CHAPTER 14

Religion, Governance, and the 'Peace–Humanitarian–Development Nexus' in South Sudan

Jonathan C. Agensky

INTRODUCTION

The July 2011 independence of the new Republic of South Sudan marks the successful outcome of a long-time struggle, encompassing a wide spectrum of local and international activities. Included among them is a variety of UN-supported peace and relief operations like the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)-led peace process, the UN-led Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS), the UN Advance Mission, the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), and, following independence, the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). Nevertheless, deep-rooted Southern animosities quickly upended the internal peace on which secession relied, troubling both international and local efforts toward sustainable peace and security. Early post-independence eruptions of violence exposed the precariousness of the new state. By 2014, the potential of a South Sudanese civil war came to fruition with the

J. C. Agensky (✉)
Ohio University, Athens, OH, USA
e-mail: agensky@ohio.edu

defection of senior figures from the South Sudanese parliament and its subsequent dissolution. Factional and interethnic violence have withstood various peace accords from 2015 to 2017, leading to widespread human rights abuses, devastating humanitarian crises, famine, and pervasive threats to human security. Amid widespread bi- and multilateral support, questioning how South Sudan become a newly independent state plagued by violence and contestation speaks to the intended and unintended consequences of peacebuilding in Africa, the impact of peace-seeking activities that parallel and overlap UN peace processes, and the wide range of non-state actors critical to securing peace outcomes.

This chapter highlights practices in the wider peacebuilding field that seek similar outcomes as UN peace operations or otherwise affect the background conditions necessary for their success. It treats South Sudan as an illustrative case study that uniquely reflects processes that shape and regulate sites of conflict, chronic emergency, and limited statehood across postcolonial sub-Saharan states. I argue that, despite the 'view from above', South Sudan's independence ultimately depended on two interconnected peacebuilding frameworks: a well-recognised top-down and centralised approach based on peacekeeping and diplomacy, and a lesser-known diffuse and multi-dimensional approach rooted in a nexus of religion, humanitarianism, and networked wartime governance. Focusing on the latter, I illustrate how the incorporation of religious institutions into postcolonial global and regional aid-based governance networks enables church-based actors to pursue political, social, and structural interventions critical to UN peace operations. In doing so, I emphasise the impact of religion, aid, and governance on peacebuilding in Africa, with a view toward contributing to discussions about holistic, integrated, and people-centered approaches to sustainable peace.

Recent literature on religion and peacebuilding increasingly emphasises the positive impact of religious actors, ideas, and institutions on international peace. Numerous religiously-identified activities in areas of wartime governance, aid, refugee and displaced persons assistance, track-two diplomacy, and civil mobilisation parallel UN operations across sub-Saharan Africa. Well known examples include Sudan, Uganda, Nigeria, Mozambique, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Liberia. Throughout the second Sudanese civil war (1983–2005) and into South Sudan's independence (2005–2011), local and international

Christian groups utilised their roles within regional and international aid networks to conduct multi-track peace diplomacy, conflict management, and local governance. They helped minimise internal fragmentation, establish the viability of a southern state, and secure the conditions necessary to advance the South toward secession. Considering recent critiques of state-centric approaches and emphases on 'people-power,' these activities demonstrate the importance of parallel peace processes undertaken by non-state actors, and, notably, religious actors, in securing peace outcomes.

Religious actors and institutions are often uniquely situated to provide social services to populations in crisis and publicly legitimate governing parties. I argue this reflects modes of postcolonial governance, envisioned here as constituting a 'religion–governance interface': a context in which religious groupings are relied upon to perform sovereign functions, encompassing local and transnational actors and institutions responsible for the delivery of public goods and the provision of civilian livelihood. At the same time, these activities encompass their own sets of problems. In the case of South Sudan, issues included problematic tradeoffs and spillover effects as the church became increasingly undercut by overly instrumentalised relationships with the principal South Sudanese rebel group, the subsequent Government of South Sudan, and the international community. Attention to how the 'religion–governance interface' enables activities in times of war and crisis, therefore, uncovers sites in which external coordination across long-term peacebuilding efforts should be strengthened in ways that better reflect the political and institutional realities of postcolonial sub-Saharan states and, more specifically, the institutional arrangements of religion in the region.

