeply.[515] Garang's exploration of culture involved detailed study of the ancient history of the Nile Valley, its repeated exploitation by foreigners, and the disruptive effects of successive regimes of slave trading. As noted in chapter one, he was particularly interested in Afrocentrism, which he continued to explore while the war was underway through works like Ivan Van Sertima's *Egypt Revisited* (1983).[516] In addition, he read anthropological and historical studies of southern Sudan written by well-known foreign scholars, including Edward Evans-Pritchard, Godfrey Lienhardt, and, in later years, Douglas Johnson.[517]

Garang's discursive mission was to displace what he had termed 'Arab nationalism' in 1972 and the oppression of 'Khartoum cliques' from 1983 with a millennia-old history of habitation and migration in the Nile Valley. Exploring this history, he claimed, would offer 'the basis for the New Sudan'.[518] Two texts feature in Garang's presentation of historical evidence: the second volume of UNESCO's *General History of Africa (GHA)*, covering 'ancient civilizations in Africa', and the Bible. In one of his few direct encounters with Garang, the historian Douglas Johnson remembers Garang telling him that the second volume of *GHA* was one of his favourite books.[519]

Published in 1981, the volume offers a microcosm of the identity politics then (and still) at play in historical study of Ancient Egypt and the Nile Valley. In the volume's introduction, Gamal Mokhtar highlighted ongoing controversy over whether ancient

[514] 'Captain John Garang's 1972 letter to General Joseph Lagu of Anyanya One', in Wël, *Genius of Dr. John*, vol. 2.
[515] Interview with Mabior Garang, 8 Apr. 2021.
[516] Mabior (interview, 1 Apr. 2021) remembers picking up a copy of *Egypt Revisited* from his father's desk when he was about 17 (c. 1994) and said this was his entry point into studying Nile Valley history and black consciousness.
[517] Interview with Mabior Garang, 8 Apr. 2021.
[518] 'Dr. John Garang's 1987 Heritage Interview'.
[519] Interview with Douglas Johnson, Oxford, 20 Sept. 2021.

Egyptians were black, stating 'it is highly doubtful whether the inhabitants that introduced civilization into the Nile valley ever belonged to one single, pure race. The very history of the peopling of the valley refutes such a possibility.'[520] By contrast, in the first chapter of the volume proper, Diop argued emphatically that Egyptians *were* black and that the rest of Africa was peopled through diffusion from Egypt; notably, Diop's chapter was accompanied by an editorial note highlighting that '[t]he arguments put forward in this chapter have not been accepted by all the experts interested in the problem (cf. Introduction, above).'[521]

Whether or not Garang referred to an explicit black identity depended on his audience. In some cases, he drew on the ancient history of the Nile Valley and its accompanying debates to invoke Pan-Africanist solidarity and, in others, Sudanese diversity. Although at face value very different arguments, both adapted ideas of ancient history informed by Garang's study of the Nile Valley and emphasized the newness of 'Arab-Islamic' nationalism in Sudan. The two recorded instances where he directly references the *GHA* ground Sudanese identity in an ancient past of rising and falling kingdoms.

Speaking to a Sudanese audience in the US in 2004, Garang explained that 'the fundamental problem of the Sudan' was 'the attempt by various Khartoum-based regimes to build a monolithic Arab-Islamic state to the exclusion of other parameters of the Sudanese diversity.'[522] To explain his more inclusive alternative, 'Sudanism', Garang appealed to history:

> We as Sudanese have a concrete anchor in history […] There is also a series of books, a *General History of Africa by UNESCO, Vol. 1-7*. And volume two covers the Nile Valley and the Horn of Africa. I recommend that you acquire and read this book. It's by UNESCO, and it is authoritative because it has lots of research.

Garang continued,

> Peoples and kingdoms have lived, thrived, and disappeared in the geographical area that now constitutes the present Sudan. […] Our contention in the SPLM is that the Sudan belongs to all the peoples that now inhabit the country and its history, its diversity, and richness is the common heritage of *all* the Sudanese people [...] And so let no one push you off the rail of history.

[520] Mokhtar, 'Introduction', 14.
[521] Cheikh Anta Diop, 'Origin of the ancient Egyptians', in G. Mokhtar (ed.), *General History of Africa, Vol. 2* (Paris, 1981), 51n74.
[522] Hajooj Kuka, 'A speech by John Garang - FULL', YouTube, uploaded 2011, https://youtu.be/GfnhnDeUgpQ [11 Jul. 2023].

Here history—specifically the 'authoritative' interpretation of the *GHA*, presented by Garang devoid of its internal controversies—acts as the bedrock of a more inclusive Sudan. Garang argued that diversity was part and parcel of Sudanese history and that learning this history would allow the Sudanese people to embrace diversity as a project of positive nation-building.

Delivering a similar speech in Nairobi the same year, Garang elaborated on this idea of diversity, taking his audience 'down the corridors of history to show that we, the Sudanese, are indeed the historical people and that the New Sudan has an anchor in history.'[523] In this rendition, he named specific kingdoms which he alleged offered origins for contemporary southern Sudanese peoples:

> Then you come down the corridors of history, and you go to the ancient kingdoms of Wawat, the kingdom of Irtet, the kingdom of Madja, and the kingdom of Annu. You will find these kingdoms in the *General History of Africa, Volume Two, by UNESCO*. So also I am not making it up. You can go and verify.[524]

He claimed that Wau may have derived its name from Wawat; that the Shilluk people, called 'Tet' by the Nuer, may be descendants of Irtet; and that the Anyuak were connected with the kingdom and/or the God of Annu. With the exception of the example of the Anyuak and Annu, covered by Diop, these direct correlations do not figure in *GHA*.[525] However, what mattered for Garang's political message was simply that these kingdoms existed, that international scholars acknowledged them, and that contemporary Sudan possessed a rich history of population and displacement which long predated the 'monolithic Arab-Islamic state' which had, since independence, 'insisted to define the Sudan in their own image to the exclusion of others.'[526]

Garang's use of Biblical allusions served a similar function of rooting the Sudanese in the ancient past. With typical charisma and humour, Garang explained on several occasions that his own village near Bor fell within the boundaries of the Garden of Eden:

> Many people will be surprised that in the Bible, in the Old Testament, the Sudan was part of the Garden of Eden, [*cheering breaks long audience silence*] where it is stated in Genesis Chapter 2, Verse 8 to 14, that the Garden of Eden was watered by four rivers. One of them

[523] 'Dr. John Garang's first briefing to the Sudanese community in Kenya, after the signing of the last three protocols in Naivasha, Kenya' (Nairobi, 30 May. 2004), in Wël, *Genius of Dr. John*, vol. 1 It is unclear whether the speech in Nairobi or in Washington was delivered first.
[524] Ibid.
[525] Diop, 'Origin', 31–3.
[526] 'Dr. John Garang's first briefing to the Sudanese community in Kenya.'

> is the White Nile, it is Pishon in the Bible. The other is the Gihon and there is a Gihon Hotel in Addis Ababa. It is the Blue Nile. And to the east by the Tigris and by the Euphrates. So the Garden of Eden was not a small vegetable garden, it was a vast piece of territory. [*scattered ululations*] My own village happens to be just east of the Nile. So I fall in the Garden of Eden. [*laughter and cheering*][527]

When he delivered his speech in Nairobi after signing the CPA, this proclamation was met with delighted laughter.[528] More broadly, Garang was adept at using humour to build political and social rapport.[529]

In another example, Garang quoted from the book of Isaiah:

> The book of prophet Isaiah (Chapter 18) talks about the Kush; the land beyond the mountains of Ethiopia that is spoiled by rivers and that is peopled by tall black smooth-skinned beautiful people that send ambassadors to Jerusalem. That is an unambiguous description of present Southern Sudan.[530]

Garang was not the first to make this connection in a Sudanese context. The same verses are cited in *GHA* and form the opening declaration of Evans-Pritchard's *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*, which Garang read and cited in his PhD thesis.[531] There is also a deeper Nilotic tradition of tracing descendance from Biblical Cush and the ancient Israelites.[532] This tradition continues to appeal to some Dinka and Nuer scholars today.[533]

Chris Tounsel has studied the wider use of Biblical narratives in SPLM/A publications and demonstrates the popularity of Isaiah's 'prophecy against Cush', interpreted by southern Sudanese to promise 'ultimate victory.'[534] However, Garang's speeches suggest he was more focused on the Bible as a historical document than a straightforward source of divine destiny. Indeed, both Akuol and Mabior commented on Garang's ambiguous relationship with Christianity.[535] Reflecting on Garang's manner of answering questions, Akuol related how she once asked her father whether he believed in

[527] South Sudan Music Videos, 'DR JOHN GARANG'S SPEECH', YouTube, uploaded 8 Nov. 2018, https://youtu.be/ebLLRx8UgUY [18 Jan. 2022].
[528] Ibid.
[529] Johnson, *Waging Peace*, 10; interviews with Jim Overdahl; Ted Dagne, phone, 11 Jul. 2021.
[530] 'Dr John Garang's speech at the Brooking Institution; Center for Strategic and International Studies; and at the International Press Club' (Washington DC, Dec. 1995), in Wël, *Genius of Dr. John*, vol. 1.
[531] de Mabior, 'Identifying', 72, 147, 223.
[532] Christopher Tounsel, *Chosen Peoples: Christianity and Political Imagination in South Sudan* (Durham, NC, 2021), 108.
[533] E.g. Liah, *Progenies*; Kuendit, *Dinka History*.
[534] Tounsel, *Chosen Peoples*, 105.
[535] See also Johnson, *Waging Peace*, 11.

God and was shocked that 'he didn't just say *yes*; he gave an indirect answer.'[536] She explained that their family is Christian, but that 'none of us have Christian names, because my parents wanted us to decide for ourselves if we wanted to have them, when we were old enough.' In a separate interview, Mabior related how, during a phase when he was exploring Christianity deeply, his father worried about him 'taking the Bible too literally':

> And my father used to read the Bible a lot, you know, he was very into the Bible. And I remember […] his worry about me taking the Bible too literally […] He read the Bible a lot but he read it as a scholar and he understood it in a different way.[537]

Like Mabior's task to define 'Africa', Garang's approach to the Bible represents, for Akuol and Mabior, his urge to question. In his speeches and writings, Garang's 'scholarly' approach to the Bible paralleled his wider use of Afrocentric history in asserting the ancient origins and diversity of Sudanese peoples to offer a foundation for the New Sudan.

In less formal contexts, Garang made the same argument without academic references or jargon. Addressing an audience of the SPLM/A's prisoners of war in Yei in 2004 in Arabic, the language they would understand best, Garang refuted the government's claims that it was fighting to protect Islam, Arabism, and the unity of Sudan:

> ثالثآ: بقولوا العروبة في خطورة. الثقافة العربية ثقافة سودانية (. . .) النوير عندهم ثقافة، الفور عندهم ثقافة، النوبة عندهم ثقافة، ال ال الدناقلا عندهم ثقافة، البجاء عندهم ثقافة، الدينكا عندهم ثقافة كل الثقافات ديل ياهو بكون السودان. (تصفيق) ومافي واحد من الثقافات ديل مهدد. مافي خطورة لأي من الثقافات ديل سوي كان ثقافة عربية ولا أفريقيا وغيره في السودان. فاااا التعددية ده تعددية بتاع ثقافات برضوا حاجة حلو، حاجة كويس ما بطالة. (تصفيق) خلي نبني بيه السودان الجديد النحنا بنقولوا ده.
>
> [Thirdly, they say that Arabism is endangered. The Arab culture is a Sudanese culture (…) The Nuer have their culture, Darfur have their culture, Nuba have their culture and Dongola have their culture, the Beja have their culture, the Dinka have their culture, all these cultures are the formation of Sudan (*applause*). And not one of these cultures is endangered. There is no endangerment for any of these cultures whether it's African or Arab or another. So this diversity of cultures is great and something that's good not bad (*applause*). Let's use it to build the New Sudan that we are talking about.][538]

The SPLM/A, Garang argued, was not against any specific group, only the domination of one group over others. A video of this speech shows Garang in his element, speaking without notes to explain the New Sudan to POWs. It is among the most popular of Garang's speeches on YouTube, with almost a quarter million views as of February 2022, and was often cited in my focus groups and interviews with young South Sudanese.

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[536] Interview with Akuol de Mabior.
[537] Interview with Mabior Garang, 1 Apr. 2021.
[538] GarangKuot, 'John Garang speaking to POWs (partII)', YouTube, uploaded 15 Jul. 2007, https://youtu.be/MPtoSogR_zQ [20 Jan. 2022]. Translated by Sunday Beiag.

Beyond Garang's speeches, Sudan's ancient history features in a number of the SPLM/A's core policy documents, of which Garang was the chief author.[539] The opening section of the movement's *Vision, Programme and Constitution* of March 1998 gives a history of Sudan which 'goes back thousands of years' to describe 'the central problem of the Sudan'.[540] A similar but more empirically detailed history introduces an unfinished draft for a new *SPLM Manifesto* dating from the time of Garang's death. The draft's first section is titled 'The historical roots of the problem of Sudan' and opens,

> The history of the Sudan dates back to millenniums before Christ during which time some parts of the present Sudan founded kingdoms and the oldest known civilizations whose influence extended to other parts of the world ever since.[541]

The idea of Nile Valley civilizations influencing 'other parts of the world' reflects the Afrocentric theories of Diop and Van Sertima. This draft and *Vision, Programme and Constitution,* asserted the richness of pre-Arab civilization in the Nile Valley. After describing various ancient kingdoms, the draft continues, 'Then came the period of the 'Entry of the Arabs', which some writers distort as the 'Entry of the people to the Sudan'. This erroneously presupposes that there lived no people in the Sudan in the first place.'[542] This draft was never formally adopted by the movement, but the *SPLM Manifesto* of 2008—the first official revision to the original *Manifesto* of 1983—retains the historical emphasis of the 2005 draft and *Vision, Programme and Constitution*. Echoing the wording of Garang's speeches at the Chukudum Convention and Pan African Congress in 1994 (see below), it explains that 'no book of significance from antiquity has neglected to mention us, and the richness of our civilizations.'[543]

The centrality of Garang's narrative of 'historical diversity' is clear, but its impact on members of the movement and the wider Sudanese population was mixed. When the movement split in 1991, Garang's rivals put forward counter histories which focused on southern resistance to foreign incursion instead of a deep history of peoples coming and going, discussed further in chapter five. The diversity narrative also became less relevant

[539] Interview with Alfred Sebit Lokuji.
[540] SPLM, *Vision, Programme and Constitution of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement* (Yei and New Cush, New Sudan, 1998), 4.
[541] Copy of 'The SPLM Manifesto' draft, 2005, shared by Mabior Garang.
[542] Ibid.
[543] Ibid.

after Garang's death in 2005 and South Sudan's independence in 2011. In this new political context, a different narrative of the past was required which more closely aligned with that put forward by the secessionist factions. The updated *SPLM Manifesto* of 2016 still opens with a section on history but under the title 'Historical background: The SPLM and its genesis.'[544] Instead of highlighting a rich past of achievement and diversity, it describes 'the history of the People of South Sudan' as one of 'struggle for emancipation and freedom', with evidence of 'different methods of resistance' dating 'to the early sixteenth Century Islamic sultanates.'[545] In this way, the post-independence SPLM leadership conceptualized South Sudan as a state born from shared experiences of oppression and resistance. This past was 'usable' in a different way, to support the political primacy of the SPLM as leaders of the resistance.

To some extent, this reversion is evidence that Garang's references to ancient history had limited traction, at least with other senior SPLM/A commanders. However, I would not go as far as saying that the idea of the New Sudan died with Garang.[546] Where Garang's rhetorical focus on history has had more lasting currency is with individuals and groups interested in the history of the struggle. At the end of an interview in 2019, a South Sudanese Member of Parliament expressed his happiness to participate in my research in reference to Garang's focus on history:

> I'm happy because definitely *history* is important as late Dr John used always to say. You need history, and he says, when you find […] two rams fighting, you find them always going back and then, this is why, and they come now charging again to lock horns – why do they go back? They go back in order to gain momentum. So history is important in one's life.[547]

Whether or not the details of Garang's history lessons have stuck, there is recognition of history's political relevance. Moreover, documents like *Vision, Programme and Constitution* and videos like that of Garang speaking to POWs in Yei—readily accessible online for free—remain popular among young South Sudanese, as I explore further in chapter seven.[548] Finally, Garang's historical rhetoric did not just target a domestic audience;

[544] SPLM, *SPLM Manifesto* (2016), 6.
[545] Ibid., 7.
[546] Kuir ë Garang, 'Political ideology and organisational espousal: A political-historical analysis of Dr. John Garang de Mabior's "New Sudan Vision"', *Modern Africa: Politics, History and Society*, 7/2 (2019), 111.
[547] Interview with Daniel Deng Monydit.
[548] Interviews with Garang Yach, Juba, 13 Aug. 2019; Agook Mayek, Juba, 13 Aug. 2019; Youth focus group 1; Youth focus group 2, Nairobi, 31 Aug. 2019.

it served a wider purpose in establishing Garang's East African and Pan-Africanist credentials.

Pan-Africanism and the New Sudan

The SPLM/A's African and international connections are among the least studied aspects of its history. There is general research on the trends of the SPLM/A's external military and political backing, and on the role of international relief in shaping the war.[549] However, with the exception of a handful of South Sudanese memoirs and accounts by western diplomats, the efforts of Garang and others to foster personal, regional, and international relationships have gone largely unstudied.[550] This section considers how Garang used ancient history to position himself as a Pan-Africanist for different African and international audiences, and how this positioning reinforced the New Sudan project. Garang's biographical and nationalist strategies went hand in hand as he bolstered his Pan-African narrative through stories about his student experiences in East Africa in the 1960s, presenting his personal life as proof of the SPLM/A's commitment to African and Sudanese unity.

This section builds on work by Nicki Kindersley and Amir Idris highlighting the importance of 'blackness' and the 'discursive construction of racial and ethnic identities' in Sudanese politics.[551] Unlike Garang's carefully non-racial rhetoric of a diverse New Sudan in the speeches above, the speeches discussed here evoked a shared black African history. These speeches raise the question of how Garang thought about race and politics in a Sudanese context, and how he disseminated his ideas to different audiences. Emphasis on black Egypt as the root of civilization in Africa and globally is characteristic of the Afrocentric texts read by Garang, but Garang was careful of when and how he deployed this narrative. In the examples which follow, he alluded to an ancient black identity to challenge Arab nationalism. However, unlike representations of Sudan's conflicts as the result of an

[549] Manoeli, *Sudan's 'Southern Problem'*, 153–6; Johnson, *Root Causes*, 85; Aalen, 'Ethiopian state support', 633, 637; Rolandsen and Daly, *History of South Sudan*, 116–8; African Rights, *Food and Power in Sudan: A Critique of Humanitarianism* (London, 1997); Millard Burr and Robert Collins, *Requiem for the Sudan: War, Drought, and Disaster Relief on the Nile* (Oxford, 1995); Ātāul Karim, *Operation Lifeline Sudan: A Review* (1996).

[550] Deng, *Visitations*; James Wani Igga, *Southern Sudan: Battles Fought and the Secrecy of Diplomacy* (Kampala, 2008); Zach Vertin, *A Rope from the Sky: The Making and Unmaking of the World's Newest State* (Stroud, UK, 2018); Hilde Johnson, *South Sudan: The Untold Story, from Independence to Civil War*, Kindle ed. (London, 2016).

[551] Kindersley, 'The fifth column?', 37; Idris, 'Historicizing race', 591.

Arab/African racial divide, Garang highlighted that Sudan's racial identities were historically contingent and constructed.

In October 1987, Garang addressed a group of Karamojong soldiers who had fled to southern Sudan from Uganda and who were contemplating taking up arms against the Ugandan government.[552] Mabior claims that Garang's speech successfully dissuaded the Karamojong soldiers from rebelling against their government and that some even joined the SPLA, but this is unverified.[553] Captured on video and punctuated by short statements followed by translation (indicated in the quotes below by //), this speech shows Garang's skill as an orator. Garang alternates between moments of humour and gravitas as he builds a two-fold argument about African unity and the African origins of civilization.

Garang greets the soldiers in faltering Kiswahili, apologizing with a wry grin, '*Swahili yangu si kizuri'* [my Swahili is not that great]. Garang explains that he and his audience are '*ndugu*' [brothers] and that '*Afrika ni moja*' [Africa is one].[554] To general laughter and applause, he describes spending time in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda as a student and refugee in the 1960s. His use of Kiswahili tactically evokes a shared African experience and past. After thus breaking the ice, Garang switches to English and introduces his translator, before repeating his message of African unity:

> As I was saying in my small Swahili, I was saying that Africa is, is *one*. // As you sit here, there is no difference between you and us. // [*Looking up then pointing to the sky*] Somebody comes from the stars and lands here today and knows nothing about the politics of this earth and of the world, they'll say that these people are from one country.

Speaking more seriously, Garang laments that Africans were 'divided and redivided by colonialism *and* by neo-colonialism' and taught by 'Western civilization' and 'capitalism' that they 'had nothing to contribute.' In an emphatic statement punctuated by pauses for

[552] The exact identity of these Karamojong soldiers is unclear. Mabior Garang claims they were loyal to former Ugandan President Milton Obote and wanted to overthrow Tito Okello, who mounted a successful coup d'état against Obote in July 1985. The SPLM/A's receipt of Obote's fighters is corroborated in D'Agoôt, 'Reappraising', 402. However, this speech was not given until October 1987, by which time Okello had also been overthrown (by President Yoweri Museveni in January 1986).
[553] Interview with Mabior Garang, 8 Apr. 2021.
[554] Video uploaded in multiple locations. See SouthSudan Broadcast Corporation SSBC, 'Late Dr. John Garang Speaking to Karamojong people !!', Facebook, uploaded 20 Jun. 2017, https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1378524125566380 [12 Feb. 2022]; Juba TV South Sudan Videos, '"Kiswahili ni lugha ya Waafrika," – Dr. John Garang de Mabior', YouTube, uploaded 4 Jan. 2020, https://youtu.be/46907kLScCo [12 Feb. 2022]; Mabior Garang Speaks, 'Afrikan Renaissance – Part I – By Dr. John Gatang [sic] (1987)', YouTube, uploaded 4 Jun. 2020, https://youtu.be/WwyK27VxCgE [24 Jan. 2022].

translation, he declares, 'This is not correct.' Africans, he explains, had been made to 'feel *little* […] this is not true. // We may be little now, // but we have not always been little.'

Turning to the ancient past, he continues, 'Those who have gone to school, you read in your history books that civilization started in Africa, started in the Nile Valley. // From the Mediterranean up to lake, what they call Lake Victoria.' After feigning ignorance about the identity of Queen Victoria to laughter and applause, Garang lists some of the achievements of ancient Africans, including Egyptians. Reaching the first half of his punchline, he reveals,

> Ancient Egypt, what is called pharaonic Egypt, was not Arab, was not European, it was not white, and it was not red, it was black. This is incontrovertible, nobody can dispute it in terms of historical facts. And this is the cradle of human civilization, this is where human civilization started.

Garang raises his voice slightly to reflect on the Egyptian pyramids as tourist attractions:

> So the Egyptians they get their tourist money but the question is not asked who built them! // They say it was the ancient Egyptians, but *who* were the ancient Egyptians? // [*Before translator finishes, Garang begins to motion with one hand for emphasis, ready to continue*] It is not the present Egyptians [*smirking slightly*]. The present Egyptians came from Arabia [*gesturing with arm as he names each location*], came from Syria, came from Persia, came from Greece, came from Rome, from Europe.

Finally, speaking more softly, he declares, 'Ancient Egyptian civilization is incontrovertibly African in origin. // And it was a great civilization. // Europe came to learn from Egypt.'

Emphasizing Egypt's historic blackness as 'incontrovertible', Garang highlights that Africans had not only been made to 'feel little' by the west but had themselves failed to claim the Egyptian pyramids as their own and to recognize their common past. His Afrocentric focus on black Egypt and Africans' dislocation from their shared ancestral achievements aligns with Mabior's comments about Garang's preoccupation with cultural discontinuity. This speech also demonstrates Garang's discursive creativity in articulating racial histories to different audiences.

Garang's message to the Karamojong soldiers was relatively simple, intended to establish a relationship based on the shared language of Kiswahili and a common racial and cultural history. More complex examples of Garang's discursive construction of race and identity are found in two speeches given in April 1994: his opening remarks to the SPLM/A's National Convention in Chukudum, Eastern Equatoria, and his speech at the 7th Pan African Congress (PAC) in Kampala. Much of the material in these two speeches is

identical and the two speeches make direct reference to each other, establishing the New Sudan and Pan-Africanism as mutually supportive projects.

Held from 2 to 13 April 1994, the SPLM/A's National Convention was the first gathering of its kind and responded to repeat calls for reform in the movement. The background to the convention was a major split in the SPLM/A in 1991, in which senior SPLM/A commanders Lam Akol, Riek Machar and Gordon Kong attempted to usurp Garang. Among their complaints were that Garang exercised total control over the movement and that its High Command had never had a formal meeting.[555] The split precipitated some of the worst violence of the war, as well as at least nominal reforms within Garang's faction of the SPLM/A. In 1991, the movement also lost its bases and offices in Ethiopia, forcing it to expand its efforts to gain international support from elsewhere, though it had already established an office in southern Africa in 1988.[556] The exact reasons for convening the convention are not clear but concern about the movement's internal and external reputation was likely an important factor.[557]

Garang's opening speech to the Convention, later transcribed and published by the SPLM/A, offered a sweeping overview of Sudan's ancient past, melding a semi-racialized reading of the struggle with one focused on diversity and economic development. Invoking Sudan's 'historicity', Garang listed various names which refer to 'the land of the blacks':

> In Isaiah Chapter 18 we are the land of Kush, the land of the black beyond the Mountains of Ethiopia […] Ancient Rome called us African, meaning the land of the blacks, while to the Greek historian, Heroditus [*sic*], we are Ethiopia, meaning the land of the blacks and he later called us Egyptians, meaning the land of people with woolly hair, which means the same as the land of the blacks. In later days the people of the Arabian Penissula [*sic*] called our country "Bilad el Sud", meaning "Land of the blacks" from which we now derive the name of our country the "Sudan".[558]

In many ways, Garang's etymological focus on 'the land of the blacks' reproduced the African/Arab dichotomy which Garang had long tried to displace. Here, however, he used the idea of an ancient 'land of the blacks' to implicitly question the goal of secession, which had become a more open possibility following the SPLM/A split in 1991: 'Since when did

[555] Douglas Johnson personal papers, 'Why Garang must go now' (1991). Reproduced in Lam Akol, *SPLM/SPLA: The Nasir Declaration* (Lincoln, NE, 2003), 306–7.
[556] Interview with Barnaba Marial Benjamin.
[557] Rolandsen, *Guerrilla Government*, 61–3.
[558] SPLM, *'This Convention Is Sovereign': Opening and Closing Speeches by Dr. John Garang de Mabior to the First SPLM/SPLA National Convention* (1994), 10–11.

we not belong to the Sudan to run away from it or not to want it? Is the case not rather that there are people in the Sudan who want to dispossess us of our land, of our Sudan?'[559] In this way, he carefully repurposed histories in shifting contexts.

Arriving at more recent times, Garang offered an explanation for the stunted development of an independent Sudanese nation: 'the ruling elite who took power […] instituted policies of hegemony and social, racial and religious discrimination.'[560] Designating the ruling elite as 'the Jellaba', he asked, 'who are these Jellaba, where or how did they come?'[561] Prior to 1994, Garang rarely used the designation *jellaba*, a common term for northern merchants with connotations of extractive trade and slavery, preferring the less-loaded 'Khartoum minority cliques'. Thomas suggests that Garang's use of *jellaba* 'may have been a belated concession' to racial readings of Sudan's divisions.[562] However, Garang was careful to decouple the term from ideas of innate racial difference, describing the *jellaba* as a socioeconomic and political elite who were best positioned to inherit power at independence but who possessed a 'narrow Arabo-Islamic outlook' which prohibited Sudanese nation-building.[563] By opening his discussion of the *jellaba* with a question about their identity, he drew attention to their gradual emergence since the fifteenth century 'from elements of foreign and local traders including slave traders.'[564] For Garang, 'The very hybrid nature of the Jellaba explains their excessive and almost sickening proclamations and obsessions with being Arab', which in turn posed 'a major problem in evolving a new Sudan commonality and identity.'[565]

By a coincidence of timing, the Convention overlapped with the 7th PAC in Kampala, which convened 800 delegates and 2,000 participants.[566] Garang delivered his opening speech at the National Convention, then left for Kampala with his son Mabior.[567] In his speech to the PAC, Garang offered the same history of the 'land of the blacks' and the emergence of the *jellaba*, but with additional comparisons to what he presented as a

[559] Ibid., 11.
[560] Ibid., 13.
[561] Ibid., 14.
[562] Thomas, *South Sudan*, 123.
[563] SPLM, *'This Convention is Sovereign'*, 17.
[564] Ibid., 14.
[565] Ibid., 15.
[566] Adi, *Pan-Africanism*, 212.
[567] Interview with Mabior Garang, 8 Apr. 2021.

universal African experience. Garang's discussion of racial identity at the PAC was topical. The years preceding the PAC had seen heated debate about who should be considered 'African'—not least regarding whether northern Africans should be included—which spilled into discussions at the PAC, including 'in the major debate in the conference on the Sudan.'[568] The PAC's organizers rejected moves to exclude North Africans from the event, calling this 'reactionary blackism', and the PAC's final resolution on reparations for the slave trade was limited to the Atlantic trade, though it 'recognized the role of Arab slave traders.'[569] Garang's discursive approach was therefore to denounce the Sudanese government's 'Arabo-Islamic' nationalism but within the relatable framework of neocolonial corruption.

Defining the *jellaba* for the PAC, Garang explained how Sudan, like other former African colonies, was unable to foster 'national unity' because 'independence naturally enabled, or rather was meant to enable, some of the most notorious unprincipled local elites, thugs and outright bandits to seize power.'[570] In Sudan, however, the elite 'were not individual thugs like Idi Amin [in Uganda] or Bukasa [*sic*] [in the Central African Republic] but a social group, which are collectively and popularly known in the Sudan as the "*Jellaba*".'[571] Like at the Convention, he described the *jellaba* as a 'hybrid' group whose 'Arabo-Islamic outlook' prevents 'national liberation.' He then advanced the New Sudan 'as the most appropriate solution to the Sudanese civil war and the eradication of Jellabaism', allowing Sudan 'to be rescued and survive as one country and thus further the aims of the Pan African Movement.'[572]

Garang's success at the PAC is difficult to gauge. The Sudanese governmental delegation was the largest of any attending, sending 54 representatives between the government and its affiliates.[573] Non-governmental delegates from Sudan numbered 46, including members from northern opposition parties and both SPLM/A factions. Following

[568] 'Rebuilding the Pan African Movement', 2; See also Adi, *Pan-Africanism*, 208–12.
[569] Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem, 'Introduction: Reclaiming Africa for Africans - Pan Africanism: 1900-1994', in Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem (ed.), *Pan Africanism: Politics, Economy and Social Change in the Twenty-First Century* (London, 1996), 11.
[570] Bishopsgate Institute Archives, BG/ARM/5/4/6, 4 Apr. 1994, 'The SPLM/SPLA and the New Sudan in the Wider Context of the Pan African Movement: Speech delivered by Dr. John Garang de Mabior, Chairman and Commander-in-Chief, SPLM/SPLA to the 7th Pan African Congress', 5-6.
[571] Ibid., 6.
[572] Ibid., 7.
[573] Abdul-Raheem, 'Introduction', 29n22.

the dominance of government voices at the 6th PAC in Dar es Salaam twenty years earlier, the organizers of the 7th PAC stipulated that governments and other organizations would all be invited but would meet 'on the basis of equality'.[574] While many governments chose not to send formal envoys, the size of the Sudanese delegations signals the significance of the PAC as a discursive face-off between the government and its opponents. A contemporary PAC summary commented with implicit disapproval on the use of 'racial definitions' by 'those from Southern Sudan', but it is not clear whether the report refers to Garang or his rival SPLM/A faction, who were committed secessionists.[575] On the other hand, the report described the PAC's efforts 'to conciliate the emotional and vitriolic outbursts from the Sudanese government.'[576] The PAC's final resolution on Sudan stated only that it was 'fully behind' the existing peace initiative.[577]

For Garang, however, simply participating in the PAC provided discursive material for highlighting the SPLM/A's international standing. When he returned to the National Convention in Chukudum to deliver his closing speech, he explained that '[t]he issue of the Sudan dominated the Pan African Congress' and that 'Africans in diaspora stood solidly with us.'[578] Before the SPLM/A, southern Sudanese liberation movements had struggled to establish relationships with other African liberation movements or governments. In contrast, Garang successfully solicited support from governments across Africa, including arms and ammunition from southern African governments, cash donations from Nigeria, and intelligence and capacity training from South Africa.[579] Moreover, past Pan African Congresses, in particular the 5th PAC in Manchester in 1945, hold a particular place in the history of African independence.[580] In this context, by signalling his involvement in the 7th PAC, Garang implicitly situated himself in a lineage of 'great' African and Pan-African leaders. Like the *Manifesto* and Garang's videos, the Pan-Africanist image Garang cultivated for himself continued to resonate decades later. In interviews about Garang, several of his supporters described him as a Pan-Africanist, in a shorthand used to evoke a

[574] Ibid., 10.
[575] 'Rebuilding the Pan African Movement', 2.
[576] Ibid., 3.
[577] 'Resolutions of the plenary of the 7th Pan African Congress, Kampala, 1994', *African Journal of Political Science*, 1/1 (1996), 127.
[578] SPLM, *'This Convention is Sovereign'*, 57.
[579] Interviews with Barnaba Marial Benjamin; Richard Mulla; Edward Lino.
[580] Adi, *Pan-Africanism*, 126–7.

combination of his intellectual worldliness, his popularity with other African leaders, and his commitment to Sudanese unity.

Conclusion

Bringing together Trouillot's theory of how histories are made, Africanist scholarship on competing nationalisms, and a biographical approach focused on performance and meaning-making, I have shown Garang's awareness of documentation, on paper and by video, and his oratory skill in shaping historical narratives for different audiences. Garang's history-making was a defining feature of his political rhetoric and practice, informed by his diverse historical interests, explored in chapter one, and demanded by the ad hoc foundation of the SPLM/A, described in chapter two. Garang developed sources, archives, and narratives to establish his primacy in the SPLM/A; a history of abuse by successive Sudanese governments; and an alternative nationalist vision for a New Sudan with roots in the ancient diversity of the Nile Valley. In the process, he drew on established historical sources—most notably, UNESCO's *General History of Africa* and the Bible—to both validate his intellectual stance and draw attention to the 'silences' of racist histories of the Nile Valley. Adapting his narrative as needed for his audience, he challenged the Arab/African binary of 'the southern problem' to argue for reform in a united Sudan. Moreover, through the well-rehearsed discourse of neo-colonialism, Garang drew parallels between Sudan and a wider African experience, presenting the New Sudan as a Pan-Africanist project and using his participation in the PAC to highlight his and the SPLM/A's international success.

Beyond a collection of 'primary sources', Garang's contributions to establishing a usable past for the SPLM/A coalesced into a dominant history of the movement and the major events of the war. The backdating of the *Manifesto*, Garang's frequent cross-referencing, and the publication of his speeches are evidence of the care he took to script and document the history of the civil war in real time. Because Garang's historical accounts have been so often repeated, by himself and by others, they form an intertextual corpus without which it is almost impossible to write the history of the SPLM/A—or, indeed, its eclipsed opponents. Like in other African states which fought long liberation wars, this has resulted in a heated politics of history-writing which has centred directly on Garang, his

leadership, and his political ideas. The following two chapters turn to the form and impact of these debates on radio and in print.

Ch. 4: John Garang on air: Radio battles in Sudan's second civil war

In February 1985, the recently launched clandestine Radio SPLA broadcast a speech made by John Garang to 'a youth gathering organized by the movement'. Speaking in Arabic, Garang emphasized the need to 'unite Sudan' and the importance of Radio SPLA for the movement:

> We set up this radio so that Numayri, or someone else in Khartoum, does not tell us lies again. This radio is a big weapon and besides it is a political success … We have achieved these successes both in the political and military spheres.[581]

As a medium to speak directly to diverse audiences, radio was a key platform for Garang's projection of himself and his political vision between 1984, when Radio SPLA went on air, and 1991, when the SPLM/A lost its transmitter in Ethiopia and the SPLM/A split into rival factions. Garang used Radio SPLA to promote his New Sudan vision, condemn the 'lies' of the Sudanese government, and claim political legitimacy locally and internationally. In turn, the government's Radio Omdurman and the Sudan News Agency (SUNA) tried to discredit Garang as nothing more than an 'outlaw' or 'terrorist'.[582] By late 1986, Radio SPLA's broadcasts had provoked the government into launching a new radio station, rife with anti-Garang material, which broadcast on the same frequencies and at the same time as Radio SPLA. When Riek Machar and Lam Akol attempted to overthrow Garang in 1991, they denounced his leadership through the movement's internal radio system, followed by an interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)'s Colin Blane. Their attempt to remove Garang failed but precipitated a major SPLM/A split which led to intense southern infighting, civilian devastation, and the government's recapture of significant territory held by the SPLM/A.

Chapter three established that Garang was attentive to the production of history and drew on Pan-Africanist and Afrocentric arguments to articulate the New Sudan. Through a case study of Garang's use of a single medium, this chapter builds on chapter three by considering not only what Garang *said* about the war, SPLM/A, and himself, but what

[581] Federal Information Broadcast Service, Daily Report Middle East and Africa, FBIS-MEA-85-029, 'SPLA-SPLM Leader Addresses Youth Meeting on Goals', *Radio SPLA* (Arabic), 8 Feb. 1985.
[582] SWB ME/8453/A/1, 'Sudan reports defections from SPLA: Role of army', *Radio Omdurman*, 18 Dec. 1986; SWB ME/8345/A/1, 'Sudan's Mahdi says Garang uses terrorism', *Sudan News Agency (SUNA)*, 21 Aug. 1986.

different audiences *heard* and how they reacted. Through oral history, memoirs, and international monitoring reports, I analyze radio conversations between Garang and his critics—northern, southern, and international—to argue that radio battles directly shaped the struggle for political and historical authority between Garang and the Sudanese government, and within the SPLM/A elite.

There are few academic studies of the media through which Garang's near mythical stature was cultivated, both at home and abroad, or indeed of SPLM/A media output more generally. One recent exception is Tounsel's work on Christian discourse and imagery in the popular *SPLM/SPLA Update*, published in Nairobi from 1992, which considers the power of comparisons between Garang and Moses.[583] Before 1992, however, the SPLM/A's print media had limited circulation.[584] Whereas Radio SPLA is ubiquitous in memories of the civil war, the earlier *SPLA/SPLM Newsletter* and aborted *Newsudan* magazine do not figure in South Sudanese or expatriate accounts. Indeed, while other state and anticolonial radio stations in Africa drew content from print publications, the reverse was true of the SPLM/A.[585] The *SPLA/SPLM Newsletter* and *Newsudan* reproduced content from Radio SPLA.[586] Radio SPLA was the movement's foremost outlet for news and propaganda in the early years of the war, and thus deserves close attention for its importance in building Garang's persona and opening him up to critique.

