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## Negotiating security provisioning in a hybrid political order: the case of the Arrow Boys in Western Equatoria, South Sudan

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### ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the emergence of a local defence force, the Arrow Boys, in Western Equatoria State in response to the threats posed by the Lord's Resistance Army, in a context where the support provided by the state security forces is considered to be inadequate by the local population. The defence force that was put in place led to a series of negotiations between politicians and local leaders supporting the Arrow Boys and the national authorities of South Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Army. Drawing from theories on negotiated statehood, this paper argues that in a hybrid political order negotiations about security involve interrelated questions about the relevance of external security threats, who is able and allowed to take action against those threats and according to which norms and rules. It is through negotiations on these issues that practices of state mediation take shape.

### KEYWORDS

Security; security provisioning; hybrid political orders; negotiation; Arrow Boys; South Sudan; state formation

### Introduction

This paper deals with the conflicts and negotiations about security provisioning between a newly established local defence force in Western Equatoria State (WES) and the South Sudanese 'state under construction'. Following the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in 2005 and the independence of 2011, the new state of South Sudan has been under construction with massive international support. A key effort in this process is to 'build' the state security sector and thus to monopolise the use of violence.<sup>1</sup> In this period WES was faced with new instability due to the arrival of the Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in the province, leading to massive displacements and food insecurity. The army (and former rebel movement) of South Sudan, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), was considered by the local population unable—or even unwilling—to stop the LRA. In response, a loosely organised civil defence group, the Arrow Boys, was formed. They were relatively successful in attacking the LRA, using armed violence with self-fabricated weapons and captured firearms. The legitimacy of this initiative became the stake of a conflict between local inhabitants and leaders largely supporting the Arrow Boys and the South

Sudanese government and army. This paper analyses how both the relevance of the security threat itself and the most appropriate ways to deal with it are negotiated between state and non-state actors. Our analysis of the negotiations focuses on the tensions between supply and demand sides of security provisioning, with the aim of understanding how political configurations and institutional arrangements that can provide for security at the local level are negotiated in a 'hybrid political order'.<sup>2</sup>

The paper starts with a discussion of security provisioning in hybrid political orders; a political context where there are multiple actors involved in security provisioning, whose actions are based on different interests, different definitions of security and different resources and repertoires, while there is not a unified authority or centralised political process where these contrasting views meet. We argue that in a hybrid political order, negotiations about security involve negotiations about the interrelated questions of what the magnitude and relevance of the security threat is, who is best able to deliver security and according to which (and whose) norms and rules. In these negotiations the question of whether the security threat should be addressed by the state and its (new and often still ineffective) rules of the game, or whether the threat requires other actors to step in on the basis of other rules, is a key issue.

After this conceptual discussion we provide some background information on the civil war in Sudan and the main dynamics of the externally supported process of state-building in the now independent South Sudan. In that discussion we place emphasis on the major relevant power configurations that were the result of the civil war and still affect today's security provisioning in Western Equatoria State.<sup>3</sup> We move on with an analysis of the conflicts and negotiations about security provisioning between the Arrow Boys, a non-state militia in Western Equatoria, and the South Sudanese state. In the analysis of the interactions and negotiations between the Arrow Boys and the state of South Sudan, which is dominated by the SPLA, we place emphasis on the claims made by the different stakeholders, and the political process of bringing together these diverging stances. The analysis draws from semi-structured interviews and group discussions which were conducted during field research in South Sudan between March and April 2011.<sup>4</sup>

## **Negotiating security in hybrid political orders**

In the past decade a lively debate has emerged about how state power should be understood in non-Western contexts. To a considerable extent these academic contributions were reactions to an emerging discourse on state-building expressed by policy-makers from Western states and international organisations, who increasingly emphasised the need to strengthen state power as a way to remedy the flaws of what were called weak or fragile states.<sup>5</sup> An important critique on the interventionism of the international community has been its misrepresentation and lack of understanding of the political context.<sup>6</sup> The notion of hybrid political order, introduced by Boege et al.,<sup>7</sup> was primarily coined with a view to countering the simplistic notion of the fragile state. The authors emphasise that in a hybrid political order there are 'diverse and competing claims to power and logics of order that overlap and intertwine',<sup>8</sup> and that in these contexts characteristics of traditional rule (such as tribes, clan structures, etc.) and modern forms of authority and international involvement are combined. In this paper, we use the term hybrid political order as a generic term to point to a broad category of countries where the state is relatively weak both in comparison to

the Western world and (more importantly) in relation to other powerful actors in society that also claim to provide for security and services.

The attention to the complexities of political power and political processes in non-Western contexts is not new and the nature of the state and of political power in Africa (as well as in other parts of the world) has been extensively debated in past decades.<sup>9</sup> Migdal emphasises that the state is one of the authorities in society whose ‘laws and regulations must contend with other, very different types of sanctioned behaviour, often with utterly unexpected results for the societies that states purport to govern—and for the states themselves.’<sup>10</sup> This implies that for an understanding of state power its relations with other societal ‘power poles’ are important and that the boundary between state and society is elusive.<sup>11</sup> Understanding the state thus requires us to look at non-state forms of power as well and to take into account the ‘coalitions, rivalries, and confrontations between major political actors outside of the state.’<sup>12</sup> This is also relevant to the task that is widely considered to be at the core of state formation processes: the institutionalisation and legitimisation of physical coercion and political power.<sup>13</sup> This process of transforming ‘coercion or power’ into domination—which means that some degree of consent is created—is not simply the result of states becoming more effective, but rather the product of a process in which multiple powers (both state and non-state) are involved.<sup>14</sup>