This chapter has three sections. First, I discuss practices of international peace against the backdrop of human security, multidimensional peacebuilding, and calls for 'people-centered' approaches. Second, I outline the central roles played by the Church and Christian NGOs in postcolonial governance and statehood. Third, I illustrate the importance of a 'religion–governance interface' for the successes and failures of peacebuilding in South Sudan. More than simply a matter of South Sudanese politics, this history lays bare the heterogeneity of peacebuilding in Africa and the religious institutions and practices that overflow mainstream discourses and centralised operations.

BEYOND STATE-CENTRIC APPROACHES TO INTERNATIONAL PEACE

Considerable scholarship addresses changes in twenty-first century global security and the role of the UN in protecting international peace, securing welfare, and promoting human development. A principal theme concerns state failure in the global South and the struggle for control by opposing non-state groups. Across sub-Saharan Africa (and elsewhere), political violence occurs in societies that have limited state power, lack political stability and effective political institutions, and are unable to establish authority over large portions of territory (for example Somalia, Angola, DRC, Mali, Nigeria, and Sudan). Conflicts are driven by a complex interaction of private interests, group identities (i.e. ethno-national and ethno-religious sectarianism), and large-scale social cleavages (i.e. social, political, economic, and cultural). They tend to be protracted, blurring the boundaries between civilians and combatants, resulting in mass civilian death and displacement.

Although international actors historically intervened into war-affected societies in postcolonial Africa (for example Congo, Nigeria, and Sudan), only in the post-Cold War period were themes of medium- and long-term peacebuilding placed on the international policy agenda, reflecting an institutional shift toward multilateral solutions for international peace. Over this period, a 'protection of civilians' agenda emerged making civilian security in post-conflict environments "critical to the legitimacy and credibility of UN peacekeeping missions, the peace agreements they are deployed to help implement, and the institution of the United Nations itself" (UN 2009, p. 1). This is now part of an overarching human security framework subject to a diverse policy and implementation environment composed of states, multilateral organisations, and humanitarian and other non-state actors, with UN peace operations at the center. In contrast to state-centric security, human security requires effective civilian protection, inclusive political institutions, and a functional civil society, fostering complex relations between security providers.

As global security regimes focus on the wellbeing of populations and the conditions underlying 'weak' and 'failed' states, they disproportionately concentrate on postcolonial settings, especially in Africa. Beginning with the 1999 UN mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), UN peacekeeping missions across the continent have intensified their interactions with host states, humanitarians, and other non-state actors (for example MONUC in DRC; UNOCI in Côte d'Ivoire; and UNMIS

and UNAMID in Sudan). Peacekeepers are now authorised to pursue actions beyond monitoring the implementation of peace agreements, becoming increasingly networked with various other actors to achieve specific political outcomes (for example operations in the Central African Republic and DRC). UN peacekeeping intersects political missions and peacebuilding operations, deploying offensive force and state-building mandates that push "the scope of activities beyond what the UN peace-keepers are accustomed to" (Peter 2015, p. 350). It has become part of a broader attempt to identify and support structures capable of strengthening peace and prevent relapse into conflict by balancing the interests of states and societies.

UN peace operations are now "multidimensional, addressing the full spectrum of peacebuilding activities, from providing secure environments to monitoring human rights and rebuilding the capacity of the state" (UN 2009, p. 2). Traditionally distinct practices intermingle, necessitating effective platforms to synergise across sectors and manage transitions from conflict to post-conflict settings. However, UN peace operations exhibit a 'coherence and coordination deficit'. Despite recognition that various "dimensions of peacebuilding systems are interlinked," practical integration has proven difficult (de Coning 2007, pp. 1–2). Accordingly, a range of policy recommendations seeks to strengthen both internal and external coherence among UN clusters and non-UN interventions and establish common strategic plans and shared priorities. This is most recently reflected by the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO), which advocates "innovative approaches that integrate conflict prevention, governance, development and human rights" (UN 2015, p. 21).