Two works on Radio SPLA offer the groundwork for this chapter. Wendy James has given an important overview of the rise of Radio SPLA and its shift from more 'homely' broadcasts to a 'harsher political style' which engaged directly with the claims and counterclaims of the Sudanese government.[587] Manoeli's diplomatic history of Sudan's 'southern problem' has offered preliminary insight into Garang's emphasis on the

[583] Tounsel, *Chosen Peoples*, 99–100, 110–2.
[584] Interview with Atem Yaak Atem, 15 Jun. 2021.
[585] A. Reza, 'Reading the radio-magazine: culture, decolonization and the PAIGC's Rádio Libertação', *Interventions*, 24/6 (2021), 13; J. Brennan, 'Communications and media in African history', in J. Parker and R. Reid (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern African History* (Oxford, 2013), 501.
[586] Interview with Atem Yaak Atem, 15 Jun. 2021; Bodleian Library Special Collections (BLSC), Oxford UK, SPLM Information Department (London office), *Newsudan*, pilot issue (Oct. 1986), 8; BLSC MS.Oxfam.PRG 5/3/1/10, SPLA/SPLM Department of Information, *SPLA/SPLM Newsletter* 6:86 (15 Aug. 1986), 5.
[587] Wendy James, 'The multiple voices of Sudanese airspace', in Richard Fardon and Graham Furniss (eds.), *African Broadcast Cultures: Radio in Transition* (Oxford, 2000), 201.

'importance of the SPLM's propaganda production' and the significance of Radio SPLA in allowing Garang 'to show his "internationalist" view'.[588]

Building on the work of Manoeli and James and a growing literature on antigovernment broadcasting, this chapter makes three contributions to the study of Garang as a focal point for historical and political meaning-making and, more widely, to the study of clandestine radio in Africa. First, I elaborate on the relationship between radio diplomacy, physical warfare, and territorial sovereignty, arguing that Garang used radio to simultaneously broadcast a non-secessionist stance domestically and internationally, and to advertise the SPLM/A's control of southern Sudan's airspace. Beyond Sudan, scholarship on clandestine broadcasting has demonstrated how liberation movements used radio to challenge colonial and minority governments. Radio uniquely allowed movements in exile to 'address their supporters instantly and directly behind enemy lines'.[589] Unbounded by borders, radio was also key to diplomacy. Clandestine broadcasters targeted international listeners and received training, money, and broadcasting time from Pan-African or Cold War sponsors.[590] As Matthew Connelly has demonstrated for the FLN in Algeria, and Paul Sturges et al. for SWAPO in Namibia, these diplomatic battles could be more important to anticolonial struggles than physical warfare.[591]

Following African states' transitions to independence and majority rule, government media monopolies continued to provoke challenges from clandestine and 'diasporic' broadcasters.[592] Like anticolonial movements, these broadcasters—including Radio SPLA—used radio to contest government narratives and cultivate international support. However, I emphasize that, for Garang, radio diplomacy was never far removed from military action. In his study of the Indochina War, Christopher Goscha highlights how

[588] Manoeli, *Sudan's 'Southern Problem'*, 157–8.
[589] S. Lekgoathi, T. Moloi, and A. Saíde, 'Radios of the liberation struggle in southern Africa', in S. Lekgoathi, T. Moloi, and A. Saíde (eds.), *Guerrilla Radios in Southern Africa: Broadcasters, Technology, Propaganda Wars, and the Armed Struggle* (Lanham, MD, 2020), 1.
[590] R. Heinze, 'SWAPO's Voice of Namibia as an instrument of diplomacy', in Lekgoathi, Moloi, and Saíde (eds.), *Guerrilla Radios*, 137; M. Chikowero, 'Broadcasting Chimurenga - Engineering a postcolonial Zimbabwe', in Lekgoathi, Moloi, and Saíde (eds.), *Guerrilla Radios,* 67.
[591] Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era* (Oxford, 2002), 4; Paul Sturges, Mbenae Katjihingua, and Kingo McHombu, 'Information in the national liberation struggle: Modelling the case of Namibia (1966-1990)', *Journal of Documentation*, 61/6 (2005), 735–750.
[592] See M. Moorman, *Powerful Frequencies: Radio, State Power, and the Wold War in Angola, 1931-2002* (Athens, OH, 2019), 143–64; E. Ndlovu, 'The re-emergence of diasporic radio in independent Zimbabwe', *Ecquid Novi*, 35:3 (2014), 10.1080/02560054.2014.957225.

information technology, including radio, was central to Vietnamese nationalists' 'consolidation and operation of their fledgling state and the projection of its national sovereignty'.[593] Radio communication allowed the Vietnamese to coordinate their war against the French, both by waging complex military operations and immediately implementing ceasefires signed abroad.[594] Meanwhile, the Voice of Vietnam 'announced … the transition from one sovereignty to another: "This is the Voice of Vietnam, broadcasting from Hanoi, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam"'.[595] Similarly, the broadcasting practices of Garang and Radio SPLA attempted to delineate new lines of national belonging through language and physical threats to national and international actors who entered SPLM/A territory without permission.

However, local reactions to Garang's radio presence were mixed, showing the challenges of soliciting popular support on the airwaves and of producing usable pasts with broad appeal. My second intervention highlights the diversity of listener experience in complex civil wars. Scholarship on listening is less developed than on broadcasting. Key studies by Marissa Moorman and Sekibakiba Lekgoathi have captured memories of 'clandestine listening' in Angola and South Africa, where anticolonial and anti-apartheid broadcasts allowed listeners to explore new political ideas and maintain a connection with movements in exile.[596] These audiences listened in secret: behind closed doors, at night, or via recordings of past broadcasts circulated on cassettes. I encountered similar stories of secret listening in Juba, and Radio SPLA is still celebrated for educating and mobilizing SPLM/A recruits; however, some interviewees remembered listening to Garang's broadcasts more sceptically, pointing to one limitation of comparing Radio SPLA to anticolonial radio. Garang's attempts to narrate a unifying history were undermined by ethnically divisive rhetoric in Sudan's southern regional government in the early 1980s, the violent consolidation of Garang's leadership in the SPLM/A, and SPLM/A violence against civilians, all of which were reasons to doubt the movement. Moorman has described

[593] Christopher Goscha, 'Wiring decolonization: Turning technology against the colonizer during the Indochina War, 1945–1954', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 54/4 (2012), 799.
[594] Ibid., 799, 813.
[595] Ibid., 811.
[596] Marissa Moorman, 'Guerrilla broadcasters and the unnerved colonial state in Angola (1961-74)', *The Journal of African History*, 59/2 (2018), 251–5; Sekibakiba Lekgoathi, 'The African National Congress's Radio Freedom and its audiences in apartheid South Africa, 1963-1991', *Journal of African Media Studies*, 2/2 (2010), 143–50.

listeners' nuanced engagement with antigovernment broadcasting during Angola's post-independence civil war, depicting more varied attitudes towards rebel messaging than in her discussion of anticolonial radio. I build on Moorman's recognition of critical listening in civil wars to disaggregate Garang's audience and show that personal experience determined how listeners heard Radio SPLA and reacted to Garang.

My third intervention argues that radio battles mattered as much to personal politics within the SPLM/A as they did to the SPLM/A's war with the government. While recent scholarship has included more focus on 'social histories of [guerrilla radio] stations' and the experiences of individual broadcasters, little attention has been paid to how *internal* rivalries within antigovernment movements shaped broadcasting policy and radio's political effects.[597] One informative study, albeit one that focuses on competition between rather than within resistance movements, is Ali Hlongwane's analysis of broadcasting by South Africa's PAC in exile. Hlongwane highlights the PAC's underrepresentation vis-à-vis the ANC's Radio Freedom in scholarship on anti-apartheid broadcasting, revealing a bias toward the radio presence of movements which later captured state power, and a tendency to underestimate dissonance within opposition broadcasting.[598] While Garang's rivals never operated their own station, they criticized him on government and international radio. Through a mix of international monitoring reports and oral history, described in the next section, I show that radio was central to Garang's projection of himself nationally and internationally. I also show that radio, by nature difficult to control, offered a platform for Garang's southern Sudanese opponents to challenge his narrative authority in an international arena.

Sources

In the absence of a Radio SPLA archive, I use monitoring reports produced by BBC's Summary of World Broadcasts (SWB), accessed via the Nexis UK database, and, to a lesser extent, the American Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS).[599] Like other colonial

[597] Lekgoathi, Moloi, and Saíde, 'Radios', 3.
[598] A. Hlongwane, 'In search of PAC footprints in broadcasting', in Lekgoathi, Moloi, and Saíde (eds.), *Guerrilla Radios,* 230–55.
[599] The Nexis UK interface allows for efficient analysis and organization of broadcasts. FBIS reports are cited only where they provide additional information unavailable from SWB.

and foreign archives produced to serve interests outside Africa, SWB and FBIS reports present obvious methodological problems in scope and format. As international monitoring is closely tied to intelligence and foreign policy, the frequency of Garang's appearance in these reports usefully reflects British and American interest in his emerging impact on Sudanese politics, echoed in American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) assessments which draw on SWB/FBIS intelligence.[600] However, the reports offer only a partial record of Radio SPLA broadcasting. While Radio SPLA broadcast in English, Arabic, and several Sudanese languages, the material available from SWB and FBIS includes a limited number of non-English broadcasts. Out of over 1,000 monitored Radio SPLA broadcasts, SWB summarized only 96 in Arabic, 45 in Latuka, 20 in Bari and none in any other languages. In addition, the monitoring reports include only English translations or summaries, without audio recordings or original transcripts, and the monitoring content skews towards political and military events, omitting cultural programming and songs.[601] Despite these limitations, international monitoring reports remain useful for studying Garang's English-language speeches, including those discussed in chapter three. Like other liberation movements, Garang and Radio SPLA were aware of the amplifying effect of international monitors.[602] These speeches reveal how Garang signalled his unionist stance to Sudanese and international constituencies and how he asserted his political influence by both publicizing peace negotiations and issuing military threats.

I compensate for the shortcomings of the SWB and FBIS records through SPLM/A memoirs and oral history interviews, including with Radio SPLA's director, Atem Yaak Atem. Atem has lived outside of South Sudan for several years and does not hold a government position, which allows him space for an independent view. In his own writings, Atem has reflected critically on Radio SPLA and continued to do so during our interviews.[603] I situate Garang's use of radio in relation to his longstanding interest in information management and his concern that southerners prove their capacity and professionalism, as

[600] Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room (FOIA), online, Directorate of Intelligence, 'Sudan: Roots and Future of the Southern Insurgency', Feb. 1986, 7. On the history of SWB and links with Anglo-American intelligence, see S. Bardgett, F. Kind-Kovács, and V. Kuitenbrouwer, 'The act of listening: radio monitoring, 1930-1990', *Media History*, 25:4 (2019), 391–3; A. Webb, 'The sound of revolution: BBC monitoring and the Hungarian uprising, 1956', *Media History*, 25:4 (2019), 450–2.
[601] Cf. Moorman, *Powerful Frequencies*, 151.
[602] Interview with Atem Yaak Atem, 15 Jun. 2021. Cf. Heinze, 'SWAPO's Voice of Namibia'.
[603] Atem Yaak Atem, *Jungle Chronicles and Other Writings: Recollections of a South Sudanese* (2017), 230.

explored in chapters one and two. Following Mhoze Chikowero's call to focus on the agency of broadcasters rather than the specifics of radio as a technology, I emphasize how Garang, Atem, and others used radio to break the Sudanese government's discursive monopoly on the emerging war and to challenge government stereotypes that southerners were parochial and backward. [604]

The combination of oral history and foreign monitoring reports also offers insight into how Garang, his southern Sudanese opponents, and the Sudanese government monitored and responded to *each other's* broadcasts, referencing international broadcasters in the process. Monitoring and responding to rival stations were key strategies of clandestine broadcasters, including the SPLM/A and Sudanese government.[605] Some of this back-and-forth is captured in SWB reports, as are moments when Radio SPLA criticized the BBC for spreading false information. These interwoven layers of broadcasting and monitoring show how Garang and his opponents navigated radio's international space to engage in personal politics. The next section offers an overview of Radio SPLA and how Garang and Radio SPLA staff used radio broadcasting and monitoring to influence public opinion of Garang and the movement. I then discuss listener reactions to Garang; the rise of Sudanese government counter-broadcasts; and, finally, how the convergence of SPLM/A, government, and foreign broadcasts shaped Garang's local and international profile.

Radio SPLA

Broadcasting on shortwave from Ethiopia, Radio SPLA was on air from October 1984 until the overthrow of Ethiopian President Mengistu Haile Mariam and the SPLM/A's concomitant loss of its Ethiopian bases in May 1991.[606] Between October 1991 and February 1993, Radio SPLA broadcast sporadically from various locations, but never on the pre-1991 scale.[607] From the start, Atem, who finished an M.Ed. at the University of Wales on radio broadcasting in Sudan immediately before joining the SPLM, intended for the station to act as a counterpart to the government's highly partisan Radio Omdurman.[608] He wanted Radio

[604] Chikowero, 'Broadcasting Chimurenga', 65.
[605] E.g. ibid., 79–80.
[606] SWB ME/7782/A/1, 'Clandestine radio broadcasting to Sudan: Radio SPLA', editorial report, 24 Oct. 1984.
[607] SWB ME/1748 E1, 'Clandestine, unofficial and satellite broadcasts', special supplement, 23 Jul. 1993.
[608] Atem Yaak Atem, 'The role and problems of broadcasting by radio with special reference to the Sudan' (M.Ed. thesis, University of Wales, 1984).

SPLA 'to be credible'; they would not broadcast the type of 'complete lies' typical of Radio Omdurman.[609] Both Atem and former presenter Rebecca Joshua Okwaci explained that Radio SPLA's objectives were education and 'awareness raising'. To this end, Radio SPLA explained the SPLM/A's *Manifesto,* framing Sudan's conflict in terms of a 'marginalizing' political system, rather than a north-south divide. Atem remembered,

> Now the message as far as Radio SPLA was concerned was to make sure that we identified the enemy. Who was the enemy? The oppressor. Not necessarily an Arab, not necessarily a Muslim, but somebody using Islam and Arabism to exclude others.[610]

For Okwaci, the importance of clarifying the identity of the enemy was mirrored by efforts to frame the struggle as being for the people:

> You don't want the public to say, 'oh some people are making noise, some people are fighting for no reason.' It was on their [the public's] behalf … And therefore education, orientation, sensitization, *informing* the people that the revolution is yours and therefore we are just doing it on your behalf, these are issues at stake.[611]

As Okwaci went on to explain, this required targeted programming for different audiences, from soldiers to youth to women, and in different languages.

Language policy was an important part of Radio SPLA's self-positioning as a representative broadcaster. News was broadcast daily in English and Khartoum Arabic. Juba Arabic was used for some programmes, including *Al Qaid ma' al Thuwaar*, discussed below.[612] In addition, Radio SPLA broadcast in a number of what they called 'national' languages: Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk, Latuka, Bari, Heiban, and Zande. The small number of Latuka and Bari programmes monitored by SWB commented on the war and encouraged listeners to join the SPLM/A. Atem explained that the national language broadcasts drew on the same source material as the English and Arabic programmes, but also included unique commentaries (sometimes by a senior SPLM/A figure who spoke the language) and poetry.[613] Atem recalls that Radio Omdurman used 'to *disparage* anything southern' and to refer to their languages in derogatory terms as *rutana* or *lahaja*, meaning 'dialects'.[614] Beyond simply offering a way to reach a wider audience, the use of local languages was

[609] Interview with Atem Yaak Atem, 7 Jun. 2021.
[610] Ibid.
[611] Interview with Rebecca Joshua Okwaci, Juba, 15 Aug. 2019.
[612] Khartoum and Juba Arabic are distinct. See Cherry Leonardi, 'South Sudanese Arabic and the negotiation of the local state, c. 1840-2011', *The Journal of African History*, 54/3 (2013), 351–372.
[613] E.g. SWB ME/8497/A/1, 'SPLA warns of attack on Juba', *Radio SPLA (Bari)*, 17 Feb. 1987.
[614] Interview with Atem Yaak Atem, 7 Jun. 2021.

therefore an explicit policy of reclaiming a media space from which many had long been marginalized, a point highlighted in Radio SPLA's national language broadcasts.[615]

Garang had recognized the importance of radio as a tool of publicity and diplomacy as early as 1972, if not before. As noted in chapter one, Garang purchased a shortwave radio set while studying at Grinnell to listen to the BBC and VOA.[616] Moreover, in his open letter to Joseph Lagu in January 1972, Garang highlighted the importance of radio broadcasting in publicizing the southern rebels' cause:

> We are poor people engaged in a just war against petty oppression that has made us and left us so poor: 'underdeveloped' is the jargon. We cannot afford radio broadcasting and press facilities, indeed potent weapons available to the Khartoum administrators of oppression. The negotiations (in the event of their inevitable collapse and failure) would provide us with the necessary broadcasting and press facilities to monitor our struggle to our people and to all peoples of the world.[617]

With Sudan's return to war in 1983, Garang was intent on utilizing these 'potent weapons' to maximum advantage and did so via an Ethiopian transmitter. Garang's vision for Radio SPLA was such that he delayed the graduation of the *Jarad* (Locust) battalion because he wanted the launch of Radio SPLA to 'coincide with their operations, so that their victories […] should be announced over the radios'.[618] Like anticolonial broadcasters, Garang sought 'to project an image of an unstoppable liberation force'.[619] Moreover, simply having the radio station—and broadcasting languages other than Khartoum Arabic and English—signalled SPLM/A capacity, diversity, and professionalism.

In production and content, Garang was omnipresent on Radio SPLA. Most obviously, Radio SPLA aired speeches given by Garang in English and Arabic. In the speeches captured by SWB and FBIS, Garang promoted a national frame for the Sudanese conflict and his New Sudan vision, described at length in chapter three. Speeches in English were generally scripted, sometimes with assistance from Atem or others, and targeted educated Sudanese in Khartoum and the south, as well as an international audience.[620] The

[615] SWB ME/8597/A/1, 'Sudanese rebel radio explains policy of broadcasting in local languages', *Radio SPLA (Bari)*, 16 Jun. 1987
[616] Interview with Muzong Kodi, 11 Jun. 2021.
[617] 'Captain John Garang's 1972 letter to General Joseph Lagu of Anyanya One', 24 Jan. 1972, in Wël, *Genius of Dr. John*, vol. 2.
[618] Interview with Atem Yaak Atem, 7 Jun. 2021; see also Atem, *Jungle*, 265–6.
[619] D. Moyo and C. Chinaka, 'Spirit mediums and guerrilla radio in the Zimbabwe war of liberation', in Lekgoathi, Moloi, and Saíde (eds.), *Guerrilla Radios*, 97.
[620] Interview with Atem Yaak Atem, 15 Jun. 2021.

Arabic speeches, by contrast, were recordings of more spontaneous occasions of Garang speaking to recruits, officers, or in newly 'liberated' areas.[621] Johnson has argued that non-English broadcasts on Radio SPLA 'tended to dwell more on grievances against the Arabs (*jellaba*) than on vision s of a united "New Sudan".'[622] This may be true of some Radio SPLA presenters, but Garang's call for unity in an Arabic speech to 'a youth gathering' (likely *Jarad* [Locust] battalion recruits in western Ethiopia) replayed over Radio SPLA in February 1985 reinforces my argument in chapter three that Garang's New Sudan vision was not just a diplomatic ploy for an international audience.[623]

In addition to speeches, Radio SPLA played interviews with Garang conducted by other news sources and, even when not sharing his direct words or voice, announcers referred to Garang constantly. According to Atem, this focus on Garang was not an explicit production policy but resulted from wider structural and political constraints within the movement. Atem explained that he tried to avoid a 'personality cult' or 'hero-worship culture' but 'was unable to prevent it happening'.[624] In Atem's opinion, one of the programmes to blame was *Al Qaid ma' al Thuwaar,* or 'The Leader with the Revolutionaries,' intended by Atem as a way 'to make sure that the leadership should be introduced to the public […] so that they could also talk, as individuals, as members of the leadership'.[625] At the time, the SPLM/A's Political Military High Command (PMHC) consisted of five members, including Garang. However, the presenter assigned to the programme used it as an opportunity to 'endear himself with Garang', ignoring the other leaders; this resulted in disagreements between the presenter and Atem, and an overemphasis on Garang.

Moreover, Radio SPLA existed alongside—and in interaction with—the movement's internal radio communication. Despite the SPLM/A's initial lack of trained personnel, the movement developed an effective communication and signaling apparatus.[626] For most of the war, long-range radio was the main means of communication, particularly

[621] Ibid.
[622] Johnson, *Root Causes*, 65.
[623] FBIS-MEA-85-029, 'SPLA-SPLM leader addresses youth meeting on goals', *Radio SPLA (Arabic)*, 8 Feb. 1985.
[624] Atem, *Jungle*, 349.
[625] Interview with Atem Yaak Atem, 7 Jun. 2021; see also Ibid.
[626] D'Agoôt, 'Reappraising', 398.

given the size of the territory in which the war was waged and the difficulty of overland travel. Between 1986 and 1991, Garang did not convene any formal meetings of the PMHC.[627] As the war progressed, Garang made several major changes to military structures and tactics, which he announced by internal radio. These feature prominently in the writings of Lam Akol, an alternate member of the PMHC and co-leader of Garang's attempted overthrow in 1991, as evidence of what Akol paints as Garang's authoritarian and arbitrary leadership.[628] The 1991 split is analyzed in more detail below, but here it is worth making some more general points about the importance of internal radio communication in making Garang known to his commanders and troops.

The most obvious role of long-range radio was the exercise of military authority and, in general, communication from the field back to Garang's office was tightly controlled. On at least one occasion, Garang chided Akol for copying a radio message about the need for a PMHC meeting to all members: 'Whereas I agree with the recommendation, message is unprocedural. The repeated to all High Command members is at best unnecessary'.[629] In addition to fostering resentment among Akol and others, this military hierarchy directly shaped the content of Radio SPLA, which received its news from commanders in the field radioing to Garang's office in Addis Ababa.[630] Garang then passed the news to Atem and his team, after edits to remove undesirable information like the number of SPLA casualties; indeed, although Radio SPLA often referred to an SPLM 'spokesman', this was in fact simply material prepared by Garang himself, again showing Garang's attention to the crafting of political and historical narratives.[631] Unlike more participatory practices of radio production which can foster 'strong relationships between radio hosts and their audience', Garang's close control over Radio SPLA exacerbated tensions within the PMHC.[632]

Garang also used long-range radio to make announcements 'to all units', through which, as one interviewee put it, he 'became famous'.[633] These messages were read out by

[627] Johnson, *Root Causes*, 91; Rolandsen, *Guerrilla Government*, 29.
[628] Akol, *SPLM/SPLA: Inside*; Akol, *SPLM/SPLA: Nasir*.
[629] SAD 985/4/29, Radio message, John Garang de Mabior to Lam Akol Ajawin, 7 Jul. 1990. Reproduced in Akol, *SPLM/SPLA: Inside*, 385.
[630] Interview with Atem Yaak Atem, 7 Jun. 2021
[631] Interview with Atem Yaak Atem, 26 Sept. 2021.
[632] Aïssatou Mbodj-Pouye, 'Radio and the road: infrastructure, mobility, and political change in the beginnings of Radio Rurale de Kayes (1980-early 2000s)', *The Journal of African History*, 62/1 (2021), 144.
[633] Interview with Anyanya veteran, Juba, 27 Jul. 2021.

political commissars in the training camps, as part of recruits' 'general political education'.[634] In addition to offering military updates, messages played a role in what members of the SPLM/A refer to more generally as 'boosting morale'. Few messages to all units survive from before 1991 but one from Garang to William Nyuon and for the information of all units from September 1990 comments,

> Singer Mohammed Wardi, a strong sympathizer of the Movement, arrived Ethiopia on 25/9/90 […] He will sing in Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa in solidarity with the SPLM/A. He will donate half of the proceeds of his parties to SPLM/A's wounded heroes […] Above is for your information and to underline the appeal and broad support the SPLM/A enjoys all over the Sudan as underlined by this famous Sudanese artist.[635]

The lighter, more uplifting tone of this message reflects a different side of Garang's leadership, as projected to general troops.

As seen in chapter two, the founding of the SPLM/A had seen a bitter leadership contest between Garang and an older generation of politicians and former guerrillas who wanted to rekindle the fight for southern secession, as Garang himself described on several occasions.[636] That Garang was never the default leader of the nascent movement made his prominence on both internal and external radio, and the link between the two, all the more important. Garang's emergence as the singular voice of the SPLM/A marked a significant departure from the fractured leadership of the southern guerrilla movement of Sudan's first civil war. The following sections discuss how his broadcasts shaped popular opinions about him within Sudan and how they prompted government counter-broadcasts.

Garang's audience

A dominant nationalist narrative celebrates Radio SPLA's role in mobilizing support for the SPLM/A and countering government propaganda, but the reality of audience reactions to Garang's speeches was more complex. Indeed, varied listener responses to Garang reflect the challenges of translating usable pasts and political presence on the airwaves into political legitimacy. Moorman has argued that, during Angola's civil war, listeners of the anti-government Radio Vorgan 'were not just echo chambers; they recognized propaganda,

[634] Manoeli, *Sudan's 'Southern Problem'*, 194.
[635] Akol, *SPLM/SPLA: Inside*, 387.
[636] SWB ME/0537/A/1, 'Sudan; SPLA leader on coup d'etat and new regime's attitude to peace process', Radio SPLA, 14 Aug. 1989; SPLM, *'This Convention is Sovereign'*, 22.

"heard between lines"'.[637] Recognizing the varied and nuanced listening of radio audiences is particularly important in the Sudanese context, where Garang was simultaneously introducing new political theories and attempting to win over a diverse population, including victims of SPLM/A violence against civilians and northerners not traditionally aligned with the secessionist stance touted by southern rebels during Sudan's first civil war. In garrison towns like Juba, the experience of listening was not only intimate—in the sense of 'broadcasting into the private space of the home, into the ear and head of the listener' used by Moorman—but personal, determined by listeners' lived experiences.[638]

Radio SPLA was widely listened to in southern Sudan and Khartoum, as well as among the Sudanese diaspora in East Africa, though listenership in rural areas was less than in towns. Its broadcasting time, 3pm-4pm, features prominently in accounts of the war and interviewees described how silence would fall as everyone tuned it, including northerners and, according to 'a story going the rounds during those years', President Bashir himself.[639] Individual and general accounts report the importance of Radio SPLA in encouraging youth to join the movement and combatting falsehoods propagated by the government.[640] However, experiences of listening and opinions of Garang varied widely, particularly in Juba which remained under government control throughout the war and suffered from intense security reprisals against suspected SPLM/A collaborators.

In SPLA camps, listening was often communal but, in Juba, people listened 'discreetly', alone or in small groups at home.[641] For SPLM/A sympathizers and those fed up with 'mistreatment [in Juba] by the Arabs', radio was an important link with the rebel movement.[642] The intimacy of radio listening under these circumstances is captured in Victor Lugala's semi-fictional novel, *White House*, which tells the story of Riti, a young photojournalist for the *Juba Times* who listens to the rebels' 'daily broadcasts religiously but in hiding' and lives in constant fear of security attention and his sister's and girlfriend's possible sexual relationships with security officers.[643] Throughout the story, sex, radio-

[637] Moorman, *Powerful Frequencies*, 149.
[638] Moorman, 'Guerrilla broadcasters', 260.
[639] Interviews with Federico Vuni; Kosti Manibe, phone, 1 Jun. 2021.
[640] Interview with John Okech Okello, Juba, 7 Aug. 2019; Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road*, 92.
[641] Interviews with Kosti Manibe; Otim David Okot, Juba, 2 Aug. 2019.
[642] Interview with Otim David Okot.
[643] V. Lugala, *White House* (Perth, 2017).

listening, and security are closely intertwined, suggesting the penetration of security into the most personal parts of people's lives. Torn by paranoia, Riti throws his radio into a pit latrine in fear he will be discovered by security but is nevertheless apprehended and ferried to the infamous 'White House', where suspected collaborators were tortured and/or killed. Riti is eventually released, but the story's conclusion reveals he was arrested for possessing a photograph of Garang, found in his office desk. The final paragraphs describe Riti remembering 'what the rebel leader once said on the radio: "Anger is the best weapon for a freedom fighter"'.[644]

This depiction of Radio SPLA's importance and Garang's capacity to inspire is common, but is countered by accounts from listeners less sympathetic to Garang and the SPLM/A. One listener remembered,

> Life was very difficult. In Torit, when the SPLA crossed to Lafon […] they crossed there and they did a lot of atrocities to the people there, raping and all this and that. People coming from there [to Juba] giving us horrible stories altogether […] So when we were in Juba of course, they used to broadcast this and this and that. John Garang was also encouraging his people, 'Oh you see, you come join this – because tomorrow those who are holding these offices, you are the ones who are going to hold these offices. See this gun? The gun will give you food and anything.' So this is what he was preaching when we was training the SPLA, you know?[645]

Filtered through accounts of SPLA abuses against civilians, Garang's messages were, for this listener, overly military and violent, encouraging harmful behavior.

Radio SPLA's songs were another polarizing factor in listeners' opinions of Radio SPLA and of Garang's leadership. Lomuro remembered that, in training camps, SPLA recruits were encouraged to compose songs in their own languages to 'boost morale'.[646] The songs were learned by fellow recruits from different ethnic backgrounds and, for Lomuro, contributed to inter-ethnic community in the camps.[647] However, when recorded and played over Radio SPLA, these songs shaped popular opinions of Garang in complicated ways. Particularly in the early years of the war, most songs not in Juba Arabic were in Dinka and Nuer, as these groups were then the majority in the SPLA.[648] In addition, many were composed in the Dinka tradition of *ket*, 'meaning to compose a song against somebody'.[649]

[644] Ibid.
[645] Interview with Michael.
[646] Interview with Lemi Logwonga Lomuro, 21 Sept. 2021.
[647] Ibid.
[648] Interview with Atem Yaak Atem, 15 Jun. 2021.
[649] Ibid. See also discussion of ket in Francis Deng, *The Dinka and Their Songs* (Oxford, 1973), 199–201.

The targets of these insults were the government and 'the South Sudanese political figures who were collaborating […] or assumed to be collaborating with the government'.[650] These songs, which echoed Garang's wider rejection of the southern elite whom he claimed cared only about jobs and personal advancement, were, according to one interviewee, off-putting for many civilian listeners.[651]

Interviewees also listened to foreign stations like the BBC, where Garang remained a strong presence. They mentioned specific reporters—most frequently Robin White—and emphasized Garang's skill in manipulating questions to offer entertaining and insightful interviews.[652] Like with Radio SPLA, however, some listeners resented the BBC's overemphasis on Garang. In 1986, the BBC conducted an audience survey in Sudan, at a time of expanding media freedom following Nimeiri's overthrow.[653] The survey was directed by Mohamed and Margaret Mohamed-Salih, anthropology professors at the University of Khartoum, whose final-year students were trained to independently question respondents in their home areas.[654] The survey was limited to select urban areas and mostly educated male respondents but nevertheless offers insight into opinions about Garang.[655] The only southern city included in the survey was government-held Juba but, in an attempt to 'complement the [survey's] quantitative information', the BBC's Francois Delauzun conducted qualitative interviews with 25 'opinion leaders' and about 30 'ordinary people' in Khartoum.[656] The opinion leaders included prominent professionals and politicians from the south and Nuba Mountains. The 'ordinary people' included 'refugees' settled 'on the outskirts of Omdurman'. The report does not list the refugees' place of origin, but they likely came from the south, Darfur, or Nuba Mountains: the 'peripheries' described by Garang. Based on these interviews, Delauzun reported,

> Our coverage of the war in the South did not seem to satisfy most listeners. This is not because it was seen to be biased, but rather incomplete. Southerners particularly resented

[650] Interview with Atem Yaak Atem, 15 Jun. 2021.
[651] Interview with Jacob Akol, video call, 15 Jun. 2021. See also SPLM/A, *Manifesto* (1983), ch. 4.
[652] Interviews with Otim David Okot; Timothy Tot Chol; Akol Miyen Kuol, Nairobi, 7 Sept. 2019. On foreign journalists as 'public figures', see Anke Fiedler and Marie-soleil Frère, '"Radio France Internationale" and "Deutsche Welle" in Francophone Africa: international broadcasters in a time of change', *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 9 (2016), 78.
[653] Article 19, 'Sudan: Press freedom under siege' (London, 1991), 1.
[654] BBC Written Archive Centre (WAC), Caversham, E3/1 416/1, International Broadcasting Audience Research, 'The BBC in Urban Sudan, Summer 1986', Jan. 1988, D4.
[655] Ibid., 3.
[656] Ibid., D1, D8-D9.

> the concentration of the coverage on John Garang and the SPLA. Although they acknowledged that Garang had a very efficient propaganda machine, they felt that the BBC should not fall for it and ought to give a broader perspective of events in the South.[657]

Though far from comprehensive, this report aligns with my interviewees' comments on Garang's wide-reaching radio presence and its ambiguous effect on listeners with reservations about the SPLM/A, showing how hard it was to craft a usable past and make Garang's biography appeal to diverse audiences. Listeners' attention to the BBC also shows that Radio SPLA did not exist in a vacuum, a fact of which Garang and Radio SPLA staff were well aware.

Garang's radio diplomacy and government counter-broadcasts

Throughout the war, Garang listened devotedly to Radio Omdurman and international broadcasters covering Sudan, in order to understand events in Khartoum.[658] He also used Radio SPLA to engage directly with the claims of the Sudanese government.[659] In the process of drawing parallels across historical cases of poor governance and oppression, Garang emphasized continuity in his own political program, referring frequently to past speeches as evidence of his consistency.[660] Central to this was his proclaimed commitment to 'dialogue', defined in the wake of President Nimeiri's overthrow in April 1985 as an inclusive process to be 'undertaken by all democratic and patriotic forces in the country so that a national democratic consensus is reached on the fundamental issues'.[661] To this end, radio served not only as a discursive platform but as a tool to make public a series of negotiations with various groups in Khartoum.

The culminating event of the one-year transitional period was a conference held in Koka Dam, western Ethiopia, between the SPLM/A and various Sudanese political groups in March 1986. Whereas peace negotiations in Sudan's first civil war had been conducted largely in secret, Radio SPLA broadcast a recording of Garang's opening address and a reading of the final declaration, which encompassed Garang's idea of a New Sudan and

[657] Ibid., D9.
[658] Interview with Lemi Logwonga Lomuro.
[659] James, 'Multiple voices', 200.
[660] For example, SWB ME/0536/A/1, 'Sudan SPLA leader on coup d'etat and new regime's attitude to peace process', *Radio SPLA*, 14 Aug. 1989 refers to speech given 27 May 1985.
[661] SWB ME/7963/A/1, 'Garang address to Sudanese people', *Radio SPLA*, 27 May 1985.

delineated a framework for a future national convention.[662] While the Koka Dam Declaration did little in the way of ending conflict on the ground, it was a public turning point in how the war and any prospective dialogue were framed, and a symbolic victory for Garang. Over the following months and years, Garang integrated the declaration seamlessly into the SPLM/A's usable past and his vision of a New Sudan, using it as a benchmark for specifically national dialogue.[663] When the April election established Sadiq as prime minister in a coalition government, Garang used the Koka Dam Declaration—to which Sadiq's Umma party was a signatory, but his two main coalition partners were not—as a central reference point in increasingly heated radio debates about possible dialogue.[664]

This was part of a wider set of strategies to establish the SPLM/A's international legitimacy, though the movement's success in doing so was mixed. In parallel to Garang's discursive posturing about dialogue, radio broadcasting played a direct role in 'the shaping of warfare and its moral rhetoric'.[665] Garang used radio to frame the military acts of the SPLA and establish it as a force which both the government and international actors would have to recognize. Garang was never shy about using military force to highlight his control of people and territory and, by extension, his claim to political legitimacy. Following Nimeiri's overthrow, he announced to 'the generals' in Khartoum that without the SPLM/A's support, '[t]he oil will not flow; water will not flow in the Jonglei canal; vehicles will not move in war zone one [southern Sudan]; the air will continue to be dangerous for air transport'.[666] In subsequent radio speeches between mid-1985 and mid-1986, Garang made intermittent threats about shooting down planes. When the SPLA captured Rumbek in March 1986, just two weeks before the scheduled Koka Dam conference, he announced,

> Rumbek town is, of course, very heavily defended all around, with many anti-aircraft guns and launchers, both SPLA's and those captured, and any relief flights into the town must first be cleared by SPLA general headquarters and then co-ordinated with the field

[662] SWB ME/8215/A/1, 'Sudanese rebel leader addresses conference in Ethiopia, Radio SPLA, 21 Mar. 1986; ME/8220/A/1, "Sudanese rebel leader addresses conference in Ethiopia", Radio SPLA, 25 Mar. 1986; ME/8221/A/1, "Declaration of Sudanese groups" meeting in Addis Ababa', Radio SPLA, 28 Mar. 1986. See also Garang and Khālid, *Call for democracy*, 118–44.
[663] SWB ME/8537/A/1, 'Sudanese rebel leader's statement on uprising anniversary', *Radio SPLA*, 6 Apr. 1987.
[664] SWB ME/8263/A/1 'John Garang reaffirm's [*sic*] SPLM's willingness to meet new government', *Radio SPLA*, 17 Apr. 1986.
[665] James, 'Multiple voices', 198.
[666] SWB ME/7922/A/1, 'Sudanese rebel leader's threat to continue struggle', *Radio SPLA*, 9 Apr. 1985.

> commander […] Any other plane whether military or civilian will be shot down without prior warning.[667]

Asserting that the SPLM/A must be treated as a legitimate diplomatic actor with pseudo-sovereign territorial control, Garang's message was clear: to reach the south, you must go through the SPLM/A and its increasingly important humanitarian wing.

Later that year, the SPLM/A followed through on its threat. On 15 August 1986, the SPLM/A announced a flight ban via Radio SPLA and international press release, claiming Sadiq 'planned […] to launch a major offensive against SPLA forces' and to 'use the food of the International Food Relief to support his offensive'.[668] The following day, the SPLM/A shot down a civilian Sudan Airways flight taking off from Malakal, killing all on board. On 18 August, the SPLM/A proudly claimed responsibility for the attack. Although Garang himself did not speak, Radio SPLA relayed a 'warm message of congratulations' from Arok Thon Arok to Garang on 'the shooting down of the enemy plane […] by the gallant SPLA forces of Fashoda Battalion'.[669] On 19 August, Radio SPLA broadcast a statement blaming Sadiq for the incident, saying he did not heed the SPLA's 'magnanimous advice'.[670]

In response, Radio Omdurman broadcast a vitriolic statement by the minister of culture and information condemning 'Garang and his gang':

> To make John Garang understand that the road to peace cannot be founded on the heads of innocent women and children and the unarmed, this government cannot share a platform with pirates and highway robbers. [671]

This marked the beginning of an era of more personalized radio attacks focused directly on Garang. Over the next week, government media described Garang as a 'terrorist', 'criminal', and 'outlaw', someone whose 'immorality' demanded that dialogue be stopped and that the SPLA 'be dealt with in the language of war'.[672] On one hand, by shooting down a civilian plane and publicly claiming responsibility, Garang and the SPLM/A had given the government the discursive fodder it needed to drop the pretense of peace negotiations. On

[667] SWB ME/8203/A/1, 'SPLA's Garang says Lakes province a "liberated area"', *Radio SPLA*, 7 Mar. 1986.
[668] BLSC MS.Oxfam.PRG.3/3/1/39, SPLM/SPLA press release, 15 Aug. 1986.
[669] FBIS-MEA-86-160, 'SPLA Radio broadcasts congratulations', *Radio SPLA*, 18 Aug. 1986.
[670] SWB ME/8343/A/1, 'SPLA blame Mahdi for shooting down of plane: More planes will be attacked', *Radio SPLA*, 19 Aug. 1986.
[671] SWB ME/8343/A/1, 'Sudanese minister on shooting down of plane: Proof of Garang's "criminal acts"', *Radio Omdurman*, 19 Aug. 1986.
[672] SWB ME/8345/A/1, 'Minister threatens guerilla warfare against Garang', *SUNA*, 21 August 1986.

the other, Garang had linked radio discourse with action, reinforcing the power of his personal warnings and those of Radio SPLA more generally.