Recent studies in the field of security provisioning in hybrid orders have focused on interactions and arrangements between state and non-state actors.<sup>15</sup> The results of these interactions are mostly quite unstable and ‘hybrid political contexts are permeated by deep contradictions and clashes between different ways of organizing security and political power.’<sup>16</sup> The main value of a hybrid approach to security is ‘the emphasis on empirically grounded investigations that uncover how, and for whom, security is determined in complex, multilayered political contexts.’<sup>17</sup> This implies that security is not politically neutral. Its understanding and definition is closely linked to the very contestations (including violent clashes) between actors that claim to provide security.<sup>18</sup> Contestations can take place both within the ‘supply side’ and between supply sides and the ‘demand side’ of security.<sup>19</sup> The supply side is about security as ‘process of political and social ordering established and maintained through authoritative discourses and practices of power, including but not confined to organized force.’<sup>20</sup> This face of security focuses on the capacity of an authority (mostly the state) to be (and be seen as) the main (if not the only) security provider in town. The demand side of security is about the lived experience of security by citizens and as such ‘dependent on social contexts, cultural repertoires and vernacular understandings of those who are secured.’<sup>21</sup> In hybrid political orders, where the power of the state is limited, there is a plurality of forms of security provisioning, while the relations between different forms will differ from place to place.

Our analysis of the negotiations about security provisioning focuses on the tensions between national and local forms of security provisioning, seeing the interactions between national and local security providers as instances of ‘processes of negotiation, contestation and bricolage’ of state making and remaking.<sup>22</sup> The core objective of our analysis is to understand how political configurations and institutional arrangements that can provide for security at a community level come into being through these complex negotiation processes.<sup>23</sup> With regard to the actors involved in the negotiations Hagmann and Péclard propose to look at the resources and symbolic repertoires of these actors.<sup>24</sup> The resources are the material basis for collective action (such as bureaucratic capacities and finance), while

the symbolic repertoires are brought into play to defend a power position or challenge the position of a competing actor. With regard to the sites where negotiations take place they distinguish between tables and arenas of negotiation. A negotiation 'table' is a formalised setting where contending actors—based on some kind of protocol and respecting each other as legitimate stakeholders—discuss 'key aspects of statehood'.<sup>25</sup> Negotiation arenas refer to the non-formalised encounters between these actors about for instance the 'right' to provide a service, or the control over a population or a territory.<sup>26</sup>

The objects of negotiations can be several, the provisioning of security being one of the key issues.<sup>27</sup> Our analysis focuses on the debate about how to deal with an external security threat posed by a non-state state military group (the LRA). While most actors that are discussed in this study acknowledge that there is an external threat and also adhere to the idea that 'the state' is or should be responsible for countering this threat, there are several referent subjects claiming to represent and protect people and groups in different ways, while the state itself can be (seen as) one of the actors that pose a threat.<sup>28</sup> This implies that even in a situation where there is agreement that there is some type of external threat, there is discussion about the relevance of the threat and the question of how to deal with it.

The negotiations about the ways to deal with these external threats cannot be separated from the socio-historical context in which tensions evolve between different communities and elites—both in the Western Equatoria State and within the new Sudanese state. These prior tensions and conflicts can both give insight into the different perceptions and interests of the parties, as well as the repertoires that they have developed over time and that appear to have a certain degree of consent among the population. For reasons of space, we will limit our discussion to the interactions between on the one hand the Arrow Boys and local politicians and leaders supporting this local defence force, and on the other hand the representatives of the South Sudanese government that deal with them. Thus, a detailed analysis of the local power dynamics in WES is not included. Furthermore, we do not discuss in detail the intricate tensions and struggles within the Sudanese state apparatus. Rather, we view the South Sudanese state as an entity that is willing but not capable to exert authority over its entire territory. Contrary to the cases where the dominant elites in the state apparatus have no desire to extend their power to the peripheries of the state, there is thus a desire to govern, which will according to Menkhaus most likely lead to forms of state mediation.<sup>29</sup> In this case, a state authority lacking other options 'has no choice but to work through local intermediaries [...] [and t]he state's relationship with local governance structures is negotiated, not purchased or coerced'.<sup>30</sup> This implies that while there is a degree of consensus about the role of the government in addressing external security threats, the low state capacity and ineffective rules of the game are likely to lead to a form of co-operation between state and non-state groups.

### **South Sudan, independent and divided**

Although there has been conflict between North and South Sudan almost continuously for half a century, this could not hide the tensions and conflicts between different ethnic groups in the South throughout the war years. The first Sudanese war started in 1955, months before its independence from Britain. The British had ruled Sudan divided into an Arab North and African South until 1946, when it decided to reverse this policy and to unite the country. Nevertheless deep disparities remained, and marginalisation in the economic development

process and exclusion from power structures were the roots of the clashes between the Arab-run state and the peripheries of Sudan.<sup>31</sup> The first civil war lasted until the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement, which provided some autonomy for the South in exchange for the rebels laying down their arms. Dissatisfaction in the South persisted when the autonomy of the South was again limited. When in 1983 the government in Khartoum instituted sharia law in the whole country, this proved to be the final straw for the predominantly Christian South which felt more and more oppressed by the predominantly Islamic North. The second Sudanese civil war started, in which John Garang became the leader of the SPLA/M.

The SPLA claimed to fight for John Garang's vision of a federal Sudan with equal rights for all citizens. This, however, was criticised by some as an attempt to bring the South under SPLA—that is, Dinka—control. SPLA commanders Riek Machar (Nuer),<sup>32</sup> Lam Akol (Shilluk) and Gordon Kong (Nuer) attempted a coup against Garang in 1991. Whereas Garang advocated a united secular and democratic 'New Sudan', Machar advocated a politically independent South Sudan. Machar broke away with the SPLA-Nasir faction after the failed coup, and his Nuer militia attacked the Bor Dinka in Garang's home territory in 1991.<sup>33</sup> Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir, who had taken power in 1989, exploited the tensions between Southern groups and used various proxy forces to fight within and against the South. Thus, Machar signed the 'April 1997 Peace Agreement' with Al-Bashir, through which several armed groups used by Khartoum as proxies were symbolically combined into the South Sudan Defence Forces (SSDF). The alliance between Khartoum and the SSDF was maintained by providing resources, cash payouts to senior commanders, playing the 'ethnic card' and drawing upon popular prejudices against John Garang and the Dinka ethnic group as the SSDF was primarily Nuer.<sup>34</sup> Within the SSDF, Machar, unable to push for a referendum on Southern self-determination in exchange for his co-operation against the SPLA, became frustrated and ended his alliance with Khartoum in 2000 and re-joined the SPLA shortly thereafter.<sup>35</sup>

