

**Intra-communal Violent Conflicts in South
Sudan: The Case of Western Nuer
1982 - 2016**

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C50/81713/2015

**This research project is submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirement of the degree of Master of Arts in Armed Conflict
and Peace Studies, University of Nairobi, November, 2021.**

DECLARATION

I, James Pui Yak Yiel, do hereby declare that this research project is the original work of my hand and had never been presented for a degree in any other University.

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I/we confirm that the work reported in this research project was carried out by the candidate under my/our supervision as university supervisor(s) and has been submitted for review with my/our approval.

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Date.....

17/12/2021

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Signed.....

Date.....

19/11/2021

Dr. George M. Gona

DEDICATION

This research project is dedicated to the Western Nuer people who throughout their entire historical existence are mired in an intractable intra-communal violent conflict.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I am indebted to Mr. Michael Chiangjiek Geay and Mr. Taban Deng Gai for their valuable support during my field work, the former provided for my transportation from Nairobi to Juba while the latter, provided for my accommodation in Juba. Also, my appreciation goes to the Western Nuer elders in Kenya, Mr. James Gatduel Gatluak (Nairobi), Mr. George Kel Gatwec, Peter Reat Rieka and the paramount chief Gideon Beding Jageah (Kakuma). These elders unreservedly compromised their valuable times to attend to my interviews albeit, the untimely passing on of chief Jageah barely a day after the interview was very sorrowful, may his soul rest in eternal peace. Am also grateful to all the youth, women and elders who turned up for the focus group interviews I have conducted in Kakuma refugee camp, the testimonies from these groups significantly contributed to the success of this research. In the same vein, I must acknowledge the tremendous support I obtained from the chiefs, youth, traders, women, government officials, faith-based groups, residents in Juba and Khartoum respectively. Likewise, the testimonies from these respondents enable the researcher draw conclusive analysis on the nature and character of Western Nuer violent conflicts. My appreciation also, goes to my two supervisors Dr. Mary C. Mwiandi and Dr. George M. Gona for their unwavering support without which this project would have not been completed. Finally, I have to thank my family Roda Nyeriek Joak, Nyamai Nyak Tangok and Veronica John Deng and the kids for their patience and perseverance, my long absence from the family circle while undertaking this MA course was certainly painful, but it's worth it.

ABSTRACT

The study problem could be epitomized as the pervasive culture of violence and aggressive attitudes among the youth of the Western Nuer society. The two forgoing phenomena are systemically embedded in the society that their eradication require strenuous efforts if the region is to enjoy a harmonious living. The study investigated the various drivers that often encourages the culture of violence and aggression among the Western Nuer youth, it further analyzed the impacts of those phenomena on the lives and livelihood of the regional inhabitants. More importantly, the study discussed three different peacemaking initiatives conducted by various mediators from the region and which serves as traditional mechanism to mitigate conflicts among the local communities. Nonetheless, for the peacemaking analyses to factor in the African perspective, the researcher has drawn examples from different parts of the continent as a comparative study to ascertain correlation or disparity between the local and the regional context. The study further looked at the continental peace success stories and how these initiatives can be replicated for the sustenance of peace and tranquility in the Western Nuer region. Two theories namely; Human Basic Needs and Psychoanalytic theories, stand out as the two paradigms through which proper explanation of the main drivers as well as the impacts of the Western Nuer intra-communal violent conflicts could be realized. Furthermore, the two theories were selected because they both rightly speaks to the themes of the research topic currently under study hence, suited for the purpose. The research has three main findings which could be summarized as follows: first, the socio-cultural upbringing of the boy child among the Western Nuer, this finding is considered as the main factor precipitating the culture of violence and aggressive behaviors among the Western Nuer youth. From his early years, the boy child is subjected to a harsh environment of constant castigation and rebuke both within the family and in the wider society. This state of affairs ultimately perpetuates and heighten the aggressive attitudes of the child culminating to warmongering that become the main activity throughout his adult life. Second, the proliferation of guns among the civilian population and particularly in the hands of the youth is a sure catalyst that perpetuate aggressive behaviors among the various rival youth of the region. Once in the possession of the guns, these warring youth exploit the might of the weapons to aggress people at will and in so doing perfecting the axiomatic phrase of “might is right”. Third, absence of proper correctional remedies to deter and discipline habitual criminals and aggressors is fomenting violent conflicts among the communities. This particular weakness on the part of relevant authorities encourages the cycle of violence, aggression as well as recidivism among the youth. The study used the qualitative method of research in which data was collected using different data collection techniques such as review of literature from both the primary and secondary sources. Techniques such as individual and focused group interviews through snowballing effect, open ended questionnaires, empirical study and observation, description, interpretation of narrative, personal feeling and emotions were also used. Additionally, data collection techniques such as video and tape recording, telephone conversations were similarly used. Finally, the researcher sought the help of personal assistants particularly in the areas that were inaccessible due either to roads impassability or insecurity.

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ACRONYMS

CDR	:	Commander
LMG	:	Light Machine Gun
NIF	:	National Islamic Front
NSCC	:	New Sudan Council of Churches
PCoS	:	Presbyterian Church of Sudan
PKM	:	Pulemyot Kalashnikova Machinegun
PoC	:	Protection of Civilian Site
RRC	:	Relief and Rehabilitation Commission
SPLA	:	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPLA/M/IO	:	Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement in Opposition
SPLM	:	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SSIM/A	:	South Sudan Independence Movement/Army
UNICEF	:	United Nation Children's Fund
UNMISS	:	United Nation Mission in South Sudan
USA	:	United States of America
USSR	:	Union of Soviet Socialist Republic

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Anyanya	The first Southern Sudanese resistance movement established in 1955 to fight the Northern dominated government in Khartoum.
Blood Wealth	The cattle paid to the victim's family to compensate the blood of a deceased killed in an act of homicide.
Boma	The lowest administrative unit in South Sudan.
Cieng	This word in Nuer vocabulary carries a lot of meanings, it can mean a family, sub clan, section or even a tribe. It literally means a social group connected by blood relationship.
Customary Court	The court administered by traditional chiefs who only apply oral laws to dispense justice among the Western Nuer people.
Deec in Boor	Literally meaning "the White Army" see the term below.
First Liberation	It is the South Sudanese liberation struggle spearheaded by the South Sudanese movement commonly known as "Anyanya I".
Khartoum Peace Agreement	An agreement signed between the Government of Sudan and some of the South Sudanese factions in 1991.
Leopard Skin Chief	This Chief is responsible for settlement of disputes by the application of the traditional and customary laws. He also cleanses and purifies through traditional rituals.
Majimboism	A Swahili word meaning "Regionalism".
Naath	A word denoting people in Nuer language and the Nuer refer to themselves as Naath.
Nasir Faction	An SPLM/A splinter group led by Riek Machar after he rebelled against SPLM/A Mainstream of John Garang in 1991.

Nuer Customary Law	These are oral laws that were promulgated and agreed upon by the convention of Nuer chiefs in 1968 at Fangak, hence the name “Laws of Fangak”.
Nuer Youth	Those who undergone initiation through marking on the forehead (they are consider men after initiation).
Payam	An administrative unit below the County in the republic of South Sudan.
Rokon	A name given to a group of youth in Koch County, it signifies their war name.
Second Liberation	The South Sudanese liberation struggle spearheaded by the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM/A).
Sobat Basin	The area along the River Sobat valley.
Ter Chwong	Mayom County youth mobilized to fight in defense of the position of Unity State Governor, Mr. Joseph Nguen Manyuil.
Toich	A wet area during the dry season along the river used for cattle pasture.
Unity Oilfield	An oil field situated in the north of Bentiu town within Rubkona County.
Wath Ngok	A river crossing point along the Nile River near Melut town.
Western Geco	A seismic company that was conducting oil exploration in the South of Unity State in 2005.
White Army	Civilian Nuer militia recruited by SPLA Nasir faction in 1991 against SPLA Mainstream and again by the SPLA/IO to assist it in its war efforts against the government in Juba in 2013.

ILLUSTRATION

Maps

1- Unity State

2- The Republic of South Sudan



Unity State Map (source: UN OCHA)



South Sudan Map (source: www.mapsofworld.com).

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Western Nuer region is mired in an endemic inter and intra-communal violent conflict that have devastated lives and livelihood of the local inhabitants since time immemorial. The genesis of these conflicts could be attributed to Western Nuer unrelenting propensity for violence engendered by the societal systemic violent culture. Unfortunately, this cultural violence is passed down to the youth through violent cultural teachings that drastically change their attitudes into pernicious aggressive behaviors - an ultimate recipe for violence. The Western Nuer youth aggressive behaviors couples with the systemic violent culture highly antagonized the relationships among the various communities living in the region so that their daily life is characterized by constant hostilities. However, the worrying trend in the pattern of the conflicts fought by the Western Nuer people is that these conflicts are associated with unethical practices such as the targeting of the educated elite, the elderly, the women and children. Certainly, these unethical behaviors signify a complete radical departure from the acceptable Western Nuer social norms which prohibits jeopardizing the lives of the vulnerable persons in the society during conflict due to their noncombat role. As a result of this social anomaly, the study investigates the factors accelerating the Western Nuer cultural violence and further analyzes the appropriate remedies that can be employed in order to curb this behavioral shift in the society. Furthermore, the study examines the different types of peacemaking and peace building activities conducted in the region and how these peace endeavors profoundly impact regional conflict landscape. Finally, in the conclusion of the thesis, the researcher outlined the research main findings that could be used as a yardstick in measuring the success of this intricate social study.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The Western Nuer community has engaged in inter-communal violent conflicts over the years with their immediate neighbors the Atuot, Cic, Agar, Rek and Ruweng Dinka, as well as the Misseriya Arabs. These violent conflicts have taken the forms of raids and direct attacks in which cattle were plundered, women acquired through abductions and sometimes lawful marriages in addition to other war spoils. More importantly, these cross-border raids and attacks accelerated the

Nuer expansion from their original Western Nuer homeland and drove them across the eastern Nile up to the Abyssinian (Ethiopia) border between the 18th - 19th centuries.¹

The main purpose of the raids carried out by the Nuer against their enemies was to acquire cattle and captives, this material conquest took them as far as Western Ethiopia displacing the host communities in their wake.² Moreover, the conflicts between the Nuer and their neighbors came as a result of the imperialist and expansionist tendencies adopted by the Nuer in 18th – 19th centuries. In those quintessential conflicts, the Nuer were able to increase their numbers by assimilating their captured enemies as well as marrying girls from their neighbors with the plundered cattle at their disposal. Paradoxically, while the Nuer marry girls from their neighbors, they also provide girls as wives to those outsiders who settled among them.³

The Nuer are bitter enemies to their neighbors the Dinka who they equally treated as their own particularly those members of the Dinka community who came to settle with them. Further studies revealed that roughly 70% of the Nuer population originally come from the Dinka and the estimated percentage constitute the majority of the Nuer ethnic group. And once these Dinka members fully integrated into the Nuer society, they would then become part of the Nuer society or “Naath” as they often refer to themselves.⁴

Ironically, while the Western Nuer constantly engage in conflicts with their neighbors from the other ethnic groups, they likewise fight among themselves in intra-communal violent conflicts that pitted families, clans or sections against each other. These Western Nuer intra-communal violent conflicts are so deadly just like the wars they fought with their external rivals, albeit comparatively less lethal. Apparently, the divergence in the degree of lethality could be understood

¹ Johnson, H. Douglas (1981a). The Fighting Nuer: “Primary Sources and the Origins of a Stereotype”. Africa Vol. 51: 508 – 527.

² Johnson, H. Douglas (1981a). The Fighting Nuer: Primary Sources and The Origins of a Stereotype. Africa Journal, Vol. 51: 508-527.

³ Pritchard, E. Evans (1940). The Nuer: The Mode of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People. Oxford University: Clarendon Press p. 221.

⁴ Ibid. p. 222.

from the fact that the Western Nuer intra-communal conflicts were considered fraternal whereas, the war with the outside groups are termed as us versus them kind of relationship.⁵

In the past, the internal Western Nuer violent wars were fought with primitive weaponry such as spears and clubs but this drastically changed over time. Presently, however, these wars evolved into deadly lethal conflicts following the introduction of automatic weapons such as AK 47, RPG rocket launchers, and PKM light machine guns into the conflict. The main suppliers of these automatic weapons are the neighboring Arabs communities as well as the various South Sudanese rival armed factions that were then mushrooming the country.⁶ The regional impacts from those weaponized conflicts include physical, cultural, social, political, economic, environmental with the heaviest toll in human lives and livelihood. Prior to the introduction of the automatic weapons, Western Nuer interclan conflicts death toll was very minimal since they were fought with less lethal weapons of war.⁷

The Western Nuer region is the cradle of the Nuer society from where the rest of the Nuer including those on the eastern bank of the Nile hails. The area is inhabited by seven Nuer sections namely, Bul, Leek, Jikany, Jagey, Haak, Dok and Nyuong. These Western Nuer communities share common ancestry and are further bonded by agnatic and cognatic relationships. In spite of this interrelationship, Western Nuer engage in intermittent conflicts among themselves as sections, clans, sub clans, or even families. Because of the intractability of these intra-communal violent conflicts, successive state administrations found it very difficult to address them.⁸ Therefore, it is out of this necessity that the researcher saw it imperative to undertake this study least the dynamics generating the occurrence of these communal conflicts are understood and possibly address.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

After extensive discussion of the literature review, the study problem has been identified as the systemic culture of violence that characterized the Western Nuer community life over the years. The region is embroiled in intractable violent conflicts believed to have been exacerbated

⁵ Crisis Group Africa Report No 179, 2011 p. 27. www.crisisgroupafrica.org, 15 March, 2016.

⁶ Hutchinson, E. Sharon (1996). *Nuer Dilemmas*, California: University of California Press, p. 103

⁷ Unity State Security Report (2013, p. 23 – 35). www.unitystate.com

⁸ Unity State Secretariat (2013). *Security Report, Bentiu*, pp. 23 – 35), www.unitystate.com

by unrelenting culture of violence exhibited by the Western Nuer youth. The study also identified aggression as a second study gap since most of the literature reviewed did not address aggression as one of the key triggers of violent conflict. Therefore, it is likely the violent conflicts currently raging in the Western Nuer region, the vast majority of them were catalyzed by the pervasive aggressive attitudes of the youth toward one another. The ultimate consequence of this phenomenon was the eventual degeneration of the society into a semi-anarchical enclave dominated by unruly youngsters. These youngsters often defy the guidance of their senior elders as well as the intellectual elite within the community.

The study having identified the study gaps after the review of the available literature, sought to understand the main triggers of the culture of violence. It equally seeks to understand the factors that motivated the youth to engage in aggressive actions toward others. Notwithstanding, the researcher believes the factors that motivate the occurrence of the two phenomena once unveiled could possibly assist in addressing the Western Nuer society's social vices. Presumably, the Western Nuer violence culture and its attendant aggression could have been responsible for the endemic violence that almost devastated the region for generations.

After the causes of the Western Nuer violence culture and aggression were identified, the study then shifted to the examination of the impacts of the two phenomena on the Western Nuer people's lives. Fundamentally, the impacts experienced by the community include loss of lives, displacement and economic deprivation. It is always expected that when violence becomes the way of life in a society, members of the afflicted community will suffer the consequences of the resultant conflict. More importantly, the study would inform decisions on the probable course of actions to be taken in order to alleviate and mitigate the impacts on the war-afflicted communities.

Finally, the study has analyzed peace activities conducted by the Western Nuer society as the right forum through which social cleavages are negotiated, discussed and then addressed. The study further explored how these peacemaking initiatives once concluded can continue to sustain peaceful co-existence of the local inhabitants. The literature reviewed is equally silent on matters pertinent to peace maintenance among the people of the Western Nuer region. Accordingly, the study examined three types of Western Nuer peacemaking processes and how these initiatives assisted in bringing about peaceful co-existence to the belligerent communities. The study also looked at

peace building activities and how the concept had been interwoven into the fabric of communal peace agreements to ensure the durability of those peace initiatives once concluded.

Having identified and discussed all the missing gaps in the literature reviewed, there is a need to provide answers to the Western Nuer social conundrums through research. Therefore, the following questions beg answers for the purpose of this study; first, what are the internal as well as external main drivers of the Western Nuer violent conflicts? second, what are the factors preventing the Western Nuer community from embracing peace just like the rest of the South Sudanese peace-loving communities? and third, why conflicts that had been successfully concluded constantly resurge and hardly translates to a permanent and durable peace?

1.4 OBJECTIVES

- i. To investigate the factors that breed the culture of violence and aggression among the Western Nuer people.
- ii. To examine the impacts of the culture of violence and aggression on the inhabitants of the Western Nuer region.
- iii. To analyze peace initiatives conducted in the Western Nuer so as to mitigate or address the culture of violence and aggression within the community.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- i. What are the drivers exacerbating the Western Nuer culture of violence and aggression?
- ii. What are the impacts of the culture of violence and aggression on the Western Nuer social life?
- iii. What are the peace initiatives conducted to mitigate or address the culture of violence and aggression within the Western Nuer society?

1.6 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The study focused on the period from the second South Sudanese liberation struggle to the post-independence period of the Republic of South Sudan (1982 – 2016). This time period had been chosen because within the forgoing period, Western Nuer civilians were heavily militarized by the South Sudanese rival military factions. The Western Nuer territory (Unity State) notably, the Nuer dominated Counties of Mayom, Rubkona, Guit, Koch, Mayendit, Leer and Payinjiar was

chosen as the ideal study area. The purpose of choosing this area was because intra-communal violent conflicts that made life unbearable for the local population became rampant and protracted among the different Nuer sections living in this territory.

The main challenges faced during the fieldwork were the issue of finances for the facilitation of the researcher transportation from one location to the other. This problem was more compounded by the current dire economic situation in the country in which money are hard to come by. Luckily, I was able to conduct the field trips using the meagre financial resources at my disposal at the time. The other challenge was the rampant insecurity in the study area which hindered access to some places that I had initially wanted to visit. Alternatively, I used research assistants who are residents in the target locations to provide the much-needed information at the disposal of the locals in those inaccessible areas.

The final challenge was the issue of displacement that happened in the area since majority of the people sought sanctuary at the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) camps commonly known as Protection of Civilians site (PoCs). Paradoxically, the confinement of the people in the UN camps turned out to be a blessing in disguise as many of my respondents were available within the vicinity. In addition to the study area, I also interviewed respondents outside the Western Nuer territory namely, Kenya, Juba and Khartoum. The reason of including those locations was because there were some key respondents identified to be in possession of crucial information relating to the Western Nuer intra-communal violent conflicts.

1.7 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The study is conducted by the researcher out of the desire to unearth the causes as well as impacts of the culture of violence and aggression within the Western Nuer region. The primary motivation that propelled the desire for this study was the extensive knowledge obtained by the researcher on peace and conflict studies. During the course study at the University of Nairobi, the researcher was able to acquire peace and conflict theories that he considered to be useful in the management of the Western Nuer violent conflicts. Moreover, the deficiency of the studies conducted by some scholars who studied the Western Nuer on the genesis of the violent culture, aggression and their related impacts motivated the researcher to venture into this study. Therefore,

the researcher strongly believes the wealth of knowledge to be acquire as a result of this study would significantly supplement the academic understanding on the violent conflicts at the communal level.

The study main focus is on Western Nuer region because the area is mired in an intractable deadly violent conflict for decades. These intra-communal conflicts seriously accelerated the militarization as well as polarization of the Western Nuer conflict environment. The intra-communal violent among the Western Nuer youth has become so perennial that its eradication require strenuous efforts from the state political leadership otherwise, it will continue affecting the lives of the local civilians. However, it is believed the research though conducted within the Western Nuer context, its findings will equally apply to the whole Nuer. Likewise, other ethnic groups with typical violent conflicts would easily make use of this research findings since the issues discussed in the study cut across ethnic divides.

Finally, the study will inform decisions of the political leaders on how best they can deal with intra-communal violent conflicts among their different warring communities. This study would particularly be instrumental to the political leadership of the targeted area notably the Western Nuer region. Similarly, the political leadership of the Republic of South Sudan would likewise benefit by generalizing the application of this research findings across the board. Presumably, communities experiencing similar matters relating to intra-communal violent conflicts can make use of the study findings worldwide.

1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW

This study section discusses the vast literature on ethnic conflicts written by different scholars particularly after the resurgence of the intrastate wars following the end of the cold war. The study gaps identified in the literature reviewed were used by the researcher to justify why the Western Nuer intra-communal violent conflicts warrant this research. The literature is divided into five level of explanation depending on the contexts in which those studies were conducted. The five levels include the literature on ethnic conflicts in Africa, Eastern Africa, Sudan, South Sudan and the communal conflicts among the Nuer community.

An ethnic group is often defined by a common cultural heritage in which the group become an entity whose members are bonded together by that belief. However, common cultural heritage alone does not suffice as a unifying factor, an ethnic group must intermingle with other ethnic groups in a given surrounding if it were to find it rightful place within the existing social setting.⁹ It is also argued that ethnic groups behave like sovereign states system which are influenced by their proximity to other similar groups of states. And because security is the primary concern for these communities, each tries to enhance its security by strengthening their defenses. The actions the community takes, however, trigger a hostile response because opposing community members intrinsically view it as offensive regardless of its motives.¹⁰

1.8.1 Ethnic conflicts in Africa

Ethnic or communal conflicts have increased in intensity and magnitude in recent years following the end of the Cold War. This increase in ethnic conflict was made possible by the shift from inter-state to intra-state wars which became the main feature of the 21st century. The African continent is a fertile ground for these ethnic and communal conflicts. Many factors that shall be discussed in the subsequent pages make such conflicts possible among the various African communities and especially the Western Nuer community.

Studies showed that group fear about their own security from other groups living around them is the main cause of conflict among different communities of the world. These rival groups would struggle against each other in order to find their rightful places in the wider society. However, it is not fear alone that generates ethnic conflicts, sometimes ethnic conflicts come as a result of host of problems which include among others political, social and economic interests but such conclusion has been criticized on the ground that it is not holistic¹¹

While fear from another group could in fact ignite conflict, people's attitudes towards conflict vary from one community to the other. A lot depends on the way a particular community culture influences the eruption of a conflict. For example, a war-prone community such as Western

⁹ Eriksen, Siri; Katrina Brown; and Mick Kelly. (2005). The Dynamics of Vulnerability: Locating Coping Strategies in Kenya and Tanzania. *Geographical Journal* 171, pp. 287-305.

¹⁰ El Hadi El Nagar S. (2012). *Children and War in the Horn of Africa*. In: Doornbos M., Cliffe

¹¹ Bojana Blagojevic (2009). Causes of Ethnic Conflict: A Conceptual Framework, *Journal of Global Change*, vol. III, No 1, pp. 1 – 13.

Nuer can be easily moved by such fears as oppose to a peaceful community that would not suspect anything around them as hostile or a source of fear. The forgoing narrative did not identify the culture of violence and propensity to conflicts that are rooted in the cultural upbringing as a potential cause of conflict. The socialization of the boy child among the Western Nuer informs their behaviors when they grow up, hence the tendency to violence and aggression.

Ethnic conflicts are engendered by the failure of the state political, social and economic institutions to address ethnic grievances.¹² Understandably, when an ethnic group faces severe economic conditions, political entrepreneurs will step in to agitate the community. These political entrepreneurs would incite the group against other groups by harboring divisive politics as a means of achieving their political interests.¹³ Moreover, it is also believed ethnic conflict lies in the greed and grievance dichotomy where one ethnic group control economic power. This dominant group will use its power to marginalize other ethnic groups by denying them access to economic benefits.¹⁴ However, the greed and grievance narrative has been criticized by terming it as people's construction necessitated by the gap between what they think they deserve and what they actually received. This economic perception was categorically dismissed because it does not in any way reflect any real marginalization since it is imaginative in nature.¹⁵

Certainly, greed and grievance are contributory factors to ethnic violent conflicts, but perhaps they are not the only ones. Communal conflicts can sometimes take place due to myriad social, cultural and political dynamics. Therefore, the criticism that socioeconomic grievances are human construction is not in place, the world is replete with examples of minority communities often marginalized by their governments particularly in nondemocratic states. The conflict in the Sudan Darfur region where the people of Fur are fighting for their political, social and economic freedoms from the dominant Arab north is a case in point. The intra-communal conflicts in the

¹² Gregory, Mthembu Salter (1988). Book Review, *Development In Practice*, Vol. 8 No 4. Taylor & Francis Ltd. On Behalf of Oxfam GB.

¹³ Lake, David A. & Donald Rothchild, (1998). *Spreading Fear: The Genesis of Transnational Ethnic Conflict*, in David A. Lake & Donald Rothchild eds., *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press pp. 3-32.

¹⁴ Medhine, Tadesse (2003). *Turning Conflict To Cooperation: Towards Energy-Led Integration*. In the Horn of Africa. Addis Ababa: Fredrick-Ebert Stiftung.

¹⁵ Davies, James C. (1962). *Toward a Theory of Revolution*. *American Sociological Review*, 27(February), pp. 5 – 19.

Western Nuer have their origin in the economic as well as political marginalization of the region by the successive Arab government in Khartoum similar to the one of Darfur. The people became so deprived that their future was greatly dominated by primordial way of life due to frustration.

1.8.2 Ethnic conflicts in East Africa

The ethnic divisions created among the African communities by the European colonialists is a leading cause of conflict within the African continent. These colonialists would favor one group at the expense of others thereby sowing the seeds of discord and mistrust between the same people. The above claim can be supported by citing the example of Tutsi in Rwanda who were socially elevated by the colonial powers at the expense of the Hutu. Such ethnic conflicts often are accompanied by war impacts notably, the state disintegration as in the case of Somalia. At times the government would channel economic resources of the country to the war front relegating important social services to the bottom of the development priorities.¹⁶

If African history is anything worthy of reflection, in fact colonial system has divided African communities along ethnic lines. However, the missing perspective in this argument is the obvious failure to acknowledge that ethnic conflicts in Africa and particularly the communal conflicts among the Western Nuer predates the advent of the colonial powers. These ethnic conflicts have existed for thousands of years before the European scramble to the continent in the 1880s. Furthermore, the culture of violence and aggression that have dominated the lives of the Western Nuer people are pre-existing phenomena prior to the advent of the European to the African continent. But there is no denying that the European colonialism have significantly contributed in precipitating communal conflicts among the Africans.

The origin of the ethnic conflict in the Rift Valley of Kenya can be explain as primarily due to the reintroduction of the multiparty politics in the country. In the past, such communal conflicts between the different communities in the region seldom existed. Some critics were particularly pointing a finger at the Kalenjin and Massai politicians who used the term “regionalism” to segregate the communities living in the Rift Valley. Consequently, the Kalenjin

¹⁶ Shabiru, D. (2009). Ethnic conflict in East Africa: An Overview of Causes And Consequences. *Journal of Resource In Arts & Education*, Vol. 2 No. 4, pp. 17 – 18.

and Masai politicians were blamed for deliberately inciting the two communities by using the “word” so that they could secure the citizens votes.¹⁷

Kalenjin and Massai being pastoralists just like their counterpart in the Western Nuer region of the Republic of South Sudan have their own issues to fight over besides politics. These conflicts were fought by the communities in the Rift Valley in spite of the regional politicians’ divisive rhetoric. However, the study failed to identify the culture of violence and aggression as one of the triggers of communal conflict in the region. And although political incitement is one factor that can ignite the eruption of conflict, their motivational factors are none other than the propensity to violence engendered by the violent culture and aggressive attitudes. These communal conflicts are precisely rooted in the cultural practices of the warring communities concerned.

1.8.3 Ethnic conflicts in Sudan

The conflict in Sudan was basically a racial, political, cultural as well as socio-economic conflict. These social imbalances are blamed for the policies adopted by the successive northern governments to marginalize the South. Consequently, these discriminatory policies were responsible for igniting the north - south war underscoring the administrative and developmental neglect as the two factors that further fueled the tension between the two regions.¹⁸ However, the British colonial rule realizing the effects of their policies on the lives of the Southern Sudanese later introduced the policy of the so called “closed District Ordinance” to check the north direct influence. The policy of containment had to be later reversed in the aftermath of Sudan independence in 1956. President Nimeiry finally accepted to negotiate with the rebels following his military takeover in 1969. He subsequently gave the South an autonomous status something previously feared by the rest of the Northerners.¹⁹

As far as the analyses are concerned, the issues discussed in the literature are clearly articulated and reflect the core grievances. However, some important factors that are not addressed

¹⁷ Gettleman, (2012). *Official Sees Kenya Ethnic Cleansing*. New York Times accessed on 12th, July, 2012 at <http://www.nytimes.com/world/Africa>.

¹⁸ Wai, Dunstan (1981). *The African – Arabs Conflict: Overview of South Sudan Problem*, New York/London, Africana publishing, p. 181.

¹⁹ Wai, Dunsen (1981). *The African – Arabs Conflict: Overview of South Sudan Problem*, New York/London, Africana publishing, p. 182.

are the ethnic violent conflicts taking place in southern Sudan at the time and particularly among the Western Nuer people. It is out of the desire to fight the wars of liberation against the north that the Western Nuer community obtained automatic weapons - a factor that could have been missing in their internal conflicts. The ubiquitous nature of the guns at the hands of the civil population in the Western Nuer is believed to have accelerated the perpetuation of the culture of violence as well as aggressive attitudes among the fighting youth. The intensification of the communal conflict among the Western Nuer people and their accompanying heavy toll in human lives are primarily due to the gun factor.

1.8.4 Ethnic conflict in southern Sudan

The purpose of the Nuer expansion in the 19th century was to access pasture for their cattle as well as the riverine areas of the Sobat basin. During these expansion campaigns, the Dinka and Anyuak communities were displaced from their territories by the Nuer, a hostile situation that undoubtedly created a bitter relationship among the three ethnic groups. Inevitably, the aggrieved communities such as the Anyuak were motivated to purchase guns from the Ethiopian highlanders purposely to reclaim back their occupied territory from the Nuer.²⁰

The analysis is right about the timing of the introduction of automatic weapons in the conflict between the Nuer versus Anyuak and the Dinka. Perhaps, it is likely that the deep animosities that have developed between the three antagonistic communities was seldom perpetuated by the introduction of the automatic weapons. Arguably, the use of the automatic weapons among the Western Nuer is a new phenomenon, the people in the region were only using the traditional weapons of war such as spears at the time when guns were already in use in the Eastern Nuer.²¹ However, the study fell short of identifying the culture of violence and aggression as two the main contributing drivers to the conflict among the three rival communities. If it were not for the culture of violence and aggression, such wars would have not taken place in the first place.