In a press conference about the Malakal incident, Sadiq denounced 'John Garang's radio':

> Mahdi described what is being broadcast by Garang's radio station as 'empty talk' […] its objective is to launch a psychological war. Mahdi stressed that the security situation in southern Sudan's four cities, which Garang threatened to shell, is calm.[673]

Ironically, Sadiq's attempt to publicly discredit Garang and Radio SPLA suggest that he perceived Garang's 'empty talk' as a real threat. Indeed, youth listening in Khartoum and Juba explained that the government's constant denigration of Garang made them more aware of his importance.[674] By attempting to combat Garang's growing public persona, the government only strengthened it.

In late September, the government began broadcasting a programme on the same frequency and at the same time as Radio SPLA. Tellingly, SWB and FBIS first described it as an 'anti-Garang broadcast', before labelling it the People's Armed Forces Programme (PAFP) and renaming it National Unity Radio on 23 October 1987.[675] A monitor's summary on 29 September 1986 stated that Radio SPLA had changed from its usual frequency of 9705 kHz to 9530 kHz, but that PAFP then began operating on 9530 kHz as well, 'causing mutual interference'.[676] According to SWB comments upon first hearing PAFP, their broadcasts even began with the signature military jingle used by Radio SPLA.[677] Within the SWB reports on PAFP's broadcasts, one programme stands out: a commentary by members of the Anyanya-2, a group of southern secessionists who clashed with Garang's SPLM/A early in the war, though many later joined the SPLM/A. Titled 'the Voice of Peace, the Voice of Anyanya II', the programme featured pro-government Anyanya-2 members who denigrated Garang and his Ethiopian, Cuban, and (alleged) Soviet backers.[678] While this was not the

[673] SWB ME/8345/A/1, 'Sudan's Mahdi says Garang uses terrorism', *SUNA*, 21 Aug. 1986.
[674] Interview with Sunday Beiag, Nairobi, 6 Sept. 2019; focus group with Equatorian youth, Nairobi, 5 Sept. 2019.
[675] SWB ME/8375/I, 'Anti-Garang broadcast heard on former Sudanese rebel radio frequencies', 27 Sept. 1986; FOIA, Cable from FBIS London to Rutlaab/FBIS Washington, 'FYI: Anti-Garang radio broadcasting on Radio SPLA frequency', 25 Sept. 1986.
[676] SWB ME/8376/i, 'Pro and anti-SPLA radio continue broadcasting on same frequencies', 29 Sept. 1986.
[677] SWB ME/8375/I, 'Anti-Garang broadcast heard on former Sudanese rebel radio frequencies', 27 Sept. 1986.
[678] SWB ME/8420/A/1, 'Sudanese anti-SPLA radio broadcasts Voice of Anyanya II programme', editorial report, 19 Nov. 1986.

first time that the government used the Anyanya-2 as the peaceful, accommodating antithesis of the SPLM, the Voice of Peace commentaries signal an overt strategy of discrediting Garang, mirroring the government's material tactics of arming southern militias against the SPLA.[679]

PAFP broadcast in Arabic, suggesting the government was targeting domestic listeners more than the international community. Voice of Peace broadcasts described desertions from 'Garang's camps', splits within his movement, and Radio SPLA's lack of credibility.[680] By using Anyanya II commentators, these broadcasts challenged Garang's authority through fellow southerners. In later years, PAFP featured news of splits between Garang and senior SPLM/A leaders, including Kerubino Kuanyin Bol, Arok Thon Arok, and Joseph Oduho.[681] Based on real divisions in the movement, these broadcasts had the potential to be much more damaging for Garang's reputation. It is hard to know how this government propaganda was interpreted by listeners; however, by tracing government attempts to discredit Garang, jam Radio SPLA broadcasts, and reveal rifts between Garang and his commanders, we see the government's increasing concern about the *idea* of Garang circulating within Sudan and beyond, and Garang's power to disrupt the status quo. Having long controlled Sudanese media, the government reacted to Radio SPLA by expanding its efforts to divide southern opinion and to silence or undermine Garang.

International radio and the SPLM/A split

In addition to the government's PAFP broadcasts, between October and early December 1986, Radio Omdurman was responsible for a series of rumors claiming that Garang had been killed. Notably, these broadcasts and Radio SPLA's reactions also implicated the BBC, first in spreading misinformation of Garang's demise and subsequently in helping prove that Garang was alive through an interview conducted by BBC correspondent Mike Wooldridge. The exchanges these rumors generated aptly demonstrate the ways in which Sudanese actors

[679] Johnson, *Root Causes*, 67–9.
[680] SWB ME/8401/A/1, 'Anti-SPLA radio claims despondency among Garang's forces', *PAFP*, 25 Oct. 1986.
[681] SWB ME/0058/A/1, 'Sudan anti-SPLM radio reports interview with defectors on "split" in movement', *National Unity Radio*, 23 Jan. 1988; SWB ME/0174/A/1, 'National Unity Radio calls on SPLA to reject Garang's leadership', *National Unity Radio*, 6 Jun. 1988.

not only spoke *to* an international audience but drew foreign broadcasters into debates about truth-telling.[682]

Original BBC broadcasts from October 1986 are not available but, on 17 October, Radio SPLA accused both Radio Omdurman and the BBC of spreading misinformation about Garang's death:

> The spokesman pointed out that rumours broadcast over Radio Omdurman and the BBC saying that Col Dr John Garang de Mabior had been killed in a fight with his deputy, Lt-Col Carabino [*sic*] Kuanyin Bol, who was claimed to have been subsequently killed himself, was [*sic*] completely fabricated. The spokesman said that the rumour is part of Khartoum's propaganda campaign aimed at misinforming and misleading the Sudanese public.[683]

Two later broadcasts monitored by SWB provided more detail, claiming Garang had been killed in Jabal Boma in eastern Upper Nile. The first claimed as its source an eyewitness who had defected from the SPLM/A and the second internal SPLM/A radio communications intercepted by the Anyanya-2.[684] According to a SUNA summary, Sadiq himself commented on Garang's alleged death, claiming he had heard different reports but that 'his absence is noticeable. His recordings that are broadcast are old'.[685] Sadiq went on to highlight 'that what is certain is that there are differences within the Garang group', claiming these had to do with both tribe and ideology.[686]

The international confusion caused by these conflicting reports is captured in the communications of Oxfam staff trying to operate in southern Sudan who, as late as 3 December, were unsure of whether Garang had been killed. Notably, it was an interview with BBC's Mike Wooldridge which proved definitively that Garang was alive, followed by a wider press conference in Addis Ababa.[687] The SPLM/A capitalized on the occasion, making jokes about Garang's 'resurrection' and turning the confusion against the government. Replying to a reporter's question that maybe he had been wounded, Garang joked about 'disrob[ing]' and affirmed, 'No, I was not wounded in any way. As I said before,

[682] Cf. Connelly, *Diplomatic Revolution*, 133–5.
[683] SWB ME/8394/A/1, 'Sudanese rebel radio denies reports of Garang's death, SPLM split', *Radio SPLA*, 17 Oct. 1986.
[684] SWB ME/8422/A/1, 'Reported death of John Garang', *SUNA*, 19 Nov. 1986; SWB ME/8436/A/1, 'Sudan's Anyanya II rejects Islamic-Christian committee; Garang rumours', *SUNA*, 2 Dec. 1986.
[685] SWB ME/8430/A/1, 'Sudanese prime minister comments on southern question, Ethiopia', *SUNA*, 28 Nov. 1986.
[686] *Ibid.*
[687] BLSC MS.Oxfam.PRG.5/3/1/11, Nick Winer to Tony Vaux, 'South Sudan', 3 Dec. 1986.

this was disinformation, distraction'.[688] He went on to decry Khartoum for spreading rumors, framing such behavior as a clear attack on the peace process agreed to in Koka Dam.

On this occasion, Garang had the last word, speaking to a domestic and international audience about his commitment to truthfulness and dialogue. The incident reveals Garang's awareness of radio's international networks and his ability to manipulate these to reinforce his personal credibility and highlight the government's duplicity. However, the power of radio rumors—no matter how unfounded—also points to the complications of projecting leadership in the contested space of the ether. Garang did not have a monopoly on international broadcasters and, in 1991, the most significant internal threat to Garang's leadership was precipitated by the combination of an internal message to all SPLA units and a BBC interview with Garang's would-be usurpers: Riek Machar and Lam Akol.

In late May 1991, the SPLM/A lost their main training and refugee camps in western Ethiopia following the overthrow of President Mengistu. They also lost the Radio SPLA transmitter, a blow from which the broadcaster never meaningfully recovered. As hundreds of thousands of refugees returned in disarray to Sudan, Nasir near the Sudanese-Ethiopian border became a hub for international relief.[689] Both Machar and Akol were in Nasir by 8 June, where they planned their attempt to replace Garang.[690] Akol had previously represented the SPLM/A in Nairobi and was known within the BBC.[691] In late August, Akol sent a message directly to Colin Blane, BBC's East Africa correspondent. Blane remembers an anonymous messenger walking into his office in Nairobi to leave a message inviting him to Nasir 'where [he] might find something of interest'.[692] Blane discreetly checked around and, realizing no one else in the Nairobi press industry had received a similar invitation, decided the tip was worth pursuing for a potentially exclusive story. On 28 August, Blane took a humanitarian flight to the Sudanese-Kenyan border and proceeded to Nasir the following day. There, he met and interviewed Garang's would-be usurpers, focusing on Akol and Machar as more eloquent speakers than their co-conspirator Gordon Kong. He

[688] SWB ME/8439/A/1 'John Garang's news conference in Addis Ababa', *Radio SPLA*, 8 Dec. 1986 and *SUNA in Arabic*, 9 Dec. 1986.
[689] Sudan Open Archive, online, Mark Cutts, 'The mass exodus of Sudanese refugees from camps in western Ethiopia and programmes for their rehabilitation in southern Sudan', July 1991, 14-15, 21.
[690] Akol, *SPLM/SPLA: Nasir*, 1–4.
[691] Interviews with Lucy Hannan, Nairobi, 19 Mar. 2018, and Colin Blane, phone, 26 Apr. 2018.
[692] Interview with Colin Blane.

returned to Nairobi on 30 August where he broke the news in a short voice report, soon followed soon by a longer feature including the interviews with Akol and Machar.

Two days earlier, Akol and Machar had sent an internal message to all units announcing, 'In order to save the movement from the imminent collapse [*sic*], it has been decided to relieve John Garang from the leadership of the SPLM/A'.[693] The BBC report relayed their message to a wider audience, including SPLA soldiers who had missed the initial dispatch. The internal message to all units—which borrowed from Garang's own communication tactics—and Blane's BBC broadcast combined to have significant impact. Although Garang was then in Torit, some 300 miles from Nasir, he reacted quickly to the report by contacting Blane directly. Blane recalled,

> I wrote a voice report […] and that prompted a very very fast response from John Garang denouncing the report and denouncing me. But since the next thing I did was to broadcast chunks of the interviews, then Garang couldn't carry on saying that I hadn't spoken to Lam Akol or Riek, because he could hear them, they were out there. And the story was out there. And you know, that was how, from my point of view, how fast and strong the impact was. I mean, Garang responded and it was clear that the split was real […] And you couldn't pretend otherwise because I had the leaders of the crew on tape.[694]

In Blane's retelling, Garang was immediately aware of the broadcast's implications. Blane's face-to-face interviews with Akol and Machar in Nasir—and the power of their voices on international radio—gave weight to Garang's alleged replacement. Unable to turn to the defunct Radio SPLA, Garang reacted to his attempted overthrow with an internal radio message to all units and a corresponding press release signed by nine of the ten PMHC members who had not defected, with a note beside the tenth saying that he had given his support via radio because he could not be in Kapoeta in person.[695]

Although there was no initial military component to Garang's so-called overthrow, the split rapidly solidified, precipitating a period of devastating inter-southern violence. If other factors were at play—Machar's close relationship with international humanitarians and the Nasir faction's backing from Khartoum—Akol's direct message to Blane and Garang's reaction to Blane's voice report reveal the important role of international broadcasters in the radio battles of the second civil war. In the search for political legitimacy,

[693] Radio message, Riek Machar to SPLA High Command and all units, 28 Aug. 1991. Reproduced in Akol, *SPLM/SPLA: Nasir*, 290–3.
[694] Interview with Colin Blane.
[695] Akol, *SPLM/SPLA: Nasir*, 14; SAD 985/3/7, Press statement by SPLM/SPLA, 31 Aug. 1991.

SPLM/A leaders interacted directly with individual correspondents like Wooldridge and Blane and cited their broadcasts to support their own agenda or denounce the BBC for its lack of objectivity. These radio battles had real effects, not only in giving Garang a voice to speak nationally and internationally, but in opening Garang to reports which blurred the line between local and global critique. Throughout the 1990s, the SPLM/A suffered further fragmentation, though Garang kept control of the 'SPLM/A-Mainstream'. Without its Ethiopian transmitter, Radio SPLA never recovered and propaganda battles during this period shifted from the airwaves to print media as the SPLM/A factions issued press releases denigrating their opponents and published more sophisticated newsletters from Nairobi.[696] They would, however, still cite internal radio messages in disputes about truth, history, and political authority.

Conclusion

Radio broadcasting played an understudied role in the development of Garang's public profile and influence during Sudan's second civil war. Reading archives in combination with oral histories for the acts of interpretation through which various actors gave value to Garang's sonic presence offers a 'real-time' view of Garang's rise to local and international prominence, and the challenges of seeking political legitimacy over the airwaves. Radio allowed Garang to speak to a dispersed audience within and beyond Sudan, presenting an alternative history of the Sudanese state and publicizing his vision of a New Sudan. Through Radio SPLA's convergence with the SPLM/A's two-way radio communications, which further amplified Garang's voice and directly shaped the content of Radio SPLA, Garang quickly dominated the wartime soundscape. For many domestic listeners, Garang's presence on Radio SPLA stands out as an important source of inspiration during the war; however, experiences of listening were shaped by place and personal experiences, and songs and speeches which originated in SPLA training camps were often poorly received by civilian listeners. Nevertheless, Garang succeeded in shifting the dominant narrative of the war from southern secession to national reform. In addition, through a mixed strategy of dialogue and military action, he established himself as someone who had to be taken seriously. The

[696] From 1992, SPLM/A-Mainstream published the weekly *SPLM/SPLA Update* and SPLM/A-Nasir published the roughly bi-weekly *Southern Sudan Vision.*

intensification of government counter-broadcast strategies after the Malakal incident—with specific attempts to muzzle and discredit Garang's radio voice—betray the government's increasing fear about the power of Garang's broadcasts. By nature transnational and conversational, these radio battles did not confine themselves to dialogue between the SPLM/A and the Sudanese government, but implicated BBC broadcasting in wider disputes about truth-telling.

Debates over the airwaves also shaped the internal politics of the SPLM/A in significant ways. Garang's aural presence—on internal radio, in songs, and on Radio SPLA—was resented by the Nasir faction leaders and, in 1991, Colin Blane's BBC interviews with Akol and Machar played a role in precipitating the era's biggest internal threat to Garang's leadership of the SPLM/A. Radio thus powerfully mediated between personal, national, and international politics. Studying the war's sonic events in this way allows for an analysis of Garang's rise to power rooted not only in the concrete events of guerrilla warfare and diplomacy but in the actions and attitudes of individual actors who broadcast, listened, and monitored. This approach, focused on war's moral contests and claims to truth, offers a lens for understanding how Garang's political persona was constructed and circulated, and the centrality of this persona to the SPLM/A's liberation war and internal conflicts. The next chapter turns to SPLM/A contests over history and political legitimacy in print in the 1990s, as new peace processes and Operation Lifeline Sudan, a United Nations-coordinated relief intervention launched in 1989, legitimated the SPLM/A factions' presence in Kenya.

Ch. 5: 'John Garang the dictator': SPLM/A factionalism and archives of dissent

Following the 1991 split in the SPLM/A and further fractures in the movement throughout the 1990s, critiques of Garang became more public and more virulent, particularly in new print publications produced by rival SPLM/A factions. Several factors explain the rise of print media as a platform for SPLM/A leadership disputes during this period. First, the loss of Radio SPLA's transmitter in Ethiopia required that Garang's 'SPLM/A-Mainstream' find new channels to communicate.[697] Second, Nairobi's new importance as a relief hub for the UN-coordinated Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) and a site for peace negotiations legitimized SPLM factions' presence in the Kenyan capital. Being in Nairobi allowed factions to build relationships with journalists and aid agencies and offered a publishing base for press releases and newsletters. Third, in 1992, several political detainees imprisoned by the SPLM/A in the 1980s were released or escaped, and quickly put pen to paper to criticize Garang.

In this chapter, I explore the anti-Garang content of *Southern Sudan Vision*, a newsletter representing Riek Machar's and Lam Akol's Nasir faction (renamed SPLM/A-United in March 1993) which published from March 1992 until at least March 1997.[698] In news articles, historical commentaries, reprinted press statements, and opinion pieces, *Vision* contributors presented Garang as a dictator, tribalist, nepotist, and murderer—the cause and embodiment of everything wrong with the SPLM/A. I argue that demonizing Garang was both a way for his rivals to make political claims as they sought legitimacy with southern Sudanese and international supporters, and to debate deep-rooted problems of governance and violence within the SPLM/A. Just as Garang used history in his discursive battles with the Sudanese government, *Vision* contributors contested Garang's narratives of how the SPLM/A was founded and of (southern) Sudanese nationhood, producing counter-histories with alternative nationalist heroes.

A rich literature highlights the centrality of contested histories of anticolonialism to postcolonial African politics, particularly in states where armed liberation movements became governments after anticolonial struggles, civil wars, or both. Anne Pitcher has

[697] Tounsel, *Chosen Peoples*, 93.
[698] For chronology of the Nasir faction's evolving names, see Johnson, *Root Causes*, 98n9.

studied 'forgetting from above' and 'memory from below' in Mozambique, arguing that the government strategically 'forgot' its socialist history to build a national neo-liberal identity, but was challenged by workers who invoked the past promises of socialism to make claims on the state.[699] In another study on Mozambique, Victor Igreja argues that, notwithstanding an official policy of moving on from the civil war, memories of violence are kept 'in reserve' and deployed by the government and opposition when useful to Mozambican parliamentary politics, while Justin Pearce shows that debates about past political contributions *within* Frelimo, the governing party, have been equally politically charged.[700] Vasco Martins and Pearce indicate that struggles over history and memory in post-civil war Angola continue wartime debates, pointing to the need to understand the long-term processes through which ideas about the past emerge according to their usefulness and viability in a given moment.[701]

The vogue for 'memory', however, sometimes occludes the active means through which particular pasts are created. Thus, in this chapter, as in previous ones, I describe how actors consciously made competing *histories*. Within the SPLM/A, battles over the past were as serious during the war as they have been after. These battles were intellectual projects which involved the assembling of evidence and archives to make political claims in a given moment and to leave sources for the future. Focusing on these confrontational practices of history-making, I expand on studies of rebel diplomacy in Sudan and elsewhere to argue that contesting the past was a core component of the 'discursive diplomacy' of rival SPLM/A leaders, as well as that of the SPLM/A vis-à-vis the Sudanese government.[702]

When Akol and Machar announced Garang's overthrow in August 1991, their support base was limited to primarily Nuer units in Upper Nile.[703] *Vision* articles promoted a wider alliance which could attract SPLM/A members in Equatoria and Bahr el Ghazal dissatisfied with Garang's leadership. Establishing Garang as a common enemy required new histories and silences, exemplified by two common characteristics in several *Vision*

[699] M Pitcher, 'Forgetting from above and memory from below: Strategies of legitimation and struggle in postsocialist Mozambique', *Africa*, 76/1 (2006), 88–112.
[700] Igreja, 'Memories'; Justin Pearce, 'Simango, Gwenjere and the politics of the past in Mozambique', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 47/3 (2021), 387–404.
[701] Vasco Martins, '"A nossa lâmpada não se apaga": The mnemonic return of Angola's Jonas Savimbi', *African Studies Review*, 64/1 (2021), 247–8; Pearce, 'Simango, Gwenjere', 112.
[702] Manoeli, *Sudan's 'Southern Problem'*, 7; Reyko Huang, 'Rebel diplomacy in civil war', *International Security*, 40/4 (2016), 89–126.
[703] Johnson, *Root Causes*, 97.

articles from 1992 and 1993. The first relates to the call for democratic reform within the SPLM/A. Akol and Machar's 'Why Garang must go now', the text released when they announced Garang's purported overthrow in August 1991, criticized Garang's hypocrisy for advocating democracy but 'running the movement in a most autocratic and whimsical manner'.[704] They accused Garang of monopolizing power, stifling democratic debate, promoting militarism, and waging 'an anti-intellectuals crusade.' These were core themes throughout *Vision* texts, often reducing wider issues to do with the SPLM/A's political culture and history of violent internal repression into questions about Garang's personal character and treatment of other 'intellectuals'—a complex and flexible category which could encompass educated, left-wing military men and civilian politicians and scholars, according to need. This simplification was necessary because many of those making claims against Garang in the 1990s, including Akol, were equally complicit in the violent crimes used to denigrate him. A focus on democracy was also used to undermine Garang's New Sudan vision and call for southern secession as the desire of the 'masses'. However, these factional discursive contests in print were in reality a step removed from the 'masses.' SPLM/A elites were writing for fellow elites—or at least for a literate constituency, largely in the diaspora—and for the international community. Unlike radio, ordinary Sudanese on the ground still in the country would have had little access to these debates.

The second characteristic is the adoption of an ethnic idiom of Bor Dinka supremacy, which drew from and expanded upon the political language of Dinka domination in southern regional politics in the late 1970s and early 1980s to frame Garang's actions in terms of ethnic favouritism or discrimination. Dinka are not a singular or homogenous group, so by specifying Garang's Bor Dinka origins, authors could generate histories which denounced Garang as a 'tribalist' while still celebrating and seeking to recruit support from Dinka in Bahr el Ghazal. Like ZANU leaders in Zimbabwe who broke away from nationalist leader Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU movement and subsequently denigrated him as a weak and traitorous leader with a narrow ethnic following, Garang's rivals sought to undermine his nationalist reputation by presenting his politics as purely self-interested and 'tribal'.[705] Through retelling the events of the Bor Mutiny and the early years of the war, several *Vision*

[704] 'Why Garang must go now'.
[705] Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems, 'Reinvoking the past', 194–6; Alexander, 'The noisy silence', 771.

articles presented Garang as part of a Bor Dinka clique who were, at best, unpatriotic when it came to the southern cause and, at worst, genocidal in their treatment of others.

Vision further cultivated a common front against Garang by printing letters by Garang's rivals within the SPLM/A, as well as opinion pieces from a wider segment of southern Sudanese writers. In several cases it is unclear whether these letters were submitted directly to *Vision* or reprinted by the editors. Either way, they signal the authors' intent to circulate new narratives of SPLM/A history and *Vision*'s attempt to aggregate anti-Garang texts into a meaningful archive of moral dissent. Critiques of Garang published in *Vision* unpacked important concerns about excessive violence, detention, and perceived discrimination within the movement. Like critical accounts of Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere described by James Brennan, several authors whose works were printed in *Vision* approached Garang 'through their own visceral experience of his autocratic power', including detention and torture.[706] However, the way these themes were explored was shaped by what constituted a useful political narrative in the early 1990s. The pamphlet 'For a strong SPLM/A: What is to be done?', co-authored by former SPLM/A officers Amon Mon Wantok, Chol Deng Alak, Ater Benjamin, Deng Bior Deng, and Ajiing Adiang, offers a case study of how explicitly anti-Garang histories were constructed and circulated, and with what effects.

I demonstrate that these histories unearthed 'silences' produced by Garang's narratives but also imposed new ones, particularly around the authors' far-left ideological stance in the 1980s and how this unsettled Kerubino Kuanyin, Arok Thon Arok, and William Nyuon, who were all core members of the movement's leadership body, the Political Military High Command (PMHC). I argue that this silencing was strategic. Marxist-Leninist claims had little value after 1991 because of the collapse of the Soviet Union and overthrow of the SPLM/A's socialist sponsors in Ethiopia. Furthermore, highlighting the involvement of Kuanyin, Arok, and Nyuon in imprisoning or eliminating other cadres ran directly counter to attempts to establish an anti-Garang front which included all these actors. In contrast, with an increased international humanitarian audience, narratives of unlawful detention, torture, and genocide offered these authors powerful emotional and political currency.

[706] James Brennan, 'Julius Rex: Nyerere through the eyes of his critics, 1953-2013', in Marie-Aude Fouéré (ed.), *Remembering Julius Nyerere in Tanzania: History, Memory, Legacy* (Dar es Salaam, 2015), 156.

But not everyone who critiqued Garang ascribed to these silences. In a second case study, I consider how another leftist SPLM/A officer, Alfred Ladu Gore, wrote against both Garang *and* the PMHC. Reprinted in *Vision*, Gore's writings contributed to the broad archive of anti-Garang dissent; however, his attention to wider issues within the PMHC captures the challenges faced by senior SPLM/A leaders attempting to distance themselves from the SPLM/A's violent past through histories which specifically demonized Garang.

Ultimately, the Nasir faction's attacks against Dinka and Equatorian civilians undermined their attempt to present themselves as the inclusive alternative to Garang's 'tribalist' violence.[707] Ironically, this precipitated another series of public resignations by SPLM/A officers, this time from the Nasir faction. Nevertheless, the histories produced by Nasir faction members and sympathizers in the movement's early years deserve attention for what they reveal about how battles over the past shaped political claim-making and for their enduring influence on narratives of 'tribal' factionalism and the treatment of intellectuals in SPLM/A politics.

Southern Sudan Vision and its audience

The context of SPLM/A propaganda and engagement with the international community in the 1990s was very different to the 1980s. In 1989, the UN entered into a tripartite agreement with the Sudanese government and SPLM to launch Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS), a ground-breaking arrangement which marked the first time the UN formally negotiated humanitarian access with opposing parties in a civil war. Initially designed as a six-week emergency relief intervention, OLS ran for sixteen years and has been described as the SPLM/A's 'procurement department' for food and medicines.[708] Operationally, OLS was divided into a northern sector run from Khartoum which accessed government-controlled towns and a southern sector run from Nairobi which accessed SPLM/A-controlled areas. OLS was premised on the idea of 'negotiated access' and relief implementation through local 'counterparts'.[709] For the northern sector, this was the Government's Relief and

[707] Johnson, *Root Causes*, 98, 114.
[708] Douglas Johnson, 'Destruction and reconstruction in the economy of the southern Sudan', in Sharif Harir and Terje Tvedt (eds.), *Short-Cut to Decay: The Case of the Sudan* (Uppsala, 1994), 133.
[709] Larry Minear, *Humanitarianism Under Siege : A Critical Review of Operation Lifeline Sudan* (Trenton, N.J, 1991), 59–60.

Rehabilitation Commission and, for the southern sector, the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association (SRRA), the humanitarian wing of the SPLM/A. The SRRA had operated in Nairobi from at least 1986 but this was a turning point in the scale and formality of their position in Kenya.[710] Following the SPLM/A split, OLS also dealt with the Relief Association of Southern Sudan (RASS), the humanitarian wing of the Nasir faction.

Ohiyok David Oduho, a former editor of *Vision*, described its mandate in relation to this new relief landscape.[711] *Vision* was an English-language newsletter, published from Nairobi but also distributed in the UK. Ohiyok is the son of prominent southern Sudanese politician Joseph Oduho, who joined SPLM/A-United after being released from SPLM/A detention in 1992 but was killed in inter-factional fighting in 1993. Ohiyok also worked as a radio monitor for the BBC in Nairobi and consultant for OLS and Save the Children Fund (UK), a member of the OLS consortium. Ohiyok identified three goals for *Vision*: informing people about the activities of the movement, the activities of humanitarian agencies, and life in areas controlled by SPLM/A-United. He explained that most copies went to the international community and southern Sudanese diaspora. Ohiyok remembers they used to print between 1500 and 5000 copies (though this number cannot be corroborated) and gave copies directly to NGOs in Nairobi. Many copies were also sent to the UK, where they were distributed to key contacts by Samuel Odat Ayul, the SPLM/A-United representative in London, and were available for subscription.[712] I was unable to locate all issues of *Vision* but those available show that it published approximately biweekly until 1993 or 1994, and more sporadically until at least March 1997.[713]

Like Radio SPLA advertising its control of airspace and correlating position as a pseudo-sovereign intermediary, *Vision* was a part of SPLM/A-United's search for diplomatic legitimacy and the political, humanitarian, and military resources this legitimacy could bring. As seen in chapter four, Lam Akol actively cultivated international opinion, communicating directly with BBC correspondent Colin Blane to arrange coverage of the

[710] BLSC MS.Oxfam.PRG.3/3/1/39, Tony Vaux to David Bryer, 'SRRA', 11 Jul. 1986; BLSC MS.Oxfam.PRG.5/3/1/10, SRRA Nairobi and SRRA London, 'Urgent appeal for emergency aid to displaced population in the Sudan', n.d.
[711] Interview with Ohiyok David Oduho.
[712] Douglas Johnson's personal papers, letter, Samuel Odat Ayul, London, to Douglas Johnson, Oxford, 'SSV No,46', 19 Feb. 1997; subscription insert in *Southern Sudan Vision* (*SSV*), 13 (15 Sept. 1992).
[713] I accessed issues of *SSV* in Oxford's Bodleian Libraries, the Sudan Archive Durham, and Douglas Johnson's personal papers.

Nasir faction's anti-Garang move in August 1991. Moreover, in the two-month period before they declared Garang's overthrow, Akol and Machar met with foreign politicians, senior UN officials, and journalists in Nasir in the context of an emergency relief intervention to aid southern Sudanese refugees fleeing western Ethiopia following the overthrow of Mengistu.[714] Relief flights allowed Akol 'to send and receive mail from Europe, America and other parts of the world, and Akol asked SPLM/A officers abroad to ensure their declaration received due international attention.'[715] After the split, *Vision* was an important channel for continuing these discursive politics. Having simply declared Garang's overthrow—without militarily displacing him—Akol and Machar's efforts to establish the SPLM/A-Nasir as a justified and viable political movement required ongoing work to undermine Garang's narrative and political primacy, both past and present.

Contesting histories of the Bor Mutiny

As the established founding event in SPLM/A history, the Bor Mutiny was a prominent topic in *Vision*, offering contributors a historiographic battlefield to challenge Garang's intellectual authority and claims to leadership. An anonymous article about the government's recapture of Bor published in April 1992 relates a history of the Bor Mutiny in which Kerubino Kuanyin is the prime hero and Garang is an opportunistic coward and traitor:

> Bor has assumed historical importance because the first shots of the current war were fired there on 16 May 1983 by the hero Major Kerubino Kwanyin Bol and his gallant NCO[s] and men of Battalions 104 and 105. Kerubino was immediately wounded on the spot […] Colonel John Garang who was by then in Bor on the same day in which the battle of Bor was being fought, grabbed the nearest Landrover of the Jonglei Development projects and hurried away from Bor […] He was heading for Malakal to avoid being implicated in what he saw as a risky adventure.[716]

The article explains that Garang callously left Kuanyin and his soldiers behind, and only decided to 'join the people' in Ethiopia because Chagai Atem persuaded him to. On the way to the border, Garang was helped by Samuel Gai Tut, 'a staunch Southern Nationalist', whom Garang subsequently betrayed and killed. The article then draws wider parallels between Garang and other 'controversial selfish and hypocritical leaders' from Bor,

[714] African Rights, *Food and power*, 266.
[715] Nyaba, *Politics*, 90–1; Akol, *SPLM/SPLA: Nasir*, 3–4.
[716] 'The capture of Bor: What must be said', *SSV*, 3 (15 Apr. 2019), 4.

claiming that Bor Dinka tell their children they are 'born to rule' and that Garang transformed the SPLM/A 'into a tool of Bor domination.'

My reconstruction of the events before, during, and after the Bor Mutiny in chapter two reveal the elisions in this version. Here, however, I am less interested in its historical accuracy than in how it challenges Garang's own account of the Bor Mutiny—as established by the *Manifesto*, his speeches, and his interviews—to construct an explicitly ethnic argument about Bor Dinka domination during the interwar period and in the SPLM/A leadership. The article concluded with an overt challenge to Garang's 'false' histories, averring that 'no further political cheating will be allowed form [*sic*] those who have almost made it their birth right. Even the SPLA history which Garang has so much falsified in the Past nine years will be put straight so that the masquaraders [*sic*] are brought to their real size.'

A month later, *Vision* featured two more articles on the Bor Mutiny to commemorate the SPLM/A's ninth anniversary. The first of these was less overtly anti-Garang than the April article but still contested the SPLM/A's dominant history of the Mutiny. Highlighting the importance of anniversaries as 'moments for reflection, rumination[,] stock taking and self examination', the article situates the Bor and Pibor 'incidents' in the context of 'general discontent and frustration among Southerners' in the 1970s and early 1980s. Like the article a month earlier, it offers a heroic portrayal of Kuanyin and criticizes Elijah Malok—a senior SPLM/A commander from the Bor area who was an MP in the regional government of the early 1980s—for his role in trying to convince Kuanyin to stand down:

> …Elijah Malok, was rough with major Kerubino Kuanyin Bor, the commander of Bor garrison and leader of the resistance. He told him to go to Bahr el Ghazal where he comes from to cause trouble there adding that they will not allow Bor to be a battle ground! Well, God works in mysterious ways. Today, Kerubino Kuanyin Bol who led the rebellion, is languishing in jail while Elijah Malok, who didn't want the rebellion to take place, shouts loudest about the inevitability of the rebellion that later transferred into the SPLA. A lot of trash has been written as to how the rebellion was planned and who did what. Such falsification of history will be dealt with separately elsewhere.[717]

Again condemning the 'falsification of history', this article highlights the different factors which led southerners to rebel in the early 1980s. When the article turns to Garang in the last two paragraphs, it is to explain how he failed 'to turn the anger of the masses into a

[717] 'The SPLA at nine: A fresh start', *Southern Sudan Vision*, 5 (15 May 1992), 3.

genuine revolution' by not developing proper structures and institutions, and by using 'the same repressive methods' as Khartoum. The article ends by drawing parallels between popular resistance to Khartoum and to Garang and, conversely, between the 'revolutionary spirit' of Kuanyin and the Nasir faction.

At the time these pieces were published, SPLM/A-Nasir was seeking wider support from Bahr-el-Ghazal Dinka and Equatorians, an endeavor in which they were only briefly successful, but which explains these articles' dual focus on popular resistance and Bor Dinka betrayals of the southern revolutionary cause.[718] A prominent feature of these histories is their focus on Kuanyin as the founding 'hero' of the revolution, a curious choice for a narrative which also laments the death of Anyanya-2 leader Gai Tut. As noted in chapter two, Kuanyin and William Nyuon were fighting *against* the Anyanya-2 until shortly before the Bor Mutiny, and led the attack on the Anyanya-2 camp in Bilpam which escalated the conflict between Garang's group and Tut's group.[719] Moreover, according to Arop, the forces which ambushed and killed Tut in 1984 were under Kuanyin's command.[720] This ethnically framed history was thus only viable with significant silences. I return to the question of Kuanyin's heroization in the following section.

Vision's broader history of popular uprising in the 1970s and early 1980s was specifically southern and supported the Nasir faction's wider call for secession. Other articles in the *Vision* issue from 15 May 1992 identify the disjuncture between the *Manifesto*'s idea of a 'United Socialist Sudan' and southerners' firm belief in the separatist cause.[721] In a reprinted press interview between 'Mr. Nicholas Ng'uono of the "NEW PEOPLE feature service"' and Lam Akol, Akol explained that Sudan was divided under colonial rule then had unity 'imposed' by the British and northern Muslim elite at independence. He then appealed to 'the west' to 'come with its full weight to see that separation is implemented in the Sudan.'[722] A longer article ten months later offered a detailed 'history of the Southern Sudanese people' as one of 'struggle against foreign invaders', beginning from the Turco-Egyptian conquest of Sudan in 1821.[723] Like Garang's

[718] Johnson, *Root Causes*, 114.
[719] Johnson and Prunier, 'Foundation', 126; Ajak, 'Building on sand', 75.
[720] Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road*, 80.
[721] 'May 16th 1983, an important date in the history of the SPLM/SPLA', *SSV*, 5 (15 May 1992), 4.
[722] 'From the press', *SSV*, 5 (15 May 1992), 11-12.
[723] 'Southern Sudan: The roots of the present conflict', *SSV*, 5 (15 Mar. 1993), 4.

speeches, this piece used history to articulate a nationalist cause, but one that was distinctly separatist. What is striking about *Vision* articles in these years is how closely they reproduced Garang's own rhetorical strategies, offering new nationalist histories and origin stories, and using significant 'anniversaries' as opportunities to debate the character and progress of the struggle. These were targeted acts of oppositional history-making, intended to discredit Garang and break his discursive control over the war's representation, but not to fundamentally challenge the use of military history to justify political claim-making.

Archiving dissent

As part of its strategy to establish a broad anti-Garang alliance, *Vision* reprinted critiques and letters of resignation authored by prominent members of the SPLM/A imprisoned by the SPLM/A in the 1980s and released in 1992. Unsurprisingly, these men were among Garang's staunchest critics and their texts described in detail their inhumane treatment. These texts reveal real abuses within the SPLM/A, as well as the limits of historical and political debate at this juncture in SPLM/A history. I focus in this section on two sets of texts, both authored by SPLM/A officers known for openly adopting a far-left political stance. These men's experiences in the SPLM/A were shaped by complex and overlapping divisions which characterized the movement's early years, including personal power struggles, ethnic representation, ideological orientation, and the role of educated cadres in the movement. But these messy realities did not necessarily make for good politics in the 1990s, when former rivals within the SPLM/A were attempting to forge a common front within the SPLM/A. For some, it was more narratively effective to attribute all misuses of power directly to Garang, presenting him as someone driven by greed and tribalism, who discriminated against 'intellectuals' in the movement. In the way these texts used the term, 'intellectuals' were not necessarily civilians; the authors who self-identified as such were left-wing military men. Being an 'intellectual' was generally equated with having completed secondary school and usually at least some university, but also with a commitment to a revolutionary ideal and opposition to corruption—qualities they claimed Garang lacked.

In September 1992, *Vision* published a press statement by a group of five 'former SPLA political detainees': Amon Mon Wantok, Chol Deng Alak, Ater Benjamin, Deng Bior

Deng, and Ajiing Adiang Marik.[724] The press statement was followed in the next issue with an extract from their thirty-page pamphlet, 'For a strong SPLM/A: What is to be done?'[725] Before turning to the text itself, it is important to understand something of the complicated history of these men and their time in the SPLM/A. I focus on Wantok and Alak, as they were senior to Benjamin, Deng, and Marik in the SPLM/A's hierarchy and thus figure more prominently in published memoirs and secondary literature on the SPLM/A, though their careers remain only partially documented. I was able to interview Wantok in 2019, but he was unwell at the time and the interview was of poor quality; Wantok has since passed away.