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in 2005 with much international pressure, formally ending the war between the North and the South. The CPA started a six year interim period which contained the possibility for an independent South through a referendum in 2011. During the referendum people overwhelmingly voted for independence and on 9 June 2011 South Sudan became the world's 194th independent country. However, the South remained deeply divided. During the war years various groups within the South fought each other, to later again be moulded back into the SPLA in bits and pieces after the 2006 Juba Declaration. But also after the referendum for independence, different SPLA commanders have defected and taken up arms against the SPLA, challenging the Government of South Sudan's capacity to manage conflict and prompting an army response. Although often motivated to negotiate a favourable position in the SPLM/A, these splits also display 'a web of deep-rooted ethnic tensions and competing political objectives that exacerbate hostilities and draw in local communities.'<sup>36</sup>

That said, the SPLM dominates the institutions of government to the extent that it becomes hardly possible to distinguish between the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) and the SPLM. In this context, any opposition against the SPLM is then also quickly considered to be opposing the GoSS.<sup>37</sup> The SPLA is the dominant state security actor, although due to the fact that several formerly opposing groups have joined its ranks it is far from a unitary actor. Several 'private armies' within the SPLA remained loyal to their commanders whose authority trumps the regular chain of command, and reportedly as little as 30 per

cent of the SPLA was under the control of the SPLA command.<sup>38</sup> These internal issues and divisions continued to frustrate attempts to build the South Sudanese state, including its monopolisation of violent means.

With the SPLM dominating all government institutions, the strongest competition was not between different political parties, but within the SPLM over leadership positions. President Salva Kiir was challenged by Vice-President Riek Machar, who publicly declared his intentions to run in the next elections, and a group of Garang-loyalists.<sup>39</sup> In July 2013 Salva Kiir responded by sacking his entire cabinet and Vice-President Riek Machar. On the evening of 15 December 2013, fighting erupted between rival units of the SPLA in the Giyada barracks in Juba.<sup>40</sup> Fighting then quickly spread to Jonglei, Unity and Upper Nile States between government forces and forces loyal to the former vice-president Riek Machar fighting under the banner of the Sudan People's Liberation Army-in-Opposition (SPLM-IO). The fracture line that divides commanders and communities today is reminiscent of the split in the 1990s.

Shortly after the outbreak of violence in December 2013, the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) initiated a mediation effort in order to secure a ceasefire and political settlement to the crisis. After more than 20 months, the warring parties finally agreed to the terms of a peace agreement in August 2015.<sup>41</sup> However, it was only at the end of April 2016 that Machar returned to the capital Juba and a transitional government was formed, and many arrangements of the agreement remain to be implemented.

Having discussed the main dynamics at the national level, the article now zooms in to events at the local level in Western Equatoria State. The dynamics at the national level have a direct impact on the negotiations, contestations and bricolage of security and governance in Western Equatoria.

### **The LRA in South Sudan and the rise of the Arrow Boys**

The Arrow Boys were organised in defence against the LRA that increasingly formed a threat to the population living in Western Equatoria State in the period after the CPA peace agreement was signed in 2005.<sup>42</sup> This section first discusses the historical presence of the LRA and the connections to warring parties during the civil war in Sudan. It moves on to discuss the inadequate response of the new South Sudanese government against this threat and, in response to that, the rise of a home guard movement that is firmly rooted in local communities.

The LRA had already entered South Sudan in the early 1990s and developed close connections to the government in Khartoum. From 1994 onwards, LRA commander Joseph Kony and his second-in-command Vincent Otti also regularly visited Khartoum and set up base in Juba in Central Equatoria State, which at the time was under control of the Government of Sudan (GoS). A partnership was established that benefited both: Khartoum used the LRA as a proxy to fight the SPLA and the army of Uganda (the Uganda's People Defence Force, UPDF), and the LRA received supplies and assistance in their fight against Museveni.<sup>43</sup> Also, after the split in the SPLA between Garang and Machar, Machar's faction signed a co-operative agreement with the GoS, and later also allied with the LRA.<sup>44</sup> With the signing of the CPA between the GoS and the SPLA in 2005, GoS support for the LRA became problematic and the partnership ended. In July 2006, under the auspices of the Government of South Sudan, negotiations started between the LRA and the Government

of Uganda. A cessation of hostilities was signed in August 2006, and it was agreed that LRA troops would be gathered and encamped in Eastern Equatoria (Magwi County—Owiny-Ki-Bul) and Western Equatoria (Ri-Kwangba) for the duration of the peace talks.<sup>45</sup> The process of the Juba Peace Talks was difficult, and several meetings were scheduled during which Kony remained absent. At the end of 2008 the process had failed and violence had resumed. Shortly thereafter the UPDF launched operation ‘Lightning Thunder’ against the LRA, which was supported by the US in planning, intelligence and the provision of satellite phones and fuel. The operation not only resulted in a ferocious retribution by the LRA against civilians in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Central African Republic (CAR), but the LRA also scattered into several small bands, making the LRA much harder to trace and counter.<sup>46</sup>

The presence of the LRA has, since the end of the Sudanese war, been the largest security threat to the population in Western Equatoria. While in 2010 and 2011 the LRA had been more active in the neighbouring countries of the DRC and the CAR, since 2008 there were nonetheless an estimated 70,000 LRA-induced internally displaced persons (IDPs) in South Sudan.<sup>47</sup> As people feared working on their land, this also caused food shortages. Throughout the vast rainforests in the border region of South Sudan, the DRC and the CAR, the LRA continued to terrorise, kill and abduct civilians. A government representative explained how the LRA ‘uses guerrilla warfare with 5 to 7 people move in from the LRA [...] they attack the civilians with small groups and attack small groups and abduct women and children.’<sup>48</sup>