²⁰ Kelly, Raymond C. (1987). *The Nuer Conquest: The Structure And Development of An Expansionist System*. Michigan: Michigan University Press, p. 89.

²¹ Kelly, Raymond C. (1987). *The Nuer Conquest: The Structure And Development of An Expansionist System*. Michigan: Michigan University Press, p. 99.

The frequent cattle raiding carried out by the Nuer against their neighbors is believed to be attributed to their lack of crops production, Nuer men are thought to be devoting much of their time on pastoralism rather than agriculture. The only people who are engaged in agriculture are the Nuer women who use the produce from their farms as a supplement to the milk from the cattle that feed their husbands and children.²² Another argument explains the conflict between the Dinka and Nuer communities as arising from environmental factors particularly scarcity of pasture and high land. It is further maintained that the two neighboring communities fight over those natural resources because they are in short supply for their herds.²³

The abovementioned conclusion could not utterly be true representation of facts, Western Nuer men are much engaged in agriculture as they would engage in pastoral life, both activities complement each other. The Western Nuer people were engaged in raiding the Dinka as a result of the culture of violence a likely motivation that could have stimulated them to go for offensive against their neighbors. The final argument attributing Nuer inter-communal conflicts to environmental factors could be right at some point but not all conflicts between pastoralists such as the Western Nuer people are environment related. There are several occasions when conflicts could arise from other social factors such as the desire to dominate over others as rival communities engage in bravery contest – a phenomenon engendered by the culture of violence and aggression.

1.8.5 Nuer intra-communal conflicts

In the Nuer culture it is obligatory to be always armed if you are to gain a special status, further arguing that the spear among the Nuer symbolizes an object that a man must depend on for his security. Similarly, it is argued that since the Nuer is a democratic society the holding of a gun is permissible so that everyone is subject to accountability whenever he commits a crime. The study also dismissed that contrary to the belief by many, violence does not often happen among the Nuer. Finally, the study argues that arms are used as deterrence, and that the rules do not permit their use without an acceptable purpose.²⁴ Another research finding posits that the guns in Western

²² Lienhardt, R. G. (1961). *Divinity and Experience*, Oxford, Oxford University press.

²³ Howell, P. P. (1955). *The Equatorial Nile project*, Khartoum, Sudan, pp. 61 – 67.

²⁴ Duany, M. Wal (1992). A PhD Dissertation, *Titled Neither Palaces nor Prisons: The Constitution of Order among the Nuer*, Indiana University, USA, p. 236.

Nuer from 1980s and 1990s were owned collectively by the clan who then stored them in the chief homestead. The study further asserts that in the event of a conflict the community owning the gun would collectively utilize it for defense purposes.²⁵

The study could have an element of truth at the time it was conducted, unfortunately at the moment, guns could not be hold for deterrence purposes as suggested by the study. Presently, however, guns could have been utilized by individual regardless of the ramifications encountered in their use during communal disputes. To clarify this point, it is likely even in a brawl of two individuals that sometimes guns can find their way into an apparent minor dispute.²⁶ Likewise, the other research on gun ownership in Western Nuer could be right at the time the study took place in the 1980s. Unfortunately, the situation cannot be the same as opposed to the period when guns were in short supply to the local inhabitant in Western Nuer. Guns are ubiquitous that the communities no longer own firearms collectively. Each individual owns his personal firearm since it is likely that guns have increased in the interwar years (1982 – 2005).²⁷ Apparently, the proliferation of the guns at the hands of the civil population have no doubt increased the level of violence and aggression within the Western Nuer community.

1.9 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was based on the following conflict theories, basic human needs theory and psychological theory of conflict. The choice of the two theories was largely dependent on the belief that they better explain the causes of the conflict under discussion. Moreover, the two theories complement each other in explaining individual behaviors that are oftentimes responsible for the occurrence of violent conflicts among the people of Western Nuer.

1.9.1 Basic human needs theory

The theory focuses around the communal protracted conflicts which are the direct consequence of the desire to fulfill social needs that include security, identity, social recognition, acceptance, political representation and access to economic resources. Once these needs are denied to a particular social group, conflict is likely to be the only available option for redressing the

²⁵ Hutchinson, E Sharon (1996). *The Nuer Dilemmas*, California: University of California Press, p. 150.

²⁶ Hutchinson, E Sharon (1996). *The Nuer Dilemmas*, California: University of California Press, p. 150.

²⁷ Hutchinson, E Sharon (1996). *The Nuer Dilemmas*, California: University of California Press, p. 150.

group grievances.²⁸ The theory further maintains that intra-communal violent conflicts are exacerbated by tendencies such as stereotyping and disparaging of others. Victimization of the weak, deep animosities and hatred as well as discriminatory attitudes toward others are some of the behaviors also associated with those behavioral tendencies. In addition, the individual would identify with his/her group leaving others as group outsiders hence, the categorization of own group and the outside group as “them versus us”.

The Western Nuer could still be heavily dependent on the primordial ethnic bonds in which an individual sacrifice his personal life for the defense of the group. Therefore, it is likely that most of the Western Nuer intra-communal violent conflicts are ignited by the need to protect one’s section or clan from the other social groups within the same community. Any failure to protect one’s group would expose the group to external dangers and even loss of social identity and status.

It is also likely that the Western Nuer being a segmented society, its fusion and fission character could be a source of conflict both from within and without. Indeed, it is possible certain groups sometimes be engaged in hostile attitudes of disparaging and stereotyping other groups outside their immediate agnatic lineage. These types of behaviors could be done by a group with the intention to assert its power and influence but inadvertently triggering negative reactions from the target group. It is also ascertained that political as well as economic marginalization among the Nuer can cause social resentments and could further lead to disagreement and possibly violent confrontation. The denials of these needs to particular sections of the society by the dominant social group could be the basis upon which communal conflicts keep recurring within the Western Nuer.

1.9.2 Psychological theory of conflict

In the theory of psychoanalytic it is argued that aggression is acquired and not found in the human genome, it is the way people are brought up in their social environment such as the family or the wider society that shape individual behaviors. Principally, such behaviors can be aggressive or violent if the environment is one that encourages aggression and violence, or they could be peaceful and nonviolent if the reverse behaviors are the social norms.²⁹

²⁸ Azar, Edward. (1990). *The Management of Protracted Social Conflict: Theory and Cases*.

²⁹ Hinde, Robert (1997). *The Psychological Bases of War*. Paper Presented at Study of War Conference, Wheaton II.

Another theory maintained that the acquisition of particular behaviors and specifically aggressive violent attitudes can result from conscious and unconscious modeling of what was observed in the immediate environment. According to the theory, aggressive and dominant behaviors commonly perceived as instinctive and automatic response for the individual concern, could be an imitation of behaviors witnessed in the family or the wider community.³⁰ Then aggression is defined as any behavior directed towards causing physical and psychological injury to another and which would be associated with protective and/or withdrawal responses³¹.

Social biologists assume that genes exist for specific behavioral dispositions like self-sacrificial bravery in warfare, but some scholars deny the existence of such genes in the human body. The study maintains that behaviors during warfare or in group conflict environment has been explained in different terms. The study provided the example of Jews who they say could not resist the holocaust in Europe but courageously stood their ground during the Israeli-Palestinian conflict of (1946 – 1948).³²

The Western Nuer intra-communal violent conflicts could be largely attributed to aggressive attitudes that are learnt from childhood. These aggressive behaviors could have been shaped by both the family and the society at large and as rightly suggested, such aggressive attitudes could be an imitation of what is observed from an individual or a social group in the immediate vicinity. Lastly, as far as the two theories are concerned, I believe they complement each other because they seek to mutually work toward the preservation and self-sacrificial protection of one group at the expense of the group outsiders.³³

1.10 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The research has three hypotheses which must be authenticated or repudiated through field investigation, these are: The causes of the Western Nuer culture of violent and aggression are influenced by the boy child upbringing at home and his socialization in the wider society.

³⁰ Bandura A. (1976). *New Perspective on Violence*. In V.C Vaughen III and T.B Brazelton (eds.), *The Family*, Chicago: Yearbook Medical Publishers.

³¹ P. E. Tetlock; Jo. L. Husbands; R. Jervis; P. C. Stern; Charles Tilly (1993). *Behavior, Society and International Conflict*, pp. 13 – 37.

³² Tiger, Lionel and Robin Fox (1971). *The Imperial Animal*. New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston.

³³ Bandura A. (1976). *New Perspective on Violence*. In V.C Vaughen III and T.B Brazelton (eds.), *The Family*, Chicago: Yearbook Medical Publishers.

- 1- The consequences of the Western Nuer culture of violence and aggressive behaviors are the intermittent intra and inter communal violent conflicts.
- 2- Peace initiatives conducted within the Western Nuer community will only endure when there is a significant reduction in the culture of violence and aggressive attitudes.

1.11 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The type of the research methodology use in this study is a qualitative method of data analysis which employ data collection techniques. Such techniques include description of personal feelings, emotions and events, observation and empirical study as well as the interpretation of narratives. In order to formalize the field study, the researcher prior to the conduct of the field trips obtained research permit from the University of Nairobi administration. Also, a similar permit was also obtained from the ministry of higher education of the Republic of South Sudan. The aim of these permits is to ensure that respondents targeted for the interviews would not be suspicious of the intention of the researcher in carrying out this study.

The researcher used both secondary and primary methods to collect data relevant to the research project by reviewing books some of which were obtained from Jommo Kenyatta Memorial Library. Moreover, scholarly journal articles as well as other electronic materials were also retrieved from the World Wide Web (www). Separately, the researcher collected data from dissertations, published and documented materials and books such as “The Nuer Dilemma” and other scholarly work of anthropologists who studied the Nuer. In addition to the published materials, the researcher has used unstructured questionnaire, in depth interviews and focused group discussions. During the interviews audio recording as well as notes taking were used to document the field interviews conducted with various respondents. In addition, ethical standards were observed during the interviews and this was achieved by obtaining interviewees consent prior to the commencement of the interviews.

During the fieldwork, the researcher has used personal assistants who facilitated some interviews in places that were inaccessible due to the prevailing security situation in the country. The research assistants were seven in number each representing a particular community as outlined in the research scope. The study population was drawn from the seven counties of Western Nuer territory which comprised the counties of Mayom, Rubkona, Guit, Koch, Mayendit, Leer and

Payinjiar. The target sample population is 100 respondents divided among the people of the aforementioned seven Western Nuer counties.

The bulk of the sample population 70% mainly targeted respondents from the youth with 10 each in every County interviewed in a focus group discussion. The purpose of drawing 70% of the respondents from among the youth was because they are the main protagonists usually engage in the inter-communal as well as intra-communal violent conflicts. Therefore, the researcher decided by targeting this section (particularly the rural youth) of the society; a lot of information will be obtained, this is so because the youth are more knowledgeable on the issues that frequently generate violent conflict among them.

The remaining 30% of the sample population was drawn from the elders, traditional chiefs, local and state government officials, organized forces, and civil society organizations. These categories of respondents were interviewed using in-depth interviews and unstructured questionnaires since they were individually interviewed. The individuals targeted for the personal interviews were interviewed in Nairobi, Kakuma refugee camp, Kampala, Juba, Khartoum and the rest in the study area. These respondents were identified through a snow balling technique where one person is interview and then become a lead to another person and so on and so forth. Preferably, focus group discussion is considered as the most perfect interviewing technique for this type of study because the topic is on communal conflict. Ideally, the causes and impacts of a communal violent conflict are common to all the community members.

After assembling all the data collected from various sources of this study, the researcher collated all the materials, analyzed and interpreted them in such a way that make them useful for drawing the deductions that became the findings of this study. Some of the interviews were used for narrating the different variables that form the subject matter of the study. In addition, to the analyses that were illustrated throughout the breadth of the thesis, the study also interpolated various narratives with the theories that underpin this research and how the two analyses explained the causes and impacts of the conflicts in Western Nuer. Finally, some examples were also incorporated into the body of the project as an articulation of different episodes that support the explanations given in the study.

CHAPTER TWO

THE HISTORY OF THE WESTERN NUER VIOLENT CONFLICTS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses the history of the Western Nuer violent conflict which is divided into five different themes including the Western Nuer socio-economic life. This theme is further subdivided into various sub topics that expounds on all the aspects relating to the Western Nuer region and its inhabitants. In the same note, the study also covered the other four remaining themes which comprises; the Genesis of the Nuer conflict with the Dinka, the Nuer expansion to the Eastern bank of the Nile, the Turco-Egyptian rule versus the Nuer on slave trade, the Nuer relationship with the British colonial administration and how the Nuer acquire arms during the inter-war years 1982 – 2016 leading to an eventual increase in the level of violence and aggressive behaviors. Lastly, a conclusion summarizing what was discussed in the themes is provided at the bottom of the chapter.

2.2 THE WESTERN NUER SOCIO-ECONOMIC LIFE

2.2.1 Territorial boundary

The Western Nuer community occupies a vast open plain west of the Bahr el Jebel (River Nile) and it inhabits the territory together with other two minority Dinka sections, the Panaru and Alor of the greater Ruweng community of the Dinka ethnic group. The official name of the territory in the government federal order of establishment is refer to as “Unity State”. The Western Nuer community comprise of Bul, Leek, Jikany, Jagey, Haak, Dok and Nyuong sections which are located in the Western, Central, Eastern and Southern parts of the state. The territory is border by the Panaru Dinka and Messyeria Arabs to the North, Fangak Nuer to the East, Gawaar Nuer and Nyarweng Dinka to the South East across the River Nile, Yirol and Pakam to the South, Luac Jaang to the South West, Lou Arik and Apuk Dinka to the West and Alor and Twic Dinka to the North West.

The area is bisected by two main rivers, the Bahr el Jebel running through the state Eastern frontier and Bahr al Ghazal River flowing from the Western part of the state. The two rivers converge at Lake No to form the White Nile River and further afield, the White Nile River converges with the Sobat River at the Canal Mouth cutting across the entire Upper Nile state up to

Khartoum. In Khartoum the White Nile finally converges with the Blue Nile to form the River Nile and thereafter the river flows downstream up to Egypt where it flows into the Mediterranean Sea to form the Egyptian Delta at the tip of the Nile River.³⁴

2.2.2 Administration

Western Nuer was ruled by the British colonial administration from 1930s to the 1950s when finally, Sudan was granted political independence by the United Kingdom in January 1956. During the colonial administration the area was administered as a provincial district - a status it continued to enjoy up to the time the region was upgraded to a province by the Nimeiry regime in 1983. In 1989, following the change of leadership in the Sudan through a military coup which brought president Beshier to power, the Western Nuer region was upgraded to a full federal state. It retained this status up to the time South Sudan declared her independence on July 9th, 2011 following a successful referendum conducted by the people of the territory to that effect.

The Western Nuer community is made up of seven Counties representing the seven Nuer sections and each headed by a County commissioner who is supposed to be elected by the county citizens for a five years term. The designations of the administrative Counties representing the Western Nuer region are Mayom, Rubkona, Guit, Koch, Mayendit, Leer and Payinjiar. Each County local government is supported by a traditional authority which is elected by the people after the expiry of its mandate. Following the end of his term, the incumbent chief would be replaced by his people in a contested open and free plebiscite.³⁵

2.2.3 Demography

The Western Nuer territory is the birth place of all the Nuer people and the land from which the rest of the Nuer currently inhabiting areas to the eastern bank of the River Nile had migrated. The community is made up of Bul, Leek, Jikany, Jagey, Haak, Dok and Nyuong sections and it has a population of 486,346 out of a total population of 585,801 of the Unity State according to 2008 Sudan Census. Unfortunately, this figure is being refuted as the 2008 Census results were seen as less credible in the South of the Country. The people of Western Nuer are also commonly referred to as Liech community - a small area in Koch County where the Nuer are believed to have originated. The Western Nuer just like the rest of the Nuer are fond of assimilating other alien

³⁴ Diet, M. Hon, Oral Interview, Mayendit County, Khartoum, Sudan, 20/01/2017.

³⁵ Kuol, J. Liyliy, Oral Interview, Mayom County, Juba, South Sudan, 05/07/2016.

community members in their midst. The population that currently exists is an amalgamation of people from the Dinka, Anyuak and Nuer descend who co-existed for centuries. The descendants of the two first community members had been assimilated from a very long time that they became part and parcel of the Western Nuer society.³⁶

2.2.4 Economic activity

The Western Nuer is a traditional community guided primarily by customary values and beliefs. The main economic activity in the region is Agri-pastoralism which is practice by the majority of the rural population. The Nuer has a special love for cattle which are used for paying the marriage dowry as well as for food economy particularly the milk. It is often rare in the Western Nuer land for a bovine to be killed for its meat. It is only when the animal is sacrificed as a ritual to gods that people could be able to consume its meat.

The types of crops that are cultivated and used as staple food includes maize, sorghum, groundnut, beans, pumpkin, okra and tomato in rare cases. The Western Nuer also used wild fruits such as the tamarind, desert dates, coconut, palm among others. mangoes, lemon, papaya trees are grown as domestic plants but only in few numbers since it is the ones who are exposed to urban life that usually grow them. Fishing as a socioeconomic source of livelihood is also practice by the majority of the population in Western Nuer. Principally, the fishing industry is used to supplement the staple diet as much as it is also used as an economic activity that generates income for the family. The catch from the fish would be traded in town markets for local consumption either in its fresh or dry forms. Also, the fish can be exported to faraway markets by adopting mobile freezing techniques mainly for the fresh fish. During the time of difficulties when food is scarce, water lily could be used as alternative food by the families in the Western Nuer region. Honey can also be extracted by some communities within the region, but beekeeping as an economic activity is seldom practiced.³⁷

2.2.5 Marriage

Marriage among the Western Nuer society is a social obligation which must be fulfill once a person reached adulthood. The marriage dowry is often paid in cattle and the average dowry required by law is (25) heads of cattle. However, wealthy families (according to the local

³⁶ Sudan Census and Statistics Commission Report (2008). Sudan Population Census Results, Khartoum, Sudan.

³⁷ Chop, T. Wicjial, Oral Interview, Guit County, Juba, South Sudan, 05/03/2018.

standards) as well as those who play leadership role in the community can marry with 100 heads of cattle or even more. The Western Nuer community is polygamous where a man can marry as many wives as he could afford provided, he is economically capable of doing so. At times a man can marry up to (50) wives or even more and those children born to these wives out of wedlock by other men with or without the consent of the husband are his legal children. Polyandry is a social sin among the people of Western Nuer.

Divorce is allowed and the man is often given back the cattle he paid as dowry during marriage except the cattle for compensating the children bore by the wife are retained by the bride family. Conversely, Cattle that are used by the bride's family at the time when their daughter is still in her husband's home would be refunded. And the cattle that have died or got lost from the in laws and which can be confirmed from independent sources are not refunded. Adultery is considered a social crime and can even cause conflict between different clans at times. The same is true for girl impregnation, elopement or abduction which are deemed by the girl's family as an aggression.³⁸

2.2.6 Justice System

The justice system in Western Nuer is based on customary law but sometimes statutory law can be applied against individual members. The traditional courts are administered by the chiefs who plays the role of the traditional authority, these chiefs exercise executive powers which are limited to customs and tradition within their respective areas of jurisdictions. Sentences against potential culprits are passed by the traditional courts and in some instances could carry severe and longer prison terms ranging from (7 – 10) years. In addition, other sentences carry minor punishments that could be enforced within the local traditional setting. The system of appeal in these types of customary courts follow the normal chain of the court hierarchy until it reaches the high court at the state level.

In the event of an all-out war that pitted the entire community, a special court can be constituted which in most cases draws its memberships from all the chiefs of the area. This special court will settle conflicts through the application of the traditional method of conflict resolution

³⁸ Gatluak, N. Danhier, Telephone Conversation, Payinjiar County, Kakuma, Kenya, 05/08/2016.

and its findings are always binding on the parties to the dispute. If one party felt it did not get the justice it deserved, an appeal against the special court is also allowed by the court authorities.³⁹

2.2.7 Trade and Commerce

Trade and commerce as an economic activity is a new phenomenon that came with modernization though the bartering system could long be in existence. Paradoxically, the colonial period has witnessed the establishment of towns in some parts of the Western Nuer territory and it is within these town markets that small scale trading activity started to take shape. Nowadays bustling town markets can be found in every corner of the state where the local as well as foreign traders engages in the exchange of goods and services. The Commodities that reached Western Nuer markets include items and goods imported from the Republic of Sudan. These commodities enter the area from the north as well as goods imported from Eastern Africa through the Equatoria region. Local items and commodities are also traded and sometimes exported as far as the Republic of Sudan, Ethiopia, and the East African region. These local commodities include among others cattle, sheep, goats, fish, tobacco etc. The medium of exchange previously used to be cattle but presently money are in circulation across the entire territory of the state.⁴⁰

2.2.8 Religion

The Western Nuer being a traditional society still very much upholds to the African traditional religions where the rural population continue to worship Magicians and conjurers, while a big part of the community practices the art of witchcraft. During difficult periods when humans are afflicted by natural calamities and pandemics, the elders will appeal to God through the dead ancestors. Interestingly, these appeals to God are expressed through the sacrifice of rituals which are believes to dispel harmful spirits and restore peace in the families. Nevertheless, with the modernization in Western Nuer in its full swing, many churches have been established in the area. As a result of this newfound faith, the number of Christian believers is ever increasing and the same is true for those individuals who profess other religions such as Islam, though they are few in numbers compare to their Christians counterpart.⁴¹

³⁹ Riek, P. Reat, Oral Interview, Guit County, Kakuma, Kenya, 07/05/2016.

⁴⁰ Nyinyar, C. Ruea, Oral Interview, Rubkona County, Juba, South Sudan, 11/01/2019.

⁴¹ Riek, P. Reat, Oral Interview, Guit County, Kakuma, Kenya, 07/05/2016.

2.2.9 Vegetation and Climate

Western Nuer has a savannah type of environment with the vegetation mostly made of tall grass and a forest cover that is widely made of thorny trees mainly acacia and desert dates. In contrast to the north, at the southern part of the region, the forest cover is mostly made of palm and coconut trees. Meanwhile, a big part of the Western Nuer territory is swampy and has a lot of marches that you cannot walk for a short distance without coming across a stream. The territory is also rich in petroleum which is mainly found in Mayom County (Kai Kang oilfield), Rubkona County (Unity oilfield), Guit County (Manga, Mala, & Joknyang oilfields) and Koch County (Tharjiath oilfield).

The climate is dry and warm from January up to the month of May, rainy and with a moisture from the month of June to the month of October and cold during the winter months (November – January). The soil type is black cotton soil which covers most parts of the region with some few places with mix sand and clay and these areas are good for agricultural production.⁴²

2.3 THE GENESIS OF THE NUER – DINKA CONFLICTS

The Nuer ethnic group is part of the Nilotic people who share common cultural similarities with their immediate neighbor, the Dinka. The two ethnic groups are believed to have come from the same ancestral lineage. According to a legend, the Dinka and the Nuer are from the same father and mother but eventually separated due to a disagreement between them. Their differences were believed to have originated from a decision taken by their frail father to divide the family cattle between his two sons as it is the custom among the Nilotic. Nonetheless, during the cattle distribution, the Dinka as the elder son was given the big cow and the Nuer being the younger son was given the heifer. At night the Dinka disguised as the Nuer sneaked into the father hut and demanded to be given the heifer. The following morning, when the Nuer came to the father to ask for the heifer only to find that it was taken by his brother, the Dinka. It is from thence that animosity between the Nuer and the Dinka ensue, trickling down to the succeeding generations. Therefore, it is believed the Nuer habits of constantly raiding the Dinka cattle is informed by the need to recover the stolen heifer from the Dinka.⁴³

⁴² Gatwec, G. Kel, Oral Interview, Mayendit County, Kakuma, Kenya, 06/05/2016.

⁴³ Jageah, G. Beding, Oral Interview, Leer County, Kakuma, Kenya, 31/04/2016.

A similar mythology claims the Nuer regards the Dinka cattle as belonging to them in the past but were unscrupulously taken from them by their brothers the Dinka.⁴⁴ It is also believed the Nuer are part of the Dinka but separated from the main body through various social changes and became a separate entity. The same narrative argues that due to the population pressures and wars the Nuer migrated Dinka homeland by disintegrating with their brethren the Dinka who later became their arch enemies.⁴⁵

The mythology explained in the above narrative, though is taken seriously by the native Nuer as the origin of the conflict between them and the Dinka, there is no proof that there has ever been cattle distribution similar to the one alluded to above. Moreover, the claim that the Nuer and the Dinka share one ancestry in the past is not something that can be with certainty proved beyond reasonable doubt. In fact, the two communities, the Nuer and Dinka have cultural similarities that could be construed as primarily due to distance agnation as some scholars and the Nuer testimonies seem to suggest. Ironically, over the years the Nuer and Dinka have been engaged in persistent hostilities that involve raiding and rustling of cattle between the two rival ethnic groups. Therefore, the culture of violence and aggression that has become the hallmark of the Western Nuer could have originated from these historical hostilities only to be intensified later by the contemporary social dynamics.

2.4 THE NUER EXPANSION TO EASTERN BANK OF THE NILE

Toward the beginning of the 19th century the Nuer expanded from the territory of the modern-day Western Nuer eastward to the areas along the Sobat and Pibor basins. During their expansion, the Nuer came into contact with their neighbors the Dinka and Anyiak. The two groups bitterly resisted the Nuer imperial ambition by doing everything in their power to hold the Nuer expansion in check. Inevitably, the frictions created by the resistance and counter resistance evolved into antagonistic relationships between the Nuer invaders and the host communities.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Burton (1981). *Ethnicity on the Hoof: On the Economics of Nuer Identity*, Vol. 20, No. 4, pp. 157 – 162.

⁴⁵ Newcomer, J. Peter (1972). *Man*. New Series, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp. 5 – 11.

⁴⁶ Kelly, Raymond C. (1987). *The Nuer Conquest: The Structure and Development of an Expansionist System*, Michigan: Michigan University Press, p. 98.

The above narrative is underpinned by the historical records suggesting that the Eastern Jikany Nuer led by Latjor migrated into their present-day territory in 1629 AD. The Nuer fought their way through the Shiluk country until they came to the bank of the White Nile River. The migrants were believed to have crossed the River Nile through Wath Ngok, a river crossing points in a distance of 15 miles north of the present day Melut town. During their crossing, the Nuer were intercepted by the Kil clan a sub section of Ageer major section, who were living in the area. Unfortunately, the attackers could not withstand the waves of Nuer migrants who after subduing their enemies temporarily stayed in Thaapiou and Ayal Nhial before proceeding to their final destination.⁴⁷

The Nuer expansion of 1880s was primarily due to population pressure because during the migration period, the Nuer population growth in the span of 1920s – to 1930s was about 86%.⁴⁸ This increase in number was primarily due to those who were assimilated by the Nuer from other communities especially the Dinka and Anyuak. It is believed the Nuer expansion was mainly due to flooding in which the living space became so limited prompting a major social migration.⁴⁹ A different part of the narrative argues that the interest in cattle among the Nuer could have been the reason for their territorial expansion. Therefore, it is believed that the purpose of acquiring more land would facilitate the sustenance of their cattle.⁵⁰

The Nuer who migrated to the eastern bank attacked the Anyuak community during the 1870s decimating their villages and taking away every loot they could find. The reason the Anyuak could not withstand the Nuer is because they did not unite their rank to form a formidable defense against the Nuer incursion. Fortunately, the advent of the automatic weapons supplied by the Ethiopian highlanders to the Anyuak became a big relief. However, after acquiring new weapons, the Anyuak managed to reclaim their usurped territory from the Nuer.⁵¹ Ironically, despite the much-publicized hostility between the Nuer and Anyuak, there are situations where the two

⁴⁷ Yuar, F. Ayul (n.d). Dinka Padang Borders with Shiluk, WWW. Sudantribune.com, 10/07/2016.

⁴⁸ Kelly (1987). *The Nuer Conquest: The Structure and Development of an Expansionist System*, Michigan: Michigan University Press, p. 98.

⁴⁹ Kelly and Hutchinson (1994). On the Nuer Conquest, *Current Anthropology*, The University of Chicago Press on Behalf of Wenner Green Foundation for Anthropological research, Vol. 35, No. 5, pp. 643 – 651.

⁵⁰ Ivan, Karp et al (1983, p. 485). The Nuer (Comments & Reply), *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 24, No. 4, pp. 485.

⁵¹ Kelly (1987). Kelly, Raymond C. (1987). *The Nuer Conquest: The Structure and Development of an Expansionist System*, Michigan: Michigan University Press, p. 101.

communities live peacefully side by side.⁵² In fact, the two communities made use of their cooperation for the exchange of goods and services since it is common knowledge that farmers and pastoralists needs each other when it comes to their socio-economic livelihood.