Wantok and Alak were university-educated professionals active in the underground politics of the 1970s and early 1980s. They had strong leftist views, joined the SPLM/A early on, and held important positions in the movement before their rapid fall from grace in 1987. Wantok was a Dinka from Bahr el Ghazal and was close in age to Garang. His educational trajectory was similar to Garang's, bringing him to Rumbek Senior Secondary School in 1960. Wantok stayed at Rumbek when many of his classmates fled during the first civil war, because he did not want to jeopardize his education.[726] Despite the worsening security situation in the south, he completed his secondary education, then studied agriculture at Cairo High Polytechnic Institute in Egypt. After graduating in 1969, he was employed as a livestock officer, first in Kassala and, after the Addis Ababa Agreement was signed in 1972, in Wau. In the late 1970s, Wantok played a lead role in establishing the National Action Movement (NAM).[727] As explored in chapter two, Wantok's account of NAM's relationship with Garang diverges from Edward Lino's; whereas Lino claimed NAM invited Garang to join them, Wantok claimed Garang tried to impose himself on their meetings but they kept him at arm's length. Either way, following the Bor Mutiny, Wantok and a group of young NAM members from Bahr el Ghazal travelled to Ethiopia and joined the SPLM/A.[728] After three months of political training, Wantok was appointed Base

[724] Amon Mon Wantok, Chol Deng Alak, Captain Ater Benjamin, Deng Bior Deng, Ajiing Adiang Marik, 'Press statement by former SPLA political detainees', *SSV*, 12 (1 Sept. 1992), 10.
[725] 'Former political detainees of the SPLA speak out', *SSV*, 13 (15 Sept. 1992), 7; SAD 985/1/93-123, Amon Mon Wantok, Chol Deng Alak, Captain Ater Benjamin, Deng Bior Deng, Ajiing Adiang, 'For a strong SPLM/A: What is to be done' (11 Jun. 1992).
[726] Interview with Amon Mon Wantok.
[727] Interviews with ibid.; Edward Lino.
[728] Wantok, *Invasion*, 102–3.

Commander of Itang refugee camp, a role which shows Garang's initial trust in him.[729] He was also included in an SPLM/A delegation sent to Libya in 1984.[730]

Alak was a Dinka from Abyei, the contested region between northern and southern Sudan, ten years younger than Garang.[731] In 1975, he won a scholarship to study marine engineering in Ukraine. After graduating with a master's degree in 1981, he was employed as an engineer for river transport in Juba. At this time, he became a leader in the Abyei Liberation Front (ALF) alongside other graduates like Deng Alor. Alak and fellow ALF members were among the first groups to go to Ethiopia after the Bor Mutiny. Alak arrived in June 1983, shortly before Alor, and the two interacted closely with Garang and other leaders of the emerging movement.[732] Alor has described Alak as 'an erratic and ambitious person', and relates that, towards the end of 1983, Alak was arrested by William Nyuon for talking about how he should be part of the movement's leadership because of the high number of recruits from Abyei. However, this first instance of arrest was brief and Alak subsequently was given various senior positions within the SPLM/A, the most significant of which was Commander of the SPLM/A's political and war studies school. According to Alor, Garang 'saw something different' in him and Alak, and 'raised [them] up.'[733]

In their leadership roles, both Wantok and Alak pushed a Marxist-Leninist ideology with which the SPLM/A's PMHC were not comfortable and became core members of a group within the SPLM/A called the Progressive Officers.[734] As explored in chapter two, Garang's commitment to Marxism-Leninism was never strong. He removed the term Marxist-Leninist from the SPLM/A's *Manifesto* when he perceived it would do more harm than good and Alor affirms that Garang did not want to alienate possible political supporters from the US and western Europe.[735] Atem Yaak Atem, the director of Radio SPLA and editor of the *SPLM/SPLA Newsletter*, related a story which further demonstrates Garang's concern about Marxist-Leninist rhetoric. While Atem was away from Addis Ababa for military training, one of the Progressive Officers was briefly editor of the *SPLM/SPLA*

[729] Ibid., 117.
[730] Ibid., 124.
[731] 'Chol Deng Alak', in Kuyok, *South Sudan*.
[732] Kuol, 'A diplomat', 44–7, 52.
[733] Ibid., 52.
[734] 'Chol Deng Alak', in Kuyok, *South Sudan*; Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road*, 205.
[735] Kuol, 'A diplomat', 55–6.

Newsletter and wrote an editorial about the anniversary of Angolan independence. Atem described,

> I remember reading the opinion piece, which carried words such as 'The imperialists took the country [Angola], using blackmail, subterfuge...', ideas which appeared to have been lifted out of the pages of Pravda, the mouthpiece of the Communist Party of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) of the day.
>
> I was told by one of my colleagues, who attended the meeting between Garang and the editor, that [Garang] was not amused by the topic and the ideological slant and tone of the editorial of a publication that was intended mainly to highlight the cause of Sudanese political armed conflict.[736]

This example shows Garang's dislike of Marxist-Leninist rhetoric, but studies by Arop and Ajak indicate that it was Kerubino Kuanyin, William Nyuon, and Arok Thon Arok who more firmly targeted the Progressive Officers.

Ajak argues convincingly that 'Garang was not as powerful in this early period as many scholars allege'.[737] He had little military experience and needed Kuanyin and Nyuon because they commanded strong personal following from soldiers who defected from battalions 104 and 105. According to Ajak's interlocutors, Kuanyin and Nyuon pushed Garang to clarify their seniority over Joseph Oduho and Martin Majier, both civilian politicians who were subsequently detained for allegedly conspiring against Garang, and for all SPLM/A cadres to receive military training. Kuanyin's and Nyuon's antagonism toward Oduho and Majier was prompted in part by the politicians' concern about commanders' use of summary executions, which several sources associate with Kuanyin, Nyuon, Arok, and—notably, given his subsequent denunciations of Garang's propensity for violent solutions—Lam Akol.[738]

Arop offers further information about Kuanyin's, Nyuon's, and Arok's opposition to the division of educated and uneducated cadres. Only a small number of recruits attended Alak's political school, mainly 'former government officials, students, and intellectuals', who subsequently became officers or 'political commissars.' Neither Kuanyin nor Nyuon completed secondary school and, according to Arop, resented what they perceived as Garang's favouritism for educated recruits:

[736] Background document on the *SPLA/SPLM Newsletter*, shared with author by Atem Yaak Atem.
[737] Ajak, 'Building on sand', 82–5.
[738] Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road*, 199, 205–6; Nyaba, *Politics*, 70–1; Ajak, 'Building on sand', 85–6.

> They thought that John Garang favoured the educated because he was a PhD holder and wanted to create a special cadre so that when time came, the less educated cadres would be discarded.
>
> Kerubino bluntly asked one of the graduates of this School: 'You people are not made to fight, and when we the combatants are dead, you will come to take over the revolution?'[739]

Arop further explains that Garang's rejection of Kuanyin's suggestions of NCOs for positions as 'Alternate Commanders' in the PMHC 'in favour of highly talented and educated professionals' was an early source of friction between the two SPLM/A leaders.[740]

These internal tensions in the movement and leadership led to a complex series of interconnected arrests which included, in sequence, Kuanyin; Wantok, Alak, and other Progressive Officers; and Nyuon and Arok. Kuanyin's arrest resulted from vocal disagreements with Garang and claims that he was the SPLM/A's rightful leader. In 1987, Kuanyin was angered when Garang intervened to protect Elijah Malok from Kuanyin, after a disagreement over the allocation of supplies. According to Arop, Kuanyin accused Garang of favouring officers from Garang's home area of Bor and pointed out that Garang had not bothered to intervene when Kuanyin arrested officers from Bahr el Ghazal.[741] Following this, Kuanyin began openly denigrating Garang to other commanders and officers. Lam Akol claims Kuanyin sent uncoded messages to this effect via long-range radio, which were being recorded by Garang's signalists in Gambella.[742] Initial attempts to get Kuanyin to meet with Garang were fruitless but, eventually, General Mesfin—one of the SPLM/A's main Ethiopian counterparts—convinced Kuanyin to travel to Addis Ababa and meet with Mengistu. A rupture between Garang and Kuanyin, the two most senior men in the SPLM/A, was serious enough to warrant intervention by their hosts.

In Addis, Kuanyin was put up in a hotel while waiting to see Mengistu. During this interim period, he had meetings with some of the Progressive Officers, including Barri Wanji and Amon Wantok.[743] Wanji had recently resigned from the SPLM/A, due to rumours he was about to be arrested as a leader of the Progressive Officers, and encouraged Kuanyin not to back down. Both Arop and Akol claim it was Wanji who authored the letter which Kuanyin subsequently gave to Mengistu, detailing his 'serious conflict with Comrade

[739] Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road*, 204.
[740] Ibid., 199.
[741] Ibid., 200–1.
[742] Akol, *SPLM/SPLA: Inside*, 107–8.
[743] Wantok, *Invasion*, 143–4; Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road*, 202–3.

Col/Dr. John Garang' because of 'how the affairs of the Movement are being single-handedly run by him'.[744] Akol further alleges that it was Wanji who convinced Kuanyin to come to Addis Ababa 'on the assurance that he (Wanji) had persuaded the Ethiopians and the socialist comrades "to ditch Garang to be replaced by Kerubino".'[745]

It is hard to prove whether Wanji enticed Kuanyin to Addis Ababa, but the letter's leftist language was more likely the work of Wanji than Kuanyin, given the latter's former disdain for the Progressive Officers. One of the letter's three core complaints was that the movement lacked 'ideological and revolutionary direction', as apparently shown by its penetration […] by Imperialist Intelligence agents' and 'Promotion of reactionary tendency within the SPLM/SPLA in Command structure and appointments'.[746] The letter also referred directly to Kuanyin's clash with Malok as an example of Garang's 'favouritism, nepotism and tribalism':

> '…recently one of [Garang's] closed relative [*sic*] Lt. Col. Elijah Malok committed a crime and disobeyed my orders. Consequently, I ordered his arrest. Without shame, the Chairman intervened and turned down my order.'

The letter's rhetorical focus on equality was at odds with Kuanyin's own behaviour, which included soliciting support specifically from Dinka from Bahr el Ghazal.[747] Unfortunately for Kuanyin, the letter had the opposite of its intended effect. Rather than remove Garang or mediate between the two leaders, Mengistu orchestrated Kuanyin's arrest two weeks later.[748]

Shortly thereafter, several Progressive Officers—including Wantok and Alak, and, slightly later, Gore—were also arrested. Accounts which explain the reasons and responsibility for their arrests vary. Arop claims that the arrests were orchestrated by Arok with the help of Nyuon, who resented how Wantok and Alak favoured graduates from the political school when appointing cadres to key positions.[749] Nyaba argues that their arrest took place because of growing 'agitation in the refugee camp which the Movement's leadership wanted to nip in the bud', following Kuanyin's arrest.[750]

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[744] SAD 985/4/1-7, Memo, Kerubino Kuanyin to Mengistu Haile Mariam, 'Memo on SPLM/SPLA current problems', 6 Aug. 1987. See also Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road*, 202.
[745] Akol, *SPLM/SPLA: Inside*, 206.
[746] SAD 985/4/1-7, Memo, Kuanyin to Mengistu.
[747] Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road*, 201; Johnson, *Root Causes*, 93n5; Nyaba, *Politics*, 70-1n44. A typo in Nyaba endnotes has note listed as n43.
[748] Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road*, 203.
[749] Ibid., 205–6.
[750] Nyaba, *Politics*, 69.

Wantok's own published account alleges that Garang resented his intellectual initiative. In his description of his meeting with Kuanyin in Addis Ababa before the latter's arrest, Wantok claims he received a direct phone call from Kuanyin asking him to visit but told him that he needed to make the request via Nyuon so as to follow the correct chain of command. Kuanyin was angry but did so, following which Nyuon reported to Garang. Wantok was then told he should meet Kuanyin but Wantok countered by suggesting he should go with Lual Diing, Alfred Ladu Gore, 'and one of [Nyuon's] security officers in case of any miss interpretation [*sic*].'[751] Nyuon agreed and Wantok's group met with Kuanyin and his officers, including Kuanyin's adjutant whom Wantok alleges was a security officer planted by Garang to record Kuanyin's conversations. Wantok admits that Kuanyin gave them a copy of his letter to Mengistu and that they reacted to it positively. They also told Kuanyin that 'he should behave as the Deputy Chair of the Movement and not […] the representative of Bahr el Ghazal.' It was this, according to Wantok, which angered Garang, because he 'wanted Kerubino to be treated just as a simple tribalist.'[752] Subsequent attempts to kill or detain Wantok involved both Nyuon and Arok, but Wantok's narrative presents Nyuon as a reluctant associate, with the true blame resting on Garang and Arok.[753]

It is difficult to assess the accuracy of these varying accounts but a few broad facts are clear. First, the disparity in education among members of the PMHC was a source of serious tension. Second, both Wantok and Alak were initially favoured by Garang and given prominent positions within the movement. Third, the Progressive Officers were pushing a Marxist-Leninist rhetoric after Garang had shifted tact. And fourth, the Progressive Officers had contact with Kuanyin at the time of his arrest and attempt to replace Garang. These men subsequently spent five years in prison under extreme conditions—including, according to their account, an initial seven-month period in a corrugated iron container and a year in an outdoor cell exposed to the elements—and understandably turned publicly against Garang upon their release.[754]

In 'For a strong SPLM/A', Wantok, Alak, and their co-authors offered a retelling of SPLM/A history which combined the language of class, 'tribalism', and human rights to

[751] Wantok, *Invasion*, 143.
[752] Ibid., 143–4.
[753] Ibid., 144, 153–6.
[754] SAD 985/1/93-123, Wantok et al, 'For a strong SPLM/A', 12-14.

discredit Garang. The opening section, on 'the historical background of the movement', closely reproduced the language of the SPLM/A *Manifesto*, critiquing southern politicians who 'connived' with the 'ruling clique in Khartoum' during the regional government period after 1972.[755] However, unlike the *Manifesto*, the authors emphasized that the regional government 'encouraged and intensified tribalism', focusing particularly on the errors of Abel Alier, a Bor Dinka like Garang.[756] The next section cast doubt on the dominant SPLM/A foundation story promoted by Garang, opening: 'The insurrection in Bor was to take place in other garrisons in the South as an overall plan by some southern officers *according to a claim*' (emphasis added).[757] Like other articles published in *Vision*, Wantok et al. presented Garang as an opportunist who learned of the government's imminent attack on Bor, then rushed to become 'the only senior officer in that area [Bor]' and fled to the Ethiopian border ahead of Kuanyin when the latter was wounded.[758]

In Ethiopia, this account continues, Garang, Salva Kiir, Samuel Gai Tut, and Akuot Atem were invited to Addis Ababa to draft the *Manifesto.* Whereas most histories present Garang as the *Manifesto*'s most important author, 'For a strong SPLM/A' claims that the Ethiopians fetched veteran southern Sudanese politician Joseph Oduho from Nairobi to break a stalemate between Garang and Kiir on one side and Tut and Atem on the other. Oduho managed to mediate and finalize the *Manifesto*, but a power struggle ensued for leadership of the movement. To gain Ethiopian support for his leadership bid, Garang 'posed […] as a Marxist-Leninist, a claim that does not reconcile with his life style.'[759] This allowed Garang to gain Ethiopia's military backing in the southern Sudanese power struggles of 1983 and 1984. The text proceeds to argue that Garang eliminated anyone who opposed him, listing several prominent internal SPLM/A deaths.

'For a strong SPLM/A' presents Kuanyin and Arok as unwilling collaborators in Garang's atrocities, rather than instigators of targeted action against educated cadres. Anti-intellectual violence is attributed solely to Garang, collapsing the power struggles and ideological debates of the 1980s into his personal discriminatory practices. This narrative

[755] Ibid., 3.
[756] Ibid.
[757] Ibid., 5
[758] Ibid.
[759] Ibid., 7

approach is reinforced through emphasis on the detainees' commitment to group study, even when imprisoned:

> We organized a study group depending on our idealized knowledge. Most of us in the prison were graduates. Each professional was allowed to discuss in his field for two weeks after which he hands over to another [...] That determined and resolute decision made us survive spiritually and morally.[760]

The detainees' shared intellectualism is presented as what helped them survive and is contrasted to Garang who, while highly educated, behaved in ways which 'did not reflect […] the education qualifications he has.'

The result was that the historical details of the Progressive Officers' proclaimed Marxist-Leninist stance was occluded by a simplistic narrative that Garang was opposed to all educated recruits. These texts capture real disillusionment with Garang, but also reflect the limits of historical debate and political claim-making in the early 1990s. For Wantok, Alak, and their co-authors, presenting Garang as a violent military man who targeted intellectuals would have offered a more effective political argument than acknowledging that Garang opposed their attempts to inculcate Marxist-Leninist sentiment among recruits against the will of the PMHC.

Not all anti-Garang letters published in *Vision* took this approach. In December 1992, *Vision* reprinted an open letter to Garang written by Alfred Ladu Gore.[761] Notwithstanding the overthrow of Mengistu and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Gore's letter encapsulated his long-standing commitment to a 'revolution' for the 'masses.' As described in chapters one and two, Gore and Garang first met and formed a friendship in the 1960s in Nairobi. In 1984, Gore left his doctoral studies at the University of Manchester after receiving an invitation from Garang to join the SPLM/A. Gore was and remains known for his leftist politics and was put in charge of the SPLM/A's foreign policy. In the mid-1980s, he solicited external support for the SPLM/A and secured training and study opportunities for SPLM/A cadres in Cuba.[762]

[760] Ibid., 13.
[761] Alfred Ladu Gore, 'Letter to John Garang', *SSV*, 18 (1 Dec. 1992), 6-8. A copy of this letter is also in SAD 985/3/68-72, Alfred Ladu Gore, 'An open letter to Col. Dr. John Garang de Mabior, Chairman and Commander-in-Chief of the Torit faction of the SPLM-SPLA', 25 Nov. 1991. I quote from the SAD copy, to avoid minor typos in the *Vision* reprint.
[762] Interviews with Alfred Ladu Gore; 'Alfred Ladu Gore', in Kuyok, *South Sudan*.

Gore was arrested in 1989 and imprisoned until 1991 or 1992.[763] Gore then publicly resigned from Garang's SPLM/A-Mainstream through an open letter, which *Vision* described as a 'letter to John Garang the dictator'. Unlike 'For a strong SPLM/A', which presented Garang as an opportunist from the time of the Bor Mutiny, Gore acknowledged his past relationship with Garang to highlight how Garang betrayed the revolutionary cause:

> My relationship with you as patriots, went back to 1970 – during our first civil war (1955-1972). At that time, indeed, you made a very deep impression on myself and other Southern Sudanese progressive youth – as a genuine revolutionary. Through you, we became acutely aware of the sentiments of our oppressed and exploited masses […] Therefore, it was not something out of the blue or an accident that made me to join you in 1984, after the SPLM/A had been formed a year earlier. It was a recognition of our historic bonds of comradeship and the trust I had in you as a revolutionary leader.[764]

Gore's core criticism of Garang was that he failed to share power with the 'masses' and eroded 'revolutionary ideals.' He explained that Garang's 'militarist command system' alienated those who came to join the SPLM/A and that Garang's 'personality cult' drove out 'creative thinking'. Gore's discursive strategy was not to directly counter Garang's version of history but to highlight how 'all manner of tall stories and falsehoods were spread' to justify sidelining and detaining 'revolutionaries' like himself.

In a further contrast to 'For a strong SPLM/A', Gore criticized the whole of the PMHC for their greed and abuse of power:

> The members of the so called Political Military High Command, PMHC, which supposedly is the highest executive and legislative body of the movement, are unable to uphold principles […] Those who ho1d leading posts of the High Command stand beyond control and criticism which have led to failures in work and to serious malpractice.

While still focused on Garang's autocratic authority, Gore's letter did not evoke a common anti-Garang front in the same ways as 'For a strong SPLM/A.'

However, *Vision* framed Gore's defection within the context of wider resistance to Garang by publishing it in an issue dedicated to Garang's diminishing popularity in Equatoria. The issue's front-page article, 'Equatoria rejects Garang', described Gore's defection as a clear indication that 'the game is now over for [Garang] in Equatoria.'[765] The article summarized a press conference with Gore in Nairobi, in which he 'expressed his deep resentment and unreserved condemnation of Garang's gross violation of human rights within

[763] Ibid.
[764] SAD 985/3/68-72, Gore, 'An open letter to Col. Dr. John Garang de Mabior'.
[765] 'Equatoria rejects Garang', *SSV*, 18 (1 Dec. 1992), 1-2.

the SPLA and against the civilian population in Equatoria'. The article also pointed to the defection of other 'very prominent Equatorian leaders' and additional 'reasons for the Equatorian anger against Garang', beyond those listed in Gore's letter. These reasons focused mainly on the mistreatment of Equatorians in the movement and in areas under SPLM/A control, particularly by officers 'from Garang's Bor Clan.'

The issue also included a press release by Gore, presumably mirroring his Nairobi press appearance. While Gore's letter was attentive mainly to Garang's failure to inculcate an inclusive revolutionary culture, the press release focused on violent human rights abuses by Garang:

> An extremely grave flagrant human rights violations [*sic*] unreported to the outside world has developed.
>
> While lying to the international community that all is in order in the SPLM/A the reality is quite different. In a brazen act of desperation Col. John Garang and his closest militarist cohorts commanders Salva Kirr [*sic*] and mentally deranged Khoul [*sic*] Manyang summarily executed twenty-eight (28) Equatorian SPLA officers and unspecified numbers of civilians in the areas of Acholi and Madi Nationalities. And this is in addition to the extermination of the Mondari, Nuer, Murle and Toposa Nationalities.[766]

As a press release, this piece targeted a wider audience, using the language of human rights and discrimination to do so. Thus, while Gore's open letter to Garang maintained a leftist slant, it was subsumed within a *Vision* issue that remained in keeping with the newsletter's wider focus on interconnected questions of human rights, ethnic discrimination, and appeals for international relief. Another article in the issue, authored by none other than Wantok, noted,

> We assure the NGOs and humanitarian bodies that there is security and tranquility in the areas under control of CDR William Nyuon Bany. In those areas a civil administration totally independent of the military has been established to facilitate among other things free and smooth work of the NGOs and humanitarian organisations.[767]

Establishing Garang as the man responsible for the violent mistreatment of civilians, including non-Sudanese, was part of assuring the international community that the new SPLM/A factions were trustworthy partners for the distribution of relief.

Taken as a whole, *Vision*'s anti-Garang content reflects a new phase of challenges to Garang's public persona and the narratives he promulgated for the SPLM/A. With the

[766] Alfred Ladu Gore, 'Mass murder of Equatorian officers and people', *SSV*, 18 (1 Dec. 1992), 9.
[767] Amon Wantok, 'Relief and food deteriorating situation in Eastern Equatoria', *SSV*, 18 (1 Dec. 1992), 5.

international community contributing increasing aid resources to southern Sudan during the 1990s and searching for credible local counterparts, it was important for would-be SPLM/A leaders to present themselves as reliable political actors who respected and supported civilians—and to discredit Garang in inverse terms. The production of press releases, open letters, and newsletters was part of the battle for credibility as moral and educated leaders, and for narrative authority over past and current events. But the contrast between efforts to heroize Kuanyin and Gore's critique of the PMHC reveal the historical contradictions faced by those attempting to promote a unifying anti-Garang narrative and alliance.

In March 1993, Machar and Akol's SPLM/A-Nasir was rebranded as SPLM/A-United, a new movement which included Wantok, Alak, Gore, Kuanyin, Nyuon, and Arok. However, the tensions of these men's histories proved too significant to overcome. As Arop and Johnson have shown, this anti-Garang alliance was short-lived.[768] From the Nasir faction's inception, collaboration with Khartoum had undermined Machar and Akol's proclaimed commitment to southern secession in the eyes of many ordinary southern Sudanese and of their would-be political colleagues among other SPLM/A officers who defected from Garang. Their reputation was further damaged by their violence against civilians, particularly in Equatoria.[769] Finally, with Kuanyin, Nyuon, and Arok—three of the SPLM/A's five PMHC members—in the leadership of the new movement, old conflicts reemerged.

In May, just over a month after the SPLM/A-United's formation, Gore resigned because these commanders were given senior positions in the new hierarchy.[770] Further dismissals and resignations followed. In early 1994, Machar dismissed Akol, after mounting tension between the two instigators of the 1991 move against Garang.[771] In August, Wantok and Alak resigned, accusing Machar of tribalism, human rights abuses, dictatorship, and collaboration with the Sudanese government.[772] These fractures played out publicly, through

[768] Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road*, 293–6; Johnson, *Root Causes*, 118–9.
[769] Further internal critiques of the Nasir faction's behaviour in Equatoria are found in Douglas Johnson Personal Papers, Letter from Richard Mulla to Riek Machar (5 May 1995); Department of Information, South Sudan Freedom Front, 'The truth of what is happening in Eastern Equatoria' (20 Mar. 1995).
[770] 'Alfred Ladu Gore' in, Kuyok, *South Sudan*; Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road*, 103.
[771] Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road*, 295–6; Lam Akol, 'Press statement' (18 Feb. 1994), in Akol, *SPLM/SPLA: Nasir*, 400–2; Douglas Johnson personal papers, Lam Akol, 'Press statement on the split of the SPLM/A-United' (25 [May?] 1994).
[772] Douglas Johnson personal papers, Dhol Acuil Aleu, Amon Mon Wantok, Chol Deng Alak, Isaac Cuir Riak, 'Why we resigned from SPLM/SPLA United' (Nairobi, 6 Aug. 1994).

more letters, press releases, and pamphlets in which those involved promoted narratives that attributed SPLM/A-United's moral and political failings to their rivals. These texts were amplified by *SPLM/SPLA Update*, the SPLM/A-Mainstream's weekly newsletter published from Nairobi, which directly cited the accusations of defecting or ousted SPLM/A-United members.[773] *Update* further capitalized on tensions between Garang's opponents by publishing the handwritten scripts of intercepted radio messages, including one which revealed Akol's frustration with Gore at the time SPLM/A-United was founded, described as 'a conspiratory [*sic*] message from Lam Akol (Alphabeta) to Riek Machar (Sennar) against their Equatorian supporters.'[774] *Update* thus also adopted the language of ethnic discrimination to denounce specific SPLM/A leaders.

Throughout all of this, Garang maintained his position as leader of the SPLM/A-Mainstream. The Nasir faction did successfully establish itself as a key partner for international humanitarian organizations seeking access to southern Sudan, but never seriously threatened to displace Garang's regional and international status. In the process, the factionalism of the 1990s generated a complicated archive of conflicting historical narratives about Garang and other senior figures in the SPLM/A, as a variety of authors sought to justify their political actions and claim international political legitimacy. Beginning in the late 1990s, these debates about the past evolved into personal memoirs by SPLM/A veterans, including Adwok, Akol, and Wantok.[775] Akol's works—and, to a lesser extent, Adwok's—stand out for including copies of letters, press statements, and radio messages from the war years, which archive dissent against Garang in these new, published volumes. Although many of these men rejoined the mainstream SPLM/A towards the end of the civil war or following the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, the 1991 split seriously weakened the SPLM/A and, since South Sudan's independence, continues to surface in government accounts as a moment of betrayal in the movement's history. Thus, for those who broke away from Garang's SPLM/A, the need to justify and rationalize the split remains important. But, as chapter seven explores in more detail, the use of history in

[773] Douglas Johnson personal papers, 'Joseph Oduho was killed by Nasir Grouping', *SPLM/SPLA Update*, 2/17 (6 May 1993), 12-13; Steve Wondu, 'Bye-bye brother Lam Akol', *SPLM/SPLA Update*, 3/7 (20 Feb. 1994), 10.
[774] Douglas Johnson personal papers, 'Treachery incarnate', *SPLM/SPLA Update*, 2/17 (6 May 1993),14.
[775] Nyaba, *Politics*; Akol, *SPLM/SPLA: Nasir*; Akol, *SPLM/SPLA: Inside*; Wantok, *Invasion*.

elite contests over political credentials has produced layered silences which occlude the experiences of ordinary southern Sudanese, who suffered most during the inter-factional violence of the second half of the civil war.

Conclusion

In the 1990s, both the Mainstream and Nasir factions gained easier access to printing presses and an ever-growing humanitarian and diaspora audience. Whether or not international humanitarians believed the content of publications like *Southern Sudan Vision* and *SPLM/SPLA Update*, the importance of this audience placed new parameters and demands on the history-making projects of would-be SPLM/A leaders. During these years, Garang's carefully curated persona was repeatedly challenged by opponents who presented him as a violent and discriminatory autocrat in their attempts to justify their departure from the SPLM/A and establish legitimacy with fellow officers, diaspora supporters who could further press their case abroad, and international supporters. Many of these men had good reason to denounce Garang, born out of their own experiences of detention and torture.

However, efforts to form a unifying anti-Garang front under the SPLM/A-United required unlikely alliances between former rivals within the movement, which ultimately proved impossible to maintain. I have demonstrated that the anti-Garang histories produced by these actors required significant 'silences' to make for effective political narratives, including Kuanyin's role in Gai Tut's death and in the detention of fellow SPLM/A cadres in the 1980s before Kuanyin was himself detained in 1987. The legacies of these fractures and the conflicting historical accounts which they surround continue to resonate in South Sudan today, particularly as they pertain to the use of ethnically framed histories to denounce political opponents and the role and value of 'intellectuals' in the movement. I explore these questions in the remaining two chapters, in the context of contested histories of Garang's death and his multiple afterlives.

Ch. 6: John Garang's crash and the politics of investigation

On 30 July 2005, six months after the CPA ended Sudan's second civil war, John Garang died in a helicopter crash on his return from visiting Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni. Garang's death was a turning point in Sudanese and South Sudanese history and politics. In the months and years that followed, the prospect of a united New Sudan rapidly faded and southern secession became all but inevitable. Over the same period, the SPLM/A was again riven by factional politics and, two and a half years after South Sudan celebrated its independence on 9 July 2011, the country entered a violent civil war. This chapter considers how different political contexts have shaped narratives of the crash, during initial efforts to uphold the CPA and over the course of Sudan and South(ern) Sudan's subsequent political conflicts.

Garang's crash was investigated by a joint technical team with members from Sudan, Uganda, the SPLM, the US, and Kenya, under the leadership of Dennis Jones, then Chief Technical Advisor of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) in the US. In April 2006, the probe issued its final report. An official press statement summarizing the report's findings attributed the crash to three factors:

> The Captain's failure to maintain horizontal and vertical situational awareness of the helicopter's proximity to the surrounding terrain, resulting in inadequate clearance and controlled flight into terrain; the Captain's decision to continue visual flight into deteriorating weather conditions; and inadequacies in operational systems.[776]

Popularly reduced to 'pilot error' and 'bad weather', the first two findings mean that the pilot was flying without guidance from air traffic control, entered bad weather, and collided with a mountain which he did not see until it was too late to avoid. The third finding, 'inadequacies in operational systems', likely refers to shortcomings in the internal practices of the Ugandan Air Force when organizing the flight.

Despite the international collaboration involved, this official investigation did little to quell rumours that Garang was assassinated, not least because the report itself did not circulate widely and is not easily accessible today.[777] In the report's absence, my account of

[776] 'Text of statement by the joint Sudan-Uganda', *Suna* (18 Apr. 2006), Nexis UK [5 Jun. 2022].

[777] I filed a Freedom of Information request to the NTSB in 2022 but was told that the 'investigating authority' which issued the final report was Uganda's Ministry of Works and Transport. Dennis Jones confirmed that this response is consistent with international protocol. Given the report's political sensitivity in Uganda and South

events before and following the crash draws on contemporary news articles; interviews with SPLM/A officers who searched for the crash site; and interviews with Jones and another member of the investigation team. The investigators' professional accounts of the crash are convincing but raise new questions about why the report was not made more widely available to a skeptical public. Notwithstanding the team's professional conclusions, theories abound as to the 'true' cause of Garang's death, shaped by the historical and political context of Sudan and Uganda's postcolonial violence.

In this chapter, I offer a new synthesis of the investigation process and report. I then consider the report's interrelationship with South Sudanese and regional politics, focusing on how narratives about the crash were developed in three contexts: contemporary Ugandan media, SPLM party politics, and news articles and books by South Sudanese authors unable to access the report. A core characteristic of these texts is a focus on the collection and interpretation of empirical evidence, a tone set by the technical mandate of the official probe, regardless of whether the report itself has been widely read. This focus on evidence has offered a way for South Sudanese authors outside of government to speak more broadly about political accountability and a generational duty to accurately document what happened, in the dual context of South Sudan's long use of history-making to further political ends and intolerance of critical journalism.

Investigating accidental deaths and assassinations

Official investigations into the accidental deaths and assassinations of other political figures in Africa have offered an entry point for studying the interrelationship between evidence, narrative, and power. Commissions of inquiry have long been identified as a means through which archival knowledge and power are made and organized.[778] Ludo de Witte's work on the assassination of Patrice Lumumba has shown the complicity of foreign actors not only in orchestrating Lumumba's murder but in obscuring the evidence of what really happened and presenting Lumumba's death as the inevitable result of violent African politics.[779]

Sudan, I did not make further requests. A summary of the crash findings is available on the NTSB database. See NTSB, 'WAS05RA013', https://www.ntsb.gov/Pages/brief.aspx?ev_id=20050916X01474&key=1 [13 Jul. 2023].

[778] Ann Stoler, 'Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance', *Archival Science*, 2 (2002), 103–7.

[779] Ludo de Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba* (London, 2001), xxi–ii.

Daniel Douek has highlighted the failings of the South African commission of inquiry which investigated the crash of a Soviet-built plane carrying Mozambican President Samora Machel in northern South Africa in 1986 and concluded the crash was due to pilot error. In contrast, testimonies given to South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1998 and declassified in 2014 offered evidence that the Apartheid government orchestrated Machel's death by planting a decoy flight beacon which caused the pilot to veer off path and crash.[780]

Susan Williams' study of the crash which killed UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld has similarly drawn attention to how white minority regime governments manipulate and obscure evidence, albeit for the death of an international leader in Africa, rather than an African leader on home soil. Hammarskjöld's plane crashed as it approached Ndola, Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), where Hammarskjöld was to meet with secessionist leader Moïse Tshombe to negotiate a ceasefire for Congo's civil war in September 1961. Williams argues that the Rhodesian inquiry which investigated Hammarskjöld's crash 'was seriously flawed by a predisposition to view the world in racist terms and by the suppression of information', including disregarding the testimony of black witnesses.[781]

These studies show how evidence can be suppressed and misrepresented by racist or otherwise biased inquiries, producing and archiving an official narrative that privileges a narrow set of perspectives. These cases offer a starting point for exploring the regional and international politics of investigating Garang's crash; however, Garang's case deviates in key ways from these examples. Dennis Jones was *invited* to lead the probe team precisely because of internal tensions among regional team members representing different interests. Notwithstanding this fact, the Sudanese government and SPLM—whom the probe effectively exonerated of Garang's possible murder—both did little to publicize the report or highlight Jones' role as the probe team's 'neutral' American leader. Indeed, the SPLM's efforts to control the narrative about Garang's crash have been haphazard and calls by senior government officials to reopen the investigation do not map onto definitive political fault

[780] Daniel Douek, 'New light on the Samora Machel assassination: "I realized that it was no accident"', *Third World Quarterly*, 38/9 (2017), 2046, 2054.
[781] Susan Williams, *Who Killed Hammarskjold? The UN, the Cold War and White Supremacy in Africa* (Oxford, 2014), 98–100, 239.

lines. Rather than creating an official evidence or record, the investigation has left a silence which has been filled through piecemeal evidence and perspectives, cited and recited over time. I argue that this is in part because, in South Sudan's ever-shifting political terrain, it is beneficial to be able to make accusations in any direction at any time.

The SPLM's ambivalence has ensured that speculative accounts flourish. The South Sudanese authors discussed in this chapter suggest several possible suspects with motives—some more convincing than others—to assassinate Garang. These theories are effectively summarized by Paanluel Wël as follows.[782] The foremost suspect is the hardline Islamic faction in the Khartoum government opposed to the CPA, possibly aided by Al-Qaeda because Sudan had hosted Osama Bin Laden in the 1990s. The second main suspect is the Ugandan government, for the obvious reason that Garang was flying in a Ugandan aircraft and on the grounds of unsubstantiated claims that Garang and Museveni had quarrelled about 'missing arms and ammunitions' owed to the SPLA. Another theory tied to Uganda is that 'rogue elements sympathetic to the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) [a rebel group operating in northern Uganda and the Sudanese borderlands] within the Ugandan People Defense Forces' shot down Garang's plane because Garang and Museveni were in alliance against the LRA. The third set of suspects is the anti-Garang faction in the SPLM/A who wanted southern secession. Further suspects include 'international wealth barons' who wanted to remove Garang to better exploit southern Sudan's natural resources; the CIA because Garang was impeding American oil interests; and African leaders who resented Garang's rising popularity. Finally, any of these suspects could have operated in collaboration with others. While suspects and motives are important, in the accounts that follow, they generally receive less focus than empirical questions about the handling of evidence. I argue that this is both a result of the technical mandate of the initial investigation and a strategy for exploring the intersection of information-sharing, history-making, and politics.

The remainder of this chapter is structured in five sections. The first and second describe Garang's final flight and the work conducted by the joint probe team led by Jones. The third, fourth, and fifth turn to how political context has shaped how the investigation

[782] Wël, *Who Killed*, 314–28.

has been represented in Ugandan news articles, SPLM political debates, and journalistic or self-published investigative texts by South Sudanese authors. Of course, much of the debate about Garang's crash does not happen in writing; however, South Sudan's ongoing conflicts and the political sidelining of Garang loyalists make it difficult to openly discuss Garang's death. I have therefore chosen to focus on published works.

In earlier chapters, I argued that the histories generated by Garang and other SPLM/A elites were consciously intertextual, with the aim of producing dominant narratives and archives to support their political vision. Here, I consider the unique effects of intertextuality in the context of investigative accounts, building on work by White and Davis. White's study of texts about the 1975 assassination of Herbert Chitepo, head of ZANU's war council, argues that 'texts and politics are entangled; they are literally intertextual […] actors are aware of texts and texts are constituted by actors.'[783] Chitepo's murder provoked an official commission of inquiry, several counter-responses, and many contradictory confessions, which still mattered 25 years after Chitepo's death. Like Trouillot, White encourages us to consider why people write what and when they do, how texts are given meaning at different times and by different people, and toward what ends. I argue that, in the case of Garang's crash, early narratives were shaped as much by Ugandan debates about corruption in its military as they were by real evidence relating to the crash.

Davis' work on South Africa's MK also focuses on how texts relate to politics, but with more attention to how successive accounts generate a 'circular and self-referential discourse, one that grows more confident and presumptuous with each layer of writing.'[784] Davis maps the intertextuality of successive accounts of infiltrations which reference two incidents—an alleged poisoning and an aerial bombardment—at MK's Novo Catengue training camp in 1977:

> As each layer of writing and testimony accrued, it became more and more difficult to discern the relations that governed accusations in the camp apart from the kinds of relations that governed other times and places […] A backward glance across these references reveals the complexity and intertextuality of these texts.[785]

[783] White, *Assassination*, 15.
[784] Davis, *The ANC's War*, 87.
[785] Ibid., 86–7.

Davis' approach is useful for thinking about how histories are 'flattened' by the narrative demands of later accounts.[786]

In the case of Garang's crash, I argue that some of this 'flattening' was deliberate; it was useful for the Ugandan government to focus attention on the pilot who crashed and to deflect from the investigation team's more detailed study of the Ugandan Air Force's organizational practices. At the same time, the idea of a 'junk helicopter' was less about the specific aircraft flown by Garang than it was the wider landscape of Ugandan corruption. As a result, the details of interviews and tests conducted during the investigation have gradually been occluded from public discourse. Although the lineage of references in South Sudanese accounts is shorter and less official than Davis' sources, the works I discuss in the final section of this chapter show that the idea of a 'junk helicopter' has filtered from the provocative speculations of a Ugandan journalist to South Sudanese accounts of possible sabotage by any combination of the suspects listed above. However, unlike the ANC texts studied by Davis, the texts I discuss do not become 'more confident and presumptuous with each layer of writing.' While certain narratives have become entrenched through repetition as points of interest for a hypothetical new investigation, South Sudanese authors remain preoccupied by the need for a new, professional, and impartial investigation.