The armed forces of the Government of South Sudan—the SPLA—were officially responsible for providing protection against the LRA, yet were heavily criticised by many civilians who felt they did not do enough. Complaints included the SPLA staying within their camps, responding to an LRA attack long after it had taken place, and that if they did go after the LRA in the bush they often only chased them very briefly. When a group of women in Yambio was asked what the SPLA did against the LRA, they began to laugh:

*The SPLA has been here for a long time. The first time the LRA came [here in Western Equatoria] was in 2006; today it is 2011. The SPLA is here and I don't deny they try. But if they follow the LRA they follow at a distance and then they don't follow anymore. They sometimes say it's our own people. This is for them to hide [the fact they are not able to deal with the LRA]. But the LRA don't even speak our language [implying the distinction between LRA and locals is not difficult to make].<sup>49</sup>*

As a result, the Zande communities of South Sudan organised a home guard system, also referred to as ‘the Arrow Boys’, a name that is taken from the Ugandan civil defence militias organised in Teso against the LRA with support from the government in Uganda.<sup>50</sup> Many people said that such a system, or any other form of self-defence groups, was entirely new to the Zande and had sprung up spontaneously. However, a paramount chief claimed it was rooted in the system of what was translated as ‘local police’, which consisted of a few unarmed young men that supported the chiefs in dealing with small problems in the community.<sup>51</sup> The Arrow Boys are comprised of young men who volunteered to counter the LRA. By 2011, it was estimated that in Western Equatoria alone the Arrow Boys counted some 3,000 of these volunteers.<sup>52</sup> The initiative was generally lauded by local communities. During a discussion with youth in Yambio, people expressed how they ‘are proud of them and maybe should join them. [...] You cannot stay when your father and mother are killed.’<sup>53</sup> Being young men from the villages they protect, the Arrow Boys were present in the places



where the LRA attacked, and responded immediately when an attack occurred, often chasing the LRA into the bush in an attempt to catch them and release possible abductees. The Arrow Boys were also reported to patrol the region, looking for tracks that could signal the presence of LRA rebels. The organisational structure of the Arrow Boys was informal and the levels of organisation may have differed per community. But generally there was an Arrow Boy commander leading the Arrow Boys from a particular community, who reported back to the chief.

This structure created a certain level of accountability, which was further strengthened by the fact that all Arrow Boys were from the local communities in which they operated. They were dependent on the community for food and the care-taking of their families when they were in the bush chasing the LRA and were unable to work on the land.<sup>54</sup> The fact that the Arrow Boys were dependent on the communities, who often have little to spare themselves, created a limitation in their capacity. Despite the support of their communities, the Arrow Boys had very limited equipment. An Arrow Boy commander explained that they 'lack food, boots, rain coats, tents,' and much more, chasing the LRA for over 10 days and living on bush yams to survive.<sup>55</sup> A group of Arrow Boys elsewhere mentioned the same problems, and said they needed satellite telephones to communicate with each other to ease the search.<sup>56</sup> Another often-heard complaint was that they lack guns and bullets, as many of them were armed with machetes, spears, and bows and arrows. They also used self-made rifles called *fabrications*, and made their own ammunition and gunpowder.

*You go into the bush and you just take a stone and take on people with guns. And they make their own guns. We call it a 'fabrication'. But it shoots only once and then you need to put another bullet in. And they face people with training and weapons. They only use the experience they have from the war to face the LRA.*<sup>57</sup>

Apart from possible past war experiences, many of the Arrow Boys had a lot of experience hunting for bush meat and knew the region very well. They had been rather effective in countering the LRA, despite their lack of equipment. Several instances were mentioned in which the Arrow Boys had killed LRA fighters after an attack and were able to release abductees. This was often attributed to their high motivation to go after the LRA, which was considered to be lacking in the state security forces. As a community member in Western Equatoria explained:

*The Arrow Boys are trusted more, because when LRA attacks, they are the first to reach and go. If anything happens, within minutes they will be there. But the SPLA will reach only the next day. [...] Then there is already some other person buried. [...] The Arrow Boys are the ones in the community. The ones being killed are their relatives. For others, if we are killed it's just cold blood.*<sup>58</sup>

Thus, despite the limited resources—such as finance, access to state resources, weaponry and technical expertise—of the Arrow Boys, they appeared to be a relatively successful provider of security at the local level with a substantial level of local support. In comparison, the SPLA had greater access to weaponry, but the fact that it was not using those resources against the LRA rather weakened their position in the region. This contradiction, being 'the' actor that claims to protect citizens from external attacks while at the same time not being able and/or willing to deliver security, had become an important building block in the repertoires of the Arrow Boys and those who supported them. The argument that if the government is not able to deliver, communities themselves should step in, was at the base of these repertoires.

Different arguments were made by the Arrow Boys and their supporters. For instance, it was emphasised that the SPLA soldiers were no longer interested in fighting as a result of war fatigue and the incentive to *not* fight the LRA. It was in this regard suggested that 'some of the security forces might not be interested in the war to end. The UPDF and the SPLA get a lot of employment when LRA threat remains here and therefore they do not really want it to stop. That's what people think now'.<sup>59</sup> Others mentioned that the LRA were not really considered a threat to the security of South Sudan by the SPLA that faced numerous security problems, including attacks from the North and by several militias and renegade commanders. As a UPDF commander explained, 'the SPLA has big challenges, and they are not interested in a few LRA'.<sup>60</sup> This was also illustrated in a conversation with SPLA officers in Nzara County, who argued that there had not been any LRA attacks in a long time. When confronted with a report of recent attacks, they explained: 'what you see there is not an attack. They just abduct people'.<sup>61</sup> An attack for them implied an attack on a military or government target. This also exemplifies the different interpretations of what threats should be placed on the security agenda.