The systematic raids carried out by the Nuer against their immediate neighbors, the Dinka, Shiluk, Anyuak, Murle, Burun and the Misseriya nomadic Arabs in the north are a product of a long-standing enmity. These Nuer raids against their rivals provide them with cattle and captives which they used to solidify their occupation. The captives from the war were assimilated into the Nuer society as part of the community, while the looted cattle would be paid as dowries to marry new wives. Inevitably, these exogamous marriages which increased the Nuer numbers perhaps became an asset during their war of conquest against their neighbors.⁵³ The Nuer managed to raid the Dinka cattle and assimilated some of their members to become Nuer particularly taking advantage of their military superiority against the Dinka. It is argued one of the important tactics the Nuer used was that they fight their enemy collectively while their Dinka counterpart have difficulty adopting the same tactics.⁵⁴

Indeed, the expansion of the Nuer from their homeland in the west to the eastern bank of the Nile River was due to numerous reasons which includes population pressure, search for good pasture especially riverine areas for the Nuer cattle. During the expansion, the Nuer fought with Shiluk, Dinka, Burun and Anyauak ethnic groups and has hitherto managed to occupy new areas which remained their territories up to this day. The hostility between the affected communities and the conquerors has generated a perennial bitterness that characterized their relationship for so many decades. This bitterness continues to inflame the fire of enmity between the Nuer and their rival ethnic groups since then and for countless generations after them. However, it is due to these internecine conflicts between the Nuer and the rest of communities living around them that the Western Nuer youth became too militarized that they later turned against one another through intra-communal violent conflicts. It is during the same period that the youth adapted to the

⁵² Gebeyehu, Temesgen (2003). *Ethnic Conflict, Interaction and Cohabitation in Africa: The Case of Nuer and Anyuak*, East African Social Science Research Review, Vol. 29, No. 2, pp. 101 – 103.

⁵³ Evans, E. Pritchard (1940:221). *The Nuer: the mode of livelihood and political institutions of a Nilotic people*. Oxford: Clarendon press.

⁵⁴ Otterbein, F. Keith (1995). *Current Anthropology*, the University of Chicago Press on Behalf of the Wenner Green Foundation for Anthropological Research, Vol. 35, No. 5, pp. 821 – 823.

dichotomy of the culture of violence and aggression which became so endemic that shaking them off is a mammoth task that would require intergenerational efforts to accomplished.

2.5 THE TURCO - EGYPTAINS RULE VERSUS THE NUER ON SLAVE TRADE

In 1820, Mohamed Ali became the ruler of Egypt and extended his rule up to the Sudan where he conducted raids in search of ivory and slaves in the south of the country. In order to fulfill their dreams, the Turco-Egyptian rulers, in connivance with the Northern Sudanese Arabs managed to penetrate the southern Sudan hinterland and subsequently engaged in the slave and ivory trade.⁵⁵ During the slave trade, the Nuer vehemently resisted the abhorrent trade in humans which was the main activity of the Turco-Egyptian colonial administration and their Northern Sudanese counterparts. The slave merchants in carrying out expeditions into the southern hinterland were frequently intercepted by the Nuer who would attack them before reaching their final destination.⁵⁶ In the event the traders managed to get hold of the slaves, they would also be attacked by the Nuer while on their way back to the north - the country main slave market.

Ultimately, this hostile relationship between the Nuer and the slave traders pitted the Nuer against the Turco-Egyptian administrators who regarded the Nuer as truculent and unruly. The hostility of the Turco-Egyptians rule against the Nuer is believed to have been orchestrated by the Dinka and Anyiak whose land was invaded by the Nuer during their expansion. In an act of retribution, the two affected communities became very hostile that they sought protection from the Egyptians and further implicated the Nuer who they regarded as their arch enemies.⁵⁷ It was not until 1874 that Gordon Charles closed down the slave camp at the Zeraf river mouth which was commanded by Nasir Mohamed. This move was taken because the British colonial administration was opposed to the trade. Gordon later sent Nasir to establish a station along the Sobat river and the current town of Nasir is named after him.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Johnson, H. Douglas (1981a). The Fighting Nuer: Primary Sources and the Origins of a Stereotype. Africa Affairs, Vol. 51: 508-527.

⁵⁶ Johnson, D. H (1981a). The Fighting Nuer: Primary Sources and The Origins of a Stereotype. Africa Journal, Vol. 51, pp. 508 - 527.

⁵⁷ Johnson, D. H (1981a). The Fighting Nuer: Primary Sources and The Origins of a Stereotype. Africa Affairs, Vol. 51, p. 508.

⁵⁸ Johnson, D. H (1981a). The Fighting Nuer: Primary Sources and The Origins of a Stereotype. Africa Affairs, Vol. 51, pp. 119 – 128.

It was exactly in December 1839 when for the first time the Nuer came into contact with the Egyptians, the latter were navigating through the river Nile in their mission to discover the source of the river when they docked at a port along the Bahr al Jebel River. A Dinka interpreter who was accompanying the Egyptians misinformed the Egyptians that the presence of the Nuer at the river bank was meant to execute a sinister plan. Accordingly, the Egyptians fired at the villagers killing one of the spectators, injuring others, and the rest fled for their dear lives. Indeed, it was out of this hostile experience with the Egyptians that the Nuer began to develop animosity with the foreigners.⁵⁹

In the light of the above enmity, the outside world characterized the Nuer in the 18th and 19th centuries as warlike people. as a result, they gave them the labels such as savages, naked and stubborn people whose life is marred by violence, truculence attitudes toward themselves and their neighbors.⁶⁰ This stereotypical Nuer characterization was a byproduct of biased presentation by the British colonial administrators serving in the Sudan. Meanwhile, a separate narrative placed the origin of the Nuer labelling as warlike people as primarily orchestrated and influenced by the Dinka of Upper Nile. The Dinka were displaced and their territory occupied by the Nuer who came from the Western bank of the Bahr al Jebel. Presumably, the intention of the Dinka was to enlist the support of the British and the Egyptians colonial administrators in a bid to revenge against the Nuer.⁶¹ Even though the Nuer are considered by outsiders as warlike and aggressive, others believe this characterization is as a manufactured truth. Instead, these Nuer supporters argued the Nuer had cordial relations with their Dinka neighbors because the two communities are engaged in intermarriages that almost pacify their violent relationships.⁶²

In 1896, Deng Laka fought with a contingent of Arab force who were advancing from Bor through Twic country. The force was surrounded by the Nuer killing most of them and capturing their weapons which they later donated to the magician Deng Kur as a sacrifice to God. The head

⁵⁹ Johnson, D. (1980). Tribal Boundaries and Border Wars: Nuer-Dinka Relations in the Upper Nile Province, c. 1860-1976. Paper presented at the 23rd meeting of the African Studies Association, Philadelphia.

⁶⁰ Otterbein (1995). *Current Anthropology*, the University of Chicago Press on Behalf of the Wenner Green Foundation for Anthropological Research, Vol. 35, No. 5, pp. 821 – 823.

⁶¹ Johnson D. H (1982). *Ngundeng and The Turuk: Two Narratives Compared*, Cambridge University Press, Vol. 9, p. 509.

⁶² Johnson, D. H (1993). *Deng Laka and Mut Roal: Fixing the Date of an Unknown Battle*, *History in Africa*, Cambridge University Press, Vol. 20, pp. 119 – 128.

of the force called Ali Elias Kannuna was killed in that attacked which later the Gawaar named “Mut Roal” literally meaning “the colonizer weapon”.⁶³

The conflict between the Nuer and the Turco-Egyptian rule was in fact triggered by the reasons enumerated in the different narratives discussed in the forgoing theme. The Nuer were very much opposed to the idea of slavery and the exploitation exacted on the local people by the colonial powers namely the Turks and Egyptians. It is out of sheer love for their fellow southerners that they fought these slave traders together with the system of rule empowering them to engage in the business. The incidence that took place at Wathkei in Fangak area in which Nuer spectators who were watching a steamer floating over the water were shot mercilessly by the Egyptians could have been another cause for the conflict that collided the two warring parties. The conflict between the Nuer and the Turco-Egyptian rule has encourage the Nuer to erect their defenses and in the process slides into the culture of violence and aggression as the two byproducts of this bitter animosity.

2.6 THE BRITISH COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION AND THE NUER

By 1899, the British colonial administration ruled Sudan following the European scramble to Africa in which the British extended their control into the south where they had been misinformed about the hostility of the Nuer. Consequently, the British throughout the entire period of their administration treated the Nuer with much contempt and suspicion. This mistreatment prompted a chain reaction from the Nuer who likewise became hostile to the British colonial rule in the Upper Nile region.⁶⁴

The Nuer resistance to the colonial rule culminated into the killing of Captain V.H Ferguson Bey in 1927 by the Nyuong section of Western Nuer. The incidence sparked a fierce response from the British colonial administration who carried out retributive campaign against the native people ransacking their entire villages as well as looting their cattle.⁶⁵ In order to ensure the success of these operations, the British patrols were given different assignments, one column from

⁶³ Ibid. pp. 508 – 527.

⁶⁴ Johnson, D. H (1980). *History and Prophecy and The Nuer of Southern Sudan*, PhD. Dissertation, Department of History, University of California, Los Angeles.

⁶⁵ Kingdon, F. D. (1945). *The Western Nuer Patrol of 1927 - 28: Sudan Notes and Records*, University of Khartoum Vol 26. No. 1, pp. 171 – 178.

Adok commanded by Captain Kidd the political officer, came towards Lake Jur. The Shambe column was commanded by Mr. Porter, headed south from Lake Jur and captain Kingdon advanced from Akot and Aluel of Rumbek. The team from Rumbek was using carriers to transport their logistics into the Nuer hinterland.⁶⁶

While in the South, the British colonial administration was characterized by the rule of force and permanent conflict between the government appointed chiefs and the traditional ones. To compound the matters further, the system also imposed an alien system of governance on the Nuer people that have severely disrupted the traditional natives' way of life.⁶⁷

During the lifetime of prophet Ngundeng, he was accused of being an opposition to the different colonial administrations. This opposition is alleged to have started with the Turco-Egyptian, the Mahdiyya and the Anglo Egyptian rules. But various Nuer testimonies revealed that Ngundeng was a peaceful man who not only opposed to the Nuer intersectional fighting, but also Nuer conflict with their neighbors. It was only after his death in 1905 that his son Guek Ngundeng became hostile to the British administration resulting into his ultimate death in 1927.⁶⁸ In 1922 the provincial government in Upper Nile decided to subdue the prophets under the government control but Guek Ngundeng refused. The Lord Cromer's remark that "the man who consult with prophet Isaiah when he is in difficulty cannot be expected to listen to any other person" analogizes the people's lack of respect to the government due to the incitement from Guek Ngundeng.⁶⁹

During the colonial period, the British administrators took more interest in practical matters that have direct political bearing, other aspects of Nuer life such as their religion were neglected by the colonial administrators. It was the antipathy toward Nuer life which was clearly reflected in the prejudiced reports written by colonial administrators prior to Evans Pritchard study of the

⁶⁶ Kingdon, F. D (1945). *The Western Nuer Patrol of 1927 - 28: Sudan Notes and Records*, University of Khartoum Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 172.

⁶⁷ Johnson D. H (1982). *Ngundeng and The Turuk: Two Narratives Compared*, Cambridge University Press, Vol. 9, p. 242.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 119 – 139.

⁶⁹ Johnson, D. H. (1986). *Judicial regulation and Administrative Control: Customary and The Nuer 1898 – 1954*, *The Journal of African History*, Cambridge University Press, Vol. 27, No. 1, p. 70.

Nuer.⁷⁰ The British colonial administration in a bid to legitimize the rules they set for the Nuer, called for a chief's conference at Fangak in 1948.⁷¹ In the conference the chiefs could not resist the new rules thinking that by introducing the idea of personal confinement against wrong doers this would minimize the rate of crime. To the contrary, the new system disrupted the traditional ways of settlement of disputes within the community.

The conference of the Nuer districts commissioners held in 1943 was meant for a pacification as well as to bring the Nuer under full control of the government. It was then thought the Nuer should be engaged so that they don't revert to their old-time feuds.⁷² Finally the Nuer succumbed to the British administration but only after they were assured that their taxes cannot be levied by the colonial government. Moreover, it was agreed that the taxes would be levied only after the government dealt with the Nuer cases as a matter of exchange of rights, responsibilities and obligations.⁷³

The British colonial rule introduced the system of joint border meetings between the Nuer and the Dinka in (1909 – 1910) with the purpose of settling disputes between the two communities. The settlement resulted into payment of blood compensation for the cases of homicide between the two warring communities. But this cross-border blood compensation was later disrupted when another system of paying tributes and taxes was introduced by the government.⁷⁴ In response to the new compensation law, A.H Alba the district commissioner of Pibor in 1941 accepted the payment of cattle in order to settle cross border feuds. But he also criticized the system of payment in cattle saying he would not accept any further payment of such kind unless the government accept the "Niloticization of the judicial system".⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Johnson D. H (1982). *Ngundeng and The Turuk: Two Narratives Compared*, Cambridge University Press, Vol. 9, p. 241.

⁷¹ Duany, M. Wal (1992). *The Nuer Concept of Covenant and Covenantal Way of Life*, Oxford University Press, Publius, Vol. 22, No. 4, p. 88.

⁷² Johnson, D. H. (1986). *Judicial regulation and Administrative Control: Customary and The Nuer 1898 – 1954*, *The Journal of African History*, Cambridge University Press, Vol. 27, No. 1, pp. 75, 76.

⁷³ Johnson, D. H. (1986). *Judicial regulation and Administrative Control: Customary and The Nuer 1898 – 1954*, *The Journal of African History*, Cambridge University Press, Vol. 27, No. 1, pp. 63, 64.

⁷⁴ Johnson, D. H. (1986). *Judicial regulation and Administrative Control: Customary and The Nuer 1898 – 1954*, *The Journal of African History*, Cambridge University Press, Vol. 27, No. 1, pp. 63, 64.

⁷⁵ Johnson, D. H. (1986). *Judicial Regulation and Administrative Control: Customary and The Nuer 1898 – 1954*, *The Journal of African History*, Cambridge University Press, Vol. 27, No. 1, pp. 64, 65.

The British and the Nuer have their fair share of hostility following the collapse of the Turco-Egyptian rule and the British takeover of the mantle of power in Sudan and specifically the administration in southern Sudan. The relationship between the two parties were marred by the hostile attitudes they have shown each other. Certainly, these hostilities were stoked by the Dinka of Upper Nile who see the rise of the Nuer as the single threat facing their very existence in the region. Part of the reason the British colonial rule became hostile to the Nuer is because of the latter unruly attitudes which became clear to the British when the Nuer began to attack their neighbors without any kind of restraint. Besides attacking their neighbors, the Nuer also were displaying truculent attitudes toward the British colonialists themselves. This proved beyond reasonable doubt to the British that the Nuer are no friend to anyone living near them. It is out of the hostility against the British administration that the Nuer began to acquire arms which later became a catalyst for the increased in the level of violence and aggression among the Nuer youth.

2.7 WESTERN NUER CONFLICTS AND ARMS ACQUISITION

While the Western Nuer are known for hostility against the foreigners and their immediate neighbors, they likewise engage in constant conflicts against each other. The intra-communal violent conflicts among the different Nuer sections are not a new phenomenon but rather part and parcel of their life which predate to the recorded human history. The reasons for fighting these communal conflicts are varied; they ranged from minor to major causes depending on their associated motives.⁷⁶ In the past, these Western Nuer intra-communal violent conflicts were fought with traditional spears and other primitive weaponry. Nonetheless, it is at the end of 19th century that the Nuer began to acquire arms thank to the introduction of automatic weapons by the colonial administration. Ultimately, the use of automatic weapons in the Western Nuer wars has completely changed the war tactics from traditional to conventional war setting.⁷⁷

Fundamentally, the Western Nuer war culture dictate that conflicts fought with an external enemy versus those fought among the Nuer themselves cannot be the same. The two institutions differ in their conduct and the manner in which captors are treated. The closer the distance the quicker the need to resolve the conflict and the lesser the feud. While, the farer the distance the deadlier the conflict become and slower the urge to resolve the conflict since these distance

⁷⁶ Gatluak, J. Gatduel, Oral Interview, Mayom County, Nairobi, Kenya, 14/07/2016.

⁷⁷ Hutchinson, S. Elaine (1996). *Nuer Dilemmas*, California University of California Press, p. 136.

communities may not be intimately related. Within the Western Nuer clans, violent conflicts have increased in intensity and severity and the human toll are immense.⁷⁸ Some of the impacts that were experienced as a result of the Western Nuer wars are that the women could no longer accompany warriors to the battlefield as used to be in the past. The same is true for the role these women play when they protect the wounded or the war captives. Moreover, the gun culture has created an urge for young men to possess firearms since they consider them as ideal tools for protection.⁷⁹

The Western Nuer people were alarmed by the level of destruction perpetrated by Matip militia who are continuously encouraged to commit atrocities by the Sudanese government in Khartoum between 1997 to 1999. It is believed the move was orchestrated to enable exploitation of the oil south of Bentiu town. Subsequently, the inter-factional fighting that followed prevented citizens from cultivating for two consecutive years something that further made life very difficult for the local inhabitants as food became scarce.⁸⁰ The intra-communal violent conflicts in Western Nuer claimed human lives that could be estimated at the tens of thousands besides the enormous destruction in property and community livelihood. It is further believed that these intra-communal violent conflicts have retarded development efforts planned for by the various successive state administrations.⁸¹

Over the years, money allocated for development activities were frequently shifted to security sectors of those administrations. And the violent conflicts have impacted on social and cultural ties of the people by rendering communities that were once tied together by affinities much more disconnected and disintegrated. Ultimately, the post-conflict relationships of these communities have been characterized by constant hostilities rather than peaceful relationships.⁸² Moreover, the cycle of revenge killings generated by the Western Nuer intra-communal violent conflicts is a cause for alarm. The revenge killings are so rampant that even government officials

⁷⁸ Evans, E. Pritchard (1940). *The Nuer: Mode of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*, Oxford Clarendon Press, p. 223.

⁷⁹ Hutchinson, S. Elaine (1996). *Nuer Dilemmas*, California University of California Press, pp. 140, 142.

⁸⁰ Johnson, D.H (1982). *Ngundeng and The Turuk: Two Narratives Compared*, Cambridge University Press, Vol. 9, p. 130.

⁸¹ Unity State Secretariat (2013). *Security Report, Bentiu*, pp. 23 – 35.

⁸² *Ibid.*

who are not part of the communal conflicts are targeted. The fighting youth often execute these personal vendettas against these government officials in the state major towns such as Bentiu and other towns with total impunity.⁸³ Unfortunately, these hostile activities by the Nuer communities against one another have fostered a warlike culture blamed on the fighting youth who keeps the spirit of the communal conflicts alive. It is believed these youth look for troubles even at the times such communal conflicts are not sanctioned by the local communities. Apparently, this warlike tendency not only renders the Nuer as dangerous to their immediate neighbors but equally to themselves.⁸⁴

In December 2013, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) party had an internal party rivalry over who should be the flag bearer come 2015 general elections. This party wrangling pitted the principal rivals in the party the incumbent president Salva Kiir Mayardit and his deputy Dr. Riek Machar Teny. During the fall out of the two rival leaders each was supported by his community, President Salva Kiir won the support of his Dinka community while, Riek Machar was supported by the Nuer.⁸⁵ The ensuing civil war that followed as a result of this fall out became particularly disastrous to the people of Western Nuer since the civilian population became directly involved in the war. Accordingly, the Western Nuer rural youth were heavily armed by the warring parties during the conflict between the two SPLM rival factions. This was a calculated move by the two leaders to mobilize the youth as part of their respective strategies to win the war.⁸⁶

Unfortunately, instead of using the weapons to prosecute the civil war, the rural youth misused them to destabilize the Western Nuer countryside. The widespread presence of automatic weapons in the hands of the civilian population ultimately created a life of lawlessness throughout the region. The rampant cattle rustling became a security threat that nobody guarantees the security of his/her property, in addition, to the countless killings that take place on a daily basis among the local inhabitants. Regrettably, the proliferation of firearms in the hands of the civilians have compounded an already volatile situation prior to the eruption of the civil war.⁸⁷

⁸³ Gatdet, W. Kur, Oral Interview, Rubkona County, Kakuma Camp, Kenya, 04/05/2016.

⁸⁴ Ruot, R. Let, Oral Interview, Koch County, Juba, South Sudan 16/11/2016.

⁸⁵ Yap, J. Bath, Oral Interview, Leer County, Juba, South Sudan, 02/12/2016.

⁸⁶ Diet, M. Hon, Oral Interview, Mayendit County, Khartoum, Sudan, 20/01/2017.

⁸⁷ Yap, J. Bath, Oral Interview, Leer County, Juba, South Sudan, 02/12/2016.

As clearly articulated by the forgoing different narratives and literature, the sources of the Western Nuer arms supplies are the different rebel movements who were fighting with the Arabs while living in the civilian settlements. The Arabs also contributed significantly in the arming of the Western Nuer people in several ways. Chief among the sources of supply are the arms that were given to the factions allied with the government which always find their way to the civilian population. The Nomadic Misseriya Arabs were also key suppliers because they often sell weapons to the Western Nuer when they come to graze their cattle in the region during the summer. Finally, the soldiers and other paramilitary elements who quit the military profession sometimes disappeared into the civilians' settlements with their guns untraced. The ubiquitous presence of the guns at the hands of the civil population antagonized the situation in the region that the culture of violence as well as aggressive attitudes became the order of the day among the Western Nuer youth.

2.8 CONCLUSION

The Western Nuer community is composed of Bul, Leek, Jikany, Jagey, Haak, Dok and Nyuong with a total population of 486,346 persons. The land is swampy with the savannah type of environment dotted with Acacia trees and desert dates in the north and palm trees in the south as the main vegetation forest cover. The economic activities are pastoralism, agriculture and fishing but trade and commerce as socioeconomic activities are recent in nature and only confined to the big towns and urban settlement.

The area is rich in petroleum and other minerals, but little benefits is reaped from these natural resources by the local inhabitants. The people of Western Nuer practiced local African indigenous religions with only 30% of the population professing Christianity and Islam. While, the justice system is a hybrid of conventional system of justice blended with a traditional system of customary law, so is the system of governance which is also made up of conventional and traditional system of governance. Marriages are conducted in accordance with the traditional way of marriage and divorce is allowed.

The hostility between the Dinka and the Nuer could be traced back to a very distant past when the two communities separated and subsequently developed some kind of animosity. This hostility did not only affect the two protagonists per se, but the other Western Nuer neighbors as well. Separately, during the colonial period the Nuer also fought with the different colonial powers

such as the Turco-Egyptian and the British administrations. These conflicts resulted into the death of an English official called V.H Ferguson Bey at the hands of the Nyuong section of Western Nuer.

While, the Western Nuer fight with their neighbors from the other communities, they likewise engage in internal conflicts among themselves. These intra-community conflicts claim more lives similar to the battles the Western Nuer community fought with their external enemies. In the past, conflicts among the Western Nuer were fought with traditional weaponry of war which later evolved into automatic weapons. The shift is made possible by the new technology further increasing the death toll and property destruction among the local people.

The environment of conflict that have characterized Nuer social life beginning with their rivalry with the Dinka and Anyauk, the Turco-Egyptian and the British rules bred the culture of violence and aggression among the Western Nuer youth. The situation is further compounded by the proliferation of the firearms in the hands of the youth making life among the civil population utterly unbearable. Unfortunately, the culture of violence and aggression became so rampant that individual murders and personal vendettas are on daily rise in the Western Nuer region.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CAUSES OF WESTERN NUER VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The Western Nuer communities oftentimes fight among themselves in inter-sectional and inter-clan violent conflicts, the causes of these conflicts are varied and numerous depending on their motivating factors. In order to better explain the different causes of these conflicts, I have tried to classified them into their rightful taxonomies as they relate to the main themes of this research. These classifications could be identified as social factors of conflict, political factors of conflict, economic factors of conflict, psychological factors of conflict and environmental factors of conflict. It is worth noting that the causes discussed in this paper are not exhaustive as other causes not mentioned here can also cause conflicts. Nevertheless, the causes outlined in this study suffice to explain the main determinants for conflict eruption among the Western Nuer people.

3.2. SOCIAL FACTORS OF VIOLENCE

3.2.1 Boy Child upbringing and socialization

Child upbringing among the Western Nuer people follow certain social patterns that are guided by the local norms and customs. Culturally, the Nuer believes that manhood is manifested through bravery in the event of a conflict. The man who shows cowardice during the war risk severe indignation from his peers as well as loss of social status in the wider community. Therefore, it is a requirement that a man undergo war training from his childhood through his adolescent years till his initiation into manhood when he becomes of age.⁸⁸ It is also maintains that in the Nuer society aggressive attitudes are encouraged from childhood making conflicts and disputes normal things in life. Accordingly, the Nuer consider conflict as part of human existence that every social being must live with.⁸⁹

The violent character of the Western Nuer people is attributed to the child cultural upbringing while rejecting the notion that it is every boy child who is violent in the Nuer society.

⁸⁸ Elders Group, Focused Group Discussion, Kakuma, Kenya, 02/05/2016.

⁸⁹ Duany, M. Wal (1992). A PhD Dissertation Titled *Neither Palaces Nor Prisons: The Constitution of Order Among The Nuer*, Indiana University, USA, p. 222.

It is argued that, in families there are those who disciplined their children and those who do not, but unfortunately the indisciplined child will influence the good ones. The author lamented how in his youthful years he used to aggress his age mates thinking it was prudent to engage in such aggressive attitudes.⁹⁰ Another argument believes it is the marks put on the boy's forehead as a sign of manhood that have a detrimental effect on the Western Nuer boys' aggressive attitudes. The same argument also maintains that once you (boy) are marked you will believe in your manhood something that will put you in a collision course with the rest of your peers⁹¹

The Nuer people are violent in character and this is because they don't want to be judged wrong. He cited an example where a person who committed an offence would be shielded from his wrongdoing by his social group, only to be told about his guilt in private. Even aggressors will be protected by their clans in spite of the guilt. The aggressor group will condone the behavior in the belief that it is part of man's life to aggress.⁹² The above conclusion is in tandem with the writings of B.A. Lewis who referred to the Nuer man as anarchic who easily becomes violent because he cannot control his temper whenever he aggressed. However, he appreciated their lifestyle which he said is characterized by a democratic ideal where nobody is above the other when it comes to social standing. He further revealed how the Nuer despised being ruled by a single personality.⁹³

The above social factors perpetuate the culture of war and aggression among the Western Nuer youth and this is manifested by the emphasis on manhood as an epitome of bravery and the ability to go to war. This male war instinct is further explained by the man's desire to participate and die in a fight anywhere and anytime violent conflicts occur regardless of who initiated the fight and the parties involved. Oftentimes, it is considered normal and an honor for a man to die in a fight provided his kin will eventually avenge his soul in the end.⁹⁴ The socialization of the Nuer child in a violent environment both at home and in the wider community inevitably encourages his future behaviors in relation to his peers. Perhaps, it would not be a surprise if the two phenomena of the culture of violence and aggression become rampant in the society.

⁹⁰ Ruot, R. Let, Oral Interview, Koch County, Juba, South Sudan, 16/11/2016.

⁹¹ Diet, M. Hon, Oral Interview, Mayendit County, Khartoum, Sudan, 20/01/2017.

⁹² Diet, M. Hon, Oral Interview, Mayendit County, Khartoum, Sudan, 20/01/2017.

⁹³ Lewis, B.A (1951). Nuer Spokesman: A Note On The Institution of The Ruic, Sudan Notes and Records, Khartoum University, Vol. 32, No. 1, p. 78.

⁹⁴ Gatluak, N. Danhier, Telephone Conversation, Payinjiar County, Kakuma, Kenya, 05/08/2016.

3.2.2 Witchcraft and Evil eye

Evil eye is described as a disease that affects the mind of the affected person who would then inflict harm on his victim by inserting or removing an object in his/her body. Miraculously, the process of insertion or removal of the object, no wound or scar is ever left in the affected person body.⁹⁵ The two phenomena are widespread in the Western Nuer society particularly among the rural population and the reason why this belief is still prevalence is due to the primordial life the rural inhabitants continue to lead. A person suspected of bewitching another person would be a target of attack from the relatives of the alleged victim.⁹⁶ In the event the witch or evil eye person is killed, the victim's relatives will be engaged in a hostile counteraction of retribution to avenge the death of their member. Thus, the victim versus the perpetrator cycle of vengeance would continue unabated, unless a quick remedy is found to address the problem by the community or the government concern.⁹⁷

There is a general consensus that the belief in witchcraft and evil eye has somehow diminished among the town residents and continue only to be entertains in the countryside. It is further maintained, the decline of these two phenomena does not suggest they are not responsible for causing many violent conflicts among the rural communities. The two phenomena, notably witchcraft and evil eye have greatly contributed to the perpetuation of violence within the Western Nuer society hence, increasing the level of the culture of violence and aggressive behaviors. Unfortunately, Witchcraft and Evil eye are considered as human construction that has nothing to do with the objective reality, it is the psychological manipulation of people's perceptions that creates such conflicts among different communities.⁹⁸

3.2.3 Alcohol and Drunkenness

Wine and spirits are taken as beverages by the local people in Western Nuer particularly the elderly. However, it is argued that quarrels during alcohol and brew drinking sparks violent conflicts between individuals which sometimes can lead to communal conflict. A person who wants to cause troubles boastfully used slanderous name calling of his war victims as a way of

⁹⁵ Duany, M. Wal (1992). A Doctoral Dissertation Titled *Neither Palaces Nor Prisons: The Constitution of Order Among the Nuer*, Indiana University, USA, pp. 248, 249.

⁹⁶ Riek, P. Reat, Oral Interview, Guit County, Kakuma, Kenya, 07/05/2016.

⁹⁷ Youth group, Focused Group Discussion, Kakuma camp, Kenya 02/05/2016.

⁹⁸ Youth Group, Focused Group Discussion, Kakuma, Kenya, 02/05/2016.

aggressing the victim's surviving family members. Such reminders about the deceased or wounded relatives would be resented by their families if they happened to be present at the scene.⁹⁹ Moreover, the invocation of the deceased name by a drunken aggressor can lead to violent conflict between the two groups, that of the perpetrator and the victim's family. Oftentimes, fighting between two drunken individuals would spread like a wildfire and draws in others who were not part of the dispute. Such conflict can escalate into wider conflict particularly if a person inflicted a serious harm to his rival, the victim's sons would always want to avenge the injury of their father and the same is true when a person is killed during this personal contest.¹⁰⁰

The nexus between the taking of alcohol and the culture of violence and aggression is the obvious attempt by the drunken individual to provoke the situation by displaying unbecoming attitudes toward others. The invocation of the names of the deceased persons is often regarded as an invitation of trouble and a direct assault on the surviving members of the victim family. Therefore, the behaviors of the perpetrator are no doubt a true manifestation of the culture of violence as well as the tendency to engage in outright aggression.