However, sustainable peace also requires local engagement and expertise as well as deepened commitment to safeguarding the lives of those in conflict-affected countries. There is a need to eschew 'white SUV culture' in favor of "a more human face that prioritizes closer interaction with local people to better understand their concerns, needs and aspirations" (UN 2015, p. 15). To that end, HIPPO promotes a 'people-centered' approach, aiming to link UN field-based personnel and local communities for improved mandate implementation and a stronger culture of protection. HIPPO suggests 'UN peace operations' be conceptualised as a "single spectrum of peace and security missions and other initiatives" and that the UN itself "become a more field-oriented and people-centered organization in its peace operations" (ibid.).

The 2016 UN 'Peace Promise' echoes these ideas by emphasising the need to "work together across silos and at the peace-humanitarian-development nexus in addressing the drivers of violent conflict, delivering humanitarian assistance and developing institutions, resilience and capacities simultaneously in a complementary and synergetic way" (UN 2016).

Calls for stronger field-oriented and 'people-centered' capabilities focus on utilising a wider range of international, regional, and local actors across a wider range of activities. These policy developments also echo recent scholarship on strategic and sustainable peacebuilding that emphasises the importance of integrating ideas, institutions, and 'people-power', for which religious actors are considered a principal resource (Philpott and Powers 2010). Although policy orthodoxy conventionally treats religion as a problem rather than solution for international crises, the participation of religious actors, organisations, and institutions is increasingly recognised as a significant part of international aid and peace, crosscutting what UN Peacebuilding calls the 'Peace-Humanitarian-Development Nexus.' Peacebuilding now encompasses aid and development efforts not automatically associated with peacebuilding by actors with considerable social capital to transform conflict dynamics. This is especially the case for religious actors in Southern states who are often deeply invested in these activities and embedded within overlapping networks. The question here is the extent to which these actors have been and could be effectively incorporated into strategic peacebuilding designs.

Church, Governance, and the Postcolonial State

Religion is central to contemporary discussions about democratisation, aid, and security across the African continent (Ranger 2008, pp. 4–5; Commission for Africa 2005, p. 27). As mechanisms of peace and international order increasingly rely on religious organisations to manage episodes of crisis, these discussions harmonise with broader 'post-secular' framings that highlight the social and political roles of religion and new accommodations between the secular state and religious actors in the post-Cold War period (de Vries and Sullivan 2006; Habermas 2008). With respect to contemporary peacebuilding, for example, Powers (2010, p. 328) argues that religious leaders at the local, national, and international level uniquely exemplify the potential of 'people power,' embodying a degree of moral credibility that "allows them

to be effective advocates for peaceful social change, to mediate between conflicting parties, and to provide new visions for the future in societies torn by conflict." More generally, religious actors and institutions are widely acknowledged to be densely networked at local, regional, and global levels and to possess valuable material, social, cultural, and ethical resources. For those concerned with strategic approaches to sustainable peace, they represent an underutilised resource.

For sub-Saharan states, the public power of religion stems from a long trajectory of postcolonial governance in areas of security, aid, and development. Differences notwithstanding, religiously identified interventions are common features of postcolonial struggles and overlap the regional presence of international NGOs following decolonisation. Liberal internationalism has long depended on religious groupings to perform sovereign functions in colonial and postcolonial settings, encompassing local and transnational actors and institutions responsible for public goods and civilian livelihood. Postcolonial states defy 'Weberian' ideals of statehood modeled on European polities that cement public authority entirely within the secular state. They comprise multiple order-producing systems coterminous with state power (Mampilly 2011, p. 239). Across contexts (for example Afghanistan, Somalia, Libya, Sierra Leone, and Sudan), control over violence and provision of law, order, security, and health is subject to "dispersed, fragmented and overlapping structures that substitute for the weakness of the central and legally constituted state" (Podder 2014, p. 215). This pattern is exemplified by the sub-Saharan Church, which, as a broadly construed social, religious, and political institution, is embedded in overlapping regional and international networks, both religious and governmental. The global peacebuilding field needs to be reconceptualised in ways that reflect these political and institutional realities and, more specifically, the institutional arrangements of religion in the region.