However, these repertoires of the Arrow Boys should also be understood in the light of the perceived 'strategic dilemmas' between Zande communities on the one hand and the Government of South Sudan on the other, that date back to the time of the civil war. In these repertoires it is not primarily the incapacity but the unwillingness of the SPLA to deliver security. As the largest ethnic group in the country, the Dinka are well-represented in the SPLA, and complaints about Dinka dominance are widespread among the other groups in South Sudan.<sup>62</sup> Although the suggestion that there are two clearly demarcated groups (Zande communities versus the Dinka-dominated Government of South Sudan) that are 'in conflict' with each other is overly simplistic, it is precisely these types of simplifications that were used by a number of Arrow Boys and their supporters to legitimise their security provisioning and to delegitimise that of the SPLA.

People often lamented the lack of initiative and motivation on the side of the SPLA to effectively deal with the LRA. This lack of initiative resonated with the answer received from an SPLA officer after asking whether they had asked for more means of transport—something that he earlier said was the reason they could not always respond to LRA attacks: 'the problem of transport, we are not the ones to say bring us transport. It's the government to think that transport is needed'.<sup>63</sup> The UPDF commander of the troops attributed the lack of initiative to an inadequate understanding on the side of the SPLA of how to deal with the LRA.<sup>64</sup> For the Zande, however, the problem also had an ethnic dimension. The majority of the SPLA troops in WES came from other regions in South Sudan, many of them being Dinka. To enhance control of the new country and prevent armed uprisings of particular regions, the SPLA had stationed soldiers outside of their regions of origin. However, people from WES therefore felt that the SPLA 'outsiders' were not interested in their suffering. 'Here most SPLA are from somewhere else and Western Equatorians in the SPLA are elsewhere. If they [SPLA soldiers] were from here at least they would do something'.<sup>65</sup> The mistrust also has roots in inter-ethnic clashes between the Zande and the Dinka at the end of 2005 and beginning of 2006. Some Zande see the limited efforts of the SPLA as retribution: 'During the war Dinkas were being killed by Zande and they want to take revenge'.<sup>66</sup> And even before this conflict, there have been tensions between the Equatorian groups and the Dinka, the former viewing the SPLA as a vehicle for Dinka domination.<sup>67</sup>

The tensions between the SPLA and the civilian population in WES underlie a precarious relationship between the SPLA and the Arrow Boys. When the Arrow Boys were initially organised, they met with fierce resistance from the national government and the SPLA. This fear of a new rebel group was also shared by members of the international community, including the UN, who feared that a militia might transform into a rebel group that might turn against the SPLA, thus causing problems in the context of state-building.<sup>68</sup> The Arrow boys were from the perspective of the SPLA a potential threat to its monopoly on the use of force. For instance, an SPLA officer said that, 'security is something for the security forces. These Arrow Boys are illegal. They didn't get their guns from the government.'<sup>69</sup> Thus, where the LRA attacks were not considered a threat by SPLA officers, the local responses to deal with the LRA were seen as potentially hazardous for national security. To emphasise this image of the Arrow Boys, the SPLA was also badmouthing them when they were not around, claiming the Arrow Boys were not killing LRA but each other. One SPLA officer claimed the Arrow Boys had also killed a priest in Yambio,<sup>70</sup> but neither the governor nor the Diocese of Yambio knew of any instance where a priest had been killed.

This section discussed the development of the Arrow Boys in response to the LRA and showed how the negotiations between stakeholders were not just about whether or not the LRA was to be considered a threat. Underlying these negotiations were deeper social, historical and political issues, which shaped the repertoires of the different stakeholders. In this context the Arrow Boys were portrayed by the SPLA as a security threat, where the civilian population portrayed the SPLA as unable and/or unwilling to provide security. The negotiations were then not only about what issues were placed on the agenda but also about whose set of rules and norms would prevail. The following section discusses how the potential stalemate between the SPLA and the Arrow Boys was overcome.

### **Negotiating security provisioning**

This section looks at the negotiation processes between the SPLA and the Arrow Boys, which were essentially about who were considered legitimate security actors. As became clear in the previous section, neither of the two considered the other a truly legitimate security provider. Yet through a series of developments the negotiation processes moved from rather informal encounters to a more formalised setting. The result was a precarious deal, which can be considered a form of state mediation.

Two political events greatly affected the negotiation process. The first was the 2010 general elections, which included the election of the state governors. Independent candidate Joseph Bakosoro won the elections from Jemma Nunu Kumba, the candidate favoured by the SPLM. While Kumba had been an advocate for the Arrow Boys, she had also lost much popular support and was considered responsible for bringing Dinka soldiers into Western Equatoria.<sup>71</sup> Since his election, Bakosoro put much effort into obtaining support for the Arrow Boys, also from the national government. When he demanded the Arrow Boys be armed in their struggle against the LRA, this raised much concern among the international community. Nonetheless, the national parliament approved an amount of five million Sudanese Pounds (two million US\$) to support the Arrow Boys.<sup>72</sup> A second political event, the 2011 referendum for independence, played an important role in this decision. The SPLM was putting all its efforts into making sure that the outcome would be in favour of independence, and needed everyone's support. Many Western Equatorians believed the support for the Arrow

Boys was only promised to make sure they would vote for an independent South Sudan. The promised support never reached Western Equatoria and in 2012 Governor Bakosoro had accepted that the Arrow Boys would not be supported with firearms.