3.2.4 Social festivities and folklore dances

Social occasions are traditionally conducted throughout Nuer land in order to recreate and foster the sense of joy and jubilation. Unfortunately, Western Nuer community often quarrel and fight in those festive moments because some criminals take advantage of the euphoria presented by the occasion to inflict harm on others. It is also likely that an individual or group seeking vengeance would infiltrate the crowd to execute their plan of murder particularly if their target is to be found in the same gathering.¹⁰¹ Another version of the story states that sometimes youth can cause conflict just on the sight of their old rivals. Or, when two young men collided or run into one another when performing war play, this can ignite a clash that ultimately become everybody's conflict. Other causes could be a girl caught with her lover in the occasion or a drunken elder who wanted to initiate a fight by instigating the youth of his clans and such conflicts draw in members of the community from both side of the conflict divides.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Gatluak, J. Gatduel, Oral Interview, Mayom County, Nairobi, Kenya, 14/07/2016.

¹⁰⁰ Jageah, G. Beding, Oral Interview, Leer County, Kakuma, Kenya, 31/04/2016.

¹⁰¹ Gatwec, G. Kel, Oral Interview, Mayendit County, Kakuma, Kenya, 06/05/2016.

¹⁰² Luop, T. Gatkek, Oral Interview, Guit County, Juba, South Sudan, 04/07/2016.

Festivals and festive moments the world over are meant to entertain and create a sense of recreation for the participants concern, but when they are turn into battlefields where killing spree take place, surely this defy any sound reasoning. Certainly, those who are engage in such activities would be deemed as savages and bloodletters who are only guided and adhere to the pernicious culture of violence and aggression. It is only when people are highly militarized and espouse violence as a way of life rather than peace co-existence among the communities that they would be regarded as truculence and violent.

3.2.5 female related conflicts

The female members are considered by the family as the honor and pride of the family and as such they are heavily guarded by their male relatives. However, in order to preserve that family pride and honor, the male relatives of the family members often respond violently to anything that violate the honor of their female relatives. The conflicts associated with the female family members can be explained in several ways as shall be detailed here below.

Courtship in the Western Nuer society is played by the cultural rules where a man conceals his love affairs that involve sexual intercourse with his lover from being discovered by the girl's relatives. Traditionally, Western Nuer community does not encourage sexual intercourse outside marriage between a man and a girl, safe for a covert sexual relationship. Nonetheless, it is acceptable to dance with a girl you love in the folklore dances, composing songs of praise in her name as well as engage in romantic conversation devoid of any sexual content.¹⁰³

In 1997, Duol Buom Gany and his lover Nyekoang Gatluak Pathot were caught engaged in sexual intercourse by Kueidol Gatkuoth and Manyang Gatluak Pathot, the girl's brothers, all from Western Jikany Nuer section. In reaction to the event, the girl's brothers seriously clubbed Gany who was then rushed to the local Bentiu hospital with severe bodily injuries that almost took his life. In the hospital, Gany was unethically informed by the doctor doing the diagnosis that he will die from complications due to a kidney damaged resulting from the beating. However, scarred by the sad news, Gany stormed to the countryside to teach his rivals a lesson before his death and eventually succeeded in the murder of Gatkuoth, the accomplice. Consequently, Gatkuoth murder

¹⁰³ Paan, J. Kuom, Oral Interview, Rubkona County, Juba, South Sudan, 29/12/2016.

sparked a clan contest between Cieng Rueh and Cieng Bieh, the two clans of the victim and that of the perpetrator, culminating to the killing of 10 People from both sides and the cycle of killings continue unabated for number of years.¹⁰⁴

Elopement, rape or impregnation infuriate girl's relatives especially her brothers who will vow to punish the would-be culprit once identified and possibly located. Inevitably, this action by the girl's brothers would ignite negative counter reaction from the boy's side sometimes leading to an all-out war. Notwithstanding, in both situations of impregnation and elopement, the perpetrator will distance himself from the girl's brothers so as to avoid the escalation of the conflict.¹⁰⁵ Another discussion maintains that abduction, rape and impregnation of female members of a family are considered a violation of honor especially if such abduction and rape preclude marriage. It is to be emphasize that the Nuer regard the protection of the female members in the family as the duty of the male members of the household.¹⁰⁶

Adultery is a social activity usually practiced by the Western Nuer society members given its polygamous nature and as a social vice, adultery is considered an offense according to the Western Nuer customary law. It is likely that a violent conflict will erupt if the adulterer is caught red handed and subsequently killed or harmed in the process by the husband of the adulterated woman. In normal situation, adultery as a social offense can be settled peacefully through the customary court presided over by the traditional chief. In the law court, the adulterer will be fine with seven heads of cattle which he is liable to pay individually or collectively with his family. The personal liability is attributed to the fact that in Western Nuer society adultery is seen as a individual offense that should not be a liability to the whole clan.¹⁰⁷

Chap Majuan Joahjoah and Nyegai Mathot Jal wife of Wiyuah Wenyang Yerkew, both from Western Nuer Leek section, are known to have an affair for a very long time. Yerkew the husband, seriously disturbed by the outright violation of his honor, mobilized his clan men and

¹⁰⁴ Thiep, K. Ngoap, Oral Interview, Guit County, Juba, South Sudan, 12/11/2016.

¹⁰⁵ Jageah, G. Beding, Oral Interview, Leer County, Kakuma, Kenya, 31/04/2016.

¹⁰⁶ Duany, M. Wal (1992). A PhD Dissertation Titled *Neither Palaces Nor Prisons: The Constitution of Order Among the Nuer*, Indiana University, USA, pp. 237 - 238.

¹⁰⁷ Paan, J. Kuom, Oral Interview, Rubkona County, Juba, South Sudan, 29/12/2016.

decided to attack Joahjoah, the adulterer along with his clan youth at Nohr Cieng Nyepier in 1983. A fierce battle took place between the two groups in which JoahJoah, the adulterer was wounded along with three others from his clan but luckily, he survived the injury and there was no death on their side, the attackers sustain no casualty whatsoever.¹⁰⁸

Dowry in the Western Nuer Society is a requirement if a man is to acquire a new bride. Ironically, bride wealth can contribute to the eruption of a conflict if the suitor venture into cattle theft or cattle rustling to supplement his meager dowry. The phenomena of cattle rustling and cattle raiding which has increased in recent years are also largely attributed to the quest to plunder cattle for marriage. Perhaps, the inflation of the marriage dowry presently used as a sign of prestige by some influential figures within the Western Nuer community created this anomaly. Therefore, it has become so difficult for the rural youth to pay this high dowry unless they engage in these illicit practices of cattle stealing, rustling and raids.¹⁰⁹

In 1994, Kerker Chak Duop proposed marriage to Nyekor Gatkuoth Jany Tut, the two lovers are from Leek section of Unity state. The girl's parents were stung by Duop proposal knowing well from the outset that the suitor do not possessed cattle of his own. But he insistently assured the bride family not to worry for the require dowry would be ready before the three days deadline. In an attempt to meet the set deadline, Duop brought 35 head of cattle he has stolen from Wal Malual Buom of Cieng Lokjak clan, exactly before the three days deadline. The bride wealth was paid, the wedding ceremony conducted and the bridegroom was officially handed his new bride who travel with him to Khartoum. Five days down the line, Buom the cattle owner, recognized his stolen cattle at Jany's home, the bridegroom father-in-law. Buom filed a case with the court and his cattle were released after Duop already took the girl. Fortunately, there was no violence in the whole episode simply because Buom resorted to a peaceful settlement of the matter and the culprit was not around either otherwise, fighting would have ensued had it been tackled by the youth.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Paan, J. Kuom, Oral Interview, Rubkona County, Juba, South Sudan, 29/12/2016.

¹⁰⁹ Paan, J. Kuom, Oral Interview, Rubkona County, Juba, South Sudan, 29/12/2016.

¹¹⁰ Paan, J. Kuom, Oral Interview, Rubkona County, Juba, South Sudan, 29/12/2016.

The violent conflicts that are associated with female are primarily necessitated by the culture of violence and aggression which became the two main aspects of the Western Nuer way of life otherwise they are manageable if people can reason before engaging in an act of violence. If the female members of the family can be given the freedom they need and not restricted within the confine of the community cultural norms, these kinds of conflicts could be avoided from taking place. It is precisely due to the excessive culture of violence as well as the Western Nuer youth aggressive habits that such violent cultural practices are enable by the society to continue to flourish.

The violation of the family's female member is largely considered as an aggression against the family to whom the female belongs. Hence, the violence which is associated with the protection of a female is informed by the psychological theory of conflict which posit that it is through the subjective manipulation of the individual mind that one regards such social phenomenon as an aggression otherwise ignoring them would have the opposite effect.¹¹¹

3.2.6 killings, personal vendettas and their social ramification

Revenge and killings are commonly practiced among the Western Nuer particularly by the murder victims' relatives and the rampant killings catalyst by the culture of violence made revenge killing the order of the day. Traditionally, the killer is not the only one liable for the death of the deceased, but his entire affine particularly his immediate agnatic male lineage. Previously, liability for homicide is only confined to the fighting youth, but at present, elderly and the educated elite has become targets for vengeance too. This cultural shift in warfare norms is attributed to the dilution of the Western Nuer wars ethics with some alien cultural practices reversing the traditional way of life.¹¹² "A boy from a ghost wife who has never seen his murdered father in his lifetime will be passed down the name and identity of his father killer. He would then be encouraged to carry out personal vendetta against the slayer even if he knows nothing about the causes of the past murder in the first place."¹¹³ The forgoing statement is supported by the below narrative, "when a Nuer man is killed, a wife will be married in his name which is called the ghost wife. If this ghost

¹¹¹ Hinde, Robert (1997). *The Psychological Bases of War*. Paper Presented at Study of War Conference, Wheaton II.

¹¹² Riek, P. Reat, Oral Interview, Guit County, Kakuma, Kenya 07/05/2016.

¹¹³ Gatwec G. Kel, Oral Interview, Mayendit County, Kakuma, Kenya 06/05/2016.

wife bore a boy child, that boy will be agitated about his father who has been killed and that the killer family are his prime targets once he grows up”.¹¹⁴

Movement restriction is a common feature of warfare among the people of Western Nuer. In the aftermath of a feud, the disputants would be hostile to one another that nobody dare cross into the enemy territory. Perhaps, this situation happened when somebody was killed during the conflict and the victim’s family will be on the lookout for any opportunity to avenge their slain relative.¹¹⁵

In 2010, Hethlem Tut Gatkuoth from Cieng Toang was spotted and intercepted and later slain by the youth while passing through Cieng Majok cattle camp. Gatkuoth, the victim was killed due to a previous murder he committed against a member of Cieng Majok clan. Following their return home during the spring of the same year, Cieng Majok the slayer’s clan were attacked at Latkabang village by Cieng Toang the victim’s clan. The attack was launched as a retribution for the killing of Gatkuoth during the summer camps. In the counter attack, Kuol Dhak Dhak Majok from the slayer group (Cieng Majok) sustained three Gunshot wounds but survived. The attackers were repulsed while another member of their group, the deceased brother Puot Tut Gatkuoth was again slain by Cieng Majok.¹¹⁶

Compensations are administered among the people of Western Nuer as a panacea against violence, oftentimes they can be imposed in the form of cattle fines particularly in the absence of capital punishment against the perpetrators. Astonishingly, the deceased family would prefer their son blood be compensated with cattle and dropped the capital punishment. Ostensibly, this cattle preference over the death penalty is informs by two main reasons; firstly, the need to marry a wife for the deceased using the blood wealth. Secondly, the victim family would fear the haunting by the spirit of the slayer should they decide for the slayer death. Ironically, the victim’s family after securing the blood wealth will again incite their male members to kill the perpetrator. This killing spree became a catalyst for an unending personal vendetta among the people of Western Nuer creating untold social unrest.¹¹⁷ In the Nuer conflicts even if the conflicting parties agreed for the

¹¹⁴ Evans, E. Pritchard (1934). *The Nuer: Tribe and Clan (Part II)*, Sudan Notes and Records, Vol. p. 52.

¹¹⁵ Ruot, R. Let, Oral Interview, Koch County, Juba, South Sudan, 16/11/2016.

¹¹⁶ Weal, P. Ruai, Oral Interview, Koch County, Juba, South Sudan, 23/11/2016.

¹¹⁷ Dar, K. Riek, Oral Interview, Guit County, Juba, South Sudan, 16/12/2016.

blood compensation and the pact is closed, the conflict is far from over.¹¹⁸ Nuer feuds are believed to be interminable, and that a conflict does not have an end in sight.¹¹⁹

Payment of blood cattle sometimes takes years to complete, so it is argued this can be the reason why the victim's side resort to vengeance rather than settlement with cattle.¹²⁰ This conclusion has been vehemently refuted by arguing that the Nuer must conduct vengeance by spilling the blood of the slayer of their son or any one of his agnates. It is only when a man is compensated with another man that the victim's family hearts will be fill with joy, the victim's family believes no amount of cattle can compensate their son even if the blood wealth had been fully paid.¹²¹

The idea that a victim that has met his fate in an encounter he partake at his own free will be compensated by killing the perpetrator or anyone of the latter agnatic affine is completely unjustifiable to say the least. The victim before joining the fight is fully aware of the consequences of his action and therefore his death should not be regarded as an attack against the family of the deceased since he was killed in an open contest. It would have been only justified for the family to exact revenge on the perpetrator if only he murdered the victim in cold blood without the victim knowledge of what await him. Understandably, what encourages this type of response from the victim family is often the pervasive nature of the culture of violence and aggression among the Western Nuer society.

Conflicts connected with homicide are informed by the basic human needs theory which posits that an individual will be motivated by the desire to protect his group even if that entails sacrificing his life. The person whose relative had been killed will find it very difficult to live with that reality of losing a family member. Therefore, the only option available for him is to go for a revenge killing if ever he must remove the bitterness in his heart.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Pritchard, E. Evans (1940). *The Nuer: The Mode of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*, Clarendon Press, pp. 154,155.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Evans, T.M.S (1985). *The Paradox of Nuer Feuds and The Leopard Skin Chief: A Creative Solution To The Prisoner's Dilemma*, American Anthropologists, By Wily On Behalf of American Anthropologists Association, Vol. 12, p. 95.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Azar, Edward. (1990). *The Management of Protracted Social Conflict: Theory and Cases*.

3.2.7 Social divisions and their attending conflict

Western Nuer is divided into clans and sub clans as a political form of social organization for the ease of the native administration. Unfortunately, this social division is misused to become a source of conflict particularly by the politicians, the chiefs or community elders. These sections of the community will incite people against one another to fulfill their narrow political vested interests.¹²³ The Nuer political system is based on two main principles territory and agnation, the first is based on material motive and the latter on personal being. The two principles complement each other in the sustenance of the Nuer feuds.¹²⁴ It is also said when an ethnic group move from being in itself into for itself it would then begin to assess its interests relative to the rest.¹²⁵ The Western Nuer elders often takes advantage of the young ones by inciting them to engaged in protracted violent communal conflicts. This is particularly so when somebody is killed or wounded, or the clan is defeated in a local feud. Likewise, the father of the deceased or the injured person will also incite his sons to fight back against the perpetrators if the latter is defeated in battle. At times, a father in an emphasis to see something done would lament his sons' ineptitude in the face of hostilities against their enemies.¹²⁶

Alliances among the Western Nuer are common features of their conflicts. Primarily, a dispute which is between two individuals would draw in members of the two opposing communities or sometimes alliances can be made when two clans are engage in a feud. Each opposing side will seek the support of the other clans who are not parties to the conflict and capitalize that support to defeat their rivals¹²⁷ Within the interdependence Nuer villages and within the village, the legal process appears to be a rallying point of a coalition in support of one's clan. The outcome of a dispute is determined by the ability to rally a coalition while, kinship group is the basis for participation in the Nuer political process. The larger the kin group you belong to, the greater the chances of your clan success.¹²⁸ It is also said the Nuer are divided into segments and

¹²³ Youth Group, Focused Group Discussion, Kakuma, Refugees Camp, Kenya, 02/05/2016.

¹²⁴ Evans, T.M.S (1985). *The Paradox of Nuer Feuds and The Leopard Skin Chief: A Creative Solution To The Prisoner's Dilemma*, American Anthropologists, By Wily On Behalf of American Anthropologists Association, Vol. 12, p. 86.

¹²⁵ Jesse L. (1998). *Cultural Pluralism, the Cold War and Africa's Integration in The World Community*, International Journal on World Peace, Vol. 15, No 2.

¹²⁶ Kuol, S. Gatgek, Oral Interview, Rubkona County, Kakuma, Kenya, 03/05/2016.

¹²⁷ Burton, and Dukes (1990). *Contemporary Conflict Resolution, The Management, Prevention and Transformation of Deadly Conflict* 3rd edition by Oliver Rambotham, Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall, polity press p.49.

¹²⁸ Gruel, (1971). *The Leopard Skin Chief: An Examination of Political Power among the Nuer*, pp. 1115 – 1120.

the segments are divided into divisions which always fights with one another. And the divisions all combine their efforts to form a single whole when they are aggressed by an outside enemy.¹²⁹

. The social divisions mentioned in the study are more or less the byproducts of the kind of upbringing and socialization the boy child is subjected to during his growth. It is expected that once a person is raised in an aggressive and violent environment, his world view and outlook will be a true reflection of what he sees at the family as well as at the community environment. His behaviors toward others must be inform by the violent characters he imitates and emulates from his elders. He would then espouse such attitudes at will since he believes they are standard behaviors required of everyone by the society. In addition. he will suspect and treat everything around him as always hostile and violent.

In the psychological theory, it is argue that individuals or the peer group are crucial sources of influence that shapes child behaviors, the influencing environment could be within the context of inter-familial or extra-familial relationships. Moreover, the behaviors of the socializing agents will be influence by the values and norms of the society in which he lives. Some societies encourage aggressive behaviors while some give emphasis to harmonious life. Other societies encourage ingroup cooperation but perpetrate aggressive behaviors toward outsiders.¹³⁰ it is also said in a group relationship, differences between the individuals composing the group are bound to happen, they will eventually take the form of an alliance between the individuals or the groups. But, in most cases the individual or groups will side with their relatives and such a competition for status within the group will ultimately develop into a socio-cultural phenomenon¹³¹

3.3 PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS OF VIOLENCES

3.3.1 Personal pride and honor

Pride and honor in the Western Nuer society is an important social aspect of their very existence. If a person is rebuked, slandered, aggressed or bullied he would feel his honor has been

¹²⁹ Lewis, (1951). Nuer Spokesman: A Note On The Institution of The Ruic, Sudan Notes and Records, Khartoum University, Vol. 32, No. 1, p. 78.

¹³⁰ Tetlock, P. E; Jo. L. Husbands; R. Jervis; P. C. Stern; Charles Tilly (1993). Behavior, Society and International Conflict, pp. 13 – 37.

¹³¹ Tetlock, P. E; Jo. L. Husbands; R. Jervis; P. C. Stern; Charles Tilly (1993). Behavior, Society and International Conflict, pp. 13 – 37.

violated forcing him to fight back in order to save face. Otherwise, not reacting to the challenge will tantamount to cowardice and lack of manliness from the perspective of the man affine. If the person whose honor is violated is a minor his elder brothers or relatives will take the challenge to fight on his behalf.¹³²

Nyemai Puok Chany Balang was abducted from their home by Kuony Gatluak Chan supposedly for marriage. However, when the abductor was asked to pay the bride wealth as it is the local custom, he refused to do so. The action was immediately construed by the girl's relatives as a violation of their family pride and honor. And in order to right this wrong, the whole Beah clan of the girl's family went to war with Kuei, the abductor's clan. During the encounter the abductor himself was killed by Ruai Puok Chany, the girl's brother. The battle took place at Jaguar Village of Mayendit County of Unity state in 2016.¹³³ The Nuer man is believed to be deeply affected when his honor is violated. Hence, he will defer the immediate defeat for a future rectification when a chance or opportune avail itself, that is why the Nuer dead's man kin never ceased to have war in their hearts.¹³⁴

The pride and honor violation heavily guarded against by the Western Nuer society is something everybody in the human society wanted to see respected if he/she is to preserved his/her dignity among the community members. However, when the protection of this right become so acrimonious to the point of initiating a fight, it would obviously be regarded as a tendency to engage in violence at it best. There is no reason whatsoever that this wrong could not be corrected using peaceful means which is the desire norms in a civilized society. So, the reason why the victim would resort to violence is due to the culture of violence and aggression that characterize the life of the people of the Western Nuer region.

3.3.2 War Histories

Communal wars fought with various enemies are always remembered by Western Nuer society, but the experiences from such a dark past is likely to fuel conflicts once passed down by the elders to the younger generations. Accordingly, the elders would educate their sons about their

¹³² Koloang, M. Yomach, Oral Interview, Mayendit County, Juba, South Sudan, 24/12/2016.

¹³³ Koloang, M. Yomach, Oral Interview, Mayendit County, Juba, South Sudan, 24/12/2016.

¹³⁴ Evans, T.M.S (1985) *The Paradox of Nuer Feuds and The Leopard Skin Chief: A Creative Solution To The Prisoner's Dilemma*, American Anthropologists, By Wily On Behalf of American Anthropologists Association, Vol. 12, p. 98.

past defeats or success in battles with their old foes whatever the case maybe. The purpose of educating the young folks is to recommend the path through which this situation could be rectify if their young men are capable of taking up the challenge.¹³⁵

In 1997, Gai Thichwong Dong and Kuoy Liyliy Goah engaged in a club fight in which the former clubbed the latter to death. As a consequence, the killer (Dong) fled to Khartoum so as to evade justice, only to return home after the murder case had been fully settled. Following his (the killer) returned to the village, Mawic Liyliy Goah, the deceased brother instigated Lual Kuoy Liyliy, the deceased son to murder his father slayer Dong who just returned from Khartoum. Kuoy, the late son laid an ambush to the slayer Dong who was on his way to Koch County HQ and tragically slain him at Bith village, this incidence prompted Cieng Yol Dong the victim's family to go on offensive the next day. The ensuing battle which took place in 2007 between Riangyian clan and Cieng Lilyliy, the slayer's family resulted to the killing of one person from each side of the warring parties.¹³⁶

As could be ascertain from the above example, the tendency to incite young people to revenge the death of people they have never seen throughout their entire life can only be explain through a deep-seated propensity for violence. When a person is killed several decades in the past, why would any anyone incite his relatives to kill another person from the perpetrator family if it were not for the culture of violence embedded in the society. If the society were to be a peace-loving society, I believe the death of a person killed several decades earlier would have been forgotten in order for the rest of the society to peacefully co-exist rather than rekindling the flame of death and destruction.

3.3.3 Peer and group provocation

Provocation is common among the Western Nuer community and it is often responded to violently, nevertheless, by responding in such a manner, the victim demonstrates his prowess to avoid being branded as coward by his peers. If the aggressor is older in age to the victim, the provoked person older siblings will come to the aid of their younger brother. Oftentimes, such individual contest would result into a communal conflict as each side is keen to lend support to the

¹³⁵ Weal, R. Puok, Oral Interview, Koch County, Juba, South Sudan, 23/11/2016.

¹³⁶ Weal, R. Puok, Oral Interview, Koch County, Juba, South Sudan, 23/11/2016.

member of their clan.¹³⁷ The Western Nuer people and particularly the youth use demeaning attitudes toward each other as a way of aggressing those who are deemed as aliens. However, disparaging and disrespecting other social groups is a source of conflict because such attitudes are considered as violation of others honor and pride.¹³⁸ Disparagement and disrespect of other clans or sections generates violent conflict only when it is directed to the victim in a confrontational manner. Otherwise, if it is done in private then nobody cares because it would be considered as a gossip.¹³⁹ Moreover, disparaging or belittling someone in front of others is so humiliating to the victim that his ultimate reaction would be for him to fight back to preserve his dignity.¹⁴⁰

Aggression dominates a major part of Western Nuer youthful life; these youth are passed down aggressive behaviors by those before them. They would then internalize this way of life and make it part of their habit. Occasionally, a young man would bully, incites, and even assault people especially his peers as a proof of dominance within the group. If nobody challenges him, then he would dominate which seldom endures as everyone believes in his manhood and bravery. Perhaps, bravery contest is a reality that every Western Nuer man must live with throughout his entire life.¹⁴¹ A group of respondents maintains that Nuer are not aggressive but at the same time admitting that the Nuer often go into conflict before they ascertain the reasons for the occurrence of the conflict. One of the group members confronted his colleagues to be truthful in their testimonies in regard to the Nuer aggressive attitudes. He challenged them to accept the fact that Nuer are violent and aggressive in character, retorting that if you partake in a conflict prior to ascertaining the motives, obviously that is what tantamount to violent character.¹⁴²

The Western Nuer people compose songs that are meant to provoke and deride other persons and though this category of conflict causation falls within the aggressive behaviors, it is distinct in the sense that it is not directed as a physical aggression. Oftentimes, such types of aggressions are inflicted on the victim through subjective means of violent aggression.¹⁴³ It is believed that derisions among the Nuer constitute a serious violation of honor for the one insulted.

¹³⁷ Diet, M. Hon, Oral Interview, Mayendit County, Khartoum, Sudan 20/01/2017.

¹³⁸ Women Group, Focused Group Discussion, Kakuma, Kenya, 02/05/2016.

¹³⁹ Diet, M. Hon, Oral Interview, Mayendit County, Khartoum, Sudan, 20/01/2017

¹⁴⁰ Liem, M. Gatdien, Oral Interview, Leer County, Khartoum, Sudan, 21/01/2017.

¹⁴¹ Goup, P. Majuoy, Oral Interview, Mayom County, Juba, South Sudan, 01/12/2016.

¹⁴² Kobang, P. Gatdet, Focused Group Discussion, Guit County, Kakuma, Kenya, 02/05/2016.

¹⁴³ Geng, W. Kuol, Oral Interview, Mayom County, Juba, South Sudan 17/11/2016.

Therefore, it can only be remedied using physical force because failure to do so would be construed as a sign of cowardice from the side of the aggressed.¹⁴⁴

Psychological factors of conflict mentioned in the study are in fact some of the subjective causes of the intra-communal conflicts among the people of Western Nuer. These types of conflicts are aggravated by the culture of violence and aggression that has characterized the entire life of the Western Nuer youth. The purpose of engaging in those subjective aggressive attitudes is primarily fuel by the desire to keep the spirit of violence and aggression alive. It is utterly inconceivable that an individual would compose abusive songs which are meant to slander and denigrate others only to provoke those individuals for a similar hostile behaviors and violence. These acts always are regarded as the continuation of the culture of violence and aggression learnt by the individual from the family and the entire society in which he lives.

According to human needs theory of conflict, human security, identity and personal recognition are some of the fundamental tenets a person must attained. Therefore, when an individual or group is taken for granted by a rival party the immediate reaction would be to resort to the use of force to rectify the situation thus, enabling the affected group to safe face in the light of that hostility.¹⁴⁵ Aggression theories posits that, it has been experimented through empirical evidence that the presence of weapons within a given society encourages aggressive attitudes. In addition, the availability of guns can also increase the use of violence and further aggravate the consequences of an already executed aggressive incident.¹⁴⁶

3.4 POLITICAL FACTORS OF VIOLENCE

3.4.1 Traditional Chiefs and the violent conflicts

Chiefs are the traditional leaders who are charged with the local administration in Western Nuer, ironically, as the custodians of peace and tranquility in the society they are always accused of not reining in the youth to refrain from violent conflicts. Instead, the chiefs are blame of

¹⁴⁴ Duany, M. Wal (1992). A PhD Dissertation Titled *Neither Palaces Nor Prisons: The Constitution of Order Among The Nuer*, Indiana University, USA, p. 237.

¹⁴⁵ Azar, Edward. (1990). *The Management of Protracted Social Conflict: Theory and Cases*.

¹⁴⁶ Tetlock, P. E; Jo. L. Husbands; R. Jervis; P. C. Stern; Charles Tilly (1993). *Behavior, Society and International Conflict*, pp. 13 – 37.

frequently inciting the youth to engaged among themselves in constant violent conflict.¹⁴⁷ The reason for this kind of chiefs' behaviors could be explain by the fear of becoming unpopular among their subjects if they enforce the law as require. So, it was believed increasing their salaries will give them the leverage to assuage the hearts of the Nuer who likes a chief that freely give them beer and who are open handed.¹⁴⁸

Traditional authority is defined as a leadership derived from the tradition and customs of the land and should therefore function in accordance with the society traditional mores and norms. However, in recent years, as politics begun to engulfed every aspect of daily life in Western Nuer community, traditional authority became a victim of a premeditated and deliberate manipulation by the political elite.¹⁴⁹ It is believed some political leaders capitalize on people hostile attitudes to mobilize them against other groups. ¹⁵⁰ it is maintained that ethnic activities and political entrepreneurs operating within the groups built upon fears within the group hence, polarizes the society.¹⁵¹ It is also argued that there has been too much politics in the traditional leadership nowadays and this ultimately affected the quality of leadership and the justice system in general. This situation renders conflicts in the society as unending phenomenon since the community leaders take sides during conflicts resolution.¹⁵² The Chief is responsible for dispensing justice and should not be politicized, but once the opposite happened then conflict does not cease at all. Therefore, it is to be emphasized that the traditional leadership is delegitimized when they take side during the resolution of conflicts.¹⁵³

The Western Nuer people always elect their chiefs in an open, fair and democratic exercise. However, when the local government administration imposes someone on the community without any prior election, there is a great probability for resentment and possible conflict within the same community. Understandably, this imposition of traditional leaders is mainly driven by

¹⁴⁷ Gatdet, Wilson Kur, oral interview, Rubkona County, Kakuma, Kenya 05/05/2016.

¹⁴⁸ Hutchinson, E. Sharon (1996). *Nuer Dilemmas*, California: University of California press p. 119.

¹⁴⁹ Luony, G. Ruai, Oral Interview, Mayendit County, Juba, South Sudan, 12/11/2016.