John Garang's final flight

On 9 January 2005, Sudan's second civil war ended with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), signed in Kenya. The CPA stipulated the power-sharing arrangements for a six-year interim period prior to national elections in 2010 and a southern referendum on secession in 2011. It established a Government of National Unity (GoNU), in which Garang or his successor would be first vice president, president of the regional government of Southern Sudan, and commander-in-chief of the SPLA.[787] Six months later, on 9 July 2005, Garang returned Khartoum for the first time since 1983 and was sworn in as first vice president.

[786] Ibid., 85.
[787] 'The Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Libeartion Movement/Sudan People's Liberation Army' (2005), 21.

On both occasions, Garang was greeted by large cheering crowds and these events feature prominently in individual and collective memories of the end of the war. Garang was supposed to give a speech when he arrived in Khartoum the day before his swearing in, but the sound system failed and he could do nothing but wave. Photos of the event show him leaning forward above the crowd as his aides try to hold him back (Figure 3). The failure of the sound system has been widely interpreted by South Sudanese as a deliberate attempt by the government to prevent Garang from addressing the public and fed accusations that the government had a hand in Garang's death. Whether or not true, this interpretation is plausible given the government's earlier wartime attempts to control Garang's sonic presence.

Figure 3: Garang is held back by his aides as he waves to the crowd in Khartoum. Courtesy of Phillip Dhil.

At the end of July, Garang returned to the south, first meeting his party in the acting southern capital of Rumbek, then going to New Site, an SPLM town just north of the Kenyan-Sudanese border which had been Garang's headquarters during the tail years of the war. On 29 July, he left New Site to visit Museveni, a close ally to the SPLA during the war, flying by chartered plane from Lokichoggio in northern Kenya to Entebbe, Uganda, then

onward by presidential helicopter to Museveni's rural home in Rwakitura. His meeting with Museveni was only supposed to take a few hours but was extended and, in a seemingly spontaneous gesture of hospitality, Museveni offered Garang the use of his helicopter to fly home to New Site the following day.[788]

Garang left Rwakitura on Museveni's presidential helicopter, captained by pilot Peter Nyakairu, at around 3pm on 30 July.[789] They stopped briefly in Entebbe to refuel and to collect Garang's bags, which he had left in Kampala expecting to return there the evening of 30 July.[790] At 'about 17.02 hrs local time', the helicopter departed Entebbe for New Site.[791] About 30 minutes after take-off, they left the airspace covered by Entebbe air traffic control. Some accounts say that air traffic control 'lost radar contact with the presidential chopper', but Jones explained that what happened was expected; the helicopter had left Entebbe's airspace and there were no air traffic control facilities in the area where they were flying.[792] In New Site, Rebecca Nyandeng waited to welcome Garang but his flight did not arrive as scheduled. She began to worry and called Museveni, who said he would find out what was happening with the flight, and the two continued communicating throughout the night.[793]

Meanwhile, Lemi Logwonga Lomuro, a senior officer in Garang's headquarters who was in Juba to secure the city for Garang's planned arrival the following week, lost phone contact with the guards accompanying Garang and began to worry.[794] He relayed his concerns to commander Bior Ajang Duot in Rumbek, who was also unable to reach anyone on the helicopter. At this point, only senior SPLM/A officers knew what was happening and tried to keep the news from spreading to avoid 'chaos in the movement.'[795] At around midnight, SPLA soldiers set out from New Cush, a military base southwest of New Site, to

[788] Interview with Dennis Jones, phone, 28 Apr. 2022.
[789] 'Text of statement by the joint Sudan-Uganda'.
[790] Interviews with Lemi Logwonga Lomuro, 16 Jun. 2022; Dennis Jones.
[791] 'Text of statement by the joint Sudan-Uganda'.
[792] 'Garang wreckage: More details on moments before crash', *The Observer* (8 Sep. 2005), https://www.mail-archive.com/ugandanet@kym.net/msg21606.html [17 Jun. 2022]. The only copy of this article I found was in an email archived by The Mail Archive. This copy matches extensive quotes given by Wël and Gibia and appears to be authentic; see Wël, *Who Killed*, 262; Roba Gibia, *John Garang and the Vision of New Sudan*, Kindle ed. (Toronto, 2008), location 1254.
[793] Interview with SPLA soldier 2, Juba, conducted by Machot Amuom Malou, 2 Feb. 2021; 'Garang's wife doubted flight', *New Vision* (4 Aug. 2005).
[794] Interview with Lemi Logwonga Lomuro, 23 May 2019.
[795] Interview with SPLA soldier 2. Lomuro similarly emphasized the need to keep the news within a small circle.

search for the missing helicopter. At around midday on 31 July, they found the crash site.[796] One member of the search team remembered that some soldiers could not see Garang's 'burned body' in the wreckage. Another described the chaos of that day. The helicopter had crashed on a steep slope and, upon locating the site, the soldiers immediately recovered the bodies and carried them down to New Site.

Although the SPLM/A had now confirmed that the helicopter crashed, the news was not immediately made public and conflicting reports circulated internationally on 31 July. That afternoon, Sudan's state television and SPLM/A spokesman Yasir Arman reported that there had been a delay in Garang's expected arrival from Uganda but he had now crash-landed safely in southern Sudan.[797] Ugandan officials and the Sudanese Minister of Communications quickly denied this and emphasized that the search was ongoing.[798] Nevertheless, misreports that Garang had been found alive feature widely in personal accounts of the crash weekend, as causes of false hope and confusion. Finally, at 3:30am on 1 August, the SPLM's Pagan Amum told the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs that Garang was dead, who passed the news to Reuters.[799] It was immediately reported on CNN's Sunday Evening News and, throughout 1 August, the story was picked up by most major news outlets around the world.[800]

Garang's death posed an immediate threat to the CPA. Riots erupted in Khartoum, as southerners, Nuba, and Darfurians accused the government of assassinating Garang. Writing the following week, Khalid Medani described the riots as 'a spur-of-the moment, albeit short-lived uprising […] against the regime', reflecting 'economic and political grievances long harbored by a wide range of poor and marginalized Sudanese—southerners and others—living in and around Khartoum's urban fringe.'[801] The Government responded with force and a curfew.[802] Riots also spread in southern towns, including Juba, Malakal and

[796] Interviews with SPLA soldier 2; SPLA soldier 1, Juba, conducted by Machot Amuom Malou, 26 Jan. 2021.
[797] 'Fate of Sudan Vice President Garang's aircraft uncertain', *AFP* (31 Jul. 2005), Factiva [30 Jan. 2019].
[798] Ibid.; 'Sudanese cabinet minister: VP's plane hasn't been found', *Comtex* (31 Jul. 2005), Factiva [30 Jan. 2019].
[799] 'Update 1-Sudan's former rebel leader Garang dead-U.N. official', *Reuters* (31 Jul. 2005 [1 Aug. in Sudan]), Factiva [30 Jan. 2019].
[800] Carol Lin et al., 'Elizabeth Smart abductor ruled incompetant [sic] to stand trial', *CNN Sunday Night* (31 Jul. 2005).
[801] Khalid Medani, 'Black Monday', *Middle East Report Online* (8 Sep. 2005), https://merip.org/2005/08/black-monday/ [13 Jul. 2023].
[802] 'Deadly riots hit Sudanese capital after death of ex-rebel leader Garang', *AFP* (1 Aug. 2005), Factiva [30 Jan. 2019].

Renk, targeting Arab merchants and businesses.[803] Over the course of the week, at least 130 people were killed in the violence.[804]

Meanwhile, local and international actors feared a power struggle within the SPLM following Garang's death. Garang's tight control of decision-making throughout the war and the only recently resolved 'Yei crisis'—a widely publicized rift between Garang and his deputy, Salva Kiir, in December 2004—put the movement on shaky ground.[805] When Garang's helicopter was declared missing, SPLM leaders assembled in New Site, with the help of a UN helicopter to transport them quickly.[806] SPLA officers present in New Site described a tense atmosphere as everyone wondered who would succeed Garang. Kuol Manyang, whom some speculate could have been the SPLM's new leader, took initiative and told Kiir that, as Garang's deputy, he was Garang's natural successor.[807] Kiir's legitimacy was strengthened by the fact that, while in Rumbek before travelling to New Site, Garang had declared that should anything ever happen to him, Kiir would take his place.[808]

Amid fears that Sudan would return to war, the Sudanese and Ugandan governments, SPLM/A elite and international community tried to quell rumours of foul play and restore calm. Prominent figures, including Nyandeng and UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, called for peace and emphasized that initial evidence suggested the crash was an accident.[809] In an ironic reversal of the government's wartime propaganda, Republic of Sudan Radio broadcast old recordings of Garang calling for peace in a united Sudan.[810] On 1 August, Museveni announced that Uganda would investigate the crash and, the next day, Ugandan Minister of Works John Nasasira named three technical experts to lead the investigation.[811] Two of the appointees, Ahmed Sebuliba Busulwa and Barry Kashambo, were professional flight accident investigators for Uganda's Civil Aviation Authority and Kashambo would go on to become the Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa in the UN International Civil

[803] Medani, 'Black Monday'.
[804] Ibid.
[805] For documents pertaining to Yei crisis and discussion, see Wël, *Genius of Dr. John*, vol. 2, ch. 4.
[806] Interview with Lemi Logwonga Lomuro, 23 May 2019.
[807] Interviews with ibid.; SPLA soldier 1; SPLA soldier 2.
[808] Johnson, *Waging Peace*, 197–8.
[809] 'S Sudanese grp calls for intl probe into death of Garang', *Dow Jones International News* (3 Aug. 2005), Factiva [30 Jan. 2019]; 'UN says to assist in probe of Sudan MP Garang's death', *Dow Jones International News* (3 Aug. 2005), Factiva [30 Jan. 2019].
[810] 'Sudan media behaviour for 3 August', *BBC Monitoring Middle East* (3 Aug. 2005), Factiva [30 Jan. 2019].
[811] 'Nasasira names Probe team', *New Vision* (3 Aug. 2005), Nexis UK [9 Jun. 2022].

Aviation Organization. Whereas there has been controversy over the selection of investigators in other high-profile accident investigations in Uganda, these were civilian professionals.[812]

On 3 August, Bashir followed suit, announcing a joint probe between the Sudanese government and SPLM.[813] The Sudanese committee was formally appointed by presidential decree on 8 August and was led by Abel Alier, a well-known elder southern Sudanese politician and lawyer.[814] Meanwhile, the UN promised assistance if needed and the US deployed a team of five experts, led by Dennis Jones, to assist in key technical areas.[815] On August 19, the Sudanese and Ugandan commissions signed a memorandum to officially form a joint technical committee, made up of members from Sudan, the SPLM, Uganda, Kenya and the US; Russian experts also contributed technical input because the helicopter was built and recently refurbished by a Russian manufacturer, Kazan Helicopters, but did not formally join the team.[816] The independence of the technical specialists from political interference was a precondition for American participation.[817] According to one team member, a partial exception was made for Aleu Ayieny Aleu and Gier Chuang Along from the SPLM, who were included in some of the technical discussions for the purpose of equal representation because the SPLM lacked technical experts.[818]

The joint probe

Like most authors writing about Garang's crash, I was unable to access the investigation team's final report. In what follows, I describe the work of the investigation team as related to me by Dennis Jones, the team's lead investigator, and an anonymous investigator whom I call William. Jones presented a plausible account of the crash, from the perspective of an

[812] Charles Okwir, 'What could have caused Uganda's helicopter crashes?', *Think Africa Press* (28 Sep. 2012), Factiva [30 Jan. 2019]; David Tash Lumu, 'MPs drag tribe into helicopter crashes', *The Observer* (18 Aug. 2012), Factiva [30 Jan. 2019].
[813] 'Ugandan president launches probe into fatal crash of Garang helicopter', *AFP* (1 Aug. 2005), Factiva [30 Jan. 2019]; 'Sudanese President appeals for end to deadly violence', *VOA English Service* (3 Aug. 2005), Factiva [30 Jan. 2019].
[814] 'Sudanese president sets up team to probe Garang's death', *Suna* (8 Aug. 2005), BBC Monitoring via Factiva [30 Jan. 2019].
[815] 'UN joins probe', *New Vision* (4 Aug. 2005), Nexis UK [9 Jun. 2022]; Alfred Wasike, 'US joins plane search crew', *New Vision* (5 Aug. 2005), BBC Monitoring via Factiva [30 Jan. 2019].
[816] Daniel Wallis, 'Garang crash black boxes to be sent to Moscow', *Reuters* (19 Aug. 2005), Factiva [30 Jan. 2019]; 'Text of statement by the joint Sudan-Uganda'.
[817] Interview with 'William', phone, 19 Jun. 2022.
[818] Ibid.

outside professional with many years of experience investigating flight crashes and someone with no direct stake in the report's outcome. My interview with William largely corroborates Jones' account, though William gave a more detailed description of the team's internal politics and of the poor quality of some of the helicopter's onboard instruments, described further below.

I also draw from contemporary news articles on the investigation, including a published excerpt from the cockpit voice recording and a summary of the investigation's findings based on a draft copy of the report.[819] While the Ugandan and Kenyan news outlets which published these pieces could have forged information, they corroborate Jones' and William's accounts, lending credibility to both the interviews and news sources, at least so far as they represent the material included in the final report. Jones explained that the investigators found no evidence of foul play but that the investigation raised serious questions about the wider practices of the Ugandan Air Force, to which it 'wasn't complimentary.'[820] This unflattering focus on the Ugandan military may explain the Ugandan government's last-minute hesitance about the report, particularly in the context of a public row between the government and journalists who speculated on Uganda's complicity in the crash during the early weeks after Garang's death.

Jones' involvement in the investigation for the crash of a Russian-made aircraft flying from Sudan to Uganda was unusual. Under Annex 13 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation, which covers protocols for 'aircraft accident and incident investigation,' the parties normally involved in an investigation would include the states where the crash occurred, where the aircraft is registered, where the aircraft operator has its 'principal place of business', and where the aircraft and engine are designed and manufactured, none of which applied to the US in the case of Garang's crash.[821] Moreover, NTSB normally does not investigate crashes involving military aircraft. However, the US

[819] For leaked recording excerpt, see 'Garang, pilots' last talk recovered', *New Vision/All Africa* (10 Sep. 2005), BBC Monitoring via Nexis UK [5 Jun. 2022]; 'Garang wreckage: More details on moments before crash'; For draft report details, see 'Pilot of helicopter that crashed with Garang didn't study route well before takeoff', *The East African/Africa News* (28 Mar. 2006), Nexis UK [5 Jun. 2022].
[820] Interview with Dennis Jones. Unless another source is stated, all empirical information in this section comes from Jones.
[821] Uniting Aviation, 'What are the accident investigation provisions in Annex 13 of the Chicago Convention?' (12 Apr. 2021), https://unitingaviation.com/news/safety/accident-investigation-provisions-of-icao-annex-13/ [6 Jun. 2022]

received a diplomatic request from Museveni and Kiir for assistance. Given the significance of Garang's death—and likely because of their own stake in protecting the CPA, which they had helped broker—the Americans obliged by sending a team consisting of Jones, a second NTSB investigator, an NTSB forensic specialist and assistant, and an explosives and firearms expert employed by the US Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Agency. Jones identified three technical goals for the US team: 'to try to account for the assumed additional person on board'; to determine if 'there was any evidence of explosives or bombs or anything'; and to help the regional investigators get the flight data and cockpit voice recorders to Russia for evaluation.[822]

Jones and his team arrived in Nairobi on 7 August and, not long after, flew to Lokichoggio near the Kenyan-Sudanese border, from where they were picked up and brought to New Site.[823] The Americans' first task was to evaluate the crash victims' remains because, as Jones noted, '[t]here were some questions about the number of people on board the aircraft. There was some concern that there was an additional person on board.'[824] Contemporary media reports show that this controversy was in part prompted by a UN comment that 17 bodies had been recovered from the crash site, sparking tension between the UN and Uganda.[825] The American forensics expert determined this was not the case; rather, a fragmented body had been miscounted as multiple victims.[826]

On 9 August, the American, Ugandan, and SPLM investigators went to the crash site, hiking 'several hours' up a steep mountainside to get there.[827] On site, the American explosives and firearms expert found no evidence of 'explosive activities or anything like that.' The crash site showed obvious signs of controlled flight into terrain (CFIT), meaning that the pilot crashed into the mountain accidentally while still in control of the helicopter. Helicopters are much more maneuverable than airplanes and someone in an emergency would slow down before trying to land. The site of Garang's crash showed that the crash

[822] Quotes from interview with Dennis Jones. Jones could not remember who made the diplomatic request, but a contemporary news article lists Museveni and Kiir: Wasike, 'US joins plane search crew'.
[823] 'US experts arrive in Kenya to assist in probe of Garang chopper crash', *AFP* (8 Aug. 2005), Factiva [30 Jan. 2005]; interview with Dennis Jones.
[824] Interview with Dennis Jones.
[825] 'Only 13 bodies - Rugunda insists'', *New Vision* (12 Aug. 2005), Nexis UK [9 Jun. 2022]; 'Garang probe reaches Russia', *New Vision* (16 Aug. 2005), Nexis UK [9 Jun. 2022].
[826] Interviews with Dennis Jones; William.
[827] The date 9 August is given in Grace Matsiko, 'No terrorism in Garang crash', *Daily Monitor* (10 Sep. 2005), BBC Monitoring via Factiva [30 Jan. 2019].

had happened at high-speed, leaving a level swathe path and causing 'massive disintegration' to the vehicle.[828] The helicopter was almost at New Site at the time of the crash and hit the upslope of Mount Lothulia (also called Mount Zulia and Mount Natinga), while travelling north-northeast from Entebbe. The official record notes Uganda as the crash location.[829] During the investigation, however, the crash site was understood by the investigators to be in Sudan and, in interviews, both Lomuro and William told me the crash took place in Sudan. Jones explained that, some time after the on-scene investigation, a surveyor determined that the crash occurred in Uganda. This discrepancy reflects ambiguity over the location of the border, rather than of the crash site.[830] Uganda's northeast border slopes at a roughly 45-degree angle, passing between Mount Lothulia to the east and Mount Lotukei to the west, but some believe the border is south of Mount Lothulia (Figure 4; Figure 5). Mount Lotukei is the largest in a range which extends northwest and southeast, passing south of Mount Lothulia. Accounts which say the flight crashed on Mount Lotukei are incorrect, as are those which say the flight was heading to New Cush. New Site and New Cush are different locations; New Site, also called Kamutho, was a community established by Nyandeng where Garang moved his headquarters around 1998.[831] New Cush was a SPLM/A POW camp and military base to the southwest of New Site.

After the on-scene investigation, Jones sent some of his team members home, then accompanied the 'black boxes'—the flight data recorder and cockpit voice recorder, meant to survive a crash—to Russia, where they were manufactured, for evaluation. Their objectives completed, in late August, Jones and his remaining team member travelled back to the US, thinking their work for the investigation was done. However, sometime in September, the American State Department received a request from the investigation team asking that Jones return to lead the investigation because there was some 'disharmony' between team members representing different interested parties.[832]

[828] Interview with Dennis Jones.
[829] NTSB, 'WAS05RA013'.
[830] This is not the only part of the South Sudanese-Ugandan border that is ambiguous. See Cherry Leonardi and Martina Santschi, *Dividing Communities in South Sudan and Northern Uganda* (London, 2016).
[831] Interview with Lemi Logwonga Lomuro, 16 Jun. 2022.
[832] Interview with Dennis Jones.

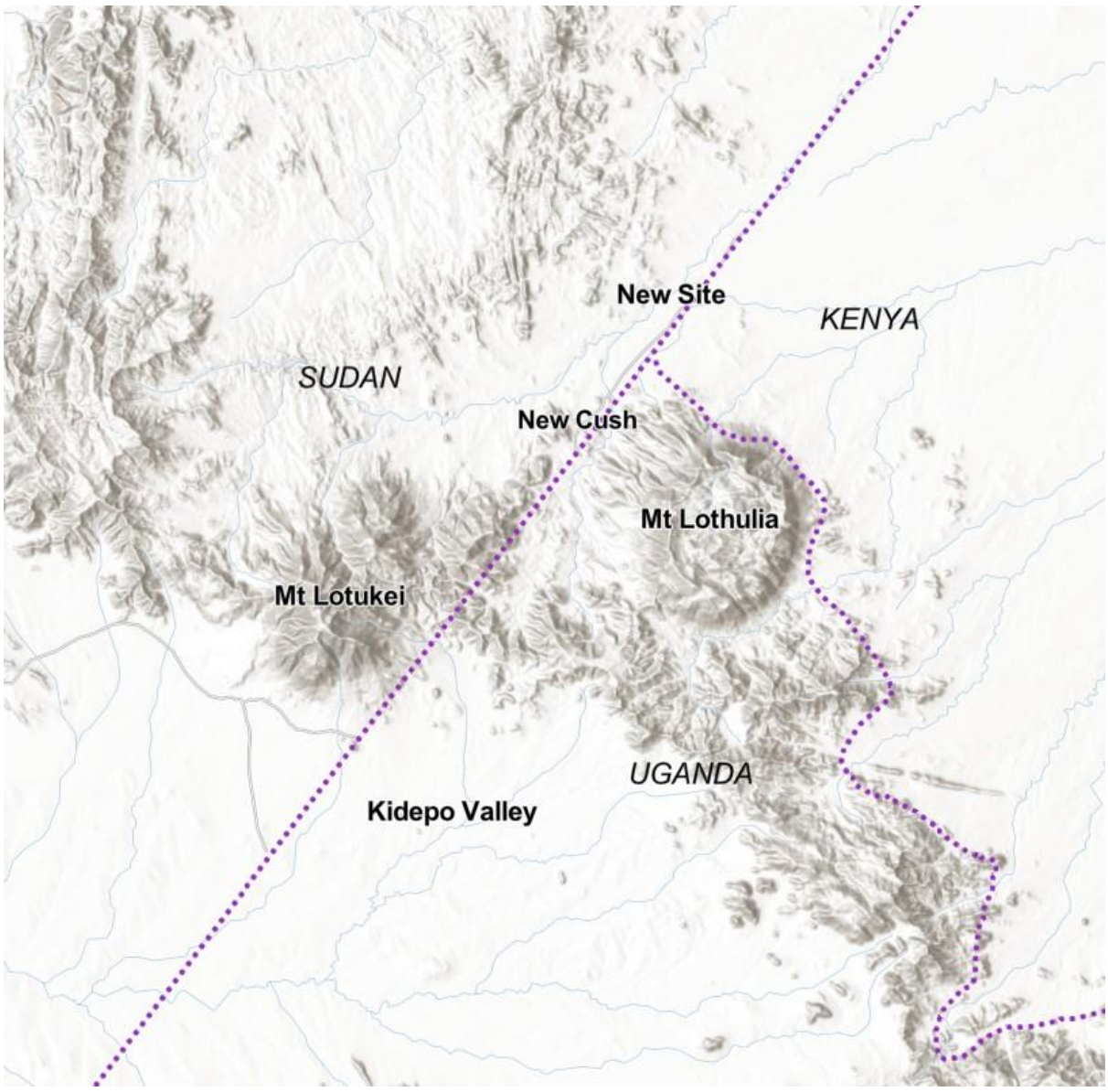

Figure 4: Map of Mount Lothulia, created by author based on information shared by interviewees. The location of the Ugandan-Sudanese border as represented here is contested. Some believe the border is south of Lothulia.

Figure 5: Regional map showing Mount Luthulia map inset, created by author.

Tension between Uganda and Sudan is not surprising. During the war, Museveni was a close ally to the SPLM/A, acting as a conduit for US military support.[833] Meanwhile, Sudan backed the rebel LRA in northern Uganda.[834] In the first week after Garang's death, tensions flared when Museveni visited the southern Sudanese town of Yei to pay his respects as Garang's body was toured around Sudan before his burial in Juba on 6 August. Museveni travelled to Yei by road with a 'heavy military escort' and did not inform the Sudanese government, who requested a formal explanation from Uganda.[835] Making matters worse, while in Yei, Museveni told the assembled mourners that Garang's death may not have been an accident:

[833] Interview with Ted Dagne, phone, 11 Jul. 2021. See also Human Rights Watch, 'Sudan: Global trade, local impact' (New York, 1998), 63–4.
[834] Mareike Schomerus, 'Perilous border: Sudanese communities affected by conflict on the Sudanese-Uganda border' (London, 2008), 8.
[835] 'Sudanese protest to Museveni over visit', *The Nation* (12 Aug. 2005), Nexis UK [9 Jun. 2022]; 'Govt team to answer Sudan query on Museveni's Yei visit', *The Monitor* (17 Aug. 2005), Nexis UK [9 Jun. 2022]; 'Museveni's Yei visit unplanned', *The Monitor* (23 Aug. 2005), Nexis UK [9 Jun. 2022].

> Now, although it was a little bit late [when Garang's flight departed], this plane was very well equipped, because I've been flying in it at night myself. It had all the systems. It could see the weather, it could see the mountains […] So for me, I want to wait for the inquiry. I'm not ruling out anything. Either the pilot panicked, either there was some side wind or the instruments failed or there was an external factor.[836]

This provoked backlash from the Sudanese government, who 'urged Uganda to stop making "baseless statements" over the death of Garang.'[837] Meanwhile, Uganda denounced accusations made by Paulino Matip, leader of the South Sudan Defence Forces aligned with Khartoum, that Uganda had played a role in Garang's death, and ongoing delays in returning the remains of the seven Ugandans killed in the crash from New Site to Kampala caused further confusion.[838]

These political and diplomatic tussles notwithstanding, Jones said that when he returned to Kampala to lead the investigation, he 'had no problems' with the technical team members. At this point in his career, Jones had conducted hundreds of investigations, including several in Africa, and was well-known to the Sudanese, Ugandan, and Kenyan investigators in the small international community of flight crash investigators. In his telling, it also 'sat well with them' that he was African American. William affirmed the importance of Jones' involvement, explaining, 'there is no way [the final crash report] would have gotten onto a table if it wasn't that Dennis Jones and his team and the Kenyans were on board.' Jones' leadership did not, however, completely prevent internal team conflict; William indicated that information was being leaked to the media during the investigation, causing tension between the Sudanese and SPLM teams especially.[839]

From Jones' return in September, the investigation took six months. The evidence was, according to Jones, 'from a technical point of view […] not hard at all.' The helicopter was flying into mountainous terrain and crashed into the mountainside while trying to 'stay below the clouds.' Jones summarized:

> So the clouds are getting lower but at the same time they're going to an area where the terrain is getting higher, meaning mountains […] you have a helicopter that's trying to stay below the clouds. And now the mountains are going into the clouds. And basically that's

[836] Full quote derived from AP Archive, 'Ugandan leader pays respects to Garang's body', YouTube, uploaded 24 Jul. 2015, https://youtu.be/iDi4skB0-FY [16 Jun. 2022] and 'Museveni says Garang crash may not have been accident', *New Vision* (6 Aug. 2005), Nexis UK [5 Jun. 2022].
[837] 'Museveni remarks upset Sudan', *New Vision* (7 Aug. 2005), Nexis UK [9 Jun. 2022].
[838] 'Govt team to answer Sudan query on Museveni's Yei visit'; 'Museveni drives all the way to Sudan', *The Monitor* (6 Aug. 2005), Nexis UK [9 Jun. 2022]; 'Bodies of Ugandan victims expected to arrive from Sudan today', *New Vision* (8 Aug. 2005), Nexis UK [9 Jun. 2022].
[839] Interview with William.

> what's called controlled flight into terrain, CFIT […] We saw evidence of that when we were on the scene. I mean, it was very clear to us that it was that kind of accident. But as we started to get more evidence, I mean from recorders and everything else, it all started to gel together that this was that kind of accident.

The helicopter was equipped with a cockpit voice recorder (CVR) and a flight data recorder (FDR). The FDR was damaged, a point often raised in the published accounts discussed below and wider debates about Garang's death. William explained there was no evidence of deliberate sabotage to the FDR but claimed the type of recorder was outdated and less durable than the standard that should have been used at the time. Jones explained that, while the FDR would have been 'very nice to have', the information offered by the CVR was 'quite compelling' and aligned with evidence from the crash site.

The CVR captured concerned comments from Garang and the pilots, who were confused about where they were flying and the surrounding landscape. Jones described,

> The recorder is quite compelling. I mean, there was at one point, just a few minutes before they hit the mountain, they had just missed another mountain! And we can hear the co-pilot yell, 'oh my god, we just missed a mountain!' And there was a point, at one point, again this is in the report, where John Garang […] was worried about the weather, and says, 'hey, you know, we can turn back and go elsewhere.' And the flight crew kept saying, 'no we will continue.'

Jones' memory of the co-pilot commenting on a nearby mountain is corroborated by a September news article which published an extract from the recording:

> Nyakairu - apparently to co-pilot: What is our GPS?
>
> Answer: 137. If we go into valley, we shall have left the rain behind. But I can't still see the ground. We have passed so near. This is a tall one (mountain)…[840]

Jones also described that, just before the crash, the first officer saw another mountain ahead:

> I remember the first officer, just before the crash occurred—I think the pilot was engaged with a conversation with someone else—and we can hear [the first officer] say, 'Captain I think there's a mountain ahead.' That was one of the last things that we heard. I'm not sure that I'm quoting that correctly, but that was something that stood out very vividly.

This too is captured in the extract published by *The Observer* and *New Vision*:

> Nyakairu: This is very steep ground. There are bad clouds and weather ahead. Concentrate on the GPS and the ground, the bearing…
>
> Other crew: But I think the tall hills are still ahead. We are about to cross border and this is Kidepo Valley… I thought Kidepo Valley was on the other side…
>
> Nyakairu: We use scale so that we… But we are over the hills… Ground speed is 120…

[840] 'Garang, pilots' last talk recovered'. All ellipses and insertions are from the news article.

> Other crew: We are approaching mountain…[841]

For the investigators, these conversations demonstrated the flight crew's concern about the weather and unfamiliarity with the area.

Jones explained that the crew had never flown to New Site and were navigating using GPS coordinates, which they referred to repeatedly during the flight. The helicopter had recently come out of overhaul and was, according to Jones, in 'excellent condition', with at least 'modest technology' for its time; however, the crew were not referencing the equipment for terrain mapping. Jones offered two possible reasons for this: that the crew were not well-trained flying with instruments or that the crew chose to fly visually for the entire flight because they knew they would have to use visual flight to land at New Site, where there was no radar or Air Traffic Control. Offering a third interpretation, William said that the instruments might not have been working properly, given that the ground proximity warning system (GPWS) should have issued an audio alert before the crash which would have been picked up by the CVR. Had there been an explosion onboard the helicopter or a missile attack from the ground, the sound of this would also have registered on the recorder.

After their initial assessment of the bodies, crash site, and recorders, the probe team turned their attention to the wider circumstances of the flight. This meant investigating the practices of the organization responsible—in this case, the Ugandan Air Force—and preparations for the flight. This focus on the Ugandan Air Force does not figure in published theories about the crash and represents a political element of the investigation shaped more by Uganda's domestic politics than possible acts of assassination or sabotage. As Jones explained, 'militaries don't like to be investigated by civilians, especially by some guy from America.' He and his team were therefore careful to document everything they did. Interviews with senior Ugandan military officials were a key part of this aspect of the investigation, all of which were recorded and transcribed.

The wider investigation revealed the 'domino factors' which resulted in Garang's delayed departure.[842] Originally, Garang had planned to spend Friday night in Kampala then return to New Site on Saturday morning the same way he arrived, via a charter flight to Lokichoggio in northern Kenya, from where he would drive to New Site. Instead, Garang

[841] Ibid.
[842] Interview with William.

stayed the night in Rwakitura and Museveni offered his private helicopter to fly Garang back to New Site on Saturday. The flight crew were not expecting this long of a journey and had to fly to Entebbe to fit long-range fuel tanks, then return to Rwakitura. Museveni then asked to be flown to a wedding before the helicopter left with Garang. When Garang and the crew eventually departed, they needed to stop again in Entebbe to refuel and collect Garang's overnight bag.[843] By the time they departed from Entebbe to New Site, it was 5pm and approaching nightfall in bad weather, and the flight crew had made multiple unplanned journeys. Jones identified these impromptu plans as likely factors in the crash, explaining that the crew would have been fatigued and felt pressure to get their VIP passenger to his destination, despite the poor flight conditions.

According to Jones, as the team's work progressed, their findings were contested by senior members of the Ugandan military. Jones met personally with Museveni on a number of occasions. During one of these, Jones remembers entering a conference room and 'there was Museveni at the end of the table […] and when I walked in, my god it seemed like he had his entire air force military brass there.' Museveni then tried to tell Jones that his information was incorrect and gave Jones a helicopter flight operations manual as evidence. However, Jones remembers pointing out that the concern that needed to be addressed at that phase of the investigation was not the flight operations manual but rather the absence of standard operating procedures:

> I look at all these guys around the table and I said, 'No sir, that's not correct.' And I went on to explain to him that what he's been presented […] it's not consistent with what we're finding. So I'm looking around this table at this brass of people who are just totally silent […] my guess is that they were trying to show that the information that the investigation is finding is not accurate.

Jones did not think Museveni was trying to influence the probe findings. Rather, he felt that Museveni was 'genuinely intrigued by the investigation process and respected [his] expertise.' In this exchange with the military leadership, Jones 'got a keen sense that Museveni wanted them to hear [Jones'] version of the particular matter in his presence.'

On a similar occasion, Museveni challenged Jones about the investigation's discussion of 'another flight that took place when the weather was so bad that they had to land midway during the flight.' Again, Museveni tried to tell Jones this was 'not right', but

[843] Interview with Dennis Jones. The point about Garang's overnight bag was corroborated by Lemi Lomuro.

Jones replied by saying this was based on his interviews with Museveni's own officers in the presence of the investigation team, which were recorded and transcribed.

Against this background and given that the final report was not flattering for the Ugandan Air Force, Jones said he took care to ensure everyone on the investigation team agreed on the details of the final report before it was published. Jones wrote the initial draft and then met for a week with the full team to go through the report, using a projector to display each page so that everyone could read and discuss. After revising some of the wording, they went to the US Embassy in Kampala, where the heads of each subunit in the team—the Ugandans, Kenyans, Sudanese, and SPLM—signed a copy of the agreed final report. Jones also submitted the report to the political committee which oversaw the technical team:

> I also submitted the report to the committee itself […] these were the political figures that were appointed […] I recall vividly where the north and south Sudanese, I mean they were really happy about the report, which I can understand […] The Ugandans, I had to explain more to them. Keep in mind none of them were investigators, they were all politicians. But it was submitted to them and they adopted the report.

On 12 April, Sudan and Uganda signed a joint press statement to announce the closure of the investigation, but Uganda's last-minute doubts received significant media attention, explored in the next section.[844] Ultimately, Jones' efforts to conduct an impartial, objective, and comprehensive investigation failed to prevent continued speculation and accusations about the causes of the crash; however, the report's technical focus set the scene for a set of debates about the gathering and interpretation of evidence.

'Your government killed Garang through incompetence': Garang's crash in Ugandan media

When the report was finished, Sudanese, Ugandan, and international media all reported Uganda's last-minute concerns, apparently 'about a clause in the report charging that the planning for the fatal flight by the helicopter crew had been inadequate.'[845] According to the joint team's official press statement about the report, Uganda's comments were included as

[844] 'Text of statement by the joint Sudan-Uganda'.
[845] 'Investigators to release Garang crash findings Tuesday', *AFP* (14 Apr. 2006), Factiva [30 Jan. 2019]; see also 'Garang probe team to conduct internal inquiries', *The Monitor* (19 Apr. 2006), Nexis UK [9 Jun. 2022].

an appendix.[846] When the report was officially adopted, Uganda's government-owned *New Vision* reported,

> Nasasira said the Ugandan team would continue with internal inquiries on why Lt. Col. Peter Nyakairu decided to fly at 5,500ft above sea level and yet the Zulia Mountain ranges on his flight path which were clearly marked on their map showed higher altitude of over 6,000ft and when the co-pilot had flown that destination twice before.
>
> It will also probe why the captain opted to continue visual flight into deteriorating weather conditions and yet he was trained to fly in bad weather using instruments.[847]

Contrary to this report, Jones does not think that the pilots had previously flown to New Site and, while the pilots' training records were up to date, William explained there were questions about their ability to use the instruments on the helicopter. The Ugandan political commission's reservations about the report's conclusions on the flight crew's poor planning and Nasasira's comments about the personal actions of the pilot appear to reflect efforts to focus attention on Nyakairu and away from wider organizational failings in the Ugandan Air Force, which was not mentioned in Uganda's press statements.

These deflective media tactics were in keeping with the Ugandan government's attempts to control public narratives about the crash from the time it happened. In the first months after Garang's death, speculative theories about the crash proliferated in Ugandan media. These included that Garang's helicopter could have been shot down by 'enemies lying in the jungles of Kidepo', that there were hijackers onboard the helicopter who shot Garang, and that Museveni had stopped using the helicopter he gave to Garang.[848] The situation was exacerbated by early inaccuracies and inconsistencies in the government's messaging, including that the helicopter had crash-landed safely; that the helicopter was short of fuel; that the pilot had radioed air traffic control in Entebbe upon encountering bad weather to say they were turning back; and that the flight crew had attempted to land in New Cush 'but aborted landing because of bad weather and headed southwest.'[849] Indeed, on 11

[846] 'Text of statement by the joint Sudan-Uganda'.
[847] Milton Olupot, 'Pilot caused Garang crash', *New Vision* (19 Apr. 2006), Nexis UK [5 Jun. 2022].
[848] 'Garang's death an unanswered puzzle', *New Vision* (5 Aug. 2005), Nexis UK [9 Jun. 2022]; 'Government dismissed conspiracy theories on Garang crash', *The Monitor* (9 Aug. 2005), Nexis UK [9 Jun. 2022]; 'MPs pay tribute to John Garang', *New Vision* (3 Aug. 2005), Nexis UK [9 Jun. 2022].
[849] 'Garang plane disappears after Uganda visit', *The Monitor* (1 Aug. 2005), Nexis UK [9 Jun. 2022]; 'Ugandan government "anxious" over Dr John Garang's safety', *Radio Uganda* (1 Aug. 2005), BBC Monitoring via Nexis UK [13 Jun. 2022]. Based on the content of this radio broadcast, monitored by the BBC at 4am GMT, it was likely a replay of a broadcast from 31 July.

August, the Minister of Information apologized for the government's poor communications, saying 'the government should do better in coordination of information in future.'[850]

The proliferation of conspiracy theories about Garang's death in Ugandan media speaks to pervasive confusion and distress in the aftermath of the crash, but also reflects deeply ingrained ideas about military corruption in Uganda and assassination in this politically inter-related region of Africa. The context in which these narratives were produced shaped their content, aims, and political weight. Following Museveni's statement in Yei that the crash could have involved 'an external factor', one writer made comparisons between Garang's death and those of other 'high profile individuals' killed in 'controversial plane incidents,' including Ugandan Army Chief of Staff David Oyite-Ojok, Mozambican President Samora Machel, and Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana.[851] 'Plane crashes,' he explained, 'still remain a covert means of assassination, beginning as accidents and later amended when the truth emerges.'