But an important consequence was that the Arrow Boys were legitimised by the state, as their role in security provision was now recognised by the national parliament. In this process, the negotiations between the SPLA and the Arrow Boys over who was allowed to take action and according to which norms and rules moved from only negotiation arenas to also include more formal negotiation tables. There were talks between SPLA officers, the governor, chiefs and Arrow Boy commanders leading to co-operation between the Arrow Boys and the SPLA. The Arrow Boys provided information about the LRA to the SPLA and accompanied them on patrols to give directions in the dense forest. This was also the co-operation described by the Arrow Boys and the SPLA when they were together, and when an SPLA camp was visited by the Arrow Boys they were allowed to carry their *fabrications* and a soldier offered his chair to the Arrow Boy commander.<sup>73</sup> In another interview an Arrow Boy commander further explained that they had also developed new signals to communicate to the SPLA that they are Arrow Boys when they encounter them in the bush to prevent mistakes and accidents, and that they report to the SPLA when they go on a patrol.<sup>74</sup>

The official repertoire came to be one of co-operation. But talking to the Arrow Boys and the SPLA separately, it was clear that the relationship remained very precarious. Arrow Boys complained that the SPLA did not always respond to the information given to them, or did so only after a long time, which still made the Arrow Boys believe the SPLA did not want to encounter the LRA. Furthermore, the weapons they captured from the LRA were taken away by the SPLA, making it more difficult for them to confront LRA fighters, and the SPLA was said to take credit for LRA fighters they killed and abductees they rescued.<sup>75</sup> By 2011 the outcome of the negotiations was therefore a very fragile construction.

### ***A breakdown of the arrangement***

Events at the national level shifted things, after the government had become entangled in a civil war with the SPLM-IO and a political debate on the future governance of the country. One of the hotly debated topics was on the subject of federalism,<sup>76</sup> and in June 2014 Western Equatoria State Governor Bakosoro publicly declared his support for a federal system. Shortly thereafter, rumours started to circulate about an alleged plan of President Kiri to arrest Bakosoro and his counterparts from Eastern and Central Equatoria.<sup>77</sup> Where support from the local population previously allowed Bakosoro leeway from the national party position, after the outbreak of the conflict Kiri started to tighten his control. In August 2015, shortly before signing the peace agreement with the SPLM-IO, Kiri removed Bakosoro as well as other critical governors in other states from office. Bakosoro was the only one to be arrested, allegedly over suspected links with the Arrow Boys militia.<sup>78</sup> He was released from prison at the end of April 2016.

This occurred against the backdrop of growing unrest in Western Equatoria State. The local population and local government officials increasingly aired frustrations about alleged SPLA attacks on civilians, problems with pastoralists from neighbouring states, and a perceived underrepresentation of Western Equatoria in national government, army and police.<sup>79</sup> This frustration had an impact on the role played by the Arrow Boys. Where the threat of

the LRA had largely diminished, several groups of Arrow Boys were now organised under the leadership of former local SPLM leaders and SPLM commanders who got frustrated with or side-lined by the national government. By the end of 2015, various groups composed of Arrow Boys were fighting the SPLA in Western Equatoria, including the South Sudan People's Patriotic Front (SSPPF) under the command of Alfred Futiyo and the South Sudan National Liberation Movement (SSNLM) under the command of Victor Wanga. Of these movements, the SSPPF had declared their alliance with the SPLA-IO that opposed the government of Kiir, thus choosing to frame their opposition in terms of a national narrative against the Dinka-dominance in the SPLM/A. The SPLA-IO welcomed rebel groups such as the SSPPF, as they tried to promote themselves as a movement representing a range of ethnic groups. The SSNLM on the other hand had entered into direct negotiations with the national government, and refuted an alliance with the SPLA-IO.<sup>80</sup>

The changing dynamics at the national level resulted in the removal of several state government officials that were sympathetic to the Arrow Boys. In the context of the civil war, the SPLA could again increasingly approach the Arrow Boys as enemy rebel elements. At the same time several groups consisting of Arrow Boys emerged, and turned to violence against the SPLA with the stated aim of protecting the interests of Western Equatorian communities. In an attempt to negotiate a new arrangement with the national government and the SPLA, some groups aimed to reach a deal through direct talks with the government, whereas other groups chose to hitchhike on the national-level talks and affiliated themselves with the SPLM-IO.

## Conclusion

In this paper we discussed the emergence of a local defence force—the Arrow Boys—in Western Equatoria state which emerged in response to the threats posed by the LRA in this area. We argued that the Arrow Boys were a reaction to the fact that the response of the defence forces of South Sudan—the SPLA—in dealing with the LRA was seen as inadequate by Zande communities in Western Equatoria and the local politicians representing them. The defence force that was put in place led to a series of negotiations between politicians and local leaders supporting the Arrow Boys and the authorities of South Sudan. To representatives of the state of South Sudan it was of key importance to be able to claim the monopoly on the means of violence and to avoid the emergence of a new and independent armed actor. To representatives of the Zande communities effective protection against the LRA was of key importance. The negotiations led to an agreement in which the Arrow Boys would co-operate with the state of South Sudan. Hence, this is a case of state mediation under construction.

In the negotiations between local communities and the state of South Sudan the discussion involved among others the question of whether there was a security threat, and who should deal with the threat and according to which rules. The establishment of the Arrow Boys can be seen as a local response that was firmly embedded in local practices and interpretations of security and thus had a high degree of local support. The SPLA clearly questioned the legitimacy of Arrow Boys. Not only did the SPLA argue that security provisioning was 'something for the security forces', but it also sought to downplay the magnitude of the threat. None of those repertoires were very convincing to the Zande communities, but in the efforts to forge co-operation between the Arrow Boys and the SPLA, the latter had

nonetheless been able to bring the threat ‘back to the state domain.’ However, in practice the Arrow Boys still existed independently from the SPLA, and the limited local presence of the state of South Sudan, the instability of its political order and the distrust between different communities made this co-operation highly unstable. This became clear when the political climate shifted at the national level, and the country slipped back into civil war. The relationship between the Arrow Boys and the SPLA again became increasingly antagonistic with both denying the other’s claim of being the legitimate security provider in Western Equatoria State.