¹⁵⁰ Kaufman, J. Stuart (1996). *Spiraling to Ethnic War: Elite, Masses, and Mosacow in Moldova's Civil War*, International Security, Vol. 21, No. 2, p. 109.

¹⁵¹ Lake, David A. & Donald Rothschild, (1998). *Spreading Fear: The Genesis of Transnational Ethnic Conflict*, in David A. Lake & Donald Rothschild eds., *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press pp. 3-32.

¹⁵² Luony, G. Ruach, Oral Interview, Mayendit County, Juba, South Sudan, 21/11/2016.

¹⁵³ Dar, K. Riek, Oral Interview, Guit County, Juba, South Sudan, 16/12/2016.

the need to fulfill the politicians' personal interests which is achieved by taking the control of the constituency as a matter of political expediency to win elections once they are held.¹⁵⁴

The chief is defined as a public figure who is obliged to serve his community wholeheartedly. Such obligation would sometimes prompt the personality appointed to the position of leadership to be biased toward his people. It is also argued that majority of the chiefs in Western Nuer society are known to be administering the law in favor of their subjects.¹⁵⁵ A 1933 – 34 British colonial administration observation discovered that the appointed chiefs began to act arbitrarily against their subjects. They would become too tyrannical, enriched themselves with the cattle fines they exacted from the people and moreover demand kickbacks from the successful litigants who won their court cases.¹⁵⁶ The justice system is blamed for bringing problems to the society particularly when justice is not served the way it is supposed to be. For example, when a person who did not commit any crime would be deliberately made guilty by the court that person will feel alienated and would even embark on committing more crimes.¹⁵⁷

The communal conflicts that are orchestrated by the chiefs undoubtedly exacerbates the culture of violence and aggression among the young people in the Western Nuer region. The chiefs who are supposed to address and arbitrate on the various conflicts that are fought by the communities are instead stoking the flame of the communal differences. It is a pity that the justice system that is supposed to dispense justice among the people are themselves being accused of inciting people to fight themselves. The involvement of the chiefs in communal conflicts can only be stemmed out by subjecting the suspected chiefs to some punitive measures that would serve as deterrence for those who would want to continue with the practice.

3.4.2 the Western Nuer educated elite, intellectuals and politicians

Intellectuals in Western Nuer are very much attached to their communities in the countryside, unfortunately, they are accused of fueling conflicts among the rural youth. Moreover, these

¹⁵⁴ Thot, T. Leaw, Oral Interview, Rubkona County, Juba, South Sudan, 25/11/2016.

¹⁵⁵ Youth Group, Focused Group Discussion, Kakuma, Kenya, 02/05/2016.

¹⁵⁶ Hutchinson, E. Sharon (1996). *Nuer Dilemmas*, California: California University Press. P. 118.

¹⁵⁷ Diet, M. Hon, Oral Interview, Mayendit County, Khartoum, Sudan 20/01/2017.

intellectuals play the role of suppliers and facilitators in the event of the occurrence of a conflict.¹⁵⁸ A traditional chief during the Wunlit peace conference once said “the wars that are fought today are not their wars but ones that are orchestrated by the educated elite”. The chief strongly believes most of the conflicts that pits communities against one another are engineered by the educated class in the urban areas.¹⁵⁹

In the past bribery was not widespread among the Western Nuer people but find its way into the society in recent years due to urbanization. Interestingly, politicians and chiefs sometimes use bribes and manipulations to buy their way into offices through influencing people decisions within the community. Those with contrary views are either sideline or pitted against the politician or chief supporters using the tactics of the divide and rule policy. Such policy is a potential source of conflicts that creates political instability in the society.¹⁶⁰ It is maintains that during the colonial period the policy of divide and rule introduced by the various colonial administrations was meant to keep African citizens engage in constant fighting against one another.¹⁶¹ It is also argued that the reason politicians often managed to manipulate their constituents is because the masses of the people admire belligerent leaders. These leaders would serve as a rallying point and an inspiration when it comes to the security of the group.¹⁶²

Indeed, the educated elite, Western Nuer intellectuals as well as politicians play a central role in fueling communal conflicts among the Western Nuer communities. The reason these educated elite sometimes engages in such practices is believe to be a matter of political expediency to dealt a political blow to their political rivals back in towns and cities. Such actions, if they are carryout as part of political game, for all intent and purposes, they are so detrimental to the wellbeing of the society that they adversely affect the relationship of the local communities. More importantly, the elite action further aggravates an already volatile situation dominated by the culture of violence and aggression.

¹⁵⁸ Luony, G. Ruai, Oral Interview, Mayendit County, Juba, South Sudan, 12/11/2016.

¹⁵⁹ Jok and Hutchinson (1999). The Wunlit Nuer-Dinka reconciliation process, p 10.

¹⁶⁰ Thot, T. Leaw, Oral Interview, Rubkona County, Juba, South Sudan, 25/11/2016.

¹⁶¹ Eriksen, Siri, Katrina Brown, and Mick Kelly. (2005). The Dynamics of Vulnerability: Locating Coping Strategies in Kenya and Tanzania. *Geographical Journal*, Vol. 171, pp. 287-305.

¹⁶² Bojana B. (2009). Causes of ethnic conflict: a conceptual framework, *journal of global change and governance*, Vol. III, No I, pp. 1- 13.

3.4.3 Administration, weak institutions and lack of development

Government administration is the backbone of public order and tranquility in any society, however, if public administrative system become weak and dysfunctional violent conflicts are bound to happen because people would take the laws into their own hands. Unfortunately, this situation happens when the law enforcement agencies and government institutions become dysfunctional and inefficient.¹⁶³ For example, the British colonial government managed to control the communal fighting during the colonial period. But it hitherto created a political situation in which people depended on the protection of the government institutions. When they departed and there occurred a weakening of the system, communal conflicts resurged once again¹⁶⁴ Similarly, in Nigeria weak institutions were incapable of addressing communal conflicts among the different communities of the country. As such, the communal conflicts began to rapidly increased prompting suggestion for the establishment of institutions that conforms with the socio-cultural situation of the people.¹⁶⁵

The Western Nuer region is void of any human and physical development due to the war and while, development is the cornerstone of human progress, its absence therefore is a precursor for resentment and social disharmony. In addition, denying the right of development to some sections of the community while developing other parts of the same would ultimately bring about conflicts to the community in question.¹⁶⁶ Additionally, lack of development makes people backward and ignorant so that they will not see anything good in life. Thus, the situation would possibly compel them to resort to violence as the only means available for them to sustain their livelihood. Perhaps, when people lack education their chances of getting decent jobs is minimal hence, the motivation to use physical force in order to survive.¹⁶⁷

Western Nuer community and particularly the rural population are leading a backward life and this primordial life has been responsible for the culture of violence that characterize the community over the years. It is only through extensive education that this culture of violence could

¹⁶³ Kor, M. Riek, Oral Interview, Koch County, Kakuma, Kenya, 05/05/2016).

¹⁶⁴ Hutchinson, E. Sharon (1996). Nuer Dilemmas, California: California University Press. P. 110.

¹⁶⁵ Don R. (1997). Book review. The journal of Developing Areas, Tennessee State University, College of Business Vol. 31, No. 2.

¹⁶⁶ Women Group, Focused Group Discussion, Kakuma, Kenya, 04/05/2016.

¹⁶⁷ Kuol, J. Yien, Oral Interview, Payinjar County, Juba, South Sudan, 23/11/2016.

possibly be eradicated among the people of the Western Nuer.¹⁶⁸ This primitivity view has been criticized as a construction and manufacturing of the people of the West. The west created the notion that ethnic conflicts are fought by primitive and backward people. To illustrate the point, the conflict between the Serbs and the Croats in 1990s who are believed to be well educated could not be referred to as conflict grounded on primitivity.¹⁶⁹

Information in Western Nuer as in other societies is an important element of human activity which dominates a big part of Nuer life particularly those who live in the rural areas. Most of the fights that occurred are often based on allegations which are not supported by objective facts.¹⁷⁰ It is posited that due to information failure, credible commitment and the security dilemma take hold, the group become apprehensive, state weakens and the conflict becomes likely.¹⁷¹

Weak government administrations and institutions by nature are incapable of establishing law and order in the society making it very difficult for the local inhabitants to adhere to the rule of law. Accordingly, when the citizens become the law unto themselves, it is likely that violent conflicts and aggression would thrive in such a volatile environment and lawlessness becomes the order of the day. The citizens in Western Nuer taking advantage of the weak government system became so violent that they murder people with impunity knowing quite well that their actions will not be met with the full force of the law.

3.4.4 the justice system and communal conflict

The Western Nuer society is administered through a hybrid justice system made up of the statutory and traditional customary law. The latter serves as a mechanism for addressing customary issues and conflicts particularly among the rural inhabitants. However, lack of proper correctional services where offenders can spend their prison terms encourages recidivism and by extension the cycle of violent conflicts among the communities.¹⁷² The other defect of the traditional justice

¹⁶⁸ Gatluak, N. Danhier, Telephone Conversation, Payinjiar County, Kakuma, Kenya, 05/08/2016.

¹⁶⁹ Bojana B. (2009). Causes of ethnic conflict: a conceptual framework, *Journal of Global Change and Governance*, Vol. III, No. I, pp. 1-13.

¹⁷⁰ Luony, G. Ruai, Oral Interview, Mayendit County, Juba, South Sudan, 21/11/2016.

¹⁷¹ Lake, David A. & Donald Rothchild, (1998). *Spreading Fear: The Genesis of Transnational Ethnic Conflict*, in David A. Lake & Donald Rothchild eds., *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press (3-32).

¹⁷² Gatwec, G. Kel, Oral Interview, Mayendit County, Kakuma, Kenya, 06/05/2016.

system is that it lacks the qualities of a written law and hence is subject to the dictates of personal influences of those administering it. It is also probable the chiefs administering this kind of justice system may easily err in passing judgments and there is no section in the law which holds the chief accountable when such error occurred.¹⁷³

The Western Nuer customary courts often arrest criminals while others are deliberately left at large by the chiefs. The reason for this miscarriage of justice is grounded on the paranoia that the government would kill the culprits for the crimes they had committed. Unfortunately, when perpetrators are left at large they risk being killed once found by the victim's family. Such killing of the perpetrator would spark a similar reaction from his relatives making the cycle of killings a vicious circle.¹⁷⁴ It is revealed that in the 1980s, the prison officials in Sudan were facing a situation where killers who had been sentenced to prison terms were ambushed and killed. This often happened when the said prisoners are taken outside for government projects. The rise in the inmates' escape prompted the local chiefs to accept cattle fine in lieu of imprisonment years.¹⁷⁵

The Western Nuer customary courts always pass judgments against both individuals and groups but implementation of these court decisions with regards to conflict resolutions is rare. This lack of implementing court decisions is reinforced by corrupt practices that is why Western Nuer intra-communal violent conflicts keep recurring after they had been resolved.¹⁷⁶ Mawic Reat Majok shot and killed Gatkuoth Ruac Top Kuembuor during a night dancing. Subsequently, the incident ignited a deadly conflict between the two parties of Cieng Bol Gany of Leek section. When the case was taken to Bentiu court for judgement, the court only imposed fines and no arrest was made against the culprits. In reaction to this miscarriage of justice, Ruai Top Kuembuor, the deceased brother attacked and killed Dhoal Muoth Tutdel a trader in Rubkona town. The second victim is a relative to the first slayer. Another retaliatory attack by the first slayer's clan resulted in burning of people inside a Byre at Wanguar Village of Rubkona County.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ Luony, G. Ruach, Oral Interview, Mayendit County, Juba, South Sudan 21/11/2016.

¹⁷⁴ Women focused group discussion, Kakuma camp, Kenya, 02/01/2016.

¹⁷⁵ Hutchinson, E. Sharon (1996). *Nuer Dilemmas*, California: California University Press. pp. 128 - 129.

¹⁷⁶ Buop, H. Lor, Oral Interview, Rubkona County, Juba, South Sudan, 27/11/2016.

¹⁷⁷ Ruot, B. Babuoth, Oral Interview, Rubkona County, Juba, South Sudan, 26/11/2016.

The Western Nuer society used oral customary laws to dispense justice to all its community members. This customary law is void of a provision that impose capital punishment to potential killers. And because no deterrence against intentional revenge killings, the cycle of vengeance is never ending. Over the years, potential killers have been motivated to carry out murders with total impunity due to the absence of this kind of punishment.¹⁷⁸ The people are not absolutely deterred in the absence of a law that prohibits revenge killing as a result, killing cannot stop in Western Nuer land. A young boy whose father had been killed would be reminded about such killing and the identity of the killer made known to him so he can carry out the murder.¹⁷⁹ The first capital punishment was exacted on Nuer premeditated murderers in 1951. But the chiefs challenged the decision saying there is a need for cattle compensation if the two disputants are to be reconcile back into the society.¹⁸⁰ Another evaluation made found that there was a significance reduction in the level of Nuer feuds and vengeance attacks. This was following the British punitive measures that introduced capital punishment for murderers between 1930s – 1940s.¹⁸¹

Blood compensations are paid by the people of Western Nuer whenever a homicide took place. Sadly, the Nuer customary law require that the entire blood relatives collectively contribute cattle to pay for the blood wealth of the victim slain by a family member. This kind of collective blood compensation settlement encourages violent as well as the continuation of killings. It is likely that, a family member would execute murder with impunity in the believe that the crime will be collectively settled by the whole clan.¹⁸² Collective compensation has generated a lot of violence because people commit murders in which the whole clan shoulder the liability for the blood wealth payment. As a result, the elders will encourage their children to commit murders least their families become famous. This type of conflict causation is a catalyst for violent conflicts since it is about preserving what you have while sharing liability of your own crime with others.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁸ Riek, P. Reat, Oral Interview, Guit County, Kakuma, Kenya, 07/05/2016.

¹⁷⁹ Jany, J. Yak, Oral Interview, Leer County, Khartoum, Sudan 25/01/2017.

¹⁸⁰ Johnson, D. H (1986). Judicial Regulation and Administrative Control: Customary and The Nuer 1898 – 1954, *The Journal of African History*, Cambridge University Press, Vol. 27, No. 1, p. 73.

¹⁸¹ Hutchinson, E. Sharon (1996). *Nuer Dilemmas*, California: California University Press. p. 127.

¹⁸² Elders Group, Focused Group Discussion, Kakuma, Kenya, 02/05/2016.

¹⁸³ Thot, T. Leaw, Oral Interview, Rubkona County, Juba, South Sudan, 25/11/2016.

Prior to the advent of colonialism, the Nuer system of compensation was never collective, but it was the British colonial administration which introduced the idea of collective compensation. Therefore, the British were blamed for tampering with the traditional way of resolving disputes among the Nuer. However, it was not clear how individual payment of blood wealth impacted on the cases of premeditated killings within the Nuer society during the precolonial period.¹⁸⁴

In Western Nuer, criminals do not spend their prison terms inside prison cells as require by the law for instance, a perpetrator will be sentence to imprisonment for seven years or more depending on the gravity of the crime committed. Unfortunately, the culprit would be release before he completes his prison term by the prison authorities. Inevitably, this earlier release of criminals indirectly encouraged recidivism in the state.¹⁸⁵ Separately, government's institutions especially the law enforcement agencies lack proper coordination in combating crimes. For example, the local government apprehends criminals and brings them to the main prison in Bentiu, the capital of the state only to be released in less than a week by the legal attorneys. Likewise, the same criminals once in prison would be released by the prison officials even before they complete their prison terms. Ultimately, those who are law abiding citizens will be motivated into committing crimes due to these legal shortcomings in the administration of justice.¹⁸⁶

The customary court in Western Nuer operates as a semi-independent body which functions outside the formal justice system. Though, in some cases appeals from the customary courts are brought to the magistrate courts. This kind of justice system encourages chiefs to administered justice in a way that pleases them since there is no direct supervision from either the local government authority or from the judiciary. Fortunately, the problem is not generally applicable to every court as some chiefs are always sincere in their decisions and will only be interested to administer the justice among their people.¹⁸⁷

Fines or Prison sentences as a deterrence against crime commission are usually imposed by the customary courts in Western Nuer. Unfortunately, the traditional chiefs and the government

¹⁸⁴ Hutchinson, E. Sharon (1996). *Nuer Dilemmas*, California: California University Press. p. 122.

¹⁸⁵ Elders Group, Focused Group Discussion, Kakuma Camp, Kenya, 02/01/2016.

¹⁸⁶ Dar, K. Riek, Oral Interview, Guit County, Juba, South Sudan, 16/12/2016.

¹⁸⁷ Kuol, J. Yien, Oral Interview, Payinjiar County, Juba, South Sudan, 23/11/2016.

are more inclined to imposed cattle or monetary fines instead of prison sentences. This desire for money or cattle from the part of the authorities is primarily attributed to individual interests' rather than altruistic reasons. Individuals from these institutions would try to accumulate wealth at the expense of the security of the general public.¹⁸⁸ In fact, there is a need for coordination in combating crimes because the judiciary is sometimes undermining the traditional customary law. So, there is need to reconcile and bridge the gap between those two legal institutions.¹⁸⁹

The judicial system in the Republic of South Sudan is based on a dichotomous legal system of customary and statutory laws. Sadly, there is clear contradiction and lack of streamlining the judicial system between the national, state and local government organs. This lack of unified justice system is exploited by criminals who twist the law in their favor particularly after crimes commission.¹⁹⁰ The differences between the customary and the formal courts are described as fundamentally from the witnesses and the system of fine. The former relies on Magicians for the determination of guilt while uses cattle as the medium for fines payment. Whereas, the latter uses witnesses to extract confession from suspects as well as money to settle fines imposed during court ruling. Thus, the conflict between the two legal institutions could be epitomized as mainly due to conflict over resources.¹⁹¹

The justice system encourages the commission of crimes if those who administer it do not dispense justice in accordance with the require standards. The unfortunate culture of violence and aggression that have engulf the entire Western Nuer are no doubt partly catalyst by the judicial system miscarriage of justice. Unless something is done to correct the situation, there is great probably that such condition would continue unabated possibly fomenting additional hatred and discord among the warring parties. For a situation which is highly dominated by the culture of violence and aggression to be corrected, the law must take precedent before and above individual self-interests which seems to have presently the dominant effect.

¹⁸⁸ Ruot, B. Babuoth, Oral Interview, Rubkona County, Juba, South Sudan, 25/11/2016.

¹⁸⁹ Thot, T. Leaw, Oral Interview, Rubkona County, Juba, South Sudan, 25/11/2016.

¹⁹⁰ Elders Group, Focused Group Discussion, Kakuma, Kenya, 02/05/2016.

¹⁹¹ Thot, T. Leaw, Oral Interview, Rubkona County, Juba, South Sudan, 25/11/2016.

The conflicts that are politically motivated have their roots in the human needs-based theory which clearly explained that the fear of the unknown sometimes makes a community more concerned about its security. Such fears would be manipulated by the politicians in order to fulfil their narrow political selfish interests. In addition, conflicts that are related to the justice system are also informed by human basic need theory. In the absence of a viable and respectable justice system, the society becomes resentful about the government itself. It is therefore, not surprising that when the justice system failed, people would ultimately take the law into their own hands, such failure to respect the law breeds chaos and anarchy will reign supreme.¹⁹²

3.5 ECONOMIC FACTORS OF VIOLENCE

3.5.1 Cattle Rustling and Theft

The phenomena of cattle rustling and cattle theft has been a dominant feature in the contemporary Western Nuer practices and since cattle are the economic life support for the people, cattle became a serious factor in fueling communal conflict. It follows that when somebody cow is stolen and found in the possession of another social group; this can immediately lead to conflict. Culturally, stealing is seen as an act of aggression especially if the thief is a well-known figure within the surrounding environment.¹⁹³ Paradoxically, an organized theft such as cattle rustling is often label as strength by the Western Nuer community particularly when the subject brought the cattle from a distance land. Traditionally, Western Nuer in the past are known not to raid nor rustle each other cattle but target their attacks on their neighboring communities. At present however, they loot one another - a reality made possible by the proliferation of the firearms. This shift in social norms is brought about by the successive armed conflicts in southern Sudan from 1955 – to the present.¹⁹⁴

In 2007, a group of youth from Cieng Chany Kuol of Mayom County attacked and stolen cattle from Cieng Gai clan of Guit County. The attackers after their successful endeavor went away with the stolen cattle to Mayom and subsequent peaceful attempts by the government to recovered the cattle ended in fiasco. The same group conducted two more raids in which Mayom County authority attempts to recovered the stolen cattle again dismally failed. In one of the episodes, the

¹⁹² Azar, Edward. (1990). *The Management of Protracted Social Conflict: Theory and Cases*.

¹⁹³ Both, R. Gany, Oral Interview, Guit County, Juba, South Sudan, 27/11/2016.

¹⁹⁴ Baret, M. Tap, Oral Interview, Rubkona County, Juba, South Sudan, 28/12/2016.

police accompanied by the cattle owners managed to recover some of the stolen cattle and while escorting the stolen cattle back to Mayom town, they were ambushed and the cattle returned by the thieves. Frustrated by the situation, Guit youth decided this time to go for offensive by mobilizing themselves and succeeded in raiding a Bul cattle camp at Turkei Village of Mayom County. Unluckily, the youth from Guit raided the wrong cattle camp which belongs to a different clan. Worse still, two of their members Par Machot Thoar and Gattiek Kong Khan were killed during the raid by the cattle owners. The raided cattle were later released by Guit County authority on the ground that they don't belong to those who initially looted Guit youth cattle.¹⁹⁵

As could be seen from the above testimony, cattle are the centerpiece of communal conflict among the Western Nuer youth simply because they are the economic life support of the people. However, these cattle related conflicts are seriously driven by the culture of violence and aggression prevalence in the region, otherwise, there is no point for a law-abiding citizen to go on rampage raiding and looting people property with no restraint. Societies that are guided by the rule of law always respect those individual boundaries because they fear of being accuse of breaking the law and then liable for arrest.

3.5.2 offering pay jobs opportunities

Pay jobs is a new phenomenon within the Western Nuer society and favoritism and nepotism in offering those jobs can cause conflicts particularly if they are offer discriminately. Resentment and bitterness among the youth who have been denied these opportunities is the possible outcome. Therefore, violent conflict can easily erupt between the target clan and the favorite community, though such conflicts were nonexistence in the past.¹⁹⁶ For example in 2007 at Bith village of Koch County, the youth of Jagey clashed with the youth from Bul following a decision made by commissioner Bol Ruot Mier to offered job opportunities to Mayom youth in spite of his constituency objection.¹⁹⁷ The forgoing assertion was refuted on the ground that such cases rarely bring about conflict among the communities because the civilians are fully aware that jobs related conflicts are often created by Government officials and not by fellow citizens.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ Both, R. Gany, Oral Interview, Guit County, Juba, South Sudan, 27/11/2016.

¹⁹⁶ Weal, R. Puok, Oral Interview, Koch County, 23/11/2016, Juba, South Sudan.

¹⁹⁷ Weal, R. Puok, Oral Interview, Koch County, 23/11/2016, Juba, South Sudan.

¹⁹⁸ Luony, G. Ruai, Oral Interview, Mayendit County, Juba, South Sudan, 21/11/2016.

Offering of jobs is possibly a potential source of communal conflict especially after the people became aware of the economic value of money particularly the money obtains from a paid job. The involvement of the culture of violence and aggression however, could be seen from the light of people translating individual grievances into communal conflicts, otherwise, if they could just engage in industrial relations, their grievances would have been heard and the conflict avoided.

3.5.3 Distribution of developmental dividends

The distribution of development dividends in Western Nuer are supposed to be implemented in a democratic way. Nonetheless, their unfair distribution can be a key determinant source of conflict if they are not well managed by the political leaders. In most instances, such conflicts take place indirectly since it necessitates incitement of the citizenry by their well-informed elite. The elite will expose the inequalities of the system and as a consequence, the affected community will react to such incitement in a violent way.¹⁹⁹ Conversely, unfair distribution of development resources is dismissed not to bring violent conflict among the Western Nuer. If a community feels marginalized, they will either opt for separation or a complete relocation to another clan. Ironically, it is also believed, that this kind of resource distribution brings conflicts when people become greedy and do not want others to share with them.²⁰⁰

Development dividends distribution no doubt can bring about conflict specially when the people so affected are so ingrained in the culture of violence and aggression. Ideally, development related conflicts are fought as wars against the state by those communities who felt they are being marginalized by the government. For these conflicts to be fought at the level of the communities at the grassroot level is a complete escalation of the situation which is necessitated by the culture of violence.

3.5.4 Poverty

The Western Nuer society is a poverty-stricken region given the enormous economic hardship faced by the local inhabitants. Unfortunately, poverty becomes a prime source of violent conflicts so that people embrace violence as a means of survival. Similarly, it is the result of poverty that make individuals steal and loots other people cattle in order for them to eke a living.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ Women Group, Focused Group Discussion, Kakuma, Kenya, 04/05/2016.

²⁰⁰ Kuol, J. Yien, Oral Interview, Payinjar County, Juba, South Sudan, 23/11/2016.

²⁰¹ Riek, P. Reat, Oral Interview, Guit County, Kakuma, Kenya, 07/05/2016.

Some scholars believe that a significant decrease in the level of poverty and inequality within a given society are important. Principally, it is the reason why people whose needs are met become less hostile to one another and more willing to work together to expand the gain of peace.²⁰²

3.5.5 Food Abundance

Western Nuer people occasionally experienced two different food situation, food abundance or its scarcity depending on the seasonal harvest. Sadly, the Nuer youth especially those in the rural villages fight when food is abundant, during this festive season people are happy because they had good harvest during the winter or the cattle are producing enough milk for people consumption. Nevertheless, the festive season would be marred by violence which often occurred at folklore dances and other social occasions.²⁰³ Traditionally, Western Nuer rural young males look after cattle as the main duty they usually perform but in recent years this duty had been relegated to the young female members while their males' counterpart loiters around in towns and cities. This situation of idleness generates conflicts as these youth would idly sit and move in group charting about past feuds fought with their rivals. Oftentimes, such memories are detrimental to the peaceful co-existence between the youth. Fundamentally, when people lack job opportunities as a result of various socio-economic conditions, they will face a bleak future. In consequence, the affected people will try to scapegoat their predicament and blame it on other ethnic groups²⁰⁴.

Economic conflicts are crucial in the explanation of Western Nuer violent conflicts particularly conflicts engendered by economic factors which include cattle rustling, job distributions and other economic opportunities. Poverty driven conflicts are so endemic that life for the average citizen in Western Nuer region is characterize by hardship, destitution and sheer lack of basic necessities of life. Therefore, it would not be a surprise for an outsider to learnt that the people of Western Nuer rustle their own cattle and that of outsiders because they are compelled by the need to survive. Besides, the inflated bride wealth mentioned in the social factors of conflict is another driver that stimulate the desire to steal other people cattle. This is often the case in order to supplement the meager resources at your disposal and to be able to pay the required dowry. Similarly, greed and corruption generate imbalances among the citizens of the region during the

²⁰² Azar, Edward. (1990). *The Management of Protracted Social Conflict: Theory and Cases*.

²⁰³ Both, R. Gany, Oral Interview, Guit County, Juba, South Sudan, 27/11/2016.

²⁰⁴ Mai Nguyen (n.d). *Causes of Ethnic Conflict: Examining the Role of Religion Diversity and Contagion Effect*.

distribution of economic benefits by the political elite holding the mantle of power, hence the clans' conflicts.

The conflicts over cattle are very much about the lack of fulfilment of human basic needs particularly the individual food security needs and other social requirements. Inevitably, the individual or the group will be tempted to acquire such wealth through the application of illicit practices such as stealing, raiding and rustling. Therefore, the conflicts that emanate from the acquisition of these animals is basically to fulfil one's needs and social desires.²⁰⁵ Other basic needs such as employment, development and socio-economic needs are important for human survival. Their absence as a result of human engineering can bring mistrust and conflict, therefore, the conflicts among the people of Western Nuer which are economic related are informed by the human basic needs' theory of conflict.²⁰⁶

3.6 ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS OF VIOLENCE

3.6.1 Cattle camp, communal borders and the grazing right

Traditionally, Western Nuer settlements or cattle campsites have defined boundaries that divide communities from one another, unfortunately, these communal boundaries became sources of conflicts once they are violated. If a particular clan encroaches into another clan territory without prior information to the community concern, it is likely that violence conflict would erupt between the two clans in question.²⁰⁷ It is said the question of territory among the Nilotic is simply a question of pastoral areas, and since the Dinka quite resembles the same characteristics of the Nuer, naturally the Nuer outwit the Dinka by acting swiftly and with vigor when they are confronted by a hostile situation.²⁰⁸ Emphasizing the importance of land to the African indigenous communities, it is said "Land is a property belonging to the entire family many of which are dead, few alive and majority are yet to be born."²⁰⁹

²⁰⁵ Azar, Edward. (1990). *The Management of Protracted Social Conflict: Theory and Cases*.

²⁰⁶ Azar, Edward. (1990). *The Management of Protracted Social Conflict: Theory and Cases*.

²⁰⁷ Liem, M. Gatdien, Oral Interview, Leer County, Khartoum, Sudan, 21/01/2017.

²⁰⁸ Johnson, D. H (1982c). Tribal Boundaries and Border Wars: Nuer – Dinka Relations in the Sobat and Zeraf Valleys, *Journal of African History*, Vol. 9, p. 494.

²⁰⁹ Tuladhar, (2004). In Ngombe et al (2006). How Strong is the Case for the Modernization of Land Tenure in Africa? A focus on Zambia's Privatization for Land Rights. *Africa Region Casle Conference on Sustainable Land Management in Africa*, Bagamoyo, Tanzania.