One of the most significant accusations in relation to internal Ugandan politics was made by Andrew Mwenda, the well-known political editor of *The Monitor* and a talk show host on 93.3 KFM, independent news outlets owned by Kenya's Nation Group. In a panel discussion hosted by Mwenda and published by *The Monitor* (likely originally hosted on KFM but this is not clear), Mwenda asked,

> The information we have [about the crash] is that the weather was very bad in New Site, that a strong wind made the functions that would enable the plane to locate a hill 100 metres away dysfunctional… Given the long history of UPDF [Uganda People's Defence Forces] having junk planes, do you think it was a question of bad weather or it was the only thing to expect from a junk plane?[852]

Mwenda's use of 'junk planes' was a reference to a corruption scandal in 1996-7, in which the Ugandan government purchased four second-hand helicopters from Belarus via an intermediary company, Consolidated Sales Corporation.[853] As Mwenda himself has published, the scandal implicated Museveni's brother, Salim Saleh, who accepted a large bribe to push through the contract without competition.[854] Only two of the four helicopters

[850] 'Buturo admits Garang crash was poorly handled', *The Monitor* (12 Aug. 2005), Nexis UK [9 Jun. 2022].
[851] 'Killing them by plane', *The Monitor* (10 Aug. 2005), Nexis UK [9 Jun. 2022].
[852] 'What next after Garang's death', *The Monitor* (9 Aug. 2005), Nexis UK [9 Jun. 2022].
[853] Roger Tangri and Andrew Mwenda, 'Military corruption & Ugandan politics since the late 1990s', *Review of African Political Economy*, 30/98 (2003), 540.
[854] Ibid.

were delivered, which proved not to be airworthy, and 'the state was defrauded of over US$12million.'[855] In Mwenda's panel, the 'junk planes' issue prompted wider discussion about how corruption could have caused the crash, including that someone could have benefited from getting a commission for the helicopter's overhaul, rather than simply buying a new one, and that a recent report in *The Observer* described how spare helicopter parts were 'sent abroad for repair', then sold off.

Museveni did not take kindly to these theories. In a public speech on 10 August, shared on national radio and television, he announced that he would 'no longer tolerate [applause] a newspaper which is like a vulture […] any newspaper which plays around with regional security, I will not tolerate it. I will just simply close it'. He then singled out Mwenda, *The Observer*, and a tabloid called *Red Pepper*:

> I have just been seeing this young boy, Mwenda, writing about Rwanda, writing about Sudan, writing about UPDF. He must stop completely […] And this other paper called Observer […] Red Pepper also.[856]

Mwenda retaliated the next day on his talk show, in a conversation with Moses Byaruhanga, Presidential Assistant on Political Affairs. After playing a clip from Museveni's speech, Mwenda declared,

> Now that is President Yoweri Museveni, I am going to answer him. First of all no one is going to stop, at least not me. I am not going to stop. If he closes the newspaper and I am out of a job, I am going to seek his job.[857]

Talking over Byaruhanga's indignant replies, Mwenda moved on to Garang's death and rebutted Byaruhanga's accusations that his articles threatened security:

> Are you saying it is The Monitor which caused the death of Garang? Or it's your own mismanagement? Garang's security was put in danger by your own government. Putting him, first of all, on a junk helicopter; second, at night; third, passing through Imatong hills, and you know that [Joseph] Kony [leader of the LRA] has stinger missiles, surface-to-air missiles; five, when there was bad weather […] Are you aware that your government killed Garang through incompetence?

In response, the government shut down KFM, arrested Mwenda, and charged him with sedition, prompting national and international outcry which only amplified Mwenda's

[855] Ibid., 540–1; Godfrey Asiimwe, 'Of extensive and elusive corruption in Uganda: Neo-patronage, power, and narrow interests', *African Studies Review*, 56/2 (2013), 136.
[856] 'Uganda's Museveni threatens to close papers "playing" with regional security', *Ugandan TV and Radio Uganda* (10 Aug. 2005), BBC Montioring via Nexis UK [9 Jun. 2022]. Elisions mine; editorial additions removed.
[857] Emmy Allio and Steven Candia, 'Monitor's K-FM radio closed', *New Vision* (12 Aug. 2005), BBC Monitoring via Nexis UK [9 Jun. 2022].

commentary.[858] Talking about the crash had high stakes, but the focus on 'incompetence' rather than purposeful assassination marks a sharp contrast with comparative cases.

Whereas these 'fixings of blame' do not reveal the cause of Garang's death, they 'tell us about the contest over national narratives and histories' in a particular political context—in Uganda as much as in Sudan.[859] Mwenda's commentary and arrest show the significance of military equipment and its maintenance to political debate about corruption in Uganda. Given these domestic implications, it is unsurprising that, in April 2006, the Ugandan probe commission tried to deflect attention from the operational failures of its air force and refocus it on Pilot Nyakairu alone, promising they would continue to investigate his behaviour. The report's wider analysis notwithstanding, in recent years the experience and behaviour of the pilot have remained a prominent question point in amateur investigative accounts of the crash. Moreover, early speculations about the number of bodies, the flight path, communication with air traffic control, and the idea of a 'junk' helicopter have proved difficult to dispel, particularly among a younger generation of writers who cannot read the report.

SPLM/A calls for a new investigation

After Garang's death, Kiir's peaceful ascent to lead the SPLM was widely lauded. However, as subsequent political and armed conflicts have shown, SPLM/A unity would not last; nor would the movement's commitment to the final crash report in a shifting political landscape. Among those closest to Garang, there was genuine mistrust of the joint probe team's findings. On the first anniversary of Garang's death, only three months after the report's release, Garang's widow, Nyandeng, called publicly for a new probe, saying 'The report has come out but as the family of Gen Garang and the extended family what we want is […] extended investigations.'[860] In June 2007, she commented during a televised awards ceremony in Nairobi honouring Garang that she always knew her husband 'was

[858] Committee to Protect Journalists, 'Talk show host arrested, facing sedition charges', (12 Aug. 2005), Nexis Uk [9 Jun. 2022].
[859] White, *Assassination*, 10.
[860] Grace Matsiko, 'Garang widow calls for fresh crash probe', *Daily Monitor* (1 Aug. 2006), BBC Monitoring via Factiva [30 Jan. 2019].

assassinated', a statement at least one author has interpreted as blaming Garang's southern Sudanese rivals.[861]

In 2007-8, reinvestigating Garang's crash became closely tied to the SPLM's intra-party power struggles. In late 2004, rumours had spread that Garang was planning to replace Kiir with Nhial Deng, triggering a crisis in the movement. At the time, Kiir was at his headquarters in Yei and it is widely believed that the crisis was orchestrated by Garang's opponents within and outside the SPLM/A, in collaboration with the Sudanese government, including Bona Malwal, Dominic Dim, Salva Mathok, and Aleu Ayieny Aleu.[862] After several SPLM/A officers travelled to Yei to urge Kiir to meet with Garang, the two leaders met in Rumbek to reconcile, first privately and then in a wider SPLM/A conference where several officers aired grievances against Garang.[863] Although the 'Rumbek meeting' averted a major split in the movement, tensions between cadres loyal to Garang and to Kiir resurfaced shortly after Garang's death. The so-called 'Garang boys' were sidelined by Kiir, in part through undermining the SPLM/A's existing institutions, which they were seen to control.[864] Kiir accommodated some of the Garang loyalists in 2006 and 2007, but three competing factions emerged in the SPLM, centring around Kiir, Machar, and the Garang group.[865] Tension between these groups flared several times and, in July 2013, Kiir precipitated a political crisis by dismissing his entire cabinet and Vice President Machar.[866] That December, fighting broke out between forces loyal to Kiir and Machar in Juba's Giyada barracks and rapidly escalated to civil war.

Throughout this period, various senior figures in the SPLM, of different political allegiances, advocated that Garang's crash be reinvestigated. In August 2007, Aleu, then Minister of Interior in Sudan's transitional GoNU and a member of the SPLM politburo, began calling for a new probe.[867] Soon thereafter, he was sacked from his position in the

[861] 'Widow says ex-Sudan rebel leader assassinated - paper', *Reuters* (18 Jun. 2007), Factiva [30 Jan. 2019]; Wël, *Who Killed*, 323.
[862] Ajak, 'Building on sand', 92; Johnson, *South Sudan*, 207–8.
[863] Ibid.; Interview with Kosti Manibe.
[864] Ajak, 'Building on sand', 198–201.
[865] Rolandsen and Daly, *History of South Sudan*, 154.
[866] Ibid., 154–6.
[867] 'Garang death: time to rest the speculations', *Daily Monitor* (18 Aug. 2007), BBC Monitoring via Factiva [30 Jan. 2019].

GoNU but continued to speak out.[868] He alleged that the helicopter Garang boarded after refueling in Entebbe was not the presidential aircraft taken from Rwakitura and that Ugandan officials orchestrated Garang's death, possibly because of a dispute between Museveni and Garang over military equipment.[869] Aleu's position as an SPLM representative during the investigation was noted at the time and has since given his statements more weight, even though he was not a technical expert.[870]

In response to Aleu, the Ugandan embassy in Khartoum issued a scathing press statement, dismissing Aleu's allegations point-by-point and accusing him of 'bad faith, ill motives […] and lack of seriousness as a leader.'[871] On 1 December, Aleu was kicked out of the SPLM, along with Telar Deng.[872] Aleu's reasons for speaking out when he did and the factional politics involved in his dismissal are not clear. Officially, Aleu was dismissed for his 'irresponsible' statements about Garang's crash, which did not reflect the party line.[873] However, his removal took place during a wider cabinet reshuffle in the national government. The reshuffle was precipitated by the SPLM's temporary withdrawal from the GoNU over its failure to implement aspects of the CPA, but also facilitated internal changes in the SPLM.[874] Aleu was closely aligned with Kiir but his outspokenness over the crash investigation may have been a convenient excuse to remove him from the cabinet for any number of reasons put forward by South Sudanese analysts: to prevent the emergence of 'threatening centres of power' which Kiir could not control; to balance competing interests in the SPLM after Kiir initially overloaded the cabinet with his own men; or simply because he was bad at his job.[875] In any case, Aleu's disgrace was temporary; he and Telar Deng

[868] Steve Paterno, 'New revelation on John Garang's death', *Sudan Tribune* (19 Aug. 2007), https://sudantribune.com/article23576/ [17 Jun. 2022].
[869] Angelo Izama and Rodney Muhumuza, 'New details on Garang's death', *The Monitor* (10 Nov. 2007), Factiva [30 Jan. 2019].
[870] Ibid.
[871] 'Uganda denounces "false" accusations on Garang death', *Sudan Tribune* (13 Nov. 2007), https://sudantribune.com/article24835/ [19 Apr. 2022].
[872] 'SPLM Amum is appointed as Sudan's cabinet affairs minister', *Sudan Tribune* (2007), https://sudantribune.com/article25407/ [16 Jun. 2022].
[873] 'Sudan: Southern minister dismissed for saying Garang's crash no accident', *Al-Ayyam* (18 Aug. 2018), BBC Monitoring via Factiva [30 Jan. 2019]; Ngor Arol Garang, 'Aleu says he knew would return to SPLM', *Sudan Tribune* (5 Sep. 2009), Factiva [30 Jan. 2019].
[874] 'SPLM Amum is appointed as Sudan's cabinet affairs minister'.
[875] Ajak, 'Building on sand', 96; Peter Nyaba, *South Sudan: The State We Aspire To*, 2nd ed. (Wanneroo, Australia, 2016), 131; Paterno, 'New revelation'.

were brought back into the fold in 2009, and played an instrumental role in the violence of 2013-14.

When Aleu first called for the new probe, Machar made a statement to *Akhbar al-Youm*, the same Sudanese newspaper with which Aleu did his first interview, saying that Aleu could express his doubts to the SPLM but should not have done so publicly.[876] Ironically, six months later, Machar made his own call to reopen the probe in an interview with *Reuters*, so that nothing 'connected to Dr. John Garang' would 'divide' the SPLM.[877] Machar claimed that the SPLM and GoSS had not officially 'endorse[d] the report' and listed others in the SPLM who doubted the details of the crash: Deng Alor, Pagan Amum and Aleu. He also 'said experts in plane crashes should be brought in from overseas to open a new investigation', showing the extent to which international participation in the initial probe had been erased from public discourse. Although Khartoum and Uganda remained in the background as prospective assassins, these debates never produced any specific allegations or conspiracy theories. A potential explanation for this is that these debates unfolded in the context of significant power struggles within the SPLM/A leadership. Calls for investigation took place on a murky base of shifting allegiances, where it was beneficial to be able to cast aspersions in a different direction at any moment. While it is difficult to say with certainty what individual actors sought to gain by calling for a new investigation, it is clear that these calls contributed to wider mistrust of the official report.

Probing the probe

The release of the report in April 2006 did little to stop South Sudanese from speculating about Garang's fatal crash. Exactly how far the report circulated at the time of its publication is unclear. Jones affirmed that it was published online by the Sudanese Government and Garang's son Mabior remembers receiving a hard copy; however, an opinion piece published in May 2006 commented that the 'report is not yet public to everyone.'[878] The report is unavailable today and never reached a wide audience. If 'texts and politics are

[876] 'Ex-rebel movement urged to clarify stance on Garang death probe', *Akhbar Al-Yawm* (21 Aug. 2007), Factiva [30 Jan. 2019].
[877] Riek Machar quoted in 'Sudan should probe rebel leader's death-southern VP', *Reuters* (2008).
[878] Roba Gibia, 'Garang's superseded aircraft', *Sudan Tribune* (10 May 2006), https://sudantribune.com/article16122/ [13 Jun. 2022].

entangled,' the *absence* of the official report on Garang's crash has been as important as the text itself.[879] Writing about the assassination of Zimbabwean nationalist Herbert Chitepo, White highlights that '[m]ost Zimbabweans who were active in politics in Zambia, whatever their political affiliation, had read the [Chitepo] *Report* very carefully' and pointed out what was 'left out'.[880] By contrast, South Sudanese authors writing about Garang's crash grapple with the unavailability of the final report and fill the gaps with material from other sources. The probe team's work to rule out physical attacks on the helicopter, analyze the Ugandan Air Force's internal practices, and to evaluate that everything on the helicopter was functioning properly, disappear. Instead, authors reference politicians' calls for a new probe and reproduce the speculative media accounts of 2005-6, either directly or via intermediary secondary sources. But notwithstanding this 'flattening', published opinion pieces about Garang's death remain highly focused on questions of technical evidence, a tone set in the original report, even if it was not circulated.[881]

In this final section, I examine texts about Garang's death by five South Sudanese authors, all male and—to my knowledge—not directly associated with the South Sudanese government. James Okuk Solomon, Isaiah Abraham, Steve Paterno, and Roba Gibia have published in the Paris-based *Sudan Tribune*. Paanluel Wël manages a multi-contributor blog and has self-published several books about Garang. South Sudan's media space is highly monitored and both *Sudan Tribune* and Wël's blog are blocked within the country. One of these authors, Isaiah Abraham, was killed in late 2012, likely for writing articles critical of Kiir's government.[882] Abraham's death testifies to the tragically high stakes of political journalism in South Sudan. In the context of this restrictive and dangerous media landscape, a focus on technical evidence offers a means to request unavailable or unclear data and to call for societal change in the approach to how information is assembled, shared, and given meaning. These authors are aware of how the past is used and misused to justify often violent political projects and seek a different approach to history-making.

[879] White, *Assassination*, 15.
[880] Ibid., 11, 100.
[881] Davis, *The ANC's War*, 85.
[882] Daniel Deng, 'Who killed South Sudan's prolific writer - Isaiah Abraham?', *South Sudan News Agency* (14 Dec. 2012), Nexis UK [9 Jun. 2022]; Kuir ë Garang, 'Poverty of wisdom and the death of Isaiah Abraham in South Sudan', *South Sudan News Agency* (5 Dec. 2012), Nexis UK [9 Jun. 2022].

In *Who Killed Dr. John Garang*, Wël opens a chapter on the investigational 'anomalies' of Garang's crash by citing Nyandeng's 2007 statement about always knowing Garang had been assassinated.[883] Later, he refers to the doubts of Aleu, Amum, Alor, and Machar.[884] Aleu's allegations have had a particularly strong influence on other accounts. An opinion piece in *Sudan Tribune* written by James Okuk Solomon at the time Aleu lost his ministerial position praised Aleu 'for presenting crucial clues which could lead to evidence about the cause of Dr. Garang [*sic*] death if investigated sincerely' and asked if Aleu is 'a sacrificial lamb for the Uganda-SPLM diplomatic relations'.[885] Four and a half years later, another *Sudan Tribune* contributor, Isaiah Abraham, used Aleu's case as an example to highlight that there was 'an abnormal crack down of anything associated with opening up of another investigation on matters surrounding Garang [*sic*] death.'[886] Wël, Solomon, and Abraham all highlight Aleu's credibility as a member of the probe team, showing how, over time, the distinction between the political commission and technical experts became increasingly blurred.

However, this positive view of Aleu is not universal. In August 2007, Steve Paterno picked apart the 'so-called new revelation by Aleu', pointing out that his claims were neither new nor, for the most part, plausible. Aleu, he explained,

> …is a person infamously associated with controversies of magnificent scale. He is said to be among those responsible for causing the rift between John Garang and Salva Kiir in late 2004. Interestingly, he was also among the committee responsible for investigating Garang's chopper crash. But for some reasons only known to him, he abruptly and quietly dropped out of the committee without sufficient explanation only to resurface and try to provoke more public controversy and outcry when the time is going tough on him. Of recent, it was widely rumored that his name is on the top of the list among those ministers up for reshuffle.[887]

For Paterno, Aleu's controversial statements were 'a desperate failed attempt to capitalize on [old ideas] for his personal gain.' Notably, the one point where Paterno agrees with Aleu is that the investigation into Garang's crash must be reopened, with more focus on 'the human element of this tragedy.' This reflects a wider belief that failing to investigate would

[883] Wël, *Who Killed*, 288.
[884] Ibid., 296.
[885] James Okuk Solomon, 'Qualms surrounding Dr. Garang's cause of death', *Sudan Tribune* (27 Aug. 2007), https://sudantribune.com/article23674/ [17 Jun. 2022].
[886] Isaiah Abraham, 'Garang death: a need for fresh probe', *Sudan Tribune* (17 Jan. 2012), https://sudantribune.com/article40761/ [17 Jun. 2022].
[887] Paterno, 'New revelation'.

mean letting down 'future generations, who will have more questions without any lead as this generation is letting the leads and evidence slip by'.

Beyond politicians' public calls for a new probe, news reports are the major source used by authors writing about the crash. Roba Gibia's *John Garang: The Vision of New Sudan* (2008) and Wël's *Who Killed Dr. John Garang?* (2015) are both footnoted and offer a lens into how certain ideas about the crash have developed since 2005. By mapping the 'intertextuality' of these accounts, I show how debates which emerged in the early days after the crash and in the context of Uganda's public discourse around corruption and 'junk helicopters' have fed ideas that Garang's helicopter could have been sabotaged. Gibia is openly critical of the investigation team, but only cites secondary summaries of the report and admits that 'the two hundred forty page report has not yet been made public.'[888] Gibia's analysis is closely shaped by arguments made in *The Observer* in early September 2005 and by Mwenda's speculations about junk helicopters. Alleging that the probe team never verified the quality of the helicopter's recent overhaul and that Museveni had not flown in the helicopter since its return to Uganda, Gibia writes:

> I believe Andrew Mwenda was correct when he said that "Garang's security was put in danger in the first place by putting him on a junk helicopter, flying at night and passing through Imatong Hills". That was the bottom line of the issue, but not that pilots didn't study well the route and was applying visual flying rules instead of using onboard instruments, while it was dark and the weather was bad and cloudy! This is completely absurd, and it is merely distortion of public opinion or duping around with minds of people.[889]

Given Museveni's assurances about the quality of the helicopter and its instruments, Gibia concurs with *The Observer*'s conclusion that the crash was likely caused by a 'mechanical fault.'[890] For Gibia, only a 'mechanical failure' caused by 'deliberate sabotage' through a 'conspiracy theory on high levels'—including some combination of the CIA, Al Qaeda, Khartoum 'extremists', pro-secession members of the SPLM/A, and African leaders threatened by Garang's 'great' leadership—could explain why the pilots did not use their instruments to navigate.[891] Gibia also accuses the investigation team of a lack of

[888] Gibia, *John Garang*, location 1200.
[889] Ibid., location 1180.
[890] 'Garang wreckage: More details on moments before crash'.
[891] Gibia, *John Garang*, location 1153, 1256.

independence, of failing to clarify the number of bodies, and of failing to study why Garang was allowed to fly at night—all issues covered by Jones' inaccessible report.

Gibia's work usefully captures the intertextuality of speculative articles about Garang's crash already emerging from 2005 and 2006, when he published his first opinion pieces. In turn, Gibia's work is heavily cited by Wël in *Who Killed Dr. John Garang,* a biography of Garang born out of Wël's wider efforts to archive and publish Garang's speeches, letters, and radio messages. Wël describes Garang's final flight, identifies 'a number of conspicuous, well-documented inconsistencies' in his death, and discusses possible suspects and their motives, as summarized above.[892] His work is well-researched and referenced and, while Wël depends largely on news articles and writers like Gibia, he shows awareness of how his dependence on secondary sources shapes his analysis by highlighting points of 'conjecture' which lack proper evidence.[893]

The sources referenced most frequently by Wël include the 8 September 2005 article from *The Observer* and Gibia's book.[894] Wël closely reproduces Gibia's argument that the helicopter's instruments were deliberately damaged, stating that 'either the plane was junky or someone sabotaged the installations.'[895] He also repeats Aleu's claims that Garang was meeting with Museveni to discuss SPLA weapons withheld by Uganda and that Garang's helicopter was swapped in Entebbe. Unlike Gibia, however, Wël does not reach a firm conclusion about the crash. Wël does not discount the possibility that the crash was an accident but, if that is so, cannot understand why the report has been kept secret.[896]

Wël's work, published seven years after Gibia's book and eight years after Aleu's public allegations, shows the cumulative influence of politicians' calls for a new probe and speculative accounts which preceded his own. However, writing about Garang's life and death was, for Wël, a more personal form of commemorative and educational politics. Wël's impressive scholastic attempts to fill the gaps left by the absent report on Garang's death mirror his wider efforts to document Garang's life and work, in order that South Sudanese 'may reflect about the revolutionary struggle for which generations of our people died, and

[892] Wël, *Who Killed,* 301.
[893] Ibid., 304.
[894] Wël miscites some direct quotes as being from Gibia, 'Garang's superseded aircraft' instead of Gibia, *John Garang*.
[895] Wël, *Who Killed,* 312–2.
[896] Interview with Paanluel Wël, Juba, 16 Jul. 2019.

in the process pause to assess our collective conscience in the light of our present course of action in the Republic of South Sudan.'[897] Wël is also aware of how speculations about Garang's death gain weight through repetition and warns about how, with time, conspiracies will be 'internalized as facts'. Describing different rumours about how Garang seemed to have a premonition of his death in the days prior to his crash, he writes,

> In a society where superstitions reign large and wide, these points are no mere speculations but have been taken and internalized as facts, in the absence of better explanations and in total rejection of the commission's stated accounts of bad weather and pilot error. These conspiracy rumors have been in circulation since 2005. Future generations of South Sudanese will likely take these rather fantastic speculations as fact-based wisdom to anchor their history on.[898]

Far from presenting a 'confident and presumptuous' narrative, Wël calls for '[t]he technical investigation […] to be reopened and re-examined' so that 'South Sudanese people have peace of mind, having known beyond reasonable doubt the circumstances surrounding Garang's death on President Museveni's helicopter.'[899] While Gibia and Wël speculate on who could have killed Garang and why, their core concern remains the quality of the investigation and lack of available details about the crash. They are highly attuned to the abuses of the past for political gain in the present and seek a different engagement with history, rooted in objective technical evidence, to allow South Sudanese people to move forward.

Conclusion

At the time of his death, John Garang remained the singular figurehead of the SPLM and one of the principal champions of the CPA and Sudan's prospective unity. The timing of the crash, just three weeks after Garang was cheered by millions in the national capital upon his inauguration as first vice president, contributed to widespread belief that his death was not an accident. As ongoing debates about the 'accidental' deaths of other African leaders have shown, investigations are politically laden procedures. Evidence can be distorted or occluded, and official reports often produce and maintain power structures, silences, and histories. Unlike the openly biased commissions which investigated the deaths of Lumumba,

[897] Wël, *Who Killed*, v.
[898] Ibid., 315.
[899] Davis, *The ANC's War*, 87; Wël, *Who Killed*, 330.

Machel or Hammarskjöld, Garang's crash was investigated by a team of local and international experts, led by the well-respected Dennis Jones. However, poor communication immediately following the crash and the unavailability of the final report ensured that speculative accounts flourished, fed by precedents of political assassination in the region and domestic political disputes in Uganda and South Sudan.

Without access to the report, South Sudanese writers have engaged closely with Ugandan media debates from the weeks and months following the crash, and political statements from senior SPLM figures. Debates about Ugandan corruption have taken new forms in speculation about how the helicopter could have been deliberately sabotaged, while Aleu Ayieny's inflammatory accusations of Ugandan government complicity and subsequent ejection from the party have entrenched belief that certain information is being silenced or hidden from the public. While some of the South Sudanese-authored texts discussed in this chapter offer possible theories on the who, how, and why of the crash, their underlying call is for a more thorough and open investigation. In this, they speak to wider debates about who controls information access in South Sudan and government apathy towards inclusive memorialization and the preservation of history.

Ch. 7: The afterlives of John Garang

Figure 6: Sudanese from across the country gather at el Merrikh football stadium in Khartoum and light candles to commemorate the first anniversary of John Garang's death. Courtesy of Phillip Dhil.

On 30 July 2006, Sudanese gathered at el Merrikh football stadium in Khartoum to commemorate the first anniversary of John Garang's death, lighting candles in his memory. Phillip Dhil, who photographed the occasion, estimated that the crowd numbered hundreds of thousands.[900] A former Khartoum resident described the day's importance in uniting Sudanese from different regions:

> [The anniversary was] I think one of the most beautiful experiences I've seen. Because it's when you see South Sudanese, Sudanese, people from Darfur, Nuba Mountains, from the western, eastern side, like all Sudanese coming together. 'Cos I don't think there's any symbolic hero that people celebrate in Sudan. I've never seen any. We only celebrate Independence Day. They don't even have a Heroes Day in Sudan, there's nothing like that. And Garang's memorial was I think the first I've heard of […] It was beautiful.[901]

Like Garang's arrival in Khartoum in 2005, the event brought together diverse groups who saw in Garang's political vision an alternative to President Bashir's repressive government.

[900] Phillip Dhil, *Late Dr. John Garang: In Pictures* (2008), 204.
[901] Interview with Sunday Beiag.

In Southern Sudan the following year, the anniversary of Garang's death was officially established as Martyrs Day, a public holiday honouring all who died in Sudan's civil wars.[902]

Martyrs Day is one of several ways that Garang has remained present in South Sudan's political discourse and symbolism since his death in 2005, though the terms in which he is discussed vary widely and have shifted over time. In this final chapter, I move beyond debates about Garang's death to consider his diverse social and political 'afterlives.' I use the concept of afterlives—rather than memories or legacies—to explore Garang's active presence in South Sudan, not only as a political ancestor for the SPLM but as a touchstone for his family, classmates, and youth to evoke lost futures and/or the real possibility of change. Garang's death so soon after the CPA sets him apart from liberation struggle leaders who continued into government and were subsequently embroiled in post-independence political strife, in South Sudan and Africa more generally.[903] He was not directly implicated in South Sudan's post-2011 conflicts and so became a symbol of the war dead, whose sacrifices demand continuous effort to see out or protect the revolution, albeit in different ways for different actors. In his study of the 'afterlives' of Indian revolutionary Bhagat Singh, executed by the colonial state at age 23, Chris Moffat argues that we must '[take] seriously the force of the dead as entities to whom something is *owed*', rather than simply as figures to be appropriated when convenient.[904] The idea of a 'debt' to the dead is particularly relevant to South Sudan, where the language around martyrs is that they paid a price in blood for the country's freedom, which must be honoured in the present and for the future. The challenge for Kiir's government has been to control interpretations of this debt, given the multiple fractures and competing histories of the SPLM/A and Garang's leadership, explored throughout this thesis.

I begin this chapter by discussing Garang's commemoration by the South Sudanese state, focusing on the John Garang Mausoleum in Juba and the public Martyrs Day celebration which I attended there in 2019. Like other African liberation movements-turned-governments, Kiir's government has used the Mausoleum to present a selective history of

[902] 'South Sudan marks Martyrs Day in memory of found [*sic*] leader John Garang', *Radio Miraya* website (30 Jul. 2009), BBC Monitoring via Factiva [29 Jan. 2019].
[903] Cf. Christine Deslaurier, 'Rwagasore for ever? Des usages contemporains d'un héros consensuel au Burundi', *Revue d'histoire*, 118 (2013), 25–6.
[904] Moffat, *India's Revolutionary Inheritance*, 2.

participation in the liberation struggle. I argue that, like the anti-Garang histories published in *Southern Sudan Vision* discussed in chapter five, this government history is of necessity shallow, glossing over liberation era divisions which could jeopardize present-day political alliances and the ability to mobilize political and military support along ethnic lines. The one exception is the government's characterization of Vice President Riek Machar as the perpetual traitor and coup-maker to justify his political demonization. The government treads a careful line to discredit Machar in the past and present, while stifling the complicated histories of other SPLM/A leaders' disputes with Garang and each other.

This government narrative is shallow in a second way: by focusing on the SPLM/A's senior leadership, it entrenches the link between militarism and political credentials, and occludes alternative ideas of liberation and political participation. This has not, however, prevented the emergence of other afterlives for Garang, which use his history, ideas, image, and voice to explore more diverse questions of family, gender, education, and transnationalism. Following my account of state commemoration, I explore three of Garang's afterlives beyond the state's military history: a documentary about Garang's wife, Nyandeng, produced by their daughter, Akuol; oral and written accounts of intellectualism shared by and among Garang's former classmates; and the oral histories and intellectual projects of a younger generation of students who see their educational journeys as modelling Garang's. Through these examples, I argue that Garang offers a focal point for considering 'legacies of the possible', which feature varyingly as nostalgia for lost visions of the future and as a model for personal or political action in the present.[905]

Moffat uses the idea of 'afterlives' to draw attention to what he calls 'a *malady* of historicism, something that is supposed to be "past" but continues to make itself known.'[906] Expanding on this idea, I argue that Garang's afterlives emerge in part from his career-long efforts to shape sources, archives, and narratives. Trouillot notes that 'retrospective significance can be created by actors themselves, as a past within their past, or as a future within their present', and Garang did this effectively.[907] In the context of a wider dearth of accessible archival material pertaining to Sudan's second civil war, Garang's daughter and

[905] Prestholdt, 'Resurrecting Che', 526.
[906] Moffat, *India's Revolutionary Inheritance*, 6.
[907] Trouillot, *Silencing*, 59.

the young men discussed below have used videos of Garang as material for new film and archiving projects. Meanwhile, Garang's former classmates have produced their own 'homespun histories' to document a moment of intellectual promise which sits uneasily within the government's narrative of military liberation.[908]

These projects are ones of layered storytelling, archiving, and history-making—between family members, between classmates, and with me as a foreign researcher. Michael Jackson argues that 'storytelling is a strategy for transforming private into public meanings' and 'a vital human strategy for sustaining a sense of agency in the face of disempowering circumstances.'[909] In the cases I explore below, this disempowerment stems in part from perceived political disregard for civilian professionalism in South Sudan, but also from the difficulty of engaging empirically and productively with the past. The non-state 'afterlives' discussed in this chapter speak explicitly to how history is accessed and made. They give meaning to narratives produced during the war and challenge silences in the state's military history, all while creating sources and archives for the future.

'Heroes/heroines never die': Security and history at the John Garang Mausoleum

Kiir and his political allies have a complicated relationship with Garang's afterlives and have accordingly mobilized a shallow history which allows the current government to claim legitimacy as the leaders of the liberation movement but discounts historical divisions in the SPLM/A beyond the 1991 split. On one hand, Kiir was Garang's deputy throughout the war and is the only surviving member of the SPLM/A's founding Political Military High Command (PMHC). His claim to leadership after Garang's death was bolstered by Garang's statement in Rumbek that Kiir would take over in the event anything happened to Garang and by a Christian narrative framing Garang as Moses and Kiir as Joshua; Moses led his people from slavery but was forbidden from entering the Promised Land and died on a mountain top, while Joshua was entrusted by Moses to lead the Israelites to the Promised Land.[910] On the other hand, Kiir was a military man who wanted secession for the south and

[908] Derek Peterson and Giacomo Macola, 'Homespun historiography and the academic profession', in Derek Peterson and Giacomo Macola (eds.), *Recasting the Past: History Writing and Political Work in Modern Africa* (Athens, Ohio, 2009), 1–30.
[909] Jackson, *Politics of Storytelling*, 35.
[910] Tounsel, *Chosen Peoples*, 111.

did not share Garang's political vision of the New Sudan. Soon after Garang's death, he sidelined the so-called 'Garang boys' who played key roles in negotiating the CPA and building the SPLM's budding institutions, and who more closely shared Garang's ideas about Sudanese unity.[911]

In December 2013, internal conflicts within the SPLM elite escalated into a civil war between forces loyal to President Kiir and First Vice President Machar, respectively.[912] The war came to a temporary halt following a power-sharing agreement in August 2015 but resumed in July 2016 and spread to Equatoria, which had thus far avoided the worst of the conflict.[913] Throughout the war, both government and opposition forces experienced infighting and fragmentation, and armed conflict played out alongside wider debates about corruption, land rights, and resource allocation, exacerbating national and community divisions. In September 2018, the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) was signed by the government and several opposition groups, though notably not by Thomas Cirillo's National Salvation Front, a major rebel outfit in Equatoria.[914] R-ARCSS laid out conditions for the formation of a transitional government which, after several delays, was formed in February 2020. At the time of writing in July 2023, this government is still in place, despite security flare-ups which many feared would break the tenuous alliance between Kiir and Machar.[915]

South Sudan's civil wars both reflect and entrench a dominant military culture which pervades the SPLM party and government. Like in other post liberation struggle states, national holidays and commemorative events in South Sudan have played a central role in

[911] Ajak, 'Building on sand', 198–201.
[912] For overview of politics leading to December 2013, see Douglas Johnson, 'The political crisis in South Sudan', *African Studies Review*, 57/3 (2014), 168–71.
[913] For discussion of the war in Central Equatoria, see Nicki Kindersley and Øystein Rolandsen, 'Civil war on a shoestring: Rebellion in South Sudan's Equatoria region', *Civil Wars*, 19/3 (2017), 308–324.
[914] International Crisis Group, 'South Sudan's other war: Resolving the insurgency in Equatoria' (Juba/Nairobi/Brussels, 2021), 9–11.
[915] E.g. Machar's withdrawal from security mechanisms meetings in March 2022 and Salva's ensuing deployment of armed forces around Machar's residence. Chany Ninrew, 'Machar lifts suspension of SPLA-IO From joint security bodies', *Eye Radio* (4 Apr. 2022), https://www.eyeradio.org/machar-lifts-suspension-of-spla-io-from-joint-security-bodies/ [9 Nov. 2022]; Press release by Riek Machar Teny-Dhurgon (28 Mar. 2022), copy shared by @WaniMichael57, Twitter (28 Mar. 2022) https://twitter.com/WaniMichael57/status/1508440007714947072 [9 Nov. 2022].

delineating lines of political belonging.[916] As seen in previous chapters, Garang and others in the SPLM/A were aware of the discursive value of anniversaries in constructing usable histories for the movement and, after 2005, the SPLM established a suite of national holidays which celebrate the armed struggle in select terms.[917] The four main celebrations are SPLA Day (16 May), the anniversary of the Bor Mutiny; Independence Day (9 July); Martyrs Day (30 July), the anniversary of Garang's death; and Veterans Day (18 August), the anniversary of the Torit Mutiny of 1955. The lexicon of these celebrations focuses not just on 'heroes' but on 'martyrs', framing military deaths as sacrifices in the name of a higher cause. The language of martyrdom was used by Garang during the war and subsequently adopted by Kiir, who declared Garang the 'Martyr of all Martyrs' in 2007.[918] Loes Lijnders argues that South Sudan's 'calendar of national commemorations' establishes a common narrative of resistance which allows the SPLM/A to subsume earlier uprisings like the Torit mutiny (1955) and to gloss over varied wartime experiences.[919] While she acknowledges a shift towards more inclusive discourse in the lead up to the 2010 referendum on South Sudanese secession, in which everyone was encouraged to use their ballots to win independence, she highlights how political and armed conflict after independence provoked a return to discursive binaries between government and opposition. Elaborating on Lijnders' analysis, I argue that the state's recent commemorative practices have drawn selectively on Garang's legacy to bolster Kiir's waning legitimacy and delineate whose liberation credentials give them the right to participate in government.

In 2005, Garang's sudden death provoked debate about where he should be buried. Several accounts state that Garang's family wanted him buried in their home area near Bor while the SPLM/A leadership wanted him buried in Juba or even Ramciel, the south's prospective—and as yet unbuilt—future capital.[920] The ultimate decision to bury Garang in

[916] Shepherd Mpofu, 'Making heroes, (un)making the nation?: ZANU-PF's imaginations of the Heroes' Acre, heroes and construction of identity in Zimbabwe from 2000 to 2015', *African Identities*, 15/1 (2017), 62–78; Shepherd Mpofu, 'Toxification of national holidays and national identity in Zimbabwe's post-2000 nationalism', *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 28/1 (2016), 28–43; Becker, 'Commemorating'.
[917] Loes Lijnders, 'The Mausoleum of John Garang: A space of commemoration and political reification', *Juba in the Making*, https://jubainthemaking.com/the-mausoleum-of-john-garang-a-space-of-commemoration-and-political-reification/ [26 Mar. 2021].
[918] Ibid.
[919] Ibid.
[920] Johnson, *Waging Peace*; Naseem Badiey and Christian Doll, 'Planning amidst precarity: Utopian imaginings in South Sudan', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 12/2 (2018), 367–385.

Juba was symbolically important. Throughout the war, the SPLM/A failed to capture Juba and, at the time of Garang's death, SPLA officers were still in the process of securing the city in advance of Garang's upcoming arrival.[921] Garang's burial thus marked his long-anticipated return to Juba and asserted the SPLM/A's claim to the city.

However, the decision was not without detractors. An SPLA officer present in New Site at the time of the burial decision commented that some Dinka soldiers were worried because of the legacy of *Kokora* or 'redivision' in 1983.[922] *Kokora* was championed by prominent Equatorian politician Joseph Lagu, who advocated decentralization in the Southern Region to counteract perceived 'Dinka domination' in government.[923] The redivision debate was exploited by Nimeiri, who unilaterally divided the south into three regions with reduced powers. Redivision caused the expulsion of non-Equatorians from the region and is often framed as a contributing cause of the second civil war, used to negatively frame current debates about federalism.[924] Conversely, some Equatorians view the decision to bury Garang in Juba not only as a way for southerners to claim the city from the government, but for Dinka soldiers to claim the city from the Bari. [925] These views reflect ongoing disputes over land and political authority between those who lived in Juba during the second civil war and incoming SPLA soldiers who arrived following the CPA.[926] Nevertheless, in the days and months after his death, Garang's burial place was a popular spot for Juba residents and incoming southerners to visit, including for several Equatorians interviewed for this research.