The case of the Arrow Boys teaches a number of lessons about local-level security provisioning in a hybrid political order where consensus about the organisation of the state is weak. Menkhaus has argued that in these contexts a state authority has ‘no choice but to work through local intermediaries,’ which requires negotiation between national and local levels.<sup>81</sup> In a situation where state power itself is still heavily contested, the negotiations about ‘acceptable forms of mediation’ are much more likely to touch upon struggles over the control of state power and national and subnational authority. Therefore, the negotiations are not simply about finding pragmatic solutions to local security issues, but deal with the interconnected questions of whether there is a security threat and what its magnitude is, who is able and allowed to take action against it, and according to which norms and rules. In a situation of weak *and* contested state power, the chances that consensus will be reached about these questions is flimsy at best and deals reached about co-operation between state and non-state actors are not a ‘final agreement’ about who has authority to use violence, but rather a pragmatic and unstable deal between groups that claim the right to use force.

The deal made between the Arrow Boys and the SPLA in Western Equatoria is an example of an unstable form of state mediation. Nevertheless, it was an interesting and important step in bringing together the demand and supply sides of security provisioning. The case clearly also shows how enormously complex and fragile this type of security arrangement is in the post-war and post-independence hybrid political order of South Sudan. Indeed, the efforts to match the supply side with the demand side of security create numerous problems and tensions that may lead to renewed instability and even to violence—both at the national and local levels. However, the resumption of violence is not a given and even in a context of weak and contested statehood, there were possibilities to manage these tensions and to prevent further escalation. The example of the renewed escalation in South Sudan shows that hybrid security arrangements should not be seen as a panacea, but rather as a reality that exists—whether we like it or not. An important question thus is whether the tensions that are inherent in this type of hybrid security arrangement can be managed and sustained in the short run, and what the prospects are for developing them into more viable and sustainable ones.

## Notes

1. The CPA signed in 2005 laid the foundations for this monopoly, stating that no armed groups allied to the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) or Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) would be allowed to operate outside the two forces, and calling for the integration of other armed groups into either the SPLA or the SAF (The Comprehensive Peace Agreement between The Government of the Republic of the Sudan and The Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/ Sudan People’s Liberation Army’, VI).
2. Boege et al., ‘On Hybrid Political Orders’.

3. The article refers to the commonly known 10 states of the Republic of South Sudan, and not the 28 new states created in a decree issued by President Kiir in October 2015. The state as sub-entity of the country should not be confused with the national state that is supported with efforts of state-building.
4. Fieldwork was conducted by Rens Willems as part of his doctoral research. See Willems, 'Dynamics of Security' and *Security and Hybridity*.
5. Aguirre and van der Borgh, 'Building Peace'; Boas and Jennings, 'Insecurity and Development'; Call and Cousens, *Ending Wars*; Paris and Sisk, *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding*.
6. Barnett and Zurcher, 'The Peacebuilder's Contract'.
7. Boege et al., 'On Hybrid Political Orders'.
8. *Ibid.*, 24.
9. Migdal, *State in Society*; Gledhill, 'Power and its Disguises'.
10. Migdal, *State in Society*, 12.
11. Hagmann and Péclard, 'Negotiating Statehood', 542–543.
12. Tilly, *Democracy*, 12.
13. Hagmann and Péclard, 'Negotiating Statehood', 542–543.
14. *Ibid.*, 545.
15. Baker, 'Linking State and Non-State'; Baker, 'Justice and Security Architecture'; Jaffe, 'The Hybrid State'; Jeursen and van der Borgh, 'Security Provision after Regime Change'.
16. Luckham and Kirk, 'The Two Faces of Security', 9.
17. *Ibid.*, 10.
18. *Ibid.*, 6.
19. *Ibid.*, 5.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*
22. Hagmann and Péclard, 'Negotiating Statehood', 539.
23. *Ibid.*, 546–554. We follow Hagmann and Péclard in distinguishing between (a) the different actors involved; (b) the sites where negotiations take place; and (c) the objects of negotiation.
24. Hagmann and Péclard, 'Negotiating Statehood'.
25. *Ibid.*, 551.
26. *Ibid.*, 550, note 7; Migdal, *State in Society*, 107. Hagmann and Péclard emphasise that the notion of arena transcends classical political scales (local, national, international) and that negotiations can take place at several and changing locations. They base their notion of arena on de Sardan who in his turn basis the concept on Bourdieu's field theory. In our view, following Migdal, these are arenas of domination and opposition. A key characteristic of arenas is the fact that (groups of) actors contest certain claims and practices that affect power positions and the right to domination.
27. Hagmann and Péclard, 'Negotiating Statehood', 552.
28. Mutimer, 'Critical Security Studies', 54–57; Boas and Jennings, 'Insecurity and Development', 386.
29. Menkhaus, 'Governance in the Hinterland', 7. The reasons for states to do so can be various. It can be the result of threats to the position of the government, discovery of natural resources, public or international pressure, etc.
30. *Ibid.*
31. Jok, *Sudan*, 115.
32. The Nuer are the second largest ethnic group in South Sudan, primarily pastoralist, and consist of a number of tribes. Apart from South Sudan, they also reside in western Ethiopia. For more on the Nuer, cf. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*; Evans-Pritchard, *Kinship and Marriage*; Evans-Pritchard, *Nuer Religion*; Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas*.
33. More than 100,000 people (almost all civilians) were estimated to have been killed in this attack and the victorious Nuer looted and took cattle with them back North. This is one of the most raw and still persistent wounds in the South (and in Jonglei in particular) and still affects the relations between Dinka and Nuer today (Young, *Sudan People's Liberation Army*, 3). In August 2011 Riek Machar apologised and said that he 'was responsible for both

the good things and the bad things that came as a result of the Nasir Declaration' (Machar, quoted in Sudan Tribune: 'South Sudan's Machar Confirms Bor "Apology", Calls for Wider Reconciliation', 28 August 2011. Available at: <http://www.sudantribune.com/South-Sudan-s-Machar-confirms-Bor,39979> [Accessed 31 March 2016]). The reactions of both Nuer and Dinka communities to his apology have been split.