Some critics of the above narrative elaborating on the issue of land argue that the village boundaries are rarely contested because communal lands are well defined and inherited throughout the succeeding generations. Ironically, the same critics affirmed that in the modern urban settlements, border disputes are on the rise between communities. And more often than not the border conflicts are the work of the intellectuals rather than the rural communities living in the countryside.²¹⁰

Cattle and other livestock in Western Nuer graze in an open plain without any restriction, but during the dry season grazing grounds are not readily available for each and every cattle camp. Therefore, those lacking the resource are forced to migrate to other areas apart from their own in search of greener pastures. This migration will bring the host as well as the migrant communities together and who would then compete over the grazing which due to its scarcity usually become a source of conflict among the pastoralists.²¹¹ Grazing ground, land and water reserves and in some cases the fishing ground can become a source of competition and possibly conflict. The reason for this conflict and competition is because the Nuer would struggle as to who should access these scarce natural resources.²¹²

Conflicts related to cattle camp sites, communal borders and grazing right are prevalence in the Western Nuer society and these conflicts are fuel by the culture of violence and aggression. If the people are ready to embrace peace, they would have resorted to peaceful settlement of their disputes rather than engaging in violence. Indeed, the issues of land, pasture and camp sites are central to the pastoralists that their scarcity always create tension and possibly violent conflicts among the competing communities. However, these conflicts can be managed if there is political will and tolerance among the people.

3.6.2 Animal diseases

Due to lack of animal vaccines and other livestock drugs, animal diseases in Western Nuer society are common, however, they become potential sources of conflicts because infectious cattle contaminate cattle camps that are free from diseases. This situation becomes a factor for conflict

²¹⁰ Rundial, D. Koang, Oral Interview, Guit County, Juba, South Sudan, 26/11/2016.

²¹¹ Gatluak, J. Gatduel, Oral Interview, Mayom County, Nairobi, Kenya, 14/07/2016.

²¹² Duany, M. Wal (1992). A PhD Dissertation Titled *Neither Palaces Nor Prisons: The Constitution of Order among the Nuer*, Indiana University, USA, p. 85.

eruption particularly if such contact was done without the prior information to the unaffected cattle camps about the disease.²¹³ In 1991, Cieng Mongjok and Cieng Matjak of Leek section had a dispute due to the cattle infection. Cieng Matjak requested Cieng Mongjiok, the infected cattle camp to vacate the campsite since the former are the first to camped in the place. Cieng Mongjiok refused to leave the campsite leading to a conflict between the two groups. During the encounter, Kot Guol from Cieng Mongjiok was killed by Juol Keat Ngek Mutleah. In addition, Wiyoh Tap Wuol and Taleak Kueh Badeng were wounded from Cieng Matjak, the fighting took place at Luola cattle camp site of Guit County.²¹⁴

Cattle diseases are in fact potential causes of conflict among the Western Nuer society but these conflicts can be managed if the parties' resort to a peaceful means of resolving their differences. The main reason why this is never done so is largely due to the culture of violence and the aggressive attitudes that have dominated the entire life of the local inhabitants in the Western Nuer region. The example cited above can be a clear testimony as to the magnitude of the violence among the youth of the Western Nuer who can only engage in a deadly encounter for issues that can be tackle through dialogue.

3.6.3 Water sources

Water points situated in the grazing areas in Western Nuer are used for livestock drinking particularly during the dry season. But scarce water sources are potential trigger of conflict especially when cattle migration for the purposes of grazing take place during the dry season. In this particular season the youth would be forced to stay together despite their internal differences and frictions would degenerate into violent conflicts either in the form of revenge killings or physical encounters among the different clans that are found within the immediate vicinity.²¹⁵ Water can cause conflict during the dry season especially when there is drought and the owners of the territory may claim the ownership of the natural resource.²¹⁶ Moreover, the Nuer expansion of 19th century was mainly motivated by the need for pastoral land and the desire to secure riverine

²¹³ Baret, M. Tap, Oral Interview, Rubkona County, Juba, South Sudan 28/12/2016.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ruot, R. Let, Oral Interview, Koch County, Juba, South Sudan, 16/11/2016.

²¹⁶ Duany, M. Wal (1992, p. 11). A PhD Dissertation Titled *Neither Palaces Nor Prisons: The Constitution of Order among the Nuer*, Indiana University, USA, p. 250.

areas along the Sobat basin. It is during this expansion that the migrant Nuer fought their way until they reached their current territories in the eastern bank of the river Nile²¹⁷

Scarcity of water just like the grazing rights have the potential to cause deadly conflicts among the pastoralists if they didn't come to a consensus to manage their differences in a peaceful manner. The biggest motivation in the eruption of the pastoral related conflicts can be explained through the unfortunate culture of violence and aggression that have almost become the order of the day throughout the entire region. It is precisely due to this culture of violence and aggression that the tendency to dialogue when there are differences is utterly absent from the social understanding.

3.6.4 Conflict relating to wildlife

The Western Nuer territory is replete with wildlife which are hunted for their meat by the local inhabitants. Interestingly, local tradition dictates that hunted wild animals once killed their carcasses should be haphazardly divided through snatching by those who killed the animal. This type of meat distribution is contingent on the individual strength to get a chunk of meat, but oftentimes people quarrel over the meat distribution of these hunted wild animals.²¹⁸ The below example illustrates the magnitude of this problem. In 1982, a buffalo was jointly killed by the youth from Leek and Bul sections of Unity state, the first who speared the animal was a Leek, followed by a youth from Bul section. And because the Buffalo was killed late in the evening, the two groups agreed to defer the slaughter to the following morning to divide it among themselves. Surprisingly, when Leek youth came to the scene the next day, they were baffled to find the whole buffalo meat taken away by Bul youth except only for the intestines and the head that were left at the scene. This action by the latter group was regarded as an aggression by Leek youth who immediately initiated a fight against their Bul counterparts. The conflict between the two sides continued for a couple of months and claimed the lives of 50 people with 70 people wounded. The battle was later named "the Buffalo head battle" because of the head and the intestines left at the slaughter scene.²¹⁹

²¹⁷ Kelly, Raymond C. (1987). *The Nuer Conquest: The Structure and Development of an Expansionist System*. Michigan: Michigan University Press, p. 80.

²¹⁸ Geng, W. Kuol, Oral Interview, Mayom County, Juba, South Sudan, 17/11/2016.

²¹⁹ Geng, W. Kuol, Oral Interview, Mayom County, Juba, South Sudan, 17/11/2016.

The natural resources have been depleted with overuse as well as from the climate change drastically affecting the ecological setting of the natural environment. The most affected natural resource is the wildlife which almost become extinct due to over hunting as the local people are largely relying on their meat for the sustenance of their lives. The conflicts that are associated with the wildlife hunting can only be understood from the same culture of violence and aggression that has been become the single most motivating force behind the Western Nuer conflict causation.

Border and land are some of the basic requirements that a person must possessed and since they are connected with shelter and production, they constitute the fundamental tenets of human existence. It is through their availability that human security is guaranteed and therefore, conflicts relating to land and border are an integral parts of the human basic Needs theory of conflict.²²⁰ Other factors such as grazing rights and access to water as well as conflicts over wildlife are inform by the human basic needs' theory of conflict. The conflict relating to wildlife are all about fulfilling one basic requirement as far as social need are concern.

3.7 CONCLUSION

The causes of the Western Nuer violent conflicts are numerous and they range from social factors of conflicts, psychological factors of conflicts, political factors of conflicts, economic factors of conflicts and; environmental factors of conflicts. These factors are further divided into sub topics for better clarity on the typologies of the conflict causation. With the exception of the political factors of conflicts, the first category of conflicts are those that had been in existence long before the advent of the government. Therefore, they constitute part and parcel of the Western Nuer socio-cultural life. Whereas, the latter conflict category is primarily necessitated by human advancement and therefore very much stem from modernization. Such conflicts include among others the involvement of government officials in communal conflicts and power distribution related conflicts, unfair distribution of resources and unemployment. Territorial conflicts, though exists in the past, are exacerbated by the involvement of the well-informed members of the society. These conflicts center on the administrative boundaries in the urban settlements which of late became a tug of war over who should accrue financial revenues from the town markets.

²²⁰ Azar, Edward. (1990). *The Management of Protracted Social Conflict: Theory and Cases*.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE IMPACTS OF THE WESTERN NUER VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The violent communal conflicts frequently fought among the different clans and sections of the Western Nuer have tremendously affected the lives of the civilian population domicile in the region. The war impacts discussed in this chapter are categorized into social impact, psychological impact, political impact, economic impact, and environmental impact. These impacts are sub divided into smaller sub topics of the various themes discussed in this study to provide clarity on the magnitude of their effect on social life in the Western Nuer community. Though, war impacts are common to all societies, each area or region have its peculiar situation unique to itself when it comes to social effects of the war. At the end of the chapter a brief summary of the concluding analysis on the impacts of Western Nuer violent conflicts is imparted.

4.2 SOCIAL IMPACTS OF VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION

4.2.1 Human Loss

Western Nuer intra-communal violent conflicts are responsible for series of deaths among the people of the region. And as the death toll keeps rising, so is the cycle of violence which almost render the taking of somebody life a simple matter. However, due to this anomaly, the institution of mourning the dead begun to diminish from the social calendar of the Western Nuer region.²²¹ There is a human death hypothesis which posits that the death toll from the Western Nuer conflicts has risen following the introduction of the firearms into the area. The hypothesis particularly places the deadly impact in the pre and post second Southern Sudanese wars of liberation.²²² It is estimated that the Western Nuer intra communal violent conflicts claimed human lives that can be estimated at the thousands. It is worth noting that there is no single day in which a person does not loss life from war related conflicts. The level of destruction in property and community livelihood resulting from these communal conflicts is also alarming in addition, to retardation of development activities planned for by the successive state administrations.²²³

²²¹ Ruot, R. Let, Oral Interview, Koch County, Juba, South Sudan, 16/11/2016.

²²² Guop, P. Majuoy, Oral Interview, Mayom County, Juba, South Sudan 01/12/2016.

²²³ Unity State General Secretariat (2013). Security Report, pp. 23 -35.

The Death toll in the Western Nuer region has dramatically increased following the introduction of the automatic firearms into the communal conflict. And if the above estimate is anything to go by, the death rate is put at the thousandth though there is scarcely an accurate statistic to substantiate this claim. Generally, the overall assessment of the residents is supportive of the abovementioned estimate. The reason why there is no accurate statistical survey of the mortality rate is because human death continues to take place even during the writing of this project and the state authorities do not have statistical records of the human death in the state. As expected, the high death rate is primarily aggravated by the excessive culture of violence and aggression.

4.2.2 Revenge Killing and Vendetta

The Western Nuer society is mired in unprecedented personal vendettas and revenge killings exacerbated by the multiple deadly intra-communal feuds. This social phenomenon has become part of the people daily life and little is being done to rectify this situation. In the past, the Nuer took revenge with the slayers alone, but presently however, the slayer's agnates including the educated ones are also targeted when identified. Worse still, the elderly persons are also targeted - a complete departure from the acceptable Nuer war ethics²²⁴ On 15/08/2014, Gatchang Mayen Char Rel was wounded in an attack launched on Bentiu town. Mayen Char Rel the victim's father consulted with a magician on the cause of his son injury and was informed by the magician that Kerwar Gai Juoth his immediate neighbor has bewitched the boy. After several days of unsuccessful traditional treatment, the boy succumbed to the gunshot wound at Boryian Village of Rubkona County. Following his son death, Rel the deceased father called on all his sons and instructed them to murder Juoth the suspected witch, but the appeal was rejected by some and accepted by others. Accordingly, Giel Mayen Char, the deceased younger brother executed the plan by shooting dead Juoth who was seated at his home courtyard during the evening hours. Meanwhile, the killer cousin, Gatdiet Ruai Ter who was providing protection to the killer, shot and wounded Gatluak Pathot Koang, the latter was trying to rescue the victim. Eventually, Rel and his cousin Geah Ter Rel were arrested and asked to pay the blood compensation which was seldom executed due to the prevailing security situation in the area. In 2016, two years after the murder, the late Juoth son in connivance with his uncle and cousins ambushed and slain Dhoal Mayen Char, the first deceased elder brother. Char was an official working with the Medicine San

²²⁴ Bol, M. Gatdet, Oral Interview, Guit County, Juba, South Sudan, 20/11/2016.

Frontiers (MSF) at the United Nations Protection of Civilians Site (PoC). Shortly thereafter, Rel the father was also ambushed and killed by unknown Gunmen while on his way to Wicpuol village. Though, the killers were believed to be the sons of late Juoth, it later turned out Bejany Wic Gatkuoth, also from the same village, murdered Rel. The murder was on the account that the slayer's father Wic Gatkuoth was murdered in the past by Piek Char Rel, Rel nephew.²²⁵

Revenge killings and Vendetta becomes rampant in recent years and this is precisely attributed to many reasons chief among these, are the perpetuation of the culture of violence and the effect of the use of automatic firearms. Prior to the introduction of the automatic firearms into the combat arena, revenge killings were less rampant as opposed to the phenomenal contemporary death rate. The use of the automatic weapons to execute personal vendetta has increased the mortality rate because the firing of the victim is not the same as spearing him. The former method is much more accurate and deadly than the latter method and worse still, gun can kill in big numbers, even those who are not the main targets can become victims due to cross fire.

4.2.3 Effect from the firearm use

Firearms have impacted the lives of the people of Western Nuer in various ways and as such accidental deaths from these weapons are on the rise in the region. The effect became so conspicuous after guns became part of the civilians' life. Unlike spears, the use of the guns prevents victims from seeking a shelter and furthermore, firearms inflict multiple injuries and wounds that are seldom sustain during spear combat, guns also inflicts instant and swift death from a long distance due to its long-range effect. Besides, children, women, and elderly and the disables who are consider untouchable suffer from the effect of crossfire during gun combat.²²⁶ To buttressed the above narrative it is claimed that due to Nuer excessive use of firearms, men became increasingly vulnerable to defend their families and livestock from external attacks. Moreover, women, children and the elderly became victims of inter communal violent conflicts, further singling women as particularly affected due to the sexual attacks from men.²²⁷ In 2004 at Kiey Roah village of Mayom County, Riek Jualnyang Thiep and his nephew Mawic Tuak Jualnyang

²²⁵ Lual, G. Dhol, Oral Interview. Guit County, Juba, South Sudan, 26/12/2016.

²²⁶ Guop, P. Majuoy, Oral Interview, Mayom County, Juba, South Sudan 01/12/2016.

²²⁷ Hutchinson, E. Sharon (2000). Nuer Ethnicity Militarized, Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland Vol. 16, No. 3, p. 12.

while under the influence of alcohol had a brawl over an adultery case. Thiep accused his nephew Jualnyang of committing adultery with his wife which Jualnyang, the accused vehemently denied. Consequently, an exchange of gun fire using AK 47 automatic rifles ensued between the two male relatives both killing themselves instantly.²²⁸

The use of the automatic weapons in the Western Nuer conflicts has tremendously affected the lives of the local inhabitants in the region. The effects from the use of the guns as described in the above narrative are deadlier than the effect from the use of the primitive weaponry of war such as spear and clubs. And the local residents are so obsessed with the effect of the guns that they all detest and lamented the application of these deadly weapons in the first place. It is a challenging task to document the death from the automatic weapons because there is no proper record of the daily death rate. The region is seriously mired in violence that the government find it very difficult to document the gun mortality rate.

Since the advent of automatic weapons in 1983 to the present, the death toll in Western Nuer has rapidly increased. And the number of people who died as a result of gunshot is projected to be five times higher than the number of those who died from the effect of spears. Besides, women and children death attributed to firearms has been on the rise since these people are often caught in the cross fire when rival clans clashed between each other.²²⁹ It has been revealed that in the 1980s, the people of Western Nuer were highly terrorized by Gunmen who acquired their weapons from different sources earlier on. The same weapons were used by these criminal gangs to enrich themselves at the expense of the people while at the same times executing personal vendettas against their enemies.²³⁰

The increase in the mortality rate in relation to the firearms is due to the high death rate which not only affects the belligerents but the vulnerable groups such as the women, Children and the elderly. The employment of firearms into the communal conflict have greatly aggravated the situation that even death that was not contemplated during the fighting with less lethal weapons is made possible by the availability of firearms. The killing of noncombatants was a taboo in the

²²⁸ Geng, W. Kuol, Oral Interview, Mayom County, Juba, South Sudan, 17/11/2016.

²²⁹ Elders Group, Focused Group Discussion, Kakuma, 02/05/2016.

²³⁰ Hutchinson, E. Sharon (1996). *Nuer Dilemmas*, California: University of California Press, p. 147.

traditional warfare and consequently, the death rate used to be very minimal among the civilians in Western Nuer during the pre-firearms period.

4.2.4 Officials and Intellectuals Targeting

In the Western Nuer tradition, revenge killings are supposed to target only the fighting youth. Unfortunately, in recent years government officials and the educated elite became victims of a premeditated murder due to violent conflicts fought by their communities in the countryside. These officials or the educated elite become targets for vengeance attacks because they are regarded as soft targets who are caught unaware of the potential risk awaiting them.²³¹ In January 2007, Gatkor Gai Majak murdered Manyiew Kuol Ruea, an oil company worker at Joknyang oilfield of Kadet Payam, both the killer and the victim are from Jikany section. On March 05, 2007, Dak Kuol Ruea the victim's brother along with his other colleagues attacked and slain Junub Koang Riek. The victim Riek, was a government official working in Guit County HQ but was murdered in revenge for the death of the killer's brother. In May of the same year Gatnyai Guek, a Catholic catechist from the second victim clan was also slain by the family of Chan bar Dongdit. The attacking family belongs to Leek section and they slain Guek on the account of their two sons mistakenly murdered along with late Ruea, the first victim.²³²

The targeting of officials and intellectuals for revenge killings is a new phenomenon among the Western Nuer people, in the past, such vendettas only target the fighting youth who are considered the main protagonists. The reason for scaling up of this type of revenge killings is because of the elevated culture of violence which radically changed the traditional way of life including the war ethics. This situation has created an atmosphere of fear and panic among the educated elite living in the urban areas. The educated elite often becomes victims of revenge killing the moment their agnatic relatives in the countryside committed an act of murder regardless of whether it is premeditated or accidental.

4.2.5 Movement Restriction

In the aftermath of violent conflict people's mobility become restricted and dangerous since rival communities would try to harm and carry out ambushes against each another. The

²³¹ Rundial, D. Koang, Oral Interview, Guit County, Juba, South Sudan, 26/11/2016.

²³² Rundial, D. Koang, Oral Interview, Guit County, Juba, South Sudan, 26/11/2016.

impact of the lack of movement becomes so acute particularly if the rival clans in dispute lives in close proximity to one other. Oftentimes, activities such as Farming, search for lost cattle and attending festivities in the adjacent and distance villages would be affected for the fear of being laid and killed. In addition, the movements between the countryside and the town markets would also be affected.²³³ In 2012 Kuac Maley Tot Weal from Jagey section, slain Torguom Diew Paar from Dok section and the chiefs ordered that the murderer be brought to book. Unfortunately, the perpetrator was unlawfully protected by his uncle Sudan Tot Weal who vehemently resisted his nephew arrest. The father of the victim frustrated by the refusal of the slayer's family to appeared before the court of law decided to abandoned the case and returned home in Leer County. While, at the village, Diew Paar the victim father, incited his son Kuerlath Diew Paar to avenge the death of his deceased brother. The boy immediately headed for the slayer's village where he waylaid and killed Maley Tot Weal the slayer's father who was on his way from his village of Tika to his farm, a short walking distance from the village.²³⁴

The restriction of people mobility is always enforced in the aftermath of the eruption of a violent conflict, as a result, the affected communities will find it very difficult to carry on with their day-to-day activities. The restriction of movement will affect every aspect of social life ranging from agriculture, cattle rearing, social occasions and other social activities. Though, the phenomenon is a general problem that affect everyone in the community, there are situation when restriction may not be used as a tactic of war. The lack of restriction would be the norm if the warring parties are living close to one another and are more socially connected.

4.2.6 Burning of Houses

Burning of houses during the fighting according to the Nuer war ethics is unacceptable, for a house is considered a shelter where one seeks sanctuary when overcome by the enemy. Sadly enough, a new precedent emerged in recent years (though it is confined to some specific cases) where houses are set ablaze by the combatants. This move is usually taken against an enemy that has been trapped inside the hut or to forced him to come out and then killed outside the shelter.²³⁵ Gai Jiel Ring from Luach clan, Killed Marial Teny Kabor, both from Payinjiar County, the

²³³ Women Group, Focused Group Discussion, Kakuma, Kenya, 05/05/2016.

²³⁴ Luony, G. Ruai, Oral Interview, Mayendit County, Juba, South Sudan, 21/11/2016.

²³⁵ Buop, H. Lor, Oral Interview, Rubkona County, Juba, South Sudan, 24/11/2016.

perpetrator was left at large by the local authorities and was able to roam freely in the countryside. One morning, while moving around in the village, the killer accidentally bumped onto the deceased brothers who were thatching a hut at Kol village and immediately fired at them killing instantly Buay Dak Guol. In reaction to the event, the family of the two victims decided to aggressively dealt with the matter until the suspect is caught dead or alive. Subsequently, the victim's brothers pursued the attacker till he became exhausted and sought sanctuary inside a nearby shelter. Immediately, the brothers of the deceased started firing at the attacker while inside the hut in a bid to compelled him to come out of the shelter. Interestingly, in spite of the firing, the killer resisted coming out forcing the attackers to torched the house so that he could be trapped inside. Alas, to the attackers' amazement, the man managed to escaped by digging a hole at the back of the hut leaving behind an old woman inside the hut to be consumed by fire.²³⁶

The burning of houses is a recent phenomenon in the conduct of war as it is only confined to specific cases nevertheless, the fact that this social vice is considered as one of the tactics of war is a disgrace to the people of Western Nuer who are connected by blood relationships. It is absolutely inconceivable that a fellow Nuer, no matter the level of hostility, would set ablaze a shelter of another Western Nuer man. These kinds of treatment were previously used against external enemies of the people of Western Nuer. Even in the conflict with outsiders, there is no point of torching houses because by so doing, it would be a clear violation of the international humanitarian law and human right laws.

4.2.7 Separation of Families

Conflict within the Western Nuer communities tear families apart, for instance, a man who has slain another person will no longer lives with his family, he will run away from the family because of the fear of vengeance from the victim's family. Ultimately, the separation of the family will impact on the upbringing of the kids who would then miss the paternal guidance. In addition, the wife would seldom procreate since her husband is not present to bear her children.²³⁷ In 2007, Gatkor Gai Majak of Cieng Dholeak clan has killed Manyieu Kuol Ruea from Cieng Gai clan, both from Jikany section. Nonetheless, in an effort to evade being arrested by the Government or killed by his enemies, Gai fled to Fangak county in Jonglei State where he spent five years. During

²³⁶ Kuol, J. Yien, Oral Interview, Payinjar County, Juba, South Sudan, 23/11/2016.

²³⁷ Both, R. Gany, Oral Interview, Guit County, Juba, South Sudan, 27/11/2016.

his self-imposed absence, the wife Nyatuai Gatkuoth Machar decided to divorced by returning to her parents and the killer's family got disintegrated.²³⁸

As can be seen from the example set above, separation of families has been one of the serious impacts of the wars fought by the people of Western Nuer society. When families become disintegrated, the whole society is affected since there would be no social cohesion and the children in the affected families would not enjoy their normal growth. It is the absence of social cohesion and lack of parental guidance that breed the culture of violence and aggression among the young people in the society.

4.2.8 High Numbers of Widows and Orphans

Western Nuer intra-communal violent conflicts generate massive numbers of widows and orphans and this is precisely because of the decline in adult males' numbers due to the war. Also, it is pointed out that widows and orphans are a burden to the society since they must be taken care of by the rest of the society. However, it is probable children will be particularly affected for the lack of paternal care, besides, the father being the head of the family, his death therefore is not only a lost but a social catastrophe as well.²³⁹ Gatloy Kuol Nger from Cieng Dholeak of Guit County was the only son to his mother Nyalam Nger Manyang. Unfortunately, when fighting erupted within the community in 2014, Nger was killed in battle, the deceased left behind his wife Nyaluak Gatkot Thon and her three children. The family remained without any person to depend on for the rest of their life following the father death in that tragic incidence.²⁴⁰

When the widows and orphans' population increased in a given society, the chances of economic growth would be very bleak unless there is government social welfare support to the affected families. Sadly, in the Western Nuer, that is not the case because such government welfare support as could be seen in the advance countries are hard to come by. Eventually, these orphans would try to eke a living by fending for themselves through crooked means hence, the increase in the level of crimes, destitution and possibly culture of violence and aggression.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Baret, M. Tap, Oral Interview, Rubkona County, Juba, South Sudan, 28/12/2016.

²⁴⁰ Both, R. Gany, Oral Interview, Guit County, Juba, South Sudan, 27/11/2016.

4.2.9 Displacement and Refugeehood

Apart from human death experienced during violent conflict, communal feuds have displaced people from their homes in Western Nuer. At times, these displaced persons will be forced to travel to far distances including crossing the international borders to become refugees. A mother whose husband is killed in a communal conflict would migrate into towns or even travel to refugee camps in the neighboring countries, oftentimes, this migration take place when the deceased relatives failed to support the deceased wife and her kids.²⁴¹ During the first days of the conflict in southern Sudan about 370,000 people fled southern Sudan and became refugees in south western Ethiopia. Meanwhile, another figure of 1,800,000 crossed the heartland of the Arabs north and resettled in the outskirts of the capital Khartoum as IDPs, perhaps some of the displaced persons comes from the Western Nuer.²⁴²

Displacement and refugeehood are detrimental to the family wellbeing since they will leave their permanent residence and move to another place making life very difficult for them in their new environment. Living outside the original homeland come with host of problems to the families devastated by war, these include psychological, economic, political and social issues as well as the reintegration into the society once the family return back home. Life in refugee camp make young people susceptible to alien cultures and this become a catalyst for the perpetuation of the culture of violence and aggression.

4.2.10 Social Disintegration

Violent conflicts create disunity and animosity among the same people as well as tear down social bonds and fabric of the society. Certainly, if a community becomes predominantly violent in character, its members will live in fear and mistrust. Currently, the situation in Western Nuer land is a depiction of the life style stated above, because each County fight with the other County in the same state and the County community fight with itself as sections, clans and sub clans.²⁴³ All Nuer districts were embroiled in inter communal fighting following the departure of the British

²⁴¹ Both, R. Gany, Oral Interview, Guit County, Juba, South, 27/11/2016.

²⁴² Hutchinson, E. Sharon (1996). *Nuer Dilemmas*, California: University of California Press, p. 6.

²⁴³ Wal, P. Sudan, Oral Interview, Mayom County, Kakuma, Kenya, 05/05/2016.

colonial administration and the vacuum of power left by the British was then used by the natives as an opportunity to settle scores with old adversaries.²⁴⁴

In normal times when the Nuer has no conflicts among themselves, they would come to the aid of their members in the event of an external enemy attack to one of their social groups. Unfortunately, such reinforcements are hard to come by these days due to the chronic Western Nuer intra-communal conflicts. Certainly, the growing social mistrust among the people is responsible for this behavioral change in the community.²⁴⁵ The intra-communal violent conflicts raging in the Western Nuer region have seriously polarized the situation so that people identify themselves in term of their clans and sections to segregate others. Even community leaders who should be the unifying figures that congregate people also are harboring divisive politics.²⁴⁶

It has been affirmed social divisions among the people of Western Nuer became a catalyst for social disharmony, instead of using this social diversity as a sign of strength, it is rather used for social disintegration.²⁴⁷ The Nuer social divisions stated above is analogous to a situation in the rift valley of Kenya which was described as highly polarized following the reintroduction of the multiparty politics in the country.²⁴⁸ It is believed this polarization has created a vicious rivalry between the local communities moreover, the Kalenjin and Masai politicians are accused of creating what they called Majimboism (regionalism) in order to secure votes from the local people.

Social disintegration is a major catalyst that propel young people into the life of violence and violent conflict. Once the fabric of the society is disrupted, societal control become very difficult and this encourages individual members of the society to take the law into their own hands. The ensuing lawlessness that follows is a sure path to the life of violence which in turn will breed the culture of violence and aggression. Therefore, the perennial culture of violence and

²⁴⁴ Hutchinson, E. Sharon (1992, p. 133). *The Cattle of Money and the Cattle of Girls among the Nuer, 1930 – 1983*, American Ethnologist, Vol. 19, p. 133.

²⁴⁵ Rueda, Kiir Ngoab, Oral Interview, Guit County, Juba, South Sudan, 12/11/2016.

²⁴⁶ Elders Group, Focused Group Discussion, Kakuma, Kenya, 02/05/2016.

²⁴⁷ Gatluak, N. Danhier, Telephone Conversation, Payinjiar County, Kakuma, Kenya, 05/08/2016.

²⁴⁸ Gettleman, (2012). *Official Sees Kenya Ethnic Cleansing*. New York Times accessed 12th, July, 2012 at (<http://www.nytimes.com/world/Africa>).

aggression among the young generation in the Western Nuer region can be understood as possibly emanating from the impact of the disintegration of the social fabric.

4.2.11 Youth Wasted Talents and Energies

The youth as the productive section of the society should have used their energies and talents to bring social change to the Western Nuer society. Unfortunately, the youth energies and talents are unnecessarily wasted in conflicts that are senseless and nonproductive. Traditionally, the Western Nuer youth are pastoralists and often help in some other domestic duties as well. Nowadays however, the youth are fond of loitering in towns where they can be seen grouped into idle camps discussing topics that are mainly concern with violence and violent conflicts.²⁴⁹ Ruot Chany Machar a young man from Juong clan brought his dry fish for sale in Leer town market. While in town, he was spotted by Cieng Tikjak youth who closely watched his moves till his returned to the countryside during the evening hours. On his journey back home, he was waylaid by the youth from Cieng Tikjak and ultimately meeting his fate at the hands of Malual Weah Muok, one of the attackers. The victim money and an AK 47 rifle were looted by the group, but Muok the slayer, was himself killed the same day by another group taking away everything in his possession. The incident took place on 11/09/2016 at Kuer Juong village across the river from Leer town.²⁵⁰

The culture of violence and aggression that engulf the entire life of the Western Nuer community particularly the youth has resulted to the loss of youth talents and energies. Such an impact is so detrimental to the society that the level of production which is a key determinant to socioeconomic growth will greatly be reduce. The implication of reduction in the level of production will render the society dysfunctional and exposed to hunger, diseases, starvation and outright underdevelopment in term of physical infrastructure and the human resource.