Following his death, Garang's body was toured around southern Sudan, the Nuba Mountains, and Blue Nile for people to pay their respects before a state funeral on 6 August. After the funeral, Garang was buried in a marble tomb across the street from South Sudan's Parliament and Ministries Complex. While some Juba residents remained fearful of venturing outside their homes because of the riots sparked by Garang's death, others visited

[921] Interview with Lemi Logwonga Lomuro, 16 Jun. 2022.
[922] Interview with SPLA soldier 1.
[923] Douglas Johnson, 'Federalism in the history of South Sudanese political thought' (London, 2014), 19.
[924] Rens Willems and David Deng, *The Legacy of Kokora in South Sudan: Intersections of Truth, Justice and Reconciliation in South Sudan* (2015), 15–18.
[925] For discussion of post-CPA land disputes in Juba, see Naseem Badiey, 'The strategic instrumentalization of land tenure in "state-building": The case of Juba, South Sudan', *Africa*, 83/1 (2013), 68–70.
[926] Author's informal conversations.

the burial site to pay their respects or simply mingle with others.[927] One interviewee, who was in primary school when Garang died, explained how he and his classmates would all go to the area to meet and even play games:

> You go home and change, you eat, you go back there. For us [children], it's become like there's no school. People forgot about the school. That is now public holiday. We are living around there. People coming from all over. People are travelling inside. You just go there and sleep and stay there the whole night: dance, you cry *kidogo* [a little], you dance. You talk to your friends, you interact, all your colleagues you will find there![928]

He explained it was a difficult time for the adults who fully understood what had happened but that there was also a need to celebrate Garang's life. In a tribute to Garang published in 2008, dramatist Joseph Abuk also described the crowds gathered daily at the site.[929] These accounts of the early period after Garang's death depict his tomb as a site of community, mourning, and celebration.

Over the years, the Mausoleum has remained at the centre of South Sudanese political life, hosting national events like the independence ceremony. By 2011, the area around the Mausoleum had been transformed into a public stadium with a covered grandstand for government and foreign elites and a large grassy area for other event attendees. At the independence ceremony, the government unveiled a towering statue of Garang facing the grandstand, materially entrenching his presence on site.[930] The Mausoleum continues to host public celebrations and political rallies; however, it has become increasingly inaccessible to the public outside of these organized events. Around 2007, the original wire fence surrounding Garang's tomb was replaced by a more permanent structure and, after independence, the park as a whole was fenced off.[931] Securitization intensified with South Sudan's post-independence conflicts and the Mausoleum is now conspicuously guarded by the Tiger Division, the elite presidential guard.

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[927] Interview with Juba resident 1, Juba, conducted by Machot Amuom Malou, Feb. 2021.
[928] Focus group with Equatorian youth.
[929] Joseph Abuk, 'Tribute to a visionary fighter: Dr John Garang de Mabior', *Tore*, 1 (2008), 20; See also, 'SPLM - a year after Garang', *The New Humanitarian* (28 Jul. 2006), https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/report/59765/sudan-splm-year-after-garang [14 Nov. 2022].
[930] Lijnders, 'Mausoleum'.
[931] Informal conversation with Machot Amuom Malou, Juba, Aug. 2019.

While one interviewee thought that this security showed respect to Garang, others expressed disappointment in these measures.[932] A Juba resident described how restricted access to the Mausoleum undermined Garang's legacy and the idea of freedom:

> [The government] could have restricted the movement of vehicles but citizens should be allowed to pass through, because it is harmless! Even if they just want to go and visit the Mausoleum, that should have been allowed. Because after a while, that is not going to do justice to the concept of tying it with independence and freedom [...] Because why are they not being allowed even to pass and pay homage to the hero [John Garang]?[933]

In similar terms, another interviewee described his fear of passing through the Mausoleum:

> I was very happy [the first time I passed through the Mausoleum], because that is a very beautiful place. But when I saw the interference of, you know, soldiers, and sometimes it is closed, I also developed this fear that I am not safe here. Whenever I cross that area, I will first make sure it's safe for me to cross […] The presence of the soldiers there make it, you know, somehow a threat to someone like me, that's how I would put it. It's no longer a national commodity […] Only some very important people are allowed to go there.[934]

These fears are not unfounded, as intimidation and excess military force have been used at the site. In an example shared with me by Juba residents, Tabitha Musangi, a Kenyan school teacher working in South Sudan, was shot and killed on John Garang Road on her way home from work because her taxi driver did not stop for the nightly lowering of the national flag in May 2012.[935]

Physical violence has been accompanied by exclusionary government rhetoric, including during national celebrations. The public Martyrs Day celebration of 2019, held at the Mausoleum, is a recent and illustrative example of how the government uses Martyrs Day and the Mausoleum to uphold a dominant military culture and exclusive narrative of military liberation. At the time of the 2019 event, R-ARCSS had been signed but the transitional government had not been formed and Machar and several other key political dissidents were out of the country. The general atmosphere in Juba remained tense and security forces were visibly present around the capital.

In May, an online dissident group called the 'Red Card Movement' announced plans for anti-government protests in South Sudan and the diaspora, to coincide with SPLA Day

[932] Interview with Juba resident 1.
[933] Interview with Juba resident 2, Juba, conducted by Machot Amuom Malou, Dec. 2020.
[934] Interview with Juba resident 3, Juba, conducted by Machot Amuom Malou, Feb. 2021.
[935] Citizen TV Kenya, 'Body of Kenyan killed in South Sudan arrives', YouTube, uploaded 15 May 2012, https://youtu.be/y635vawHBt4 [10 Nov. 2022]; Amnesty International, 'Amnesty International annual report 2013 - South Sudan' (2013), https://www.refworld.org/docid/519f516d18.html [10 Nov. 2022].

on May 16. In response, the government closed John Garang Road, which cuts through the Mausoleum, and harassed suspected Red Card Movement members in South Sudan and neighbouring countries.[936] No public celebration took place for Independence Day on 9 July, but John Garang Road was unexpectedly reopened on 20 July.[937] Then, on 26 July, the government made a last-minute decision to hold a public event at the Mausoleum.[938] At the time of the decision, the Mausoleum appeared dusty and neglected: its flagpoles were mostly bare and its few flags were faded and torn.[939] On 29 July, a concerted effort was made to spruce up the site. In the morning, prison labourers cleaned the area. In the afternoon, soldiers set up chairs in the grandstand and sofas on the central speaker platform. They replaced a worn flag with a new one, added flags to the empty poles, and hung long green, white, and red ribbons in front of the grandstand.

Figure 7: Tiger Division soldiers parade for Martyrs Day at the John Garang Mausoleum, 2019. Photo taken by author.

[936] Alhadi Hawari, Obaj Okuj, and Emmanuel Akile, 'Army re-opens Dr. John Mausoleum to motorists, pedestrians', *Eye Radio* (20 Jul. 2019), https://eyeradio.org/army-re-opens-dr-john-mausoleum-to-motorists-pedestrians/ [14 Nov. 2022]; Amnesty International, 'South Sudan: "We are at risk and on the run"' (London, 2019), 6–10.
[937] Hawari, Okuj, and Akile, 'Army re-opens'.
[938] Author's informal conversations with government officials, Jul. 2019.
[939] Author's fieldnotes, 29 Jul. 2019.

The imagery of Martyrs Day is military and masculine, acting to reinforce the central position of current and former soldiers in politics and a dominant military culture (Figure 7: Tiger Division soldiers parade for Martyrs Day at the John Garang Mausoleum, 2019. Photo taken by author.

). The celebration on 30 July featured military parades and speeches, including one by Kiir, interspersed with a handful of musical performances.[940] In the early years after Garang's death, Garang and his ideas were the central focus of Kiir's Martyrs Day speeches.[941] Over time, however, Martyrs Day celebrations have focused less on Garang. In 2019, he was pictured on the front of the event programme and referenced by speakers, but only in passing. Lijnders locates the timing of this shift with South Sudan's return to conflict in December 2013, arguing that 'the SPLM has actively sidelined the late John Garang' and that 'Kiir no longer accepts to stand in the long shadow of his predecessor.'[942] However, the extent of this shift should not be overstated. As both the founding figure of the SPLM/A and the 'martyr of martyrs', Garang remains important to the state's narrative emphasis on military liberation and the need to honour those who died during the war.

Both before 2013 and since, the imperative of honouring past sacrifices by working towards specific goals has been a dominant theme in government discourse about martyrs. Kiir employed this logic in 2010 to encourage citizens to vote in the referendum on secession; in 2011 to call for an end to tribalism; and in 2012 to work towards national self-sufficiency and food security.[943] In each instance, failing to build the South Sudanese nation was equated with dishonouring those who died in the war. Following the start of South Sudan's civil war in December 2013, the discursive link between past sacrifice and current action was used to discredit the opposition. The theme for Martyrs Day in 2014 was 'Martyrs are the symbol of redemption and loyalty', presumably highlighting the disloyalty of Machar

[940] Author's fieldnotes, 30 Jul. 2019.
[941] 'President Salva Kiir's speech on the first anniversary of Dr. John Garang's death in Juba, July 2006' and 'President Kiir's speech on the 3rd anniversary of the Martyrs Day in Juba, July 2008', in Simon Yel Yel and PaanLuel Wël (eds.), *Salva Kiir Mayardit: The Joshua of South Sudan, President Kiir's Speeches Before Independence* (Juba, 2016), 113–23, 187–94.
[942] Lijnders, 'Mausoleum'.
[943] 'President Kiir's speech on the occasion of the commemoration of Martyrs' Day, July 2010', in Yel and Wël, eds., *Salva Kiir (Speeches Before)*, 325–32; President Kiir's speech on the 6th Martyrs Day in Juba, July 2011' and 'President Kiir's speech on the occasion of Martyrs Day, July 2012', in Simon Yel Yel and PaanLuel Wël (eds.), *Salva Kiir Mayardit: The Joshua of South Sudan, President Kiir's Speeches After Independence* (Juba, 2016), 62–6; 162–6.

and the SPLM-IO.[944] In 2015, Kiir used his Martyrs Day speech to directly criticize Machar and to denigrate the IGAD peace process then underway.[945]

Themes of loyalty and disloyalty remained prominent at the 2019 Martyrs Day celebration, betraying the government's limited efforts to foster reconciliation despite R-ARCSS.[946] This event was notable for introducing a posthumous medal honouring five categories of martyrs for their sacrifice during the liberation struggle. The medal was pitched as an annual award but, to my knowledge, has not been given out since. The choice of award winners was politically biased and reinforced a selective history of the liberation struggle which glossed over all internal divisions except those involving Machar. The first award category was for members of the PMHC, the highest decision-making body in the SPLM/A, formed of five permanent members and several alternate members. Of the five founding permanent members, only Kiir is still alive. The other four, including Garang, were the first four martyrs honoured with the 2019 award. The event programme explained that all members of the PMHC were given the award, 'Regardless of circumstances surrounding their death.'[947] This caveat was necessary because—as we have seen—Kerubino Kuanyin, Arok Thon Arok, and William Nyuon all clashed with Garang and their deaths are difficult to dissociate from the SPLM/A's factional disputes. Arok died in a plane crash in Nasir in 1998; at the time, he was aligned with the government in Khartoum and was travelling with senior Sudanese leaders, including Vice President Zubair Mohamed Salih. The government claimed the plane missed the runway in bad weather but the SPLA claimed they had shot down the plane.[948] Nyuon was killed in factional fighting in January 1996, after leaving then rejoining the SPLM/A.[949]

Kuanyin's death and legacy are most complicated of all. As shown in chapter five, Kuanyin had serious differences with Garang in the 1980s and, in the early 1990s, served as a heroic symbol for the anti-Garang opposition. In addition, in the late 1990s, Kuanyin was

[944] 'W. Bahr el Ghazal honours fallen heroes on Martyrs' Day', *Sudan Tribune* (31 Jul. 2014), Factiva [29 Jan. 2019]. I was unable to find Kiir's full speech for this year.
[945] 'South Sudanese president queries IGAD's peace proposal', *Sudan Tribune* (31 Jul. 2015), Factiva [29 Jan. 2019].
[946] The following descriptions derive from the author's attendance at the 2019 Martyrs Day event in Juba.
[947] Republic of South Sudan Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs, 'Martyrs Commemoration Day Programme' (30 Jul. 2019), 5.
[948] Alfred Taban, 'Sudan's first vice president killed in plane crash', *Reuters* (13 Feb. 1998), https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/sudans-first-vice-president-killed-plane-crash [7 Nov. 2022]
[949] Johnson, *Root Causes*, 161.

responsible for violent raids against civilians in Bahr el Ghazal, contributing to a devastating famine in the region in 1998. In Gogrial, where Kuanyin is from, he is associated with a period of great suffering and conscious attempts have been made to reclaim his military base as a positive space for the community.[950] The exact circumstances of Kuanyin's death remain unclear. He was killed in September 1999 during fighting between Paulino Matip's government-backed militia, which Kuanyin joined earlier that year, and a breakaway militia led by Peter Gadet.[951] Some believe that Gadet killed Kuanyin on Garang's orders.[952] Cormack has documented Kuanyin's ambiguous and unsettling legacy in Gogrial:

> The death of Kerubino [Kuanyin] happened under murky circumstances: the speculation in Gogrial during my fieldwork was that he had been hacked to death with machetes because he had spiritual power that protected him from bullets. This supposedly incomplete and maimed body of Kerubino reinforces the impression that his legacy and memory is incompletely resolved in Gogrial. His body has reportedly recently been returned to Wunrok, by the arrangement of one of his wives, where he is buried privately in his home. There is no public grave, no public memorial.[953]

As Cormack highlights, Kuanyin's local invisibility contrasts with his public celebration at a national level.

In general, the SPLM has done little to address the legacies of factional violence and its long-term societal impacts. In a relevant study, Merethe Skårås and Andlers Breidlid have highlighted how South Sudanese history teachers avoid discussing inter-ethnic conflict in the classroom. Skårås and Breidlid argue that '[t]he aim of producing a unified recent past comes at the expense of historical accuracy and stifles discussion and critical thinking in class', but may also 'signal a wish for reconciliation' and avoiding conflict.[954] In the case of the government's Martyrs Day discourse, commemorating the PMHC's deceased leadership obscures discussion about attacks on civilians during intra-SPLM/A fighting, including violence against women and children.[955] The legacies of this violence continue to resonate;

[950] Cormack, 'Making and remaking', 226–7.
[951] Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road*, 352–3; Johnson, *Root Causes*, 124–5.
[952] Youth focus group 1; Deng Emmillo Mou, 'Lieutenant Colonel Kerubino Kuanyin Bol, his declaration of scrutiny', (29 May 2022), https://pachodo.org/latest-news-articles/pachodo-english-articles/35351-lieutenant-colonel-kerubino-kuanyin-bol,-his-declaration-of-scrutiny [14 Nov. 2022].
[953] Cormack, 'Making and remaking', 229.
[954] Merethe Skårås and Anders Breidlid, 'Teaching the violent past in secondary schools in newly independent South Sudan', *Education as Change*, 20/3 (2016), 115.
[955] Jane Kani Edward, 'Reconfiguring the South Sudanese Women's Movement', *Journal of Women of the Middle East and the Islamic World*, 17 (2019), 67; Jok and Hutchinson, 'Sudan's prolonged second civil war', 131–2; Amnesty International, 'Sudan: The ravages of war: Political killings and humanitarian disaster' (1993).

during South Sudan's civil war, violence against women intensified, including ethnically motivated sexual attacks perpetrated by both uniformed SPLA soldiers and armed opposition groups.[956]

In 2019, the government's choice of martyrs also served clear political ends. In addition to Kuanyin's award, one of his daughters was an event MC and one of his wives gave a speech as the 'representative of the survivors of martyrs.' While the controversy surrounding Kuanyin's abuse of civilians during the struggle make his family members odd choices for a national commemoration honouring those killed in the war, their selection makes political sense as the Dinka of Warrap state are among Kiir's key political and military supporters.[957] Like *Vision* authors in the early 1990s, Kiir's government has claimed Kuanyin as a political grandfather because it is beneficial to do so.

Notably, the inclusive treatment of controversial martyrs did not extend to Machar's past and present supporters. When Machar and Akol declared Garang's overthrow in 1991, they announced a 'creeping revolution' but Garang and his supporters denounced their action as a coup. The semantic debate over whether the Nasir move was a coup found direct parallels in 2013. Each side has its own narrative of what happened when fighting broke out in Giyada barracks on 15 December: Kiir claims that Machar and other opposition forces attempted a coup; the opposition claims Kiir used the fighting in the barracks as an excuse to target them. In overtly political language, the 2019 awards reserved a special category for those 'killed in cold blood during Nasir coup [of 1991]'.[958] While the Nasir faction was guilty of arbitrary killing in the early 1990s, so too was the mainstream SPLM, but these abuses received no discussion at the 2019 event.[959] Moreover, in addition to the 'Nasir coup' category, the general award category for martyrs killed in action included six 'senior officers that sacrificed during the attempted coup of 2013 and in the wars that ensued thereafter'.[960] The effect was to highlight continuity in Machar's supposed treachery, a tactic Kiir has also

[956] 'Final Report of the African Union Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan', 112, 135, 161, 165.
[957] On Kiir's use of security forces from his home area, see Johnson, 'Political crisis', 171; Ajak, 'Building on sand', 101, 138.
[958] Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs, 'Martyrs Commemoration Day Programme', 19.
[959] Amnesty International, 'Sudan: The ravages of war'.
[960] Ibid., 6.

employed on other occasions, despite the fact that he and the deceased founding leaders of the PMHC also clashed with Garang.[961]

The public resonance of the government's Martyrs Day discourse is mixed. Faced with the lived reality of South Sudan's economic crisis and insecurity, several individuals interviewed between 2019 and 2021 placed little value in Martyrs Day. They explained you could not celebrate the sacrifice of those who died if you failed to live up to the promise of liberation. Moreover, there was a general sense that the day should move beyond a narrow military elite to celebrate the 'unknown soldier' and non-military contributions to the struggle.[962] One focus group participant described the day's importance as a time to remember her grandfather, who was not a soldier but championed education as a teacher and civil servant and was murdered during the first civil war.[963] As is the case with other liberation movements in power, the allocation of political positions and resources between soldiers and civilians—or 'liberators' and 'liberated'—is contentious.[964]

More broadly, South Sudanese scholars have identified one-sided histories as a source of conflict and have called for inclusive approaches to memorialization. In 2014, David Deng, research director for the South Sudan Law Society, highlighted conflicting rhetoric as 'a driver of violence' and called for a 'Truth and Dignity Commission' to report on human rights abuses from 1972 to the present.[965] R-ARCSS does include requirements for a 'commission for truth, reconciliation and healing'.[966] The process to establish the commission was launched in June 2021 and public consultations began in April 2022.[967] However, the commission's mandate will only cover from 2005 onwards, meaning that the conflicts and abuses of the struggle era are likely to remain points of contention and

[961] Kiir evoked the events of 1991 in a speech to the National Liberation Council the day before fighting broke out on 15 December 2013, and in his press statement the day after. See Johnson, *South Sudan*, location 3756-854; Amidst the Kiir-Machar tensions of March 2022, Johnson's interpretation was challenged (and 1991 again evoked) in a controversial report which Kiir's government commissioned from British lawyer Steven Kay. See Steven Kay, *Pushing the Reset Button for South Sudan* (London, 2022), 36.
[962] Youth focus group 1.
[963] Ibid.
[964] See discussion of commemorating civilian contributions to the Namibian liberation struggle in Becker, 'Commemorating', 529, 533–4.
[965] David Deng, *Truth and Dignity Commission: A Proposal to Reconcile the Many Truths of South Sudan from 1972 to the Present* (2014), 2.
[966] Intergovernmental Authority on Development, 'Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS)' (Addis Ababa, 2018), ch. 5.2.
[967] UNDP, 'Truth and reconciliation the way to chart South Sudan's path forward', https://www.undp.org/south-sudan/truth-and-reconciliation-way-chart-south-sudan's-path-forward [21 Nov. 2022].

division.[968] Jok Madut Jok and Aru Muortat promote a long durée history of the South Sudanese struggle, dating back to the nineteenth century. This approach, Muortat argues, would celebrate South Sudan's diversity and foster a 'much needed inclusive environment.'[969] These calls for a more diverse and empirically rigorous approach to commemoration show the limited power of Garang's public afterlife—in the masculine, militarized form presented by the state—to foster national inclusion. The fractures in the state's selective liberation history are too obvious and many citizens are tired of the violence associated with the SPLM/A's divisive rhetoric. That does not mean, however, that Garang has become fully irrelevant. In what follows, I turn to Garang's alternative afterlives which focus on non-military themes of family and education to explore lost futures and the enduring promise of liberation beyond formal independence.

No Simple Way Home: Gendered history and John Garang's family

In a stark divergence from the military rhetoric of the SPLM, *No Simple Way Home* (2022), an award-winning documentary produced by Garang's daughter Akuol, offers a sensitive portrait of Garang as Akuol explores South Sudan's political journey, her mother's new vice-presidency, and complicated notions of 'home.' The intimacy of the filming and the focus on women's experiences contrast the masculine, military symbolism employed at state celebrations, in which Garang's family has featured less prominently over time. The film provides an entirely different afterlife for Garang—as a husband and father, as well as a political and military leader—which allows Akuol to reflect on the intersection of South Sudan's political journey and everyday family and social life.

Like in Zimbabwe, the state's claims to Garang have not always matched those of Garang's wife and children, who continue to occupy an ambiguous position in national commemorative practice.[970] The relationship between Kiir's SPLM and Garang's wife, Nyandeng, has been complicated, reflecting both political differences and gender biases. She is widely recognized as Mama Rebecca, mother of the nation, but sided with the

[968] Intergovernmental Authority on Development, 'R-ARCSS', ch. 5.2.2.3.1.
[969] Aru Muortat, 'South of South Sudan's historical figures', *Sudan Studies*, 56 (2017), 42; Jok Madut Jok, 'South Sudan and the memorialisation of the civil war', *South Africa Reconcilitation Barometer, Africa Edition*, 2 (2013), 8–9.
[970] Cf. Jesmael Mataga, 'Unsettled spirits, performance and aesthetics of power: The public life of liberation heritage in Zimbabwe', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 25/3 (2019), 279.

opposition following the December 2013 violence, leaving her role as a presidential advisor to go into exile in Kenya. She returned to government in February 2020 as one of the country's five vice-presidents, a position she holds as of mid-2023. Garang's son Mabior also played a key role in the SPLM-IO, but I focus here on Nyandeng and her daughters to reflect on how gender bias and the SPLM's dominant masculine culture shape representations of Garang.[971] Akuol began filming for *No Simple Way Home* in mid-2019 and originally conceptualized the project as the story of her mother's political journey. However, the final film focuses as much on Akuol's own complicated relationship with South Sudan as it does on Nyandeng.

South Sudan's female politicians, including Nyandeng, remain part of a narrow elite. Women are allocated 35% of governmental positions in South Sudan under a quota system which often leaves women more accountable to their political benefactors than their constituencies.[972] Indeed, many of South Sudan's higher ranking female politicians are family members of the country's most powerful men. Educated women—usually but not exclusively Dinka—were desirable wives for senior SPLM/A leaders during the war.[973] Male leaders' wives, sisters, and daughters also benefitted from educational opportunities outside Sudan, giving them a further edge in post-2005 politics. Nyandeng and other female politicians are thus separated from most women in South Sudan by significant and overlapping divisions of class, wartime experience, and ethnicity.[974] Without discounting these divisions, I focus here on the significance of *No Simple Way Home* as a female-led project, undertaken by a predominantly female team, to tell the story of South Sudan's only female Vice-President.[975]

Already in 2005, the decision to bury Garang in Juba signalled the prioritization of male SPLM/A leaders' views over those of Nyandeng and the family; national and

[971] For Mabior's own account of his role in the SPLM-IO, see Mabior Garang, 'Bio', *Mabior Garang Speaks* (5 Jul. 2020), https://mabiorgarangspeaks.com/bio/ [22 Nov. 2022].
[972] Edward, 'Reconfiguring', 72–5. Under South Sudan's 2011 transitional constitution, women were guaranteed 25% of positions. Under R-ARCSS, they are guaranteed 35%. .
[973] Clémence Pinaud, '"We are trained to be married!": Elite formation and ideology in the "girls' battalion" of the Sudan People's Liberation Army', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 9/3 (2015), 384; Caroline Faria, 'Gendering war and peace in South Sudan: The elision and emergence of women', *Association of Concerned African Scholars Bulletin 86: The Sudans: Which Way?* (2011), 22.
[974] Faria, 'Gendering', 22–3.
[975] 80% of the *No Simple Way Home* crew were women. @NoSimpleWayHome, Twitter (7 Dec. 2022), https://twitter.com/NoSimpleWayHome/status/1600409056677482496 [7 Dec. 2022].

international claims to Garang meant that family interests were sidelined. Nyandeng, Akuol, and Mabior gave speeches at Garang's funeral; however, Akuol remembers being pushed out of the way so that journalists could get good photos:

> There was a lot of people there. There were a lot of journalists who I found, they were very intrusive, the *whole* time. And… uh, yeah a lot of heads of state, and… I don't know… At that point it's like, it was an event I guess. And the fact that there were so many journalists there made it difficult for us, like even as his coffin was going down, we're pushed out of the way so that people could get a good photo. Even *my mom* was being pushed out of the way I remember.[976]

As a public 'event', the funeral did not allow the family the privacy which the death of a husband and father warranted.

Tension between family mourning and state commemoration is not inherently political; however, there is evidence that gendered ideas about participation in the struggle shape claims to narrative authority about Garang. I was warned by SPLA veterans that I should not trust Nyandeng as a source for my research on her husband because she had not been on the frontlines of conflict. Furthermore, while filming *No Simple Way Home*, Akuol encountered the state's ever-present security apparatus and the gendered way in which Garang's history has been claimed by the SPLM. Akuol was stopped by security when trying to film at the Sudanese peace signing ceremony in Juba in 2020. Obstruction of local journalists is common at national events in Juba but, for Akuol, this represented an obstacle when trying to reconstruct and document her own family's history.[977] She explained to the security officer that, if she did not film herself, her family would have to later '*buy* these things [photos or videos] from journalists'.

Akuol also shared her experience of trying to access archival video footage taken by the SPLM/A, much of which is held personally by Malak Ayuen, the movement's wartime director of information:

> I went to [Malak's] office with a fixer, with our fixer. And entering that space, everybody's in uniform. There were almost no women, and this huge building […] And when we went to go speak with him, he wouldn't even, he *barely* looked at me, he was always addressing

[976] Interview with Akuol de Mabior.

[977] E.g. 'Southern Sudanese information minister promises free media coverage', *Juba Post* (29 Jul. 2010), BBC Monitoring via Factiva [29 Jan. 2019]; For a recent summary of press repression in South Sudan, see Garang A. Malak, 'South Sudan's censored media space is forcing journalists to quit the profession', (18 Aug. 2022), https://ijnet.org/en/story/south-sudan's-censored-media-space-forcing-journalists-quit-profession [7 Dec. 2022].

> my fixer. Part of me was like well thank God [my fixer] was here, because otherwise [*laughs wryly*] I wouldn't have gotten anything out of him.

Akuol's encounters with male gatekeepers show how patriarchal assumptions about women's competency limit access to historical material. While Akuol has political and social capital because she is the daughter of Garang and Nyandeng, this did not stop Malak from speaking more to her 'fixer' than to her.

Indeed, one reason why Akuol began making the documentary was to prevent her mother from being forgotten, although she acknowledged how her views shifted as she filmed:

> I had this feeling like I wanted to make a film about her because I was worried that she would be forgotten. And her contribution wouldn't be acknowledged. I wasn't worried about my father being forgotten because… I mean, *because* [*laughs*] […] So when I look at the situation, it feels like his legacy will overshadow hers, but I don't think that she feels that way. She always says—whenever I ask her what her legacy is independent of my father's—she always brings it back to the fact that they shared a dream. So she doesn't feel this need to differentiate.

Akuol signals her parents' 'shared dream' and the intertwined stories of her family and her country in the opening moments of *No Simple Way Home*. Accompanying a sequence of old family photos, Akuol narrates,

> My family's story is inseparable from the story of my country. Even though I've never really lived there. We moved around a lot and I grew up in exile because of the war.
>
> My father founded the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, the SPLM, in 1983. With my mother by his side.[978]

This provides the frame for the remainder of the film, which features a mix of archival film footage from before and after independence; conversations between Akuol, her mother, and her sister, Nyankuir; and narration by Akuol.

The film documents the hopes and shortcomings of independence, while reflecting implicitly on questions of how we access the past. Akuol's choices of archival footage do not just show Garang delivering a speech; they show him delivering a speech while flanked by an SPLM/A soldier with a cassette recorder and, in a separate scene, being interviewed by white journalists who brought their recording equipment to the bush. In a third example, we see Akuol load a VHS into a VCR and watch as a speech by Garang starts to play, before the scene cuts to the archival footage itself. Through these stylistic choices, Akuol focuses

[978] Akuol de Mabior, (dir.), *No Simple Way Home* (2022).

the viewer's attention on *how* the struggle was documented. Meanwhile, her conversations with her mother point to what is not captured in these video recordings: family emotions, the doubts and challenges inherent to the liberation process, and women's voices.

In response to a question about what she hoped to achieve with the film, Akuol explained that she always felt her mother 'was a last hope':

> She seemed to me to be somebody who, or she even says it herself: she desperately wants things to change for the better because she doesn't want my father's life, what he dedicated his whole *life* to, to have been in vain. And also all the people who died in the movement or for the country, she speaks a lot about that.

A post-independence archival clip included in the film shows Nyandeng speaking out against the conflict which broke out in December 2013, framing this as a betrayal of the values of the liberation struggle and the lost lives of loved ones. Not unlike the government's Martyrs Day discourse, Nyandeng emphasizes the need to honour those who died in the war through acting in the present.

However, the film diverges from government rhetoric by reflecting openly on personal doubts and challenges, and by centring family concerns as much as those of the country. About halfway through the film, a short scene shows Akuol and Nyankuir speaking about the difficulty of returning to South Sudan and about their parents. One way in which the film establishes intimacy is by filming conversations during everyday moments: upon waking in the early morning, while Nyandeng gets her hair cut or, in this case, while Akuol and Nyankuir chat and joke in the kitchen at home:

> Nyankuir: So when I first came to Juba, I feel like I would cry almost every time, like I was so sensitive. It was all of these things that I had to come to terms with. Like moving back here, not speaking the language, trying to kind of fit in […] It was tough […] I didn't know what I was doing […] So I would go to Mama *crying*, like 'Mama, I don't know what's wrong with me' […] So I'd cry, and Mama would be like 'everything is gonna be okay' and she'd say the right things. But this time, I don't know why, I just asked her, 'Mama, I always come to you crying like this, but has Baba [father] ever cried for you like this? And she was like, 'Yeah one time, I don't know what happened, I think he was under a lot of pressure.' And she said that he *cried* in her arms for like five minutes. Just crying.
>
> Akuol: When they were much younger? Older?
>
> Nyankuir: It was during the movement days so it must have been later in…
>
> Akuol: [*nodding*] 80s or 90s.
>
> Nyankuir: Yeah. And I told someone this story and they were like, 'What?!'
>
> Akuol: [laughing and mimicking others] 'Not our leader.'

> Nyankuir: [*in a voice of pretend shock*] 'Garang Mabior?!'
>
> [*Akuol laughs harder and puts face in hand. Nyankuir also laughs and shrugs.*]

As indicated by the reaction Nyankuir received when telling this story to someone else, the image of Garang crying contrasts with his public reputation as the powerful and decisive Chairman and Commander-in-Chief. The story inverts traditional gendered notions of women in southern Sudan as being less politically or militarily capable, or more emotional, than men. Instead, it depicts Garang and Nyandeng's relationship as mutually loving and supportive, a point reiterated by Nyandeng throughout the film.

At the same time, Nyandeng figures as a contrast to the rest of the SPLM's leadership. She expresses her lack of desire to ever be president; she openly acknowledges the leadership's failures; and she describes her vice-presidency as a 'challenge' rather than a 'pride' or 'prestige.' In the final minutes of the film, Nyandeng shares her desire to be a role model for women and young people and reflects on South Sudan's failings by explaining, 'What was being done unto us, we are doing unto our people now.' While the SPLM claims its legitimacy in reference to the past, *No Simple Way Home* signals the need to consider leaders' present actions and the future of the country. Near the end of the film, Akuol narrates,

> What is the vision beyond the struggle? […] My mother stepping into the role that my father died in will not be history repeating itself. She's not going to be a martyr of the liberation struggle. She will more likely be remembered for what she does in this new position.

Akuol announces both a link to, and a break from, the past, through the parallel experiences of her parents and the new political action of her mother. Shortly after, in *No Simple Way Home*'s final scene, Akuol describes women as a source of hope and fortitude as she wanders through Juba:

> It looks like there's no peace on the other side of freedom. And home is not a place of rest. I still don't know what it means to be South Sudanese. I do know that the promise of liberation and independence is not the reality of liberation and independence. I look to my mother but now also to my sister and the young women who support their families by serving tea on the roadside. They're the quiet force keeping things from entirely falling apart. We've been ten years free. Most of our compatriots are struggling to survive. And we're still holding our breath.

The metaphor of 'holding our breath' captures the feeling of an unfinished transition while Akuol's focus on strong women who do the everyday work of holding together their families—and, implicitly, the nation—contrasts a masculine, military rhetoric of defending

the nation from would-be coup-makers. Far from celebrating South Sudan's independence and the glory of the liberation struggle, *No Simple Way Home* is critical about the country's ongoing power struggles and armed conflicts. In centring women's experiences and intergenerational storytelling, it offers a family-focused afterlife for Garang which both shifts the focus from the past to the present and uses Garang's past relationship with Nyandeng to imagine a future in which Nyandeng can play a key role in shifting national political focus toward improving the lives of everyday citizens. Through its use of archival video footage in a new film which has had international access, *No Simple Way Home* also ensures the survival and circulation of Garang's physical image and voice through wartime sources; however, these sources are given new meaning by being paired with intergenerational family interviews which explore the unrealized 'promise of liberation.' In the next section, I explore a different example of the 'promise' which has characterized Garang's enduring presence in South Sudanese imaginations of the future, not as a father and husband, but as a student.

'To the moon without a rocket': The intellectual promise of the young Garang[979]

Accounts of Garang's student days, focused on his intellectual ability and passion for reading, further contrast the militarism evoked during Martyrs Day and at the highly securitized Mausoleum. The young Garang has powerful and enduring afterlives which differ significantly from the afterlives of Garang the chairman and commander-in-chief. Throughout this study, I have shown the importance of Garang's transnational education in exposing him to intellectual trends which informed his political thought and argument, as well as in equipping him with a set of personal anecdotes which he deployed in speeches to attempt to build transnational solidarity. In this section, I return to my interviews with four of Garang's student contemporaries: Aggrey Ayuen, Joseph Abuk, Levi Sebit Nigo, and Timothy Wani Logali. I argue that narrating and documenting their shared education with Garang—both academic and political—allows these men to conceptualize 'liberation' as an

[979] Timothy Wani Logali and Aggrey Ayuen shared invaluable accounts of their education with Garang, which informed chapter one and this section. Sadly, Logali and Ayuen passed away between our interviews in 2019 and this research coming to fruition in 2023. I am immensely grateful to them for sharing their histories and hope this section offers them meaningful afterlives of their own.

ongoing professional endeavor, rather than a singular military achievement synonymous with independence.

I focus on these four men—over others I interviewed who knew Garang as students, like Col Dau Ding and Alfred Ladu Gore—because they were not members of the SPLA in later life, although they remained in intermittent contact with Garang and sympathized with the movement. During the war years, they pursued respective careers as a businessman (Logali), dramatist (Abuk), veterinary sciences academic (Nigo), and another veterinary sciences academic/UN official (Ayuen). In our interviews, Nigo and Logali gave me a eulogy for Garang written by Logali on behalf of their classmates and Abuk gave me a magazine he edited in 2008 which included a tribute to Garang. In both content and form, these textual sources supported and reinforced our discussion about the promise of education. Like Akuol's documentary, these texts act as creative archives which capture the past and look to the future. However, in their focus on education in the 1960s and 1970s, these works remain gendered male and public, contrasting *No Simple Way's Home* focus on the private-public intersection and attention to female experiences.

Moffat argues that the 'sense of open possibility' manifested in Indian revolutionary Bhagat Singh's radical education and anticolonial politics in 1920s Lahore 'continues to resonate across Bhagat Singh's spectral afterlives'.[980] Similarly, the stories of Garang examined here foreground the 'promise' and opportunity which emerge from Garang's transnational educational encounters. While Moffat points out that Singh's execution by the colonial state when only 23 years old contribute to 'his amenability to a politics of critique', I argue that the young Garang has distinct afterlives which uniquely evoke the promise of intellectualism and transnational youth activism.[981] This is a different brand of intellectualism to that promoted by Garang's educated military critics, discussed in chapter five. Whereas Amon Wantok and others in the SPLM/A used the category 'intellectuals' mainly to capture left-wing officers, the men discussed here focus on civilian educational and professional achievement, underscoring the complexity of how education has been valued vis-à-vis military service in South Sudan.

[980] Moffat, *India's Revolutionary Inheritance*, 59.
[981] Ibid., 5–6.

For Ayuen, Logali, and Nigo, speaking about Garang was a way to give meaning to their shared educational experiences at Rumbek Senior Secondary School. As explored in detail in chapter one, Rumbek is well-known as the south's first senior secondary school and the training ground of the southern Sudanese political and professional elite. Student strikes were frequent and, in the early 1960s, there were direct links between students and the nascent southern rebellion in exile. However, while the events of the first civil war were an important topic elsewhere in my interviews with Ayuen, Logali, and Nigo, descriptions of life at Rumbek focused on the daily activities and intellectualism of student life, summed up by Nigo: 'You know, we had to read, to play football, doing athletics, running and whatnot, so that was the life.'[982]

Ayuen, Logali, and Nigo all described Garang as highly intelligent and an avid reader. Garang's intelligence, however, was characteristic of Rumbek students, not exceptional. Indeed, it was Logali who placed first in their year in the highly competitive Rumbek entrance exams. In this vein, speaking of Garang's academic commitment and success allowed Ayuen, Nigo, and Logali to speak of South Sudanese liberation in terms of their own professional achievements. Both Nigo and Ayuen mentioned that they and Garang were among the top ten academic performers in their year. Ayuen recalled how John Wol Makec, then a student two years above them at Rumbek and later South Sudan's first chief justice, commented on their hard work:

> So [Makec] observed the way we in first year were working. Then one night he made a joke. He said, 'you know what? There are four boys in first year: […] Timothy Wani, Aggrey Ayuen, John Garang and Peter Nyot, these boys they want to go to the moon without a rocket.' [*Bursts out laughing*] They want to go to the moon without a rocket, eh…! I don't know why he said that! But maybe because, I think we were intelligent. I think we were good people, we had a lot of friends.[983]

Ayuen regrets not having asked Makec about that statement in later life; however, for Ayuen, Makec's proclamation 'underlined that our group, our group was very successful.'

Illustrating *how* they were successful, Ayuen listed the qualifications of some of their classmates:

> And if you go into that group of John Garang, you have people like Dunstan Wai Mogga, […] He was a professor, he worked with the World Bank […] There were people like Peter Nyot himself, was a professor at the University of Khartoum, then he joined politics and so

[982] Interview with Timothy Wani Logali, Levi Sebit Nigo, and Jonathan Wani Jumi.
[983] Interview with Aggrey Ayuen.

> forth. Well if I have to blow my own trumpet I am here, as a professor. I have travelled the whole world except South America. […] Timothy Wani was also successful. He became a business person, he actually got his degree from Makerere.[984]

Summing up, Ayuen concluded,

> And of course, John [Garang] delivered the south. So if Wol Makec was alive, I would say, 'now, now John [Wol Makec], we have gone to the moon without a rocket. We liberated the south' [laughs].