Following decolonisation, the Church entrenched itself as a principal source of social service, advocating on behalf of economic and political inclusion and providing services to needy populations. This constituted a pattern across the continent, seen in Sudan, Kenya, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Congo, Mozambique, and elsewhere. Examples include the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission established by the Sudan Council of Churches; rural education administered by the National Christian Council of Kenya; and agricultural development by the Zimbabwe Council of Churches—to name a few (Gifford 2009, p. 50). The Church

accrued widespread credibility and moral authority, contrasting the rampant patrimonialism, corruption, and 'politics of the belly' that characterised many postcolonial African states (Bayart 1993, p. 21).

Decolonisation, uneven development, and violent conflict also led to an intensified international NGO presence. By the 1980s, numerous African governments were unable to fulfill basic governance. International NGOs took their place, many of which were Christian identified and evolved from church-based relief and development structures. Western donors, adopting neoliberal approaches to foreign aid and weary of limited state capacity, channeled aid through NGOs and local churches. In South Sudan, for example, bi- and multilateral development aid organisations like the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the British Department for International Development (DfID), and the World Food Programme funded a variety of international partners to provide services from water, sanitation, and hygiene to healthcare and education. In Mozambique, religious and secular NGOs were at times more powerful than the state. Church-affiliated NGOs like World Vision International and Christian Care entered Zimbabwe as relief organisations in the early 1970s, coming to play central roles in the development of the postcolonial state.

The interpenetration of religion, governance, and aid created an environment conducive to religiously identified public activity. It vested Christian-identified organisations with local credibility, authority, and social capital, strategically positioning the Church within overlapping networks of security, aid, and governance. For international stakeholders, the NGO sector was crucial for the democratisation of African countries and the creation of a pluralistic civil society, for which Christian NGOs were especially well-positioned. This overlapped and informed the Church's role in providing social service and local governance; its increasing orientation toward relief and development; and its growing entanglements in global aid regimes. Religious and secular NGOs thus became implicated in sustaining state power and economic development while also creating conditions enabling governments to streamline and limit their own role in civil services. Paradoxically, this both supported and undercut state legitimacy while also jeopardising the independence and autonomy of the Church and expending its own social and political capital.

Reconceptualising *political order* within postcolonial spaces is therefore critical for understanding how religious institutional configurations impact peace outcomes. The interface between religion and governance

encompasses three dimensions relevant to peacebuilding Africa. First, there is a governance–brokerage dimension in which religious organisations subcontract social services, infrastructure, social capital, and legitimacy. Second, there is a political–strategic dimension in which they formulate their own organisational and strategic mandates and conduct various forms of political entrepreneurship and mobilisation. Third, there is an instrumental–organisational dimension in which the selective and limited engagement of these organisations by state, rebel, and international actors leads to potential trade-offs and spillover effects that can negatively impact both long-term peace outcomes and organisational integrity.

Political Fragmentation, Violence, and the New Republic of South Sudan

Prior to South Sudan's independence, conflict between Sudan's Khartoum-based government (the 'North') and southern insurgent groups (the 'South') produced two civil wars. These wars were part of a broader conflict system that displaced millions of people, intensifying the effects of environmental crisis and famine. The second Sudanese civil war between the North and South began in 1983. It was fought mainly between the North and what had become the primary southern rebel group, the South Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). It was also fought among various southern factions, often through northern support. The war formally ended in 2005 with the 9 January signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The principal signatories were the Sudanese state and the SPLM/A. The CPA formalised a series of protocols established through a peace process led by IGAD (comprised of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, and Uganda), 'Troika' states (USA, UK, and Norway), and the African Union. At its core was the possibility of southern secession through referendum following a six-year interim period of southern autonomy and national power sharing. It also afforded the bulk of southern political representation to the SPLM/A, which transitioned into the interim southern government and, after independence, has dominated the Government of South Sudan.