4.2.12 Effect on Marriage

Marriage is another social field affected by the Western Nuer intra-communal violent conflicts since the victim's family would have difficulty marrying from the slayer's family. This denial of marriage is in line with the Nuer cultural tradition and customs which prohibits the

²⁴⁹ Kuol, S. Gatgek, Oral Interview, Rubkona County, Kakuma, Kenya, 03/-5/2016.

²⁵⁰ Yap, J. Bath, Oral Interview, Leer County, Juba, South Sudan, 02/12/2016.

deceased male family members from marrying girls from the killer's family. Likewise, boys from the same family are not allowed to marry girls from the slayer's family and vice versa, thereby affecting the Western Nuer social relationships.²⁵¹

In 1976, Koang Biel Kueth killed Top Mit Kwong in a communal fight and the earth priest performed a purification ritual to reunite the two families to their normal life albeit, with the exclusion of the right to marriage between the two families. Surprisingly, in 2007, Rel Malual Tai Kwong, the deceased nephew decided to marry the slayer's daughter Nyethak Koang Biel, but the community elders refused the proposed marriage because it contravenes the customs of the land. In spite, of the warning from the community elders, the suitor supported by his father pressed on with the marriage. Finally, the two partners were able to found a family after their marriage, but unfortunately, their offspring begun to die including the husband himself. This family death was believed to have originated from the haunting soul of the slain relative - a superstitious claim that could not be proven by the respondent.²⁵²

The impact of the marriage can better be explained from the angle of the dominant culture of violence and aggression. If it were not for the rampant killings that almost characterized the life of the people of Western Nuer, marriages would have been conducted across the communities without any difficulty. It is also evident that when people intermarry across families, the society will be interconnected through family relationships which in turn is a recipe for a peaceful and stable life among the people.

4.2.13 Effect on Culture

The armed violent conflicts ravaging the Western Nuer society have profound cultural impacts on the people way of life. And as previously stated, there is a fundamental shift in the Nuer war tradition manifested in the targeting of the elderly, women, children, disables and the sick. The use of the modern automatic weapons has exacerbated the shift in the Nuer fighting methods as opposed to fighting with traditional weapons such as spears and clubs. Moreover, traditional use of dances and folklores as a physical manifestation of the continuity of cultural oral teachings are no longer practice for fear of retributions and the eruption of conflicts.²⁵³ The acquisition of automatic weapons by the Western Nuer changed the war tactics, the current war

²⁵¹Gatluak, N. Danhier, Telephone Conversation, Payinjiar County, Kakuma, Kenya, 05/08/2016.

²⁵² Yap, J. Bath, Oral Interview, Leer County, Juba, South Sudan, 02/12/2016.

²⁵³ Gatluak, N. Danhier, Telephone Conversation, Kakuma, Kenya, 05/08/2016.

techniques in used are those of the military such as surprise, night time attacks and even burning of houses. This is also beside the deliberate destruction of food supplies by the combatants.²⁵⁴

The impacts on culture as a result of the conflict have adversely affected traditional way of life including the applicable mechanisms for the maintenance of peace and stability in the society. When the cultural institutions that regulate the activities and conduct of the individual members of the community are broken, there is likelihood that social norms will be violated and abandoned. This shift in the cultural way of life can only be blame on the rampant and excessive culture of violence and aggression that dominated the life of the Western Nuer younger generations.

4.3 PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF CONFLICTS

4.3.1 Stigmatization

The stigma attached to the Western Nuer violent conflicts is that they are regarded as the work of people who are primitive, backward and less civilized. Those who are engage in constant conflicts are also label as murderers and savages who enjoy bloodletting and killings with no regards to human lives. Ostensibly, such stereotypes and labeling bring shame to the members of Western Nuer community when views through the lens of other communities.²⁵⁵

As explained in the above narrative, the culture of violence and aggression have adverse effect on the life of the people as exemplified in the stigma attached to Nuer wars by other communities. In the era of a civilized society, engaging in excessive violence carries a lot of names calling and other stereotypical strings attached to it. In order to avoid this, a society has to conform to standard norms applicable to the rest of the societies.

4.3.2 Traumatic Stress Distress

The introduction of firearms into intra-communal violent conflicts in Western Nuer has caused psychological effect of traumatic stress disorder among the civilian population. These psychological effects particularly impact on those members of the society whose relatives had been murdered in communal feuds. Similarly, those who are wounded during conflicts will find it very difficult to cope with the wounds inflicted on them, the same is true for those children left without

²⁵⁴ Hutchinson, E. Sharon (2000). Nuer Ethnicity Militarized, Vol. 16, No. 3, p. 10.

²⁵⁵ Gatdet, W. Kur, Oral Interview, Rubkona County, Kakuma, Kenya, 04/05/2016.

the paternal care following their father demise due to communal violent conflicts. Apparently, the lack of parental care affects the children mental development during their growth.²⁵⁶

Trauma come in the aftermath of a violence conflict specially if some members of the community experienced the effect of the war. This social phenomenon can be blame on the endemic culture of violence and aggression that become dominant features across the Western Nuer society. Experience has shown that the severity of trauma among the affected communities, the likelihood of the prevalence in the cases of lunacy and possibly increase in the level of mortality rate among the affected people.

4.3.3 Change of Attitudes

Since the time guns has been introduced into Western Nuer, people attitude drastically changed. Nevertheless, the change in attitudes was characterized by outright aggression and arrogance which became the norm in the day-to-day interactions of the people. Perhaps, it is the same change in attitudes, which are adversarial in nature, that is responsible for the myriad violent conflicts causing total havoc in the region.²⁵⁷ An elaborative explanation revealed that the youth in Western Nuer are so aggressive and arrogant like never before. The youth often aggress their victims for no apparent reason and any attempt by the victim to resist the bullying, the aggressor would immediately find an excuse to start the fight. In conclusion, this situation is fundamentally a product of the war and its attending impact is the gun culture which became the norm in the society these days.²⁵⁸

Attitudinal change as a result of the violent conflict which affect the warring communities is a major impact that readily come with the eruption of conflict. If the society did not urgently find a remedy to address the situation, it is possible that this change in attitudes will accelerate the level of violence and aggressiveness to the extend the harmonious relationship between the people would drastically change to a hostile relationship. It is also due to attitudinal change that lack of respect for the elderly became part of new normal and this in turn made the responsibility of the elders toward their children very difficult as far as family discipline is concern.

²⁵⁶ Deng, N. Duoth, Oral Interview, Guit County, Khartoum, Sudan, 15/01/2017.

²⁵⁷ Jageah, G. Beding, Oral Interview, Leer County, Kakuma, Kenya, 31/04/2016.

²⁵⁸ Paan, J. Kuom, oral interview, Rubkona County, Juba, South Sudan, 29/12/2016.

4.3.4 Fear and Panic

The availability of guns among the civilian population creates constant fear and panic because these guns are responsible for massive civilians' death. Additionally, their easy use as tools of death and destruction makes people fearful of their cheer presence. Unlike traditional spears which have only minimal impact, guns are terrifying when in the midst of the civilian population.²⁵⁹ A parent narrated how his own children became victims of fear and panic from the guns, and this is what he said, "my children visited me at Nhialdiu in Rubkona County where I used to stay, and when the kids saw people carry Guns openly, they were so frighten. As a result of that fear, they refused to come outdoor for days and I had to send them back to Bentiu PoC where they initially came from".²⁶⁰

Fear and panic as consequences of the war affects the communities on whose territories those inter clans' wars took place. It is always likely that civilians who had their first experience to live in the theatre of war would be too scare of their lives as the terrifying sound of guns would be a new reality in their lives. The impact of fear and panic that has created a life of misery to majority of the Western Nuer community can be attributed to the perennial culture of violence and aggression that almost become unavoidable way of life particularly for the youth in Western Nuer region. Unless something is done in this regard, this violent culture is likely to stay longer.

4.4 POLITICAL IMPACTS OF CONFLICT

4.4.1 Disruption of Government Functions

The government function during communal violence is disrupted and paralyzed since the primary concern of the authorities will be how to address the prevailing insecurity. The same insecurity will also affect the delivery of social services to the local inhabitants. Moreover, government official focus will be distracted from real issues affecting the population and instead, they will direct their efforts and energies on tackling civilians' hostilities.²⁶¹ There is a view which says "when the civilian population in a given country is heavily armed with firearms, they become

²⁵⁹ Youth Group, Focused Group Discussion, Kakuma, Kenya, 02/05/2016.

²⁶⁰ Guop, P. Majuoy, Oral Interview, Mayom County, Juba, South Sudan, 01/12/2016.

²⁶¹ Gatwec, G. Kel, Oral Interview, Mayendit County, Kakuma, Kenya

too powerful relative to the state. Ultimately, the end result of this situation is that the government would be paralyzed".²⁶²

Indeed, successive state administrative functions had been disrupted by intra-communal Western Nuer violent conflicts because the government main concern would be to bring about social security in the state. When the government funds are redirected toward maintaining security, the rest of the activities that are essential to citizens survival would lag behind thereby retarding the area development. Nevertheless, it is the culture of violence and aggression that are the main impediments to social progress.

4.4.2 Outsiders Paranoia

The Western Nuer people live in constant fear because everybody is targeted when war broke out, so are outsiders living in the state who are not confident of their survival in a land they have little knowledge about. The communal conflicts would also give a false impression to these outsiders that life in Unity State is full of risks, but the fact of the matter is that these are domestic violent conflicts that mainly target the local people and have nothing to do with foreign individuals.²⁶³ It is believed civilians with arms are very dangerous to be control because once they are armed, violence become the order of the day. It is also revealed that the sources of gun supply are always the paramilitary forces operating under the Government. Moreover, most commanders supplied guns to their clans for personal protection while some civilians buy their guns from the army and police units.²⁶⁴

The culture of violence and aggression that became the centerpiece of every day activity in the region instill fear and paranoia into the hearts of foreigners living in the state territory and this affect the Western Nuer region economically. Therefore, there is great need for the regional leaders to address this matter otherwise, the area will be boycotted by the foreigners denying the region vital services and expertise that come with the foreign nationals. In addition, to the tarnishing of the image of the state and its inhabitants.

²⁶² Cohen, R. and Deng, F. (2002). *Masses in Flight: The Global Crisis of Internal Displacement*. Brookings Institute Press: Washington D.C.

²⁶³ Liem, M. Gatdien, Oral Interview, Leer County, Juba, South Sudan, 21/01/2017.

²⁶⁴ Goup, P. Majuoy, Oral Interview, Mayom County, Juba, South Sudan, 01/12.2016.

4.4.3 Gun Culture

The Western Nuer violent conflicts have generated civilians urge to possess guns due to their associated power. In 1980s, only few civilians were armed for self-defense against the nomadic Misseriya Arabs who pillaged, killed and maimed unarmed civilians in the region. It is during the 1991 SPLA/M internal split that many Western Nuer youth were armed by the SPLM/A Nasir faction. The Western Nuer youth were recruited in what was known as “Deec in Boor” literally meaning the “The White Army” and the purpose of this recruitment was primarily to enlist their support. In the same vein, during the Khartoum peace agreement, the youth were also armed by the different rival factions then allied to the government. Finally, in the aftermath of Dec 15th, 2013 South Sudanese civil war, arms were also acquired by these civilians.²⁶⁵ Prior to 1983, the people of Western Nuer do not own guns, but as they become highly militarized due to numerous wars fought in their midst, they gradually begun to acquire arms by secretly purchasing guns which they stored in the chief homestead.²⁶⁶

Since the start of the second Sudanese civil war back in the 1980s, the Western Nuer civilians became fond of possessing firearms and this dramatically increase the level of violence among the youth of the Western Nuer region. Apparently, the increase in the level of violence became a factor in heightening the culture of violence and aggression that has become so prevalence in the region since the beginning of the Sudanese civil war. The Western Nuer region is awash with huge quantity of guns that even young children have access to those firearms.

4.4.4 Reduction of Nuer Social Standing

The Western Nuer community as part of the South Sudanese society is a force to be reckons with particularly if they maintain their cohesion as a community. Unfortunately, due to the intermittent violent conflicts now crisscrossing their country, they tend to loss rather than gain from the conflicts. It is likely that their number will keep reducing as many lives are being lost due to the conflicts. Moreover, the decrease in the population number will in turn affect their political representation in the various levels of governance in the country.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ Gatluak, J. Gatduel, Oral Interview, Mayom County, Nairobi, Kenya, 14/07/2016.

²⁶⁶ Hutchinson, E Sharon (1996 p. 150). Nuer Dilemmas, California: University of California press, p. 150.

²⁶⁷ Elders Group, Focused Group Discussion, Kakuma, Kenya, 02/05/2016.

The endless communal wars fought by the Western Nuer youth are likely to decreased the demography of the people of the region which in turn affect them during important national political events such as elections and census. It is imperative that the culture of violence and aggressive attitudes among the youth are reduce so as to restore the dignity and respect of the people of Western Nuer in the eyes of the South Sudanese people and the foreign nationals living in and outside the country.

4.4.5 Lack of Development

The intra-communal violent conflicts in the Western Nuer have retarded both the state physical and human development. Money that are earmarked for development activities would be shifted to the security sector when war flared up. Ultimately, the potential outcome will be absence of a meaningful tangible progress as far as development is concerned.²⁶⁸ It is once said if the people are educated and lives in towns, they would not fight over minor issues. Therefore, reducing overt conflict required reduction in the level of underdevelopment because peace is development in the broadest sense of the word.²⁶⁹

The theory that educated people who live in urban settlement do not fight among themselves over minor issues, though somewhat controversial at some point, it cannot be dismiss as mere unproven hypothesis. There an element of truth in this hypothesis because the majority of the youth that are always engage in communal violent conflicts are the rural youth and few if any from the educated youth. Therefore, if the government focus in the provision of the development dividends, they will surely reverse the trend of the culture of violence and aggression prevalence among the Western Nuer rural youth.

4.4.6 Effect on Education

Education is another area adversely affected by the Western Nuer communal violent conflicts ravaging the countryside. Teachers become targets for vengeance particularly if their relatives are perpetrators in the killings, the same is true for the pupils and students in schools who also become targets of attack due to the same circumstances. Ironically, some teachers and students become participants in the conflict as they lend support to their belligerent communities. In

²⁶⁸ Thot, T. Leaw, Oral Interview, Rubkona County, Juba, South Sudan, 25/11/2016.

²⁶⁹ Azar, Edward (1990). *The Management of Protracted Social Conflict: Theory and Cases*, Aldershot: Dartmouth, p.155.

consequence, education will be affected due to school boycott by both teachers and pupils for the fear of retribution.²⁷⁰ The diversion of nation resources for war efforts by the African states at the expense of social services to the people is quite detrimental to say the least. There is a blame for the lack of education and healthcare in the marginalized communities based on these governments' policies.²⁷¹

The targeting of teachers and students in school as a result of communal conflicts fought by their relatives in the villages can only be regarded as the highest degree of violence. The targeting of these educated social categories has culminated to the dropping out of some students from their studies as well as the abandonment of the teaching profession by the targeted teachers. Certainly, this is not a healthy environment for education in the Western Nuer community, unless something is done about.

4.4.7 Effect on Health

Health sector is another area which is severely affected once conflict erupts and the major impact is on the local health workers. These health workers become targets of revenge killing along with their respective communities, in addition, patients would be confine to their homes without visiting the local healthcare centers for fear of reprisal. The paranoia generated by the targeting of the health workers particularly impact on women and children who would not receive the necessary healthcare due to the conflict. The supply of drug is also affected as qualified health staff stay away from the workplace and would have difficulty doing the requisition of the drugs.²⁷² Chuol Gai Thiec from Payinjiar County stole a cow from the Dinka land in 2005 and on his way back home, Thiec was overcome by fatigue forcing him to surrendered the cow to Gamuok clan youth who were his companion in the stealing mission. Prior to his death, Thiec pleaded with the youth to hand over the cow to his parents upon their arrival home. Surprisingly, before the handing over of the cow to the intended family, Peter Koang from Gamuok misinformed Thiec's parents that Gamuok youth intends to hide the cow from them. The news infuriated Gattiel clan youth who quickly mobilized and attacked Gamuok. The ensuing fighting between the two parties lasted for

²⁷⁰ Jany, J. Yak, Oral Interview, Leer County, Khartoum, Sudan, 25/01/2017.

²⁷¹ Shabiru, D. (2009). Ethnic Conflict in East Africa: An Overview of Causes and Consequences. *Journal of Resource in Arts & Education*, Vol. 2, No 4, pp. 17 – 18.

²⁷² Women Group, Focused Group Discussion, Kakuma, Kenya, 04/05/2016.

two days resulting in five deaths, two from Gattiel and three from Gamuok. Jok Kai Liem who was one of the wounded victims was admitted to Nyal hospital, but he was followed and murdered at the hospital, the battle was fought at Ketieth village of Nyal Payam.²⁷³

It is utterly inconceivable that someone admitted to the hospital would be targeted by his rival no matter the seriousness of the circumstances surrounding the case. The level of violence has significantly increased that you cannot failed to attribute such a behavior to the endemic culture of violence and aggression which became the two main contributing factors to the prevalence of communal conflicts in the region.

4.5 ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF CONFLICT

4.5.1 Loss of Resources

The communal violent conflicts in the Western Nuer drains away the locals' economic resources for example, at the end of a violent conflict, cattle would be taken either as fines or compensation for the war victims. And because cattle are the main source of livelihood for the local inhabitants, their lost greatly affect individual households. Furthermore, the impact from the loss of livestock due to conflicts can leads in most cases to starvation or even death in the worst-case scenario.²⁷⁴ It is observed that the economic impact of small arms is that when a pastoral community lost livestock through rustling, raiding or even death the affected community will be deprived of livelihood. Naturally, it is always believed the lives of the pastoral communities depend very much on their livestock.²⁷⁵

The resources that are lost by individual households as a result of war in Western Nuer are enormous and this ultimately impact the economic livelihood of the affected families. The economic lost would then breed the culture of violence and aggression as the affected communities would engage in rustling, theft and raiding of other people cattle in order for them to eke a living. The numerous wars fought by the Western Nuer youth center around the economic needs as each family grapple with the economic hardship facing the warring communities.

²⁷³ Kuol, J. Yien, Oral Interview, Payinjar County, Juba, South, 23/11/2016.

²⁷⁴ Women Group, Focused Group Discussion, Kakuma, Kenya, 05/05/2016.

²⁷⁵ Mkutu, K. Agade (2008). Guns and Governance in The Rift Valley Pastoralist Conflicts and Small Arms, p.100.

4.5.2 Looting of Property

In the past, Western Nuer community seldom loot nor raids their own members' livestock, but presently there is a complete shift in the social norms as people violates the old tradition with impunity. Nonetheless, the reason behind the change is mainly due to the loss of traditional values as well as political divisions within the Western Nuer society.²⁷⁶ The economic woes engendered by cattle rustling would be taken advantage of by the political entrepreneurs who would blame the community misfortune on outsiders thereby igniting conflicts among different groups.²⁷⁷ The Nuer must accept the reality that gun culture has usher in a new era which will significantly change their social roles as protectors of their livestock, homes and the female members of the community concerned.²⁷⁸

Looting of properties from the same community members is unprecedented phenomenon that can only be said to have come along with the pervasive culture of violence and aggression that affected the Western Nuer communities and particularly the youth. The proliferation of the guns in the hands of the civilians has aggravated the situation that the urge to loot cattle from rival clans or section become so rampant in the society. Obviously, this social anomaly is a great contributing factor to the disintegration and the tearing down of the fabric of the society.

4.5.3 Effect on Trade and Commerce

Trade and commerce are severely affected by the Western Nuer violent conflicts precisely because the traders and business people are targeted along with their community members in the villages. It is likely that traders who feel their lives are threatened may leave the marketplaces by closing down their shops and find safe haven among their clans' members. Moreover, the mobile trade industry which is the dominant trade among the petty traders in Western Nuer is also affected. These traders are targeted while shuttling on feet with their commodities between different markets in the state.²⁷⁹ In 2007, Liem Nguean sons stormed Leer main market as they were bent on targeting traders from Cieng Muot clan, this action prompted the local authority to close down the market for number of days. It follows that in the past few days, Nguean family member had been murdered

²⁷⁶ Luop, T. Gatkek, Oral Interview, Guit County, Juba, South Sudan, 04/07/2017.

²⁷⁷ Bojana B. (2009). Causes of Ethnic Conflict: A Conceptual Framework, *Journal of Global Change and Governance*, Vol. III, No I, pp. 1- 13.

²⁷⁸ Hutchinson, E. Sharon (1996). *Nuer Dilemmas*, California: California University Press, p. 155.

²⁷⁹ Kuol, J. Yien, Oral Interview, Payinjjar County, Juba, South Sudan, 23/11/2016.

by Cieng Muot during a communal fight between the two communities. Therefore, Nguean family were seeking revenge with anyone from the opposing clan for the death of their member. The traders fearing for their lives refrained from visiting the market for five days in a row.²⁸⁰

Businesses and market places are supposed to be peaceful places where consumers and traders exchange goods and services but due to the protracted conflicts engendered by the excessive culture of violence and aggression, these places instead became hot spots. When trade and commerce is obstructed due to communal conflicts, it is likely that the state government will be deny an important source of revenues. The absence of revenues would obviously impede the government service delivery which is in turn affects the area development and progress.

4.6 THE LIVELIHOOD IMPACTS OF VIOLENCE

4.6.1 Effect on Livestock

Gun violence affects livestock particularly when they are caught in crossfire as rival parties engage in hostilities against each other. The killing of livestock impact on home economies inasmuch as they constitute the source of family livelihood, in addition, cattle are use as dowry in marriages and their death is a big blow to the social unions. Also, livestock perishes when certain communities are denied access to grazing right or water points.²⁸¹ In February 1983, at Parek village, Manong Gai Kach provoked into a duel his opponent Gatbol Chop Jal, the two youth are from Cieng Tiekjak and Cieng Bapuoh clans of Leer County. Fighting between the two clans ensued as a result of the two men conflict. And since the battle was fought in the middle of the cattle camp, nearly fifty head of cattle were killed during the encounter. The conflict ended only when the Government sent in troops to quell down the fight.²⁸²

The killing of cattle during communal conflicts is a reality that affected every household in the Western Nuer because the wars fought by the youth are not discriminatory in nature. However, due to the heighten level of violence and aggressive attitudes even livestock are not spare in the event of the eruption of a conflict. Perhaps, this behavior is not consistent with the local norms and more importantly they affect household sources of livelihood.

²⁸⁰ Yap, J. Bath, Oral Interview, Leer County, Juba, South Sudan, 02/12/2016.

²⁸¹ Youth Group, Focused Group Discussion, Kakuma, Kenya, 02/05/2016.

²⁸² Yap, J. Bath, Oral Interview, Leer County, Juba, South Sudan, 02/12/2016.

4.6.2 Effect on Agriculture

Western Nuer violent conflicts disrupt agricultural activities such as cultivation due to the fear of reprisals and vengeance, eventually, poor harvest result into famine as food become scarce for the families. Meanwhile, malnutrition would also result leading to increase in mortality rate especially among the children. This predicament forced people to migrate to find food hence, disrupting the indigenous coping mechanisms. Dependency on relief aid will be a possibility and the local food production diminished as people become lazy hence refusing to work for themselves.²⁸³ Cieng Gai Chuoch of Bul and Cieng Lokjak of Leek sections fought in 1992 at Wangnyang village. The two sides were reinforced by their respective allies and the fighting casualties were (30) deaths besides those wounded in battle. Consequently, the fighting prevented the parties from cultivation in 1993 and a subsequent severe famine devastated the area the year after.²⁸⁴

The prevention of the agricultural activities in the aftermath of a violent communal conflict is a serious matter that not only impact on the economic livelihood of the individual households but the entire regional economy. Therefore, the impact of the culture of violence and aggression is something that cannot just be simply ignore and dismiss at face value. There is great need for the people of Western to come to their senses by avoiding unnecessary violence otherwise, they will continue living in destitution and misery as a result of their actions.

4.7 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF VIOLENCE

4.7.1 Effect on Wildlife

The Western Nuer intra-communal violent conflicts have severely impacted the wildlife due to poaching, hunting and other illicit activities. The culprits who carry out these illegal practices are taking advantage of the breakdown of the law governing wildlife conservation. In the past, Western Nuer was a home to abundant wildlife resource prior to their migration to Fangak and Bahr El Gazal border areas.²⁸⁵ To buttress the wildlife extinction claim, it is argued that when the Western Nuer youth obtained guns for the first time, they scared away the wildlife through random shooting. Reportedly, the animals migrated out of the region for fear of being targeted by

²⁸³ Liah, S. Kuon, oral interview, Koch County, 01/05/2016, Kakuma, Kenya.

²⁸⁴ Geng, W. Kuol, Oral Interview, Mayom County, Juba, South Sudan, 17/11/2016.

²⁸⁵ Koloang, M. Yomac, Oral Interview. Mayendit County, Juba, South Sudan, 24/12/2016.

the poachers and hunters who usually disturbed their natural habitat and forced them to flee their natural environment.²⁸⁶

The wildlife resource is an important asset to the people of Western Nuer but due to the effect of the excessive violence and aggressive behaviors this wildlife has been seriously affected. The loss of the animals is of course a setback to the regional economy as it will prevent potential tourists who would have significantly contributed to the area economy when they come to the state. The illicit poaching and hunting are serious crimes that need to be curbed by the government if they want to utilize this crucial natural resource and cut down the death rate of the wildlife.

4.7.2 Effect on the Ecosystem

The rampant targeting of the wildlife species discussed above affects the natural environment which in turn negatively affects smooth functioning of the ecosystem. Understandably, in conflict situations there is a total breakdown of law and order and this encourages activities such as arsons, deforestation and unregulated fishing. Similarly, the environment is contaminated through the oil spillage resulting from the oil wells' destruction during the war.²⁸⁷ The environmental damage was accelerated by the conflict during the interwar years 2013 - 2015 due to too much oil spillage in Mala and Tharjiath oilfields. The oil spill seriously affected the local ecosystem including livestock and it could not be salvaged since the oil companies were not operational due to the war.²⁸⁸

The impact on the ecosystem is due to some activities that came about as a result of the wars and they include the oil spillage as well as the destructive activities that are conducted by the belligerents in the course of the prosecution of the war. The activities such as arson and deforestation are some of the human actions that sometimes became perpetuated as a consequence of the absence of law and order. Perhaps, these activities were accelerated by the culture of violence and aggression that became a serious catalyst in the war fought by the Western Nuer youth. It is the prevalence of the violence in the community that has brought about the state of lawlessness leading to the degradation of the natural environment.

²⁸⁶ Yap, J. Bath, Oral Interview, Leer County, Juba, South Sudan, 02/12/2016.

²⁸⁷ Koloang, M. Yomach, Oral Interview, Mayendit County, Juba, South Sudan, 24/12/2016.

²⁸⁸ Gatdet, W. Kur, Oral Interview, Rubkona County, Kakuma, Kenya, 04/05/2016.

4.8 CONCLUSION

The Western Nuer violent conflicts have multiple impacts which are compounded by the proliferation and the use of automatic weapons. The impacts are divided into socio-cultural, political, economic and environmental typologies. The major impacts of the Western Nuer communal violent conflicts could be summarized as large-scale human death and increase in the level of the armed youth aggressive attitudes. Ultimately, these aggressive attitudes have significantly contributed to the perpetuation of the culture of violence among the fighting youth. The other war related impact is the retardation of development that hindered human progress in the region. In addition, the education and healthcare sectors are severely affected, so is economic security of individual citizens. Similarly, social impacts such as disunity, lack of trust among the different clans and the erosion of social bonds, norms and values are experienced in the Western Nuer society. Lastly but not the least, some of the despicable impacts that are new phenomena among the Western Nuer people include burning of houses, looting of personal property and cattle rustling as well as cattle raiding to mention but a few.

CHAPTER FIVE

PEACE ACTIVITIES AMONG THE WESTERN NUER COMMUNITY

5.1 Introduction

Western Nuer society just like the rest of the African societies has its traditional ways of resolving communal violent conflicts once they flared up. In the past, such conflict resolution mainly relied on the traditional methods conducted by people who have no connection with the western governance system. Presently however, the Western Nuer society uses a dual system of traditional as well as conventional conflict resolution. It is through the amalgamation of these two systems that the society was able to foster peace and tranquility among the people of the region. In order for the reader to understand the various methods of conflict resolution, the researcher has contextualized the Western Nuer communal conflict resolutions into three typologies. These three peace initiatives include one carried out by the local government in Guit County, a peace resolution mediated by the Presbyterian Church of Sudan (PCoS) in Koch County and a peace initiative brokered by a spiritual leader in Rubkona County.