Relating this episode humourously and with evident fondness for his school friends, Ayuen placed himself and his peers within a collective of those who dared to dream of, and to achieve, 'liberation' for the south, framed here in terms of their wider professional contributions to South Sudan. To describe Peter Nyot, for example—who was a key member of the SPLM's Khartoum cell in the 1980s and represented the movement in Germany throughout the 1990s—as a professor *first* and having 'joined politics and so forth' *second*, subordinates political activity to educational achievement.[985]

This sentiment was closely paralleled in a group interview with Nigo, Logali, and Jonathan Wani Jumi. Nigo explained that he, Garang, and Logali were all among the top performers in their year, adding that, in fact, everyone at Rumbek was intelligent. To illustrate his point, he mentioned a eulogy for Garang written by Logali, pulling out a copy which he had brought with him. The front page of the eulogy lists 32 of their former classmates under the declaration: 'On behalf of John's Classmates who were with him in 1962 at Rumbek Secondary School – The cradle of Southern Sudan.' Indicating this list, Nigo stated:

> If you go through the names, you can prove that what I'm telling you is the truth. Because if you see the titles there, some of them are now professors, some are engineers, some are [word indistinct], all the class, most of us… I am a vet doctor.[986]

Like Ayuen, Nigo emphasized what he and his peers, including Garang, had *achieved* in terms of educational and professional qualifications. Focusing not only on education but on its results, Nigo's and Ayuen's renderings of their brief school days with Garang offer alternative narratives of achievement, outside of the narrow space of military politics and power-sharing.

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[984] Ibid.
[985] For biography of Nyot, see 'Peter Nyot Kok', in Kuyok, *South Sudan*.
[986] Interview with Timothy Wani Logali, Levi Sebit Nigo, and Jonathan Wani Jumi.

Throughout this exchange, the eulogy acted as a self-made historical document, archiving the names of Garang's classmates in the absence of any easily accessible official record. Far from an isolated incident, Logali's eulogy was one of several self-authored tributes, biographies and other ephemera which were gifted to me during interviews about Garang. These 'homespun histories' do the work of authoring intellectual and political communities, in this case of students who knew Garang and identify with the culture of intellectualism he represents.[987] The eulogy mattered not only because of its poetic content but because of how it was preserved and shared.[988] Nigo bringing the eulogy to our interview and Logali having it copied for me signalled their enduring commitment to academic practice and to ensuring a textual afterlife for Garang and other Rumbek graduates' intellectual achievements.

Another tribute to Garang was shared with me by Joseph Abuk, who interacted with Garang at various points in Uganda and Kenya in the 1960s.[989] For Abuk, speaking and writing about Garang was an opportunity to place himself in the transnational networks of intellectual exchange of the 1960s, described in chapter one, and to reflect on Garang's death in terms of the loss of a 'great man', on par with the likes of Kwame Nkrumah and Tom Mboya. Abuk first met Garang in mid-1963 in Uganda and then again when Abuk travelled to Nairobi searching for 'opportunities of education.' For Abuk, Nairobi in the 1960s was a hub of Pan-African intellectual activity, including Ghanaians speaking 'mellifluously' about Nkrumah's vision for a continental union. During school holidays, Garang and other students travelled to Nairobi, where southern Sudanese exile politicians gave briefings on the progress of the war.

Abuk's most powerful memory of Garang captures the twin causes of Pan-Africanism and the southern struggle, reflecting SANU's racialized rhetoric of African solidarity.[990] Prior to the Round Table Conference held in 1965 to discuss the 'southern problem', Abuk claims he, his cousin, and Garang were invited by William Deng, Secretary-General of SANU-Inside, to join his delegation as representatives of the youth in East

[987] Peterson and Macola, 'Homespun historiography', 15; cf. Kindersley, 'The fifth column?', 165–203.
[988] K. Barber, 'Introduction: Hidden innovators in Africa', in K. Barber (ed.), *Africa's Hidden Histories: Everyday Literacy and Making the Self* (Bloomington, 2006), 2.
[989] Unless otherwise stated, all quotes in this section are from interview with Joseph Abuk.
[990] Manoeli, *Sudan's 'Southern Problem'*, 31–50.

Africa.[991] Abuk described Deng with the same praise as he did Nkrumah, designating him 'a great great great intellectual and great speaker, and a reader of a class really that is rare.' Deng was 'much attracted to the youth' and promoted talent regardless of age, which gave Abuk a chance to witness Garang's rhetorical prowess while at meetings with the politicians gathered at Kampala's Silver Spring Hotel:

> During the daytime there were meetings, articulating the kind of position paper that would require to be presented at […] the Round Table Conference in Khartoum. And that is when I came to realize that, although Garang was still a student of a certain level, he talked so powerfully and the politicians wanted by all means for him also to go [to the Conference].

In the end, Abuk and Garang decided that they should not join the politicians in Khartoum and returned to Nairobi, with Garang continuing onward to Tanzania. From then on, however, Abuk understood that Garang 'was a man who has a future.'

What is important in Abuk's account is not Garang's or William Deng's politics *per se*, so much as their reading, their eloquence, and the recognition of the 'future' possibility of these attributes. Fittingly for a dramatist, this is a story in which education and oracy are imbued with political promise. Unlike erroneous accounts of Garang's past which conflate his secondary education with his later one-year fellowship at the University of Dar es Salaam, Abuk established Nairobi as a Pan-African hub which attracted Garang and others for political debate. Newly independent, run by Africans, and abounding in political thinkers, 1960s Nairobi represents, in Abuk's narration, the possibility of an intellectual politics, as embodied in Garang.

Far from simple nostalgia, this creative intellectualism is, for Abuk, an ongoing and forward-looking project. During our interview, Abuk made frequent reference to an article he wrote for the first issue of *Tore*, a magazine founded by Abuk in 2008. Titled 'Tribute to a visionary freedom fighter: Dr John Garang de Mabior', the article recounts the same series of events that Abuk shared in our interview—his first meeting with Garang in Bombo refugee camp; Abuk's encounters with Pan-African ideas in Nairobi; and his and Garang's participation in the pre-Round Table Conference discussions in Kampala—bookended by

[991] Following the October Revolution of 1964 which re-established a civilian government in Sudan, William Deng took a more conciliatory position with the new government, ultimately leading to a split between what came to be known as SANU-Inside and SANU-in-Exile. See ibid., 84–85.

descriptions of the profound emotional impact of Garang's death for South Sudanese of all ages.

Concluding the article, Abuk refers to Garang as a 'Pan-African giant':

> If any statesman held high a gleaming ray of liberating hope for the marginalized Africans of the Sudan from the quagmire of pseudo-Arabism and its enslaving booby traps, that was to be Dr. John Garang de Mabior. Alas, he is no more and the job is unfinished! And yet he had already gone a long way in planting the critical milestones along the road of true redemption for the country. It is only for [a] taskforce charged with following the footpath, to step on the right marks in order to accomplish the construction.[992]

Written in 2008, the article captures both the profound loss of Garang's death and the lingering optimism of his intellectual legacy, prior to South Sudan's independence and the civil wars which followed. The magazine as a whole was intended as 'a marketplace of ideas: an invitation to artistic, literary and cultural discourse' and frames liberation as an 'unfinished' intellectual process. As the opening editorial explains,

> South Sudan has wept enough, it is time to tell stories, sing songs, dance, recite poetry and shed tears of joy to celebrate a new dawn where artists, writers, poets, playwrights, dancers, commentators, comedians take center stage to give our people food for thought, laughter, hope and even provoke. The important role of these creative people cannot be underestimated in peace building and to liberate the south Sudanese mind from negative thinking or feelings of inferiority.[993]

By the time I interviewed Abuk in 2019, *Tore* had floundered from lack of funding. Perhaps more importantly, if in 2008 it was still possible to imagine an open and creative intellectual space, by 2019 South Sudan's civil wars had created a political culture of mistrust, insecurity, and fear. Nevertheless, like Logali and Nigo with their eulogy, I arrived for my first meeting with Abuk and was immediately gifted a copy of *Tore*'s first issue. Speaking and writing about Garang allowed Abuk to relate a defining period in his own life and revisit the unfinished intellectual project which started with their transnational education in the 1960s.

In the oral narratives and written works of Ayuen, Nigo, Logali, and Abuk, the young Garang allows for an alternative idea of 'liberation', encompassing non-military achievements and the role of creative thought in fostering peace. By giving the young Garang textual afterlives, these men negotiate personal and collective student subjectivities to give meaning to their own professional trajectories. Far from one-off events of meaning-

[992] Abuk, 'Tribute', 23.
[993] 'Toreditorial', *Tore,* 1 (2008), 1.

making, the stories shared by these men in interviews signalled wider intellectual projects, evidenced through reference to their own written work and their emphasis on academic and professional success.

The first 'lost boy': Transnational afterlives in a digital age

In this final section, I turn to Garang's enduring and affiliative power for young educated South Sudanese men displaced by the second civil war, who see their experience as closely mirroring that of Garang. The young men who feature in this section are of the same generation as Garang's daughter and have lived similarly transnational lives to both Akuol and Garang's classmates. They highlight Garang's educational experience in East Africa as a direct precedent to their own and invest this experience with political meaning through an exploration of Garang's speeches and writings. Like the first civil war, the second saw largescale displacement, including of young people. Thousands of children—mostly boys—walked to Ethiopia to pursue their educations, join the SPLA, or both. Following the overthrow of Ethiopia's Derg regime in 1991 and the SPLA's concomitant loss of its Ethiopian bases and refugee camps, these children became a priority for humanitarian organizations, ultimately leading to the creation of Kakuma refugee camp in northern Kenya.[994] Commonly referred to as the 'lost boys', many of these youth were offered scholarships or resettlement in the early 2000s and have become popular poster boys of humanitarian success. I approach these youth as 'students' to draw parallels between their experience with that of students like Ayuen, Nigo, Logali, and Abuk during the first civil war.[995] Without romanticizing their displacement, viewing these youth as students and intellectuals shifts focus away from debates about Garang's policy vis-à-vis child soldiers and allows me to instead consider how they articulate their intellectual subjectivities in relation to Garang.[996] I consider the personal, creative, and political implications of how these men draw on Garang's early life as an archetypal precedent of their own lived

[994] For a typical humanitarian account of the lost boys, see International Rescue Committee, 'The Lost Boys of Sudan' (3 Oct. 2014), https://www.rescue.org/article/lost-boys-sudan [accessed 25 Feb. 2021].
[995] I use the term 'youth' loosely, based on interviewees self-identification as the younger generation in South Sudan's social and political space.
[996] E.g. Human Rights Watch, 'The Lost Boys: Child soldiers and unaccompanied boys in southern Sudan' (New York, 1994).

experience to give meaning to their shared educational achievements and—in the process—generate new afterlives for Garang.

In what follows, I draw selectively from five of the interviews I conducted with young people in South Sudan and Kenya, all of whom have at least a bachelor's degree, obtained by necessity beyond southern/South Sudan. Garang Yach and Agook Mayek are political advisors for the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and, at the time of interviewing, Yach was pursuing a PhD in political science; Jacob Dut Chol is a consultant and professor of political science at the University of Juba; PaanLuel Wël (introduced in chapter six) has anthologized hundreds of Garang's letters, speeches, and radio messages; and Jon Pen is a prolific poet, publisher, and peace activist. These young men access Garang through key SPLM publications and Garang's recorded speeches, which circulate online among new and transnational 'digital publics,' and—in the cases of Wël and Pen—engage in new archival and intellectual projects made possible through the rise of online blogging and self-publishing outfits.[997] I focus here on two aspects of their discussion of Garang's intellectual output: its importance as a historical resource of intellectual leadership and its significance as an *ongoing* impetus for intellectual action in the name of liberation. More explicitly than stories from Garang's contemporaries, these younger generation narratives evince the power of the young Garang's political promise for present political engagement.

In the introduction to his investigative tribute to Garang, explored at length in chapter six, Wël describes Garang as Sudan's 'first lost boy', situating Garang among the ranks of the thousands of youth displaced during the second civil war.[998] Wël grew up and attended secondary school in Kakuma refugee camp in northern Kenya, before getting a university scholarship at George Washington University in the US. When he was preparing to return to South Sudan after graduating, he realized that he knew little about his country and wanted to explore its history; the attraction of Garang was that he had also gone to the US to study and then returned to serve his country, an example which Wël wanted to emulate.[999]

[997] On digital publics, see special issue: Sharath Srinivasan, Stephanie Diepeveen, and George Karekwaivanane, 'Rethinking publics in Africa in a digital age', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 13/1 (2019), 2–17.
[998] Wël, *Who Killed*, 45.
[999] Interview with PaanLuel Wël; Ibid., ii–iii.

This sense of shared experience with Garang was echoed in several of my other interviews. Agook Mayek described the 'visceral' connection which he and his peers felt to Garang:

> Dr John Garang was an embodiment of the suffering so many young South Sudanese have gone through and made it. He was a young guy who went through too many difficulties, ranging from educational opportunities to economic opportunities and so many other things. But because of his intelligence, dynamism, and all that, he made it through. From here, from South Sudan, he went through the Eastern Africa: Nairobi, Tanzania, and all that, to the US. And that's exactly the history of so many young people today in South Sudan.'[1000]

Mayek's description is first and foremost one of parallel lived experience. Indeed, Mayek recalled that in Nairobi, Kenyans would call all South Sudanese 'Garang', 'because this was the only person they knew. This was a voice in the region and every South Sudanese was Garang.'

Garang also influenced some of these interviewees' lives in direct encounters. Garang Yach and Jacob Dut Chol joined the SPLM/A as children, receiving both schooling and military training.[1001] In separate interviews, they related similar vivid memories of when Garang spoke directly to them and their peers, emphasizing the importance of education and referring to the youth as 'the *terab* in Arabic; *terab* is the seed, the seed of the nation.'[1002] A memory of particular importance for Chol was his 'passing out' ceremony at the end of his training in the SPLA, when Garang told them that they would fight with both the gun and the pen. Chol described being 'shocked about this thing of [the] pen!' and said he included it in the dedication of his MSc thesis at the London School of Economics in 2008.[1003]

Jon Pen—who described being inspired as a child by the revolutionary fervor personified in Garang at a young age and taking the name Jon when he was baptized for this reason—offered another example of Garang's influence on, and promotion of, youth education. In 2004, Pen was writing for the *Sudan Mirror* and covered a press conference about the peace talks at the Intercontinental Hotel in Nairobi. He was there with only a hand-held voice recorder and the 'big guys of Reuters, the CNN' had large equipment which blocked Pen from getting close enough to record. Thinking quickly, Pen pushed in front of

[1000] Interview with Agook Mayek.
[1001] Garang Yach is not related to John Garang nor the SPLA commander Justin Yach.
[1002] Interviews with Garang Yach; Jacob Dut Chol, Juba, 19 Jul. 2019. Direct quote is from Chol but was echoed almost word for word by Yach.
[1003] Interview with Jacob Dut Chol.

them and grabbed Garang's empty coffee cup, put his recorder inside, and put it back on the table. One of the SPLM organizers 'jumped on [him]', saying he was being 'disrespectful', but Garang intervened:

> Then Garang grabbed the cup—in the full glare of cameras!—then Garang said 'No no no no, keep it. This is the real SPLA! These are my creative boys. He wants a story and our people back home want the story. These CNN guys will not deliver it the way we want it.' So he said, 'Leave the boy.' And he said, 'What's your name?' I said, 'Jon'. He said, 'Oh, man, you are real John. You are me. This is how we should do it.' Ah, that maaan, I got fired up! [*laughs*]. It was the talk of the day.[1004]

In Pen's telling, Garang then 'went round talking about me to schools in South Sudan':

> So I made an impression to him and he kept me in his mind. Used to talk to school children about me. That you know, 'This guy who writes like this is from you! He's from under the trees here, he's not from America. He's part of you here and he's our product in the bush.' You know, like that.[1005]

The significance of this experience, the first and only time that Pen interacted with Garang so personally, was evident in the excitement with which he told the story. Like Chol's memory of the gun and pen speech, which was enough of a force in Chol's life for him to reference in the dedication of his thesis fifteen years later, Pen used this story to simultaneously claim a link *with* and relate how he was claimed *by* Garang.

In all these narratives, Garang figures as a grounding device in the interviewee's life, allowing him to tell a transnational story of education which is intimately linked to a South Sudanese future. More than this, however, Garang speaks from the past through his political speeches and figures as a point of departure for further exploration of South Sudanese history and politics. In my first meeting with Mayek and Yach, Mayek responded to my opening research description—emphasizing my interest in youth perspectives and different narratives about Garang—by saying that Garang was an icon and that youth still listen to his speeches today.[1006] In our subsequent interview, Mayek explained that, since the end of war, Garang's speeches have become easily accessible on YouTube and have offered him 'so much inspiration.'[1007] Similarly, when I asked Yach whether Garang still matters today, he explained,

[1004] Interview with Jon Pen, phone, 15 Jan. 2021.
[1005] Ibid.
[1006] Meeting notes, Agook Mayek and Garang Yach, Juba, 8 Aug. 2019.
[1007] Interview with Agook Mayek.

> Well, whatever is unfolding now, I can trace it to history, to Garang's speech, Garang's ideology, Garang's outlook on problem of Sudan then. I said before, we might have liberated ourselves politically from dominance of the other group, but we have not really accomplished the work of liberation […] So his outlook on solutions of South Sudanese problems—in this country that has become South Sudan after him maybe—I think are still relevant today.[1008]

For Yach, Garang's speeches are a tool to both explore the past and continue the 'work of liberation.' In this way, Garang's efforts to self-archive—to literally create his own afterlives—have been successful, made more so by the transnational political and archival space provided by YouTube.

Mayek's and Yach's comments reflect the wider popularity of Garang's speeches as historical sources, mentioned by several focus group participants.[1009] Wël has taken this interest a step further by seeking out, transcribing, and publishing several of Garang's speeches and communications, first on his online blog and later in a series of anthologies.[1010] The accessibility of Garang's speeches has allowed Garang to continue to imprint himself in South Sudanese political thought. Youth who already feel an affiliative connection to Garang turn to his voice to make sense of lost political possibilities. Like Garang's own education and activism in the 1960s, these students act in a transnational space, though theirs is increasingly mediated by new digital technologies and self-publishing outfits. For these narrators, speaking of Garang is a way of giving meaning to their own lives and educational achievements across borders. At the same time, they solidify Garang's presence in current political debate by engaging with the ideas shared in his speeches and, in some cases, re-archiving these speeches for new audiences.

Compared to Wël, Mayek, Yach, and Chol, Pen is uniquely outspoken. A vocal civil society activist, Pen has frequently clashed with South Sudanese security forces and his stories about Garang include an explicitly activist element. Pen writes from and about a transnational political space; in addition, Pen's account of confrontations with surrogates of South Sudanese security in Nairobi reveal the transnational reach of the South Sudanese government. Whereas the above narratives explore personal identity through educational affiliation with Garang, Pen grants meaning to his personal experiences of persecution through explicit reference to Garang's early encounters with authority. In his writing,

[1008] Interview with Garang Yach.
[1009] Focus group with Equatorian youth; Youth focus group 1.
[1010] Wël, *Genius of Dr. John*, vol. 1; Wël, *Genius of Dr. John*, vol. 2.

discussed here through two examples, Pen actively invokes the possibility of Garang's figurative reincarnation in a younger generation activist.

In October 2018, Pen wrote a blog article about a meeting with Kenyan opposition leader Raila Odinga which he attended in August with other representatives of South Sudanese civil society, to discuss South Sudan's then ongoing peace process.[1011] In the article, Pen explains how he used the example of Peter Biar, a South Sudanese doctoral student at Cambridge University who was arbitrarily arrested in Juba, to describe South Sudan's 'shrinking civic space.' This prompted Raila to tell of how his father, former Vice-President Oginga Odinga, had saved Garang 'from state-sponsored kidnapping and execution' after he was arrested in Kenya in the 1960s, as related in chapter one. Describing Garang as a 'young activist', Pen emphasizes his narrow escape and subsequent political impact. He then evokes Garang's imprisonment as a direct precedent for current problems and opportunities, concluding, 'Those South Sudanese youths rioting in tge [sic] diasporas or rotting in horrible dungeons of the notorious National Security Bureau in South Sudan are our potential leaders of this nation, now and tomorrow.' In this rendition, the political specter of Garang rises to undermine the government's current mistreatment of youth activists.

The same sentiment is captured in Pen's poem, 'St John Garang'. The poem opens with religious imagery, before describing Garang as 'Prophet Moses II, / Martin Luther King II; / He is John the Baptist II, / Beheaded for being big-headed'.[1012] It then presents Garang as merely hibernating, waiting to be resurrected as a new hero:

> St. John II is morally alive,
> For heroes ne'er mortally die,
> They – into political hibernation – dive,
> And – in historical metamorphosis – lie
> In an actively fossilized volcanic ambush,
> To erupt into another hero in arms and bush.

The figure of Garang is, for Pen, one of latent political possibility, capable of undermining and unnerving the present government. Like Wël's anthologies, Pen's poetry simultaneously establishes affiliative links with Garang and ensures that the *potential* of Garang's political thought continues to circulate.

[1011] Pen, 'In the lion's den'.
[1012] J. Pen, 'St John Garang', in J. Pen, *The Black Christs of Africa* (self-published, n.d.), 45.

Just as these works create a transnational and digital space for Garang's afterlives, the South Sudanese government's attempts to control what it views as subversive publications extend beyond South Sudan's territorial borders. In December 2020, Pen held a launch event for his new publishing company, at which he was supposed to present his many books. However, Pen explained that he was 'locked out of the event by National Security guys and Kenyan counterparts.'[1013] The reach of South Sudanese security into Nairobi is not new and, for Pen, shows that he is 'actually under serious security threat' because of his writing.[1014] Linking this back to our wider conversation about Garang, Pen explained the current South Sudanese government's aversion to 'Garang's stories' and 'Garang's vision.' For Pen, writing about Garang is about challenging government silences and continuing the activism initiated by Garang.

Conclusion

Garang's afterlives continue to matter in South Sudan because they are a way for diverse actors to make use of the past for future-facing projects—for themselves, for the nation, or for both. Decades of fractures and shifting alliances among the SPLM/A elite have left a complicated legacy for Kiir's government, necessitating the propagation of a shallow and distorted history of the liberation struggle which is built on selective 'mentions' and 'silences.' As the founding father of the SPLM/A, Garang must be celebrated to justify the SPLM's continued right to power as those who 'liberated' South Sudan militarily. Kiir's claim to leadership rests in part on his credentials as the sole survivor among the five founding permanent members of the SPLM/A's PMHC and former position as Garang's deputy. In the context of South Sudan's conflicts between factions loyal to Kiir and Machar, the PMHC's internal divisions are occluded so that the government may celebrate Kuanyin—who hails from Bahr el Ghazal where Kiir has the strongest support—and cast Machar as the SPLM/A's quintessential traitor, rather than one among many who differed from Garang. However, this militaristic history-making has increasingly little resonance

[1013] Interview with Jon Pen.
[1014] Human Rights Watch, 'South Sudan: Investigate apparent 2017 killing of activists', (30 Apr. 2019), https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/04/30/south-sudan-investigate-apparent-2017-killing-activists [18 Feb. 2021].

with tired South Sudanese citizens who question controlled access to the physical site of Garang's Mausoleum and seek a more inclusive approach to the past.

In contrast, Garang's daughter, classmates, and young intellectuals engage directly with the video and textual sources produced by or for Garang during the war, and generate new afterlives for Garang through their creative and intellectual projects. Akuol explores her parents' relationship and shared vision of liberation to reflect on the complicated realities of independence and to centre women's contributions toward realizing the promise of independence. Ayuen, Nigo, Logali, and Abuk describe their shared student history with Garang to recharacterize liberation as a professional and intellectual project, rather than a merely military one. Logali's eulogy and Abuk's tribute to Garang delineate intellectual communities, while reflecting on the lost optimism of their student years and the need to both document this history and—particularly for Abuk—carry this intellectual and artistic liberatory project into the future.

Finally, Mayek, Yach, Chol, Wël, and Pen make sense of their lived experiences of transnational education through reference to Garang. Garang was an inescapable archetype during their lives, as shown by Mayek's story of being called 'Garang' by Kenyans. More significantly, these men—like Akuol—grapple with having spent parts of their lives outside Sudan and South Sudan, and the challenge of exploring the history of the liberation struggle and future of the country. In this context, Garang's recorded speeches—easily accessible and sharable online—have been an essential resource for historical study and for new archival and academic projects like those pursued by Wël and Pen. In turn, these projects perpetuate the circulation of Garang's political thought and life story, ensuring that his afterlives proliferate further. Garang's afterlives thus tell us not only about debates over the past in South Sudan but about how history is accessed, made, and circulated, and how this shapes political imagining in the present and for the future.

Conclusion

History-making is an integral part of John Garang's biographical story. Through studying how and why Garang, his supporters, and his opponents curated diverse personas for him in different contexts, I have built a new empirical account of Garang, the SPLM/A, and Sudanese and South Sudanese nationalism. My approach brought together Jo Margadant's feminist school of 'new biography', scholarship on how southern African leaders curated public images, and Michel-Rolph Trouillot's seminal work on history-making, to argue that Garang carefully managed his political presence and history.[1015]

A core innovation of my study is methodological. Using oral history interviews to interpret the origins and content of sources gathered through traditional archives, personal collections, and online platforms, I have traced the everyday practices through which histories of liberation are generated and circulated, and have shown their wider import in the making of a political and military movement and its leader. Further, I have shown the benefits of a biographical approach able to bring together intellectual, social, and political history. This kind of biographical work is particularly important in a context like Sudan's, where the cumulative effects of rival leaders' attempts to generate usable pasts have created a web of teleological histories that obscure the complex relationships and rationales inherent to underground political and military movements.

My reassessments of Garang's transnational education, African-facing activism in the 1960s and 1970s, and underground political activity prior to the birth of the SPLM/A offer an important contribution to the limited scholarship on Garang's early life. They also allowed me to use social and intellectual history as a starting point when analyzing Garang's later attempts to unify a fractious rebel movement born out of diverse underground political organizations. I have argued that Garang's transnational education must be studied in the context of East African and global trends during the mid- to late 1960s. This was a period of political optimism and possibility in Nairobi, which acted as an important 'hub' for Garang and other southern Sudanese student refugees who congregated in the Kenyan capital during school holidays to meet with fellow students and southern Sudanese exile

[1015] Margadant, 'Introduction'; Boehmer, *Nelson Mandela*; Rassool, 'Writing'; Tendi, *Army and Politics*; Trouillot, *Silencing*.

politicians.[1016] Exposure to new anticolonial, black, Pan-African, and Afrocentric ideas—first in East Africa and subsequently at Grinnell College in the American Midwest—had a formative impact on Garang. He drew on these intellectual schools to position himself as a worldly activist upon his return to East Africa in 1969 and again in his political speeches as leader of the SPLM/A.

Applying Hodgkinson's idea of 'political studenthood' to the Sudanese context, I have shown that Garang's student/graduate identity continued to shape his personal opportunities when he became a captain in the rebel Anyanya in late 1970 or 1971 and, after the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972, in the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF).[1017] His outspoken activism did not sit well with his military commanders and he was granted further chances for study abroad, during which he and other young southern graduates continued to coalesce as an educated, professional constituency fluent in the development language of the day.

When Garang moved to Khartoum in early 1982 after completing his doctorate at Iowa State University, his social networks and status as an educated professional were key to his success in Sudan's underground political landscape. Taking Elena Vezzadini's rich study of covert Sudanese politics in the 1920s as a starting point, I have traced continuities in the methods and demands of underground politics in Sudan over time.[1018] I have argued that family and social networks offered Garang and others a path for political mobilization and a front for political activity, allowing southerners to travel and meet without attracting attention. In addition, Garang carefully managed his public persona and curated an image as a 'good boy'—that is, someone willing to assimilate to the state's dominant cultural vision and to avoid further political resistance. I have argued that these strategies were creative responses to the racialized security regime of the Sudanese state as Garang and his associates organized covertly against the government.

As in earlier periods of Sudanese history, the necessity of these covert strategies generated multiple student, military, and political movements, all at risk of persecution and betrayal. The process of bringing these movements together to form the SPLM/A in 1983

[1016] Burton, 'Hubs of decolonization'.
[1017] Hodgkinson, 'Politics'.
[1018] Vezzadini, *Lost Nationalism*.

was fraught and violent. Garang was able to capitalize on his links with civilian and military groups to claim leadership of the nascent SPLM/A, but to do so he needed to generate usable pasts for himself, the movement, and the nation to address the movement's tumultuous founding and legitimate his position as chairman and commander-in-chief. In his efforts to create these pasts, Garang did not just make narratives in the moment—he produced sources and archives which have deeply informed subsequent historical studies of the SPLM/A. These sources cross-referenced each other, creating an intertextual archive of the struggle, and a wider body of Afrocentric and Pan-Africanist political thought encountered by Garang as a student, through which Garang positioned himself among the great transnational African leaders of the twentieth century.

In the process, Garang used radio and video technology to reach audiences across geographies and time periods. Garang had recognized the power of radio from his time as a student at Grinnell and, as leader of the SPLM/A, he effectively established a sonic presence and used his speeches on Radio SPLA to establish a history of the movement in real-time. But while history-making was a core and necessary part of Garang's politics, uniting the SPLM/A was never a straightforward or entirely successful project. The mixed reactions towards Garang's radio broadcasts and the proliferation of anti-Garang texts from within the SPLM/A revealed the challenges of generating usable pasts for a liberation movement that represented diverse interests and competing nationalist visions.

While radio allowed Garang to project his voice and vision widely during the first half of the war, there were limits to his ability to sway those who experienced or witnessed the SPLM/A's violence firsthand. Moreover, the same elements of radio that made it so effective for combatting the Sudanese government allowed Garang's opponents to use radio to challenge Garang. I have expanded on scholarship about African liberation movements' use of radio by arguing that radio was as important to *internal* SPLM/A politics as it was to the discursive battles between the SPLM/A and Sudanese government. Garang's leadership and political commitment to unity were never accepted by many SPLM/A officers and other southern rivals, who used both radio and print media to challenge Garang's authority and undermine his legitimacy at home and abroad.

My study of Garang has expanded on scholarship on 'competing' nationalisms through a unique case, in which contests over nationalism in a postcolonial state existed in parallel to those within a liberation movement.[1019] History-making was central to these oppositional nationalist projects, as Garang challenged the dominant Arab-Islamic nationalism promoted by the Sudanese state and was in turn challenged by southern opponents who denounced the SPLM/A's violent culture and promoted a history of southern oppression to justify secession. As in any history, these projects involved acts of silencing. Garang's founding history for the SPLM/A subsumed the diversity of anti-Nimeiri political mobilization in the late 1970s and early 1980s, establishing the Bor Mutiny as the seminal event in the start of the second civil war.

After the SPLM/A split of 1991, Garang's opponents challenged the historical details of how he presented the Bor Mutiny but not its central importance, engaging within the same narrative frame of reference. First-hand accounts from SPLM/A officers on the receiving end of the High Command's brutality made for powerful oppositional histories. However, the narrative demands of the anti-Garang front required significant new silences—most notably, the role of Kerubino Kuanyin, William Nyuon, and Arok Thon Arok in imprisoning other officers, with whom they briefly allied in the early 1990s. In the context of ongoing tension between President Salva Kiir and Vice-President Riek Machar since 2005, these silences continue to sit uneasily at the centre of the South Sudanese state's commemorative practice, as to fully unpack the SPLM/A's fractious history would undermine Kiir's government's ability to frame Machar as the movement's perennial traitor.

Narratives of Garang's death have been similarly shaped by changing political contexts and intertextual silences. While the international probe team which investigated Garang's crash produced a well-researched technical report identifying no foul play, the report was never widely circulated and the SPLM never adopted a common stance on the report. I have argued that this ambiguity was functional in the SPLM's ever-shifting politics, allowing SPLM elites to cast accusations in any direction at any time. Exploring the mixed effects of intertextuality in different contexts, I have shown how these accusations and Ugandan media reports offered source material for South Sudanese writers outside the

[1019] Larmer and Lecocq, 'Historicising'.

political military elite. This intertextuality 'flattened' the report's analysis but did not allow a dominant narrative to cohere.[1020] Instead, these writers warn against the misuse of the past toward violent ends and seek a more objective approach to evidence and history.

More broadly, I have argued that intra-SPLM/A historical debate shares a focus on military elites and occludes other stories about the past which instead centre family, gender, youth, or civilian professionalism and scholarship. In these areas, Garang's wider political and historical discourse has had important impact. Garang was a talented political performer, able to effectively articulate his cause in the language of diversity and inclusive development. Whether or not his leadership always lived up to the ideals he set, his recorded speeches offer the raw material for new historical and artistic projects, undertaken largely by a younger generation not directly involved in the military divides of the liberation era. Conflicts in South Sudan since 2013 have seen a sharpening of ethnic conflict, both real and perceived, as well as ongoing gendered violence. In this context, Garang's New Sudan vision—captured in a disparate archive of video, audio, and textual sources authored by or about Garang—has offered an entry point for a different engagement with the past and a mode to think beyond ethnic and other divisions. Through these sources, Garang's afterlives have proliferated and continue to impact upon individual, community, and national political imagination in South Sudan.

Most recently, Garang's ideas have resurfaced on social media in the context of renewed war in Sudan, used by Sudanese and South Sudanese commentators to discuss the breakdown of Sudan's political space and security sector. On 15 April 2023, fighting broke out in Khartoum between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a powerful paramilitary group led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo or 'Hemedti'. Both sides have used aerial bombing and heavy artillery in Khartoum, causing significant damage to the city and forcing residents to flee. At the time of writing in July 2023, further battles are being waged around the country, with particularly intense fighting in Darfur. UN estimates in early July indicated that approximately 700,000

[1020] Davis, *The ANC's War*, 87.

people had sought refuge in neighbouring countries, including South Sudan, while a further 2.2 million were internally displaced.[1021]

The immediate political background to this war began with civil disobedience against Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir in December 2018. After months of grassroots protests and sit-ins across Sudan, Bashir was forced out by SAF and RSF in April 2019, who established an interim Transitional Military Council. Following further civil disobedience as protestors demanded a transition to civilian rule, the Transitional Military Council agreed to establish a civilian-military Sovereign Council under the leadership of a civilian prime minister; however, in October 2021, the military forces seized power again in a coup.

From the outset, the alliance between SAF and RSF was tenuous. Bashir had built RSF as a check against SAF's power and Hemedti's Darfuri origins made him an outsider among the Khartoum riverain elite like al-Burhan.[1022] In December 2022, SAF, RSF, and civilian political leaders signed a framework agreement to move toward civilian rule but, in early April 2023, tension between SAF and RSF escalated over debates about the timeline for RSF to dissolve, erupting into conflict for which both sides were clearly prepared.[1023]

The deeper political background to the war lies in decades of marginalization and conflict in Sudan's peripheries, government counter-insurgency tactics, and attempts to 'coup-proof' the security apparatus by establishing parallel security organs.[1024] RSF evolved from the *Janjaweed*, government-sponsored militias coopted in the early 2000s to fight rebels in Darfur, which in turn had roots in militias mobilized during wars in the south. Over time, Hemedti emerged as a key player within the *Janjaweed*'s successors and was favoured by Bashir with cash and promotions, including leadership of RSF. Between 2013 and

[1021] IOM UN Migration, 'Regional Sudan response situation update' (4 Jul. 2023), https://mena.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl686/files/documents/2023-07/iom-sudan-external-situation-report-number-12.pdf [5 Jul. 2023].
[1022] Willow Berridge, Justin Lynch, Raga Makawi, and Alex De Waal, *Sudan's Unfinished Democracy: The Promise and Betrayal of a People's Revolution* (Oxford, 2022), 65–6.
[1023] Azza Ahmed Abdel Aziz, 'Sudan is at risk of unravelling from decades of injustice', *Middle East Eye* (25 Apr. 2023), https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/sudan-unravelling-from-decades-injustice [9 Jul. 2023]; International Crisis Group, 'A critical window to bolster Sudan's next government', (23 Jan. 2023), https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/sudan/critical-window-bolster-sudans-next-government [9 Jul. 2023]; International Crisis Group, 'Stopping Sudan's descent into full-blown civil war', (20 Apr. 2023), https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/sudan/stopping-sudans-descent-full-blown-civil-war [9 Jul. 2023].
[1024] Berridge, Lynch, Makawi, and Waal, *Sudan's Unfinished Democracy*, 41, 63–9.

Bashir's overthrow in 2019, Hemedti's and RSF's influence and wealth grew enormously, to the point they could rival SAF.

Several Twitter posts by Sudanese and South Sudanese commentators have expressed that Garang's political vision for a New Sudan could have prevented or resolved the current conflict.[1025] For many, the war manifests Garang's theories about peripheral underdevelopment, state attempts to impose a narrow national identity, and the need for inclusive political reform across Sudan. As one commentator wrote: 'Once the Southern problem was removed, it took off the mask of what the real issues was. It was never the South. Dr. John Garang truly understood & knew what the roots of the problem were & he truly was a student of history.'[1026]

Common issues between the current and past wars in Sudan allow Garang's ideas and voice to be effectively redeployed. In video clips from a speech given in Washington in 2004, posted by two different people, Garang condemns the government for arming 'tribes against tribes' as part of its counter-insurgency strategy in Darfur: **'**I want to say that the problem in Darfur is not the *Janjaweed* as such. The *Janjaweed* are only a tool. The problem in Darfur [*interrupted by applause*]—the problem in Darfur is the government counter-insurgency strategy.'[1027] Because counter-insurgency tactics contributed directly to Darfur's fractured conflicts and the rise of Hemedti and RSF, Garang's words offer a compelling way to comment on the war while drawing links to the past. Meanwhile, comparisons between Garang and Hemedti, framed as two revolutionaries from the peripheries, have prompted attempts to defend Garang's political vision and show how it differed from Hemedti's pursuit of power for power's sake.[1028]

[1025] @fatheyayallas, Twitter (9 Jun. 2023), twitter.com/fatheyayallas/status/1667249566637252608 [10 Jul. 2023]; @AkolMiyenKuol, Twitter (28 Apr. 2023), twitter.com/AkolMiyenKuol/status/1651972891884371969 [10 Jul. 2023]; @jongethon, Twitter (19 Apr. 2023), twitter.com/jongethon/status/1648815904329961472 [10 Jul. 2023]; @minlayla77, Twitter (7 May 2023), twitter.com/minlayla77/status/1655350057338544130 [10 Jul. 2023].

[1026] @NiloticValor, Twitter (16 Apr. 2023), twitter.com/NiloticValor/status/1647614957607874561 [10 Jul. 2023].

[1027] @MamdohMohamme14, Twitter (15 Apr. 2023), twitter.com/MamdohMohamme14/status/1647335105550065664?s=20 [10 Jul. 2023]. A slightly different clip from the same speech was posted by @aloosh_saif, Twitter (22 Apr. 2023), twitter.com/aloosh_saif/status/1649988875366924291 [10 Jul. 2023].

[1028] @Letters_to_Deng, Twitter (20 Apr. 2023), twitter.com/Letters_to_Deng/status/1649148406126768150 [10 Jul. 2023]; @touskonkouda, Twitter (11 May 2023), twitter.com/touskonkouda/status/1656644857551618053 [10 Jul. 2023].

Politically and materially, Garang failed to create a united New Sudan: South Sudan seceded in 2011 and violent conflicts have continued in both Sudan and South Sudan. However, the idea of the New Sudan remains a powerful idiom for debating political reform and democracy in the two states. As old questions about political belonging and identity resurface in new contexts, so too do Garang's ideas and voice, readily available on YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter to be repackaged and reimagined as demanded by the current political situation.

Garang's history-making has had mixed but indelible impacts on Sudanese and South Sudanese politics and historical practice. On one hand, Garang's attempts to script a unifying history of the SPLM/A's founding and military success set the tone for a set of oppositional military histories which have generated layered silences and a legacy of militarized commemoration in South Sudan. On the other, as a new generation comes of political age in Sudan and South Sudan, Garang's story of transnational education and political work to articulate histories of Sudanese diversity remain both recognizable and relevant. This generation's work is future-facing, focused on realizing the economic, social, and political promises of 'liberation.'

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