South Sudan's independence depended on two interconnected peacebuilding frameworks. The first, exemplified by the CPA, reflects a top-down centralised approach based on peacekeeping and diplomacy. It

facilitated the negotiated settlement between Khartoum and the South and established the formal parameters for an internationally recognised secession. This framework became the principal referent for pre-independence peace operations, like UNMIS, which focused mainly on CPA protocols and the ceasefire between North and South. The second framework, exemplified by reconciliation among rebel factions and local support for the SPLA, reflects a more diffuse and multi-dimensional approach rooted in a nexus of religion, global humanitarianism, and networked wartime governance. It unified the southern insurgency; undercut the Khartoum-sponsored proxy war in the South; and constituted the SPLA as the legitimate political voice of South Sudan. Importantly, this framework secured the conditions necessary for both the negotiated settlement as well as secession itself. However, it also allowed the SPLA to channel funds derived through oil revenue and bilateral arrangements into security and military expenditures; unintentionally enabled the formation of local patron–client networks; and contributed to widespread corruption.

Violence between principal parties escalated following the referendum, propelled by the incomplete implementation of core CPA milestones. However, violence also escalated within the South. The CPA did not include all relevant parties (i.e. civil society and political and military factions) other than Khartoum's National Congress Party and the SPLM. At least 36 militias under the umbrella of the South Sudan Defense Forces) were excluded from the peace process. Nor did the CPA address the broader conflict system active throughout both the North and the South, leaving unresolved many core issues with respect to power sharing, equity, human rights, and security. Armed southern factions protested the SPLM- and Dinka-dominated government. Disgruntled politicians and political entrepreneurs traded on their abilities to mobilise, if by force, large militias to extract political concessions from the Government of South Sudan. Government efforts to resolve these issues through political concessions and ministerial posts, disarmament campaigns, immunity programs, and assassinations were unsuccessful. Violence was, and continues to be, fuelled by an admixture of political interests and entrepreneurship on the one hand, and tribal and ethnic rivalries, on the other—exacerbated by chronic underdevelopment, abject marginalisation, and war. The push to end the conflict and secede suppressed these issues. They forcefully resurfaced in the absence of a unified enemy and competition for post-independence dispensation.

Conflict, Aid, and Development

Outbreaks of large-scale violence and fragmentation expose multi-layered and multi-scalar tensions that have historically impeded peace and security in South Sudan. Throughout the second civil war and post-conflict period, these tensions crystalised into an increasingly autonomous local conflict system driven by rent-seeking, political entrepreneurship, and tribal and ethnic rivalries. Much of the death and displacement ascribed to Sudan's second civil war stemmed from factional fighting and mobilisation within the south, exploited by Khartoum through a sustained proxy war. The SPLA relied on international patronage to secure itself as the de facto governing entity of South Sudan, a status formalised through the CPA. It was far from the unproblematic political and military expression of the people's will, against which it often found itself. In order to achieve recognition and position itself as a quasi-sovereign actor in the international system, the SPLA required various means to manage factional struggles, suppress rival claimants, and establish political authority.

Although southern groups faced and resisted marginalisation, isolation, and exclusion by the northern elite, they also faced challenges from each other. The South always lacked a coherent ethnic or political basis from which its own polity could easily be formed, despite its representation in colonial materials, international treaties, local and regional peace-accords, and missionary cartography. South Sudan continues to encompass diverse ethno-national and ethno-social identities. Sudan's civil wars demonstrate this, fuelled by differing intersubjective cartographies, primordialist appeals, instrumental agendas, and emancipatory politics (Jok and Hutchinson 1999; Hilhorst and van Leeuwen 2005; Maitre 2009; Branch and Mampilly 2005, p. 4). Despite varying degrees of political autonomy and multiple civil wars, South Sudan remains an internally contested space, organised around interethnic lines that, in turn, create precarious boundaries traversed by raiders, pillagers, and militias that recruit men and boys at gunpoint. Considerable efforts on the part of local and international groups attempted to address these matters, but ended up only deferring them in favor of promoting independence.