34. Small Arms Survey, *Armed Groups in Sudan*, 3.
35. For an elaborate account of the conflict in Sudan and the peace process see, for instance, Johnson, *The Root Causes*; Young, *The Fate of Sudan*; Thomas, *South Sudan*.
36. ICG, *Politics and Transition*, 4.
37. Ibid.
38. Mc Evoy and LeBrun, *Uncertain Future*, 30–31.
39. Thomas, *South Sudan*, 282.
40. For a detailed account of the outbreak of violence and the events leading up to it see ICG, *South Sudan*.
41. See Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), 'Agreement on the Resolution of the Crisis in South Sudan (ARCISS)'. Available at: <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article56093> [Accessed 31 March 2016].
42. For a more detailed account of the LRA, see Allen and Vlassenroot, *The Lord's Resistance Army*.
43. Schomerus, *The Lord's Resistance Army*, 18.
44. As mentioned, Machar had been fighting on the side of Khartoum, which was also at the time when Kony had an alliance with Khartoum. Later, when Machar was Vice-President of South Sudan he became the chief mediator in the Juba Peace Talks between the LRA and the Ugandan Government. In Western Equatoria State there is much distrust of Machar, with accusations that the Juba Peace talks led by him brought the LRA into Western Equatoria.
45. van Puijenbroek and Plooijer, *How EnLightning is the Thunder*, 6.
46. Heaton and Fick, *Field Despatch*.
47. OCHA, *LRA Regional Update*.
48. Interview, GoSS WES State Representative, Yambio, WES, 1 April 2011.
49. Discussion Group, youth, Yambio, WES, 2 April 2011.
50. Heaton and Fick, *Field Despatch*.
51. Interview, Paramount Chief WES, Yambio, WES, 4 April 2011.
52. Martin Bell, 'The Soldiers are Armed with Bows and Arrows'. *Daily Mail*, 2 April 2011.
53. Discussion group, women, Yambio, WES, 2 April 2011.
54. R. Ruati, 'Western Equatoria: Arrow Boys Head Applauds Victory over LRA Fighters'. *Sudan Tribune*, 21 June 2011. Available at: <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article39279> [Accessed 31 March 2016]. Since April 2011 chiefs in Yambio County decided to support the Arrow Boys with 'contributions [...] to boost their operations'.
55. Interview, Arrow Boys Commander of Operation, Yambio, WES, 7 April 2011.
56. Interview, Arrow Boys and SPLA, Sangha Payam, Nzara, WES, 7 April 2011.
57. Interview, community member, Yambio, WES, 4 April 2011.
58. Discussion group, women, Yambio, WES, 2 April 2011.
59. Interview, community member, Yambio, WES, 4 April 2011.
60. Interview, Commander of UPDF forces in Southern Sudan, DRC and CAR, Nzara, WES, 4 April 2011.
61. Interview, SPLA Officer, Nzara, WES, 6 April 2011.
62. See Walraet, 'Le Sud-Soudan', 195.
63. Interview, SPLA Officer, Nzara, WES, 6 April 2011.
64. Interview, Commander of UPDF forces in Southern Sudan, DRC and CAR, Nzara, WES, 4 April 2011.
65. Interview, local NGO, Yambio, WES, 4 April 2011.
66. Interview, community member, Yambio, WES, 4 April 2011.
67. Branch and Mampilly, 'Winning the War', 4; Walraet, 'Le Sud-Soudan', 195. As the largest ethnic group in the country, the Dinka are well represented in the SPLA, and complaints about Dinka dominance are widespread among the other groups in South Sudan.



68. See UN, 'Report of the Secretary-General', which mentions the role played by the Arrow Boys, but also points at 'the long-term consequences and impact of having such armed civilian groups operating outside of Government command and control is a matter of concern' (para 21).
69. Interview, SPLA Officer, Nzara, WES, 6 April 2011.
70. Interview, SPLA Officer, Nzara, WES, 6 April 2011.
71. R. Ruati, 'WES Arrow Boys Take the Lead in LRA Fighting'. *Sudan Tribune*, 16 December 2009. Available at: [http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?iframe&page=imprimable&id\\_article=33481](http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?iframe&page=imprimable&id_article=33481) [Accessed 31 March 2016]; Fick, *South Sudan's Post-Election*.
72. 'Sudan: Arm Militia to Contain LRA in Western Equatoria, Say Leaders'. *IRIN News*, 10 December 2010. Available at: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/91342/SUDAN-Arm-militia-to-contain-LRA-in-Western-Equatoria-say-leaders> [Accessed 31 March 2016].
73. Interview, Arrow Boys and SPLA at SPLA camp, Sangua Payam, Nzara, WES, 7 April 2011.
74. Interview, Simon Khamis Pee, Arrow Boys Commander of Operation, Yambio, WES, 7 April 2011.
75. Interview, Arrow Boys Commander of Operation, Yambio, WES, 7 April 2011; Interview, Arrow Boys, Sangua Payam, Nzara, WES, 7 April 2011.
76. For an elaborate overview of federalism in South Sudan, see Johnson, *Federalism in the History*.
77. 'Bakosoro Denies Rumours about Arrest of Equatoria Governors'. *Sudan Tribune*, 30 June 2014. Available at: <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article51523> [Accessed 31 March 2016].
78. 'Sudan Security Re-arrests Ex-governor of W. Equatoria'. *Sudan Tribune*, 23 December 2015. Available at: <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article57471> [Accessed 31 March 2016].
79. 'Understanding New Violence in South Sudan's Western Equatoria'. *Radio Tamazuj*, 10 October 2015. Available at: <https://radiotamazuj.org/en/article/understanding-new-violence-south-sudans-western-equatoria> [Accessed 31 March 2016].
80. 'SSNLM Forces in Western Equatoria State Deny Defection to SPLA-IO'. *Sudan Tribune*, 8 February 2016. Available at: <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article57961> [Accessed 31 March 2016].
81. Menkhaus, 'Governance in the Hinterland', 7.

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