Church, Aid, and Wartime Governance in South Sudan

Many international, regional, and local actors and agendas shaped the peacebuilding field in South Sudan. In the final phases of the IGAD-led peace negotiations, the UN authorised the Advance Mission in

Sudan (UNAMIS) to support peace talks and prepare for a subsequent UN peace operation. After the signing of the CPA, the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) was mandated as an observer and verification force to assist principal parties with implementation of the agreement in cooperation with the AU and international partners. Following independence, UNMIS was replaced by the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), focused on supporting South Sudan's new government as well as protecting civilians and promoting development, peacebuilding, and recovery.

During the conflict, UN relief and development activities also incorporated peacebuilding objectives. In addition to repatriation of internally displaced persons, area development, and civil society support, for example, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) disseminated information on peacebuilding and engaged in community-level conflict transformation. UNICEF provided support for social services, infrastructure, local NGOs, and civic education while implementing peacebuilding programs and promoting humanitarian principles and human rights compliance. In partnership with the World Food Programme, UNICEF also established OLS, an umbrella organisation for a consortium of UN agencies and NGOs that created an organised framework for international aid and relief. OLS included most of the aid agencies working in Sudan, many of whom developed peacebuilding programs offering "peace education and training in conflict analysis, facilitating dialogue between warring parties, or promoting reconciliation and preventing conflict through reconstruction or economic development" (Bradbury et al. 2006, p. 23).

UN activities both supported and intersected grassroots peacebuilding initiatives, addressing 'second-tier' conflicts indirectly related to war between Khartoum and the SPLM/A. At the center of these initiatives were local and international Christian groups like the New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC), the Presbyterian Church of Sudan, and various international Christian NGOs. Through its humanitarian mandate, this constellation of actors supported the IGAD peace process by conducting public messaging and awareness campaigns and community-level peacebuilding, pioneering a 'people-to-people' approach to peace. From 2000 to 2002, the NSCC took part in 'strategic linkages conferences' in South Sudan, Kenya, and Uganda that paralleled IGAD meetings. Based on their success, several large secular organisations adopted the people-to-people approach, including Pact Sudan, USAID's Sudan Peace Fund, UNDP, and UNICEF.

According to a Rift Valley Institute report, church-driven peacebuilding took place within a 'governance gap,' "on the periphery of the state, where local forms of governance exist, but central government and the opposition movements have little or no formal administrative capacity and limited control" (Bradbury et al. 2006, p. 22). However, this would be better conceptualised within a framework of postcolonial statehood, which has traditionally relied on a religion-governance interface. Accordingly, various church-based organisations utilised their positions within global and local governance networks to conduct aid, advocacy, and peacebuilding. They worked closely with the SPLM/A and the Government of South Sudan, international relief organisations, and various international churches and para-church groups. Globally, their labours reinforced the SPLM/A's standing as the central political voice of the South, effacing internal fragmentation and establishing the viability of a potentially independent southern state. Locally, they facilitated and fulfilled governance, delivered aid, and conducted peacebuilding initiatives that held the South together. From this perspective, the SPLA demonstrates patterns common to postcolonial insurgencies (and states) with respect to subcontracting legitimacy, drawing on religious structures, and mobilising both grassroots and transnational support.

I argue the peacebuilding field in South Sudan cannot be fully understood without attention to these activities, their embeddedness in a global and regional nexus of religion, aid, and governance, and the role of religious organisations in establishing order and authority throughout the conflict. In the remainder of this chapter, I provide three empirical snapshots that flesh this out, focusing on the crystallisation of the religion–governance in South Sudan following the first Sudanese civil war, the role of the church in wartime governance, and post-CPA struggles.

First, during Sudan's first civil war (1955–1972), the World Council of Churches (WCC), All Africa Conference of Churches, and the interdenominational American humanitarian agency Church World Service provided relief aid and financial support for southern Sudanese refugees in Uganda, Ethiopia, the Central African Republic, and Zaire/Congo. Having previously conducted aid and advocacy targeting Biafra's secession, they negotiated with Khartoum to create humanitarian space for aid delivery in the South. A decade into the conflict, they expanded their activities to more actively encompass peacebuilding and political advocacy. With support from the Khartoum-based Sudan Council of Churches, officials toured neighboring refugee camps

seeking endorsement of a draft peace proposal that would ultimately form the basis of the final settlement. With much success, churches and relief agencies lobbied for support across Europe, including the WCC, Lutheran World Federation, and Norwegian Church Aid.

These activities cemented a nascent religiously identified humanitarian–peacebuilding nexus, for which the 1973 Addis Ababa peace agreement was a milestone (Collins 2008, p. 108; Howell 1978, pp. 430–435; Werner et al. 2000, pp. 391–394). They demonstrated the ability of the international Church to intervene into the postcolonial politics of sub-Saharan African states; to do so in conjunction with the delivery of aid and within an overarching humanitarian framework; and to successfully secure political outcomes. In conjunction with the agreement's provisions, they also facilitated an influx of new international groups into southern Sudan, both religious and secular, creating the conditions through which the Sudanese Church became implicated in the provision and implementation of international aid and governance.

Second, church-based actors became central to wartime governance, aid, and local peacebuilding in the post-Cold War phase of Sudan's second civil war. A hub for international aid and peacebuilding, the NSCC was established by the major Christian denominations to build governance capacity, provide social services, and manage international funds secured through the UN-sponsored OLS humanitarian initiative. The NSCC was part of the WCC ecumenical framework, deriving funding from European, North American, and regional ecumenical bodies. It was also operationally and financially supported by a group of church-based aid organisations, exemplifying the institutional effects of regional humanitarian governance and its overlap with the wider peacebuilding field. The NSCC became increasingly central to governance and institutional reform in the South. It was tasked with resolving internal southern violence and facilitating peace and reconciliation by the SPLA's newly created political wing, the SPLM, which strategically revised its relationship with the Church in the attempt to establish effective civil administration in areas liberated from the North.

This new relationship was exemplified by the 1997 joint SPLM and NSCC conference at the Kajiko parish center of the Episcopal Church of Sudan. The Kajiko conference utilised the NSCC's social capital to mitigate tensions between ethnic groupings and help resolve a devastating SPLA split that had been exploited by Khartoum and became responsible for the bulk of death and destruction during the war.

It also strengthened links between the SPLM/A and the Church, endorsing a set of common objectives on local peace and liberation (the 'Yei Declaration'). Kajiko reaffirmed the Church's commitment to the insurgency and mandated the NSCC with facilitating southern reconciliation. It laid the foundation for the Church-led 'Person-to-Person' peace process, which culminated in the 1999 Wunlit agreement that reunited the SPLA—paving the way for the IGAD-led peace negotiations between North and South.

Third, in the post-CPA period, as UNMIS and its international partners focused on CPA protocols, local and international Christian groups provided civic education and grassroots peacebuilding, helping advance the South through a timely and organised referendum and independence. Christian humanitarian NGOs like World Vision International, Tearfund UK, Norwegian Church Aid, and Catholic Relief Services incorporated longer-term developmental frameworks that centered on matters of governance—including supporting local governments through decentralisation. In terms of local peacebuilding, their efforts included the establishment of conflict early warning and response systems and a civil society track empowered to monitor and respond to internal southern violence. However, these organisations faced 'cold' relations with South Sudan government, as the SPLM asserted its political autonomy. They also faced unresolved southern grievances and the absence of an effective South Sudanese national identity. Throughout the war, social reassurances in the face of repressive tactics by Khartoum, the SPLA, and other rebel militias were not found in the certitudes of ethnic or national identification typically associated with civil or secessionist war. Instead, they were partly provided by a religion–governance interface, for which internal fragmentation was an enduring problem.

After its long history of providing aid, governance, and social services to the southern population, these issues symbolised the Church's broader struggle to find its public and private footing amid the impending normalisation and formalisation of southern governance. Indicating the importance of humanitarianism and governance to its institutional identity, the local Church reaffirmed its commitments to four key areas of activity: (1) repatriation and resettlement of internally displaced persons, through its social wing of the Emergency Relief, Rehabilitation and Development Agency; (2) peacebuilding and reconciliation, by establishing forums across the South at various levels; (3) advocacy and lobbying, by targeting various national, regional, and international

partners with which it was already engaged; and (4) civic and voter education, by conducting campaigns at the grassroots and other levels, as well as engaging international observers and monitors (Sudan Council of Churches 2010). Despite their immediate successes, however, they failed to achieve much beyond secession.

After a prolonged history of productive entanglements, Church, aid, and the future of South Sudan had become inextricable. They created a nexus infused with complex global social dynamics, mixed mandates, and relations of dependency. The organisational capacity and competence of the principal ecumenical body weakened and it experienced issues with management and leadership. In many ways, internal Church dynamics mirrored social and institutional development across the South. Socially, the Church had become fragmented. Institutionally, it had become prone to corruption. Consequently, it faced a crisis of legitimacy. Humanitarian-centered ministry played a large role in the Church's vision of the future but the Church faced a double struggle. First, it was concerned not to be beholden to the guidelines and objectives of the common donor platform of bi- and multilateral agencies that were releasing new funds oriented to longer term, development goals in the South. Second, it struggled with being, and being perceived to be, impartial and independent of the government. Both struggles affected the public legitimacy and trust of the Church, exemplifying longer-term societal and institutional effects of the religion governance interface.

Conclusion

This chapter located South Sudan's precarious peace within an aid-based postcolonial order crystallised across sub-Saharan states. By calling attention to South Sudan's humanitarian past, it emphasised the historical importance of religious agency within this order for regulating and *producing* international spaces. Empirically, this paper questioned how South Sudan became a newly independent state plagued by violence and contestation, facing a prolonged and intractable civil war. Conceptually, it questioned how we think about the wider peacebuilding field with respect to intersections of religion, aid, and governance. Emphasising how these activities encompassed problematic tradeoffs and spillover effects, it pinpointed sites in which external coordination across long-term peacebuilding efforts should be both strengthened and more effectively utilised. Attention to how these relationships take shape is critical

for discovering ways to *strategically* incorporate the full-spectrum of relevant actors into peacebuilding frameworks.

Military and humanitarian action alone are insufficient for achieving international peace in the absence of effective governing and political institutions. The HIPPO advocates better coordination between missions and humanitarian actors as well as deeper engagement of communities and non-governmental organisations. Calls for stronger field-oriented and 'people-centered' capabilities address this by focusing on how to utilise a wider range of actors across a wider range of activities. I have suggested that thinking about these questions from the perspective of a postcolonial 'religion–governance interface' calls attention to the unique ways religious agency impacts the 'Peace-Humanitarian-Development Nexus' in Africa. This lays bare the limits of state-centric—and *secular*—approaches to peacebuilding. Attending to the political and institutional realities of statehood in postcolonial spaces is critical for stabilising South Sudan and better utilising 'people-power' in support of UNMISS and related operations. It is also relevant for empowering other contemporary operations across the continent and beyond, with respect to multidimensional integrated missions mandated to protect civilians, extend state authority, and stabilize governments (e.g. MINUSCA in the Central African Republic, MINUSMA in Mali, and MONUSCO in DRC).

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