Conflict prevention is defined as a situation in which proper appreciation is made for the adequate explanation of the phenomenon of a conflict which includes the human element as well as the different triggers accelerating the eruption of a conflict. Moreover, there is also the need to understand the different dynamics at play including the necessary structural conditions that can limit the likelihood of a conflict. Finally, a conducive environment for a cooperative relationship must be created so that structural hostilities are permanently addressed and transformed.²⁸⁹

5.2 LOCAL GOVERNMENT PEACE INITIATIVE

5.2.1 Mediation

The mediation between the two warring parties of Cieng Dholeak and Cieng Gai was conducted by Guit County administration. The mediation team comprised of intellectuals and prominent elders from within and outside the two conflicting communities. The mediation team membership includes Guit County commissioner, members of both local and state assemblies from the two sides. This is in addition, to officials from the County government, County intellectuals,

²⁸⁹ Burton and Dukes (1990). *Contemporary Conflict Resolution, The Management, Prevention and Transformation of Deadly Conflict*, 3rd edition by Oliver Rambotham, Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall, polity press, p.49.

the County chiefs and neutral elders from different clans within the County.²⁹⁰ The mediation was conducted in various locations in line with the adopted strategy; firstly, the two parties met the mediation team separately in their respective areas. Cieng Dholeak were met by the mediators at Wicruop Payam headquarters, while Cieng Gai were met by the mediation team at Chotyiel Boma HQ. After these separate meeting, the two parties were then for the first time brought together in a neutral ground, Bentiu town, the state HQ. Finally, the last meeting was convened between the two warring parties in Guit County headquarters where they met face to face for the second time.²⁹¹

The mediation among the Jir of the Tiv community of Nigeria is done by assembling the elders of the warring parties in a semi-circle. And the mediators formed the other half of the circle to make a full circle. The disputants would be placed in the middle of the circle and would be ask to present their cases in turn. The mediators will try to persuade them to put the conflict behind them by reconciling with one another. In 1994, a British academic called Martin Dent who became a friend to the community since the colonial period mediated a conflict between the two communities of Kusuv and Ikurav Kiev of the greater Tiv community over a boundary dispute. After intensive negotiation, the two parties were convinced to make the river Kungwa Jov the common border between the two warring clans. Meanwhile, they continue their normal cross border trade and the conflict was successfully brought to an end.²⁹²

It is claimed the conflict among the Nuer does not persist when somebody is killed because the community does not accept its continuation as it may disrupt cross cutting relationship. The affine of the slain man may revenge the death of their member or accept the blood compensation but the bottom line is the maintenance of relationships.²⁹³ In the Nuer covenantal relationship if a bond is broken, the victim of the disagreement must take the law into his hands by resisting the wrong done to him. This action, however, is done in order for the victim to restore his right unless the community quickly intervene to mitigate the problem.²⁹⁴ The community members avoid

²⁹⁰ Manyang, K. Gatluak, Telephone Conversation, Guit County, Guit, South Sudan, 15/02/2018.

²⁹¹ Chop, T. Wicjial, Oral Interview, Guit County, Juba, South Sudan, 05/03/2018.

²⁹² Francis J. David (2008) (eds). *Peace and Conflict in Africa*, Zed Books. New York, pp. 24 – 215.

²⁹³ Glickman (1971). *Kinship an Credit among the Nuer*, *Africa: Journal of International African Institute*, Cambridge University Press, Vol. 41, No. 4, p. 311.

²⁹⁴ Duany, M. Wal (1992). A PhD Dissertation Titled *Neither Palaces Nor Prisons: The Constitution of Order among the Nuer*, Indiana University, USA, p. 74.

conflicts that are destructive to the fabric of the society. Individual will strive to work within the accepted norms because not to do so the family will loss honor and prestige. Moreover, the individual member will be punished by his kin, the wider community and from the supreme Being.²⁹⁵

The mediation strategy and the mediation team selected to mediate the conflict both contributed toward the success of the mediation firstly, because the team engaged the two parties separately to try to cool their temperatures. And after venting their anger, the mediation team brought the warring parties together in a neutral ground where both parties would not fear for their security. Secondly, the mediation team was composed of people who are not parties to the conflict, therefore, the mediation gains the trust and confidence of the two conflicting parties.

5.2.2 The agreement reached by the conflicting parties

During the mediation process between the two warring parties, the parties agreed on the following resolutions; firstly, that the youth from the two opposing sides shall commit themselves to the terms and conditions of the agreement by ceasing all forms of hostilities. Secondly, that in the spirit of peace, reconciliation and healing the two warring parties shall forgive one another for the mistakes, death and atrocities committed against each another. Thirdly, that the two conflicting parties shall compensate all those families whose members were affected by the conflict. To formalize the end of the hostilities, a white bull be slaughtered to symbolize a new era of peace as traditionally it is a requirement that an animal be sacrifice after the warring parties are fully reconciled.²⁹⁶ The victims' relatives from the two sides of the conflict divides were initially opposed to the peace efforts however, the general opinion of the populace in the whole County support the resolution of the conflict. Ultimately, these peace spoilers were convinced by the community to backed down from their entrenched position which they did.²⁹⁷ Peace creates spoilers because it is rare in any dispute that the parties involved see peace as beneficial. And even

²⁹⁵ Duany, M. Wal (1992). A PhD Dissertation Titled *Neither Palaces Nor Prisons: The Constitution of Order among the Nuer*, Indiana University, USA, Ch. 8, p. 72.

²⁹⁶ Both, R. Gany, Oral Interview, Guit County, Juba, South Sudan, 12/3/2018.

²⁹⁷ Both, R. Gany, Oral Interview, Guit County, Juba, South Sudan, 12/3/2018.

if it is seen as beneficial, they also cannot do so simultaneously because the agreement of the two parties on the term of an acceptable peace often proved unrealistic.²⁹⁸

In the conflict resolution among the Tiv warring communities of Nigeria, the parties would always strive to achieve the following objectives as part of their desire to see peace come to the community. Firstly, there must be a commitment to the maintenance of order and ensuring the peaceful co-existence of the group. Second, the community must remain cohesive and united if it has to stand the test of time. There is no leadership to decide on a particular issue, the parties must reconcile among themselves. Fourth, the mediation is based on consensus where every community member is free to participate and to contribute toward the settlement of the conflict. Fifth, the parties will be assured of the benefits inherent in the Jir mediation process if they adhere to the terms of the agreement.²⁹⁹

The resolutions passed by the two parties were very important in bringing about peace between the two disputing parties. The compensation of those who died during the conflict as well as the commitment from the two parties to let bygone be gone and forgive one another are key resolutions that ultimately defused the conflicting situation. Finally, the sacrifice of a bull as a symbol of appealing to God to bless the agreement have a powerful psychological effect on the warring parties who will fear the wrath of God should they violate the oath.

5.2.3 Peace building measures

The mediation of the conflict between the two warring parties (Cieng Dholeak vs Cieng Gai) adopted some strategies that were meant to transformed the conflict from its hostile nature to a peaceful form of conflict. These measures include among others; peace and reconciliation conferences conducted between the two belligerent communities purposely to restore confidence and trust between them. Second, in order to build trust through the reduction of fear and suspicion, members of the belligerent parties were encouraged to move about freely across their respective territories. Third, the ring leaders who were the troublemakers from both sides of the conflict were employed into pay jobs by the county authorities and were further mobilized to play the role of

²⁹⁸ Hartwell, M (2006). *Violence in Peace: Understanding Increased Violence in Early Post Conflict and its Implications for Development*.

²⁹⁹ Francis J. David (2008) (eds). *Peace and Conflict in Africa*, Zed Books. New York, pp. 24 – 215.

peace makers. Fourth, the two rival communities were also encouraged to share festivities and social occasions since such coming together enhances the building of trust among the belligerents.³⁰⁰

Peace building is defined by the former Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali in 1995 as a range of activities meant to identify and support structures which are meant to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse to a conflict. Murithi, equally defined it as the rebuilding of social relationships, asserting communal ownership as well as working in solidarity as a cohesive unity. Moreover, positive peace is described as not the eradication of violent conflict situation per se, but a pursuit of peace that addresses the structural inequalities and injustices that undermine people wellbeing as well as the suppression of their fundamental human rights.³⁰¹

The peacebuilding measures undertaken to transform the Cieng Gai – Cieng Dholeak conflict were effective measures particularly when applied to the local context. The movement of the belligerent parties across their respective boundaries as well as the sharing of social occasions such as folklore and festivities cement the mutual trust of the parties. More importantly, the idea of offering job opportunities to the youth ring leaders is a powerful tool of engaging those trouble makers who usually play the role of inciters and influencers of their warring colleagues. By giving them the jobs, they were deny playing the same role of agitators once more.³⁰²

5.3 CHURCH BROKERED CONFLICT RESOLUTION

5.3.1 Mediation

The mediation between the two warring parties (Bul & Leek) sections was spearheaded by the Presbyterian Church of Sudan (PCoS). The mediation was done under the auspices of Rev. Matthew Mathiang Deng, the then associate moderator for the Western Upper Nile Presbyterian Church.³⁰³ The mediation conference was conducted in Pakur area of Koch County which was

³⁰⁰ Chop, T. Wicjial, Oral Interview, Guit County, Juba, South Sudan, 05/03/2018.

³⁰¹ Francis J. David (2008) (eds). *Peace and Conflict in Africa*, Zed Books. New York, pp. 24 – 215.

³⁰² Francis J. David (2008) (eds). *Peace and Conflict in Africa*, Zed Books. New York, pp. 24 – 215.

³⁰³ Kuol, J. Liyliy, Oral Interview, Mayom County, Juba, South Sudan, 05/07/2016.

selected because it was the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) sector one HQ. The area was considered as an ideal place as far as the security of the conferees is concern.³⁰⁴ The main actors in the conflict between Bul and Leek sections are the two County commissioners representing the two sections. Martin Mashod Deng, commissioner for Mayom County (Bul) and Simon Jalduong Matuek for Rubkona County (Leek). In addition, the two military area commanders i.e. CDR. Tito Biel Wich and CDR. Michael Kolchara Nyang and the chiefs from the two warring sides were also among the actors. In December 13th, 2004 there was a change of leadership in Mayom County in which Mr. James Liyliy Kuol replaced Mr. Martin Mashod Deng as the County commissioner.³⁰⁵

The conventional conflict resolution approach has always neglected the indigenous and endogenous approaches that are tailored to local context. In these contexts, the local communities use their local resources to bring about peace and stability in their local environment. Some of the values that are unique to African indigenous conflict resolution is that they place more emphasis on forgiveness, healing and restorative justice and reconciliation. In the Nuer negotiation of local disputes, they were done in the open where everyone aired his opinion with full freedom. The speaker would say everything bitter in his heart and also would use threat until the disputants come into a consensus.³⁰⁶

The mediation of the conflict between the Leek and Bul belligerents was successful because the church is a respected institution among the Africans and particularly among the Western Nuer community. Their words are respected as they are believed to have divine power behind them and people loathe against tampering with them. The involvement of the army commanders as part of the mediation team have also contributed to the success of the talks as each side fear the repercussions of acting contrary to the wishes of the general public and also against the wishes of the government.

5.3.2 The conference participants

In order for the two conflicting parties to end hostilities, a peace and reconciliation conference was urgently convened at Pakur, SPLA sector one HQs from May 12 – 29, 2005. The

³⁰⁴ Kuol, J. Liyliy, Oral Interview, Mayom County, Juba, South Sudan, 05/07/2016.

³⁰⁵ Kuol, J. Liyliy, Oral Interview, Mayom County, Juba, South Sudan, 05/07/2016.

³⁰⁶ Francis J. David (2008) (eds). *Peace and Conflict in Africa*, Zed Books. New York, pp. 24 – 215.

conference was attended by the four county commissioners whose communities are involved in the conflict. These commissioners include Mr. James Liyliy Kuol for Mayom County, Mr. Simon Jalduong Matuek for Rubkona (representing the two warring parties), Mr. James Pui Yak for Guit County and Peter Tap Gatdet for Koch County (representing the allies to the warring parties). Besides the County commissioners, the conference was also attended by the Chiefs, religious leaders, youth, women, government officials and army commanders.³⁰⁷

In the Nuer conflict resolution, experience has shown that the Nuer lived from time immemorial without a head and yet they lead a harmonious way of life. It is also believed they resolve their differences in a fair and an equal way despite the absence of a mediating authority.³⁰⁸ In the event of a conflict between the community's members, there would be a need for negotiation, mediators are always from the dominant lineage who are fear for cursing the people living in the territory. But the success of the mediation by a third party depends on the belief the disputants had with the system.³⁰⁹

The conference participants were an amalgamation of the religious leaders, army commanders, youth and women leaders as well as officials and chiefs from different Counties apart from the warring Counties. The composition of the participants was made in such a way that they act as neutral parties so that they are able to mediate between the two parties in dispute. This arrangement paves the way for the resolution of the conflict since these participants will only decide without any bias judgement which side is to take the blame and which to be exonerated.

5.3.3 The Conference Resolutions

The following resolutions were passed at the end of the conference; firstly, the two sides committed to restraint their respective youth to end the hostilities forthwith. Second, that the victims both the deceased and the injured during the conflict must be compensated. Third, that the government must collect all the firearms used in the attack by the two sections. Fourth, that the cattle seized from the two sides must be returned to their rightful owners accordingly. Fifth, that

³⁰⁷ Kuol, J. Liyliy, Oral Interview, Mayom County, Juba, South Sudan, 05/07/2016.

³⁰⁸ Duany, M. Wal (1992). A PhD Dissertation Titled *Neither Palaces Nor Prisons: The Constitution of Order among the Nuer*, Indiana University, USA, p. 68.

³⁰⁹ Duany, M. Wal (1992). A PhD Dissertation Titled *Neither Palaces Nor Prisons: The Constitution of Order among the Nuer*, Indiana University, USA, pp. 72, 73.

Chot Chara, the contested border area belongs to Mayom County. Sixth, that a special court be constituted to settled cases related to the conflicts between the two warring sections. And seventh, the chiefs were tasked to implement the provisions of the peace agreement in letter and spirit and any violators would be brought to book. Lastly, at the end of the talks, a white bull was slaughtered in the presence of all the key stakeholders marking the end of the hostilities. The implementation of the agreement was resumed the same year following the appointment of Taban Deng Gai as the Unity state governor.³¹⁰

The people of northern Somalia are relying on blood relationships and traditional customary law known as Xeer in their conflict resolution. However, the elders are regarded as the main custodians of the law and order in the society. The elders mediate between warring parties during war times and provide moral guidance during peace times. In the event of a conflict, the elders of the clans will assemble in a peace forum called Shir. But when the conflict is between various clans, the elders will meet in a forum called Guurti to mediate community conflicts. In Erigavo, all the clans' elders assembled and managed to bring peace to Somaliland in 1993 while, southern Somalia remained in a turmoil. The meeting culminated to the following results, achievement of peace, opening of free trade, freedom of movement across the common borders of the different warring clans. And more importantly the peace initiative resulted to a general peace throughout Somaliland.³¹¹

Sacrifice of ritual particularly to mark the end of feud symbolizes one of the important steps in the Nuer conflict resolution. The mediation task it is often performed by a chief priest or an elder of a dominant lineage. Any deviation from the ritual constitutes a religious sin and may adversely affects the violator.³¹²It is further argued that rituals in themselves does not guarantee peace but only through the personal understanding of the individuals involved in the dispute.³¹³ This peace arrangement is described as that conflict resolution in which the mediator will always be the earth custodian that presides over the process assisted by the village elders. The steps

³¹⁰ Kuol, J. Liyliy, Oral Interview, Mayom County, Juba, South Sudan, 05/07/2018.

³¹¹ Francis J. David (2008) (eds). *Peace and Conflict in Africa*, Zed Books. New York, pp. 24 – 215.

³¹² Duany, M. Wal (1992). A PhD Dissertation Titled *Neither Palaces Nor Prisons: The Constitution of Order among the Nuer*, Indiana University, USA, p. 265.

³¹³ *Ibid.* p. 266.

followed are that the elders would assemble, the parties are called for the meeting, the victim is asked to narrate part of his account. Meanwhile, the perpetrator will recount his part and then finally the verdict would be passed by the priest and the assembly of elders.³¹⁴

The Bul – Leek sections conference resolutions were not what makes the conference outcome a success, but the main reason behind the breakthrough was the implementation phase executed by the government. The army were immediately tasked to collect all the arms that were used in the prosecution of the conflict as well as the return of the stolen cattle from both sides through the government enforcement. Otherwise, without strong enforcement of the implementation phase, things would have fallen apart.

5.3.4 The main challenges

The challenges that were faced during the implementation of the peace agreement could be summarized as follows; first, the refusal of the two warring County commissioners (Mayom and Rubkona) to jointly ensure peace return to their respective areas. Second, the involvement of some governments officials as well as the chiefs in the violence perpetuation, Third, the initial reluctance of the two conflicting parties to implement the terms of the peace agreement. Nevertheless, the implementation of the agreement went on smoothly and the two sides never return to war in spite of the challenges.³¹⁵ The main spoilers of the agreement were the main actors themselves who see the agreement as a lost for each of them. Fortunately, the public opinion in support of the accord prevailed and the implementation went on as initially planned.

The Western oriented peace resolution is often a top-down approach which is forced on the Africans by the foreigners and is based on liberal peace project. The purpose of this peace approach is to promote punitive or retributive justice. It also hides the contribution of the African indigenous peace resolution mechanisms from being utilize to advance peace instead, it perpetuates the communal conflicts. However, some of the weaknesses of local peace initiatives are that they become slow in bringing about peace simply because they proceed from the principle of ensuring

³¹⁴ Duany, M. M (1992). A PhD Dissertation Titled *Neither Palaces Nor Prisons: The Constitution of Order Among the Nuer*, Indiana University, USA, p. 255.

³¹⁵ Kuol, J. Liyliy, Oral Interview, Mayom County, Juba, South Sudan, 05/07/2018.

consensus among the warring parties. They are also very much patriarchal dominated and there is no room for women to participate. Therefore, there is need to embody the element of gender equality in the peace activities in the African continent.³¹⁶

The church mediation is an attempt to blend the traditional as well as the conventional forms of conflict resolution, but it eventually came down to traditional process since it is the elders and the chiefs who does the mediation. The involvement of the SPLA armed men who hails from the two communities aggravated the situation, the same is true for the involvement of educated intellectuals who should have done the opposite given the level of their enlightenment. The other contributing factor was the proliferation of arms in the hands of the civilians which was mainly attributed to the logistical support they were getting from the different armed groups operating in the area. Nevertheless, the conflict between the two sections was successfully brought to an end, but since the two communities are still awash with small arms and light weapons and while, the war culture continues to be the driving force, isolated and sporadic incidents continue unabated.

5.4 TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP PEACE INITIATIVE

5.4.1 The mediation

The warring parties' hostilities were brought to an end through the intervention of the spiritual leader Ziador Tutroal Thac assisted by the community elders. In reverence to the spiritual leader, the two conflicting parties positively responded to the call for peace and reconciliation after which the mediator took the initiative to reconcile the two clans.³¹⁷ Initially, the peace process between the two disputants was mediated by the County commissioner Rev. Thomas Maluit Hoth Ganyang on October 15th, 2013 at Rubkona town, the county HQ. Then it was finally relocated to Tuarkel village, the home of the spiritual leader on October 17th, 2013. The two locations are all situated within Rubkona County.³¹⁸

The mediation through the application of the traditional mechanism which had been the dominant way of resolving conflicts has been tampered with by the colonial administration. It is

³¹⁶ Francis J. David (2008) (eds). *Peace and Conflict in Africa*, Zed Books. New York, pp. 24 – 215.

³¹⁷ Kuol, J. Liyliy, Oral Interview, Mayom County, Juba, South Sudan, 05/07/2016.

³¹⁸ Nyinyar, C. Ruea, Oral Interview, Rubkona County, Juba, South Sudan, 11/01/2019.

believed because the latter take precedence over the former that is why conflicts cannot be satisfactorily resolved.³¹⁹ It is also argue that although the British colonial rule disapproved of the way Ngundeng was settling disputes terming it as untraditional, they likewise copied the approach. In fact, it was Ngundeng who for the first time introduced the idea of conflict settlement that involve the Nuer and other communities such as the Dinka.³²⁰

The mediation by a spiritual leader is a highly respected endeavor among the Western Nuer community and since the bulk of the population especially the rural inhabitants are their followers, their words command popular respect. Besides, most belligerents in the communal conflicts are rural dwellers, there is no doubt then that such mediations would by all measure meet the intended purpose. Moreover, the belligerents in a communal dispute would fear shouldering the curse particularly for the side that would be consider as violating the command of the spiritual leader. Therefore, this kind of mediation is often seen as a success story long before the conduct of the exercise particularly if the spiritual leader is a powerful figure within the community.

5.4.2 The agreement reached by the parties

The two parties to the conflict have committed themselves to the cessation of hostilities prior to the convening of the reconciliation meeting. Traditionally, the Western Nuer society sometimes reconcile warring parties by performing commensalism which is always taken to remedy the hostile attitudes that emanate from a conflict environment. Prior to the mediation, the two conflicting parties seldom engage in an act of commensality nor social gatherings whatsoever the circumstances. The spiritual leader, guided by such tradition made sure he fulfilled those requirements in advance so as to create a conducive atmosphere for the talks. Accordingly, the parties to the conflict committed themselves to respect and abide by the agreement. More importantly, the acceptance of the peace and reconciliation initiative has been accelerated by the prior settlement of blood compensations between the two parties. Otherwise, failure to do this at the onset, would have created a hurdle in the road to peace between the warring parties.³²¹

³¹⁹ Johnson, D. H (1986). Judicial Regulation and Administrative Control: Customary and The Nuer 1898 – 1954, *The Journal of African History*, Cambridge University Press, Vol. 27, No. 1, p. 62.

³²⁰ Duany, M. M (1992). A PhD Dissertation Titled *Neither Palaces Nor Prisons: The Constitution of Order among the Nuer*, Indiana University, USA, p. 259.

³²¹ Kelual, D. Manyang, Oral Interview, Rubkona County, Juba, South Sudan, 21/03/2018.

The Mato Oput mediation mechanism is used among the Acholi of Uganda and it is through this traditional conflict resolution mechanism that the society peace, harmony and the law and order are maintained. The Acholi also relies on blood kinship and social connections where a conflict between individuals is necessarily a conflict between the entire community. Also, consensus building is achieved by bringing matters to the attention of the elders, the community as a whole must have a say in the resolution of the conflict which as a matter of principle must be accepted by all the members. The assembly is called the Kacoke Madit and the process is conducted in five stages. The perpetrators must admit their guilt after the testimony of the witnesses and the participants, the perpetrators must publicly repent and show remorse to their victims; perpetrators must request for forgiveness from the victims and the same would be expected from the victims to the perpetrators. The perpetrators would finally pay the compensation to the victims to reinforce the remorse they had earlier shown. Lastly, the two warring sides would then reconcile and conclude by drinking a bitter herb known as Oput which symbolized the bitter conflict they are just ending. Then finally, a spear will be bent marking the formal end of the conflict.³²²

The act of commensalism that was conducted by the Leek spiritual leader is something seen among the Western Nuer as an act of restoring confidence between the belligerents after they lost trust of one another to the point of not sharing meals. During this bitter period of hostilities, the two sides, besides not sharing meals, they cannot in equal measure, drink from the same water pot or share a water calabash. Therefore, by eating together, the conflict is half resolved save for putting the final touches before coming to a formal mutual agreement. This customary practice has enormous power in bringing conflicts to an end especially the psychological impact it places on the belligerents not to engage in hostile relationship after the exercise.

5.4.3 Peace building measures

Peace building measures are intervention techniques or methods that were designed to prevent the start or resumption of violent conflict by creating a sustainable peace. They address the root causes or potential causes of violence, create a societal expectation for peaceful conflict resolution and stabilize society politically and socio-economically. Therefore, in order to restore

³²² Francis J. David (2008) (eds). *Peace and Conflict in Africa*, Zed Books. New York, pp. 24 – 215.

peace and stability to the war-torn community of Cieng Bol Gany of Padang, the disputants were given sufficient space to express themselves freely in a bid to vent their anger. The mediators knew by giving such a platform, the conflicting parties would air their respective grievances paving the way for a total resolution of the conflict.³²³

In southern Africa, conflict mediation uses the principle of Ubuntu which its main characteristics are first, a person is a person because of other people. Second, is reciprocity; third, inclusivity and fourth, share destiny between the people. During the proceedings, the whole society have a say in the resolution of the conflict and any person can question the perpetrators or witnesses. Thereafter, the mediators would report to the council of elders who also investigate the matter and then in turn advice the king on the possible course of action. The overall purpose of all these endeavors is to maintain the cohesiveness of the society by ensuring sustainable peace and harmony among the community members.³²⁴

The Western Nuer people during the mediation of any conflict provide a platform for the disputants to talk their minds freely without any restriction, for they believe by doing so you would allow the belligerents to vent their anger. The community also believe when people talk bitterly against each other, it is likely they will finally come to their senses after the diatribe and peace would be around the corner. By giving the same platform, the spiritual leader had rightly reduced the level of tension between the two sides, thereby creating a conducive environment for peace.

5.4.4 The Agreement Implementation Challenges

Some of the challenges that were experienced during the peace process were the refusal of certain individuals from within the parties to attend the reconciliation meetings, meanwhile, the same individuals continue to agitate the implementation process. Similarly, the victims' relatives from both sides of the conflict divides desire a prolong conflict to enable them avenged the death of their family members. Finally, suspicion and mistrust among the belligerents were some of the

³²³ Lam, C. Puok, Telephone Conversation, Rubkona County, Juba, South Sudan, 15/04/2018.

³²⁴ Francis J. David (2008) (eds). Peace and Conflict in Africa, Zed Books. New York, pp. 24 – 215.

peace implementation major hurdles, but ultimately the will of the majority supportive of peace prevailed in the end.³²⁵

The main purpose for the conduct of the Mato Oput among the Acholi people of Uganda and the involvement of all the community members in the exercise is to ensure the smooth implementation of the peace in the post conflict environment. Any attempt to deviate from the agreed resolutions, the violators would be castigated and severely ostracized by the whole community who act as both the custodians as well as the guarantors of the agreement.³²⁶

The challenges encountered during the conduct of the peace process were some of hurdles that are expected in any conflict resolution but the spiritual leader using his divine powers prevail on the warring parties and the peace spoilers alike. As already outlined in the proceeding pages, no person would dare to stand in the way of the spiritual leader, unless the person in question is looking for troubles that may continue to haunt his children and grandchildren for the unforeseeable future to come.

5.5 CONCLUSION

The resolution of conflict among the people of Western Nuer is traditionally based on local customary methods and this approach has been used as a preventive measure to maintain peace and tranquility within the community by mitigating the occurrence of conflict. Moreover, the traditional mechanism approaches were used to mend social ties fragmented by cleavages and social upheavals particularly after disruption of the social fabrics. Understandably, the community unity would be at risk when war broke out unless meaningful transformation of hostile communal relationships into peaceful ones is achieved. Sadly, the advent of modernization as a new paradigm shift have diluted traditional social values with alien cultures making it very difficult for the status quo to be maintained. While, the government institutional arrangement on conflict resolution is gaining momentum, informal institution of conflict resolution still very much dominates the conflict resolution discourse. Accordingly, both the formal and informal methods of conflict

³²⁵ Nyinyar, C. Ruela, Oral Interview, Rubkona County, Juba, South Sudan, 11/01/2019.

³²⁶ Francis J. David (2008) (eds). *Peace and Conflict in Africa*, Zed Books. New York, pp. 24 – 215.

resolution are applied in the region so that they juxtapose in creating the necessary environment for the peaceful co-existence of the Western Nuer society.

CHAPTER SIX

6.0 CONCLUSION

The study provided an elaborate historical background on the Western Nuer conflicts and how these conflicts evolved from traditional to semi conventional forms of conflicts. Over the years, the people of Western Nuer have been engaged in intractable inter-communal violent conflicts which they fought with their immediate neighbors the Dinka and the Misseriya nomadic Arab tribes. Likewise, the community is embroiled in internal violent conflicts that pitted different clans within the wider Western Nuer community. These inter-clan violent conflicts compounded by the proliferation of firearms have been responsible for the loss of human lives as well as property destruction on unprecedented scales.

According to the reviewed literature, the genesis of the Western Nuer conflict with outsiders started way back during the Turco-Egyptian rule. The condominium administration was manipulated to hate the Nuer due to their ethnic differences with their neighbors. The shooting incidence against the Nuer civilians in the area of Fangak in 1839 triggered the hostility with the outsiders in general particularly the Turks, Egyptians and English. Reportedly, the Nuer civilians were at the river bank watching a giant machine floating over the water when surprisingly without any warning they were fired at and killed by the Egyptians onboard a flotilla. The attack was orchestrated by a Dinka interpreter accompanying the Egyptians who misinformed the latter about the Nuer presence at the riverbank. The interpreter accused the Nuer of not merely watching the Flotilla but planning to launched attack on the Egyptians.

Similarly, the British colonial administration inherited the same stance when they took charge of the state of affairs in the country in 1921, the British looked upon the Nuer as unruly, truculent and violent. The misperception about the Nuer led to a direct confrontation between the colonial power with the Nuer and the assassination of V.H Ferguson Bey by the Nyuong section of the Western Nuer in 1927 is a case in point. In addition, the Nyarweng Dinka Chiefs' stereotype against the Nuer as the most hostile community in the region was raised in a meeting held between

the former and the British. These chiefs accused the Nuer of disturbing the peace of the neighboring communities, something the British administration didn't accept to condone.

The study also discovered that the other factors exacerbating the Western Nuer communal violent conflict stemmed from the boy child upbringing at the family level as well as his cultural socialization in the wider society. Majority of the respondents in this research agreed that the Western Nuer boy upbringing is a contributing factor to his aggressive attitudes when he becomes an adult. Fundamentally, two important facts substantiate this claim; firstly, the Western Nuer child is systematically castigated by his parents if and when he has been defeated in a personal contest with his peer. Moreover, the parents frequently subject the boy child to a severe tirade in a bid to harden his resolve so that he remains steadfast in the face of all odds.

Secondly, the repeated reminder for the boy, whose father had been murdered during combat, to avenge the death of his deceased father compound the situation further. The boy would do everything in his power to fulfill the mission entrusted on him by his parents and elders. The constant bullying and aggression by his peers to test his valor is also another self-stimulant for the child. This constant test of valor encourages him to rise above the challenges by trying as much as he could to overpower his opponents. To do otherwise, the child will lead a life of misery, fear and panic as a result of his comparative weakness relative to his peers.

Another research finding is that during his childhood, the Western Nuer boy would be taught war techniques from his young age up to his initiation into manhood. This war training is conducted in several stages; firstly, the child will engage in a mock fight with his age mates by throwing mud balls against one another. This will be changed into fighting with dry cow dung at a certain age of the boy development and by the age of ten years and above, the boy will shift to sharp pointed long sticks used against his age mates. Perhaps, the sharpened long-pointed sticks symbolize the spear the boy will use as soon as he is initiated into manhood through marking on the forehead. Inevitably, all these trainings are preparing the child to become a vicious and a formidable fighter during his adult years.

Furthermore, the study found that the psychological causes of conflicts among the Western includes provocative songs composed by young men to denigrate their opponents. The perpetrator would at times hurl abuses and slanders just only to aggress and bully his age mates, these abusive songs and insults are taught from a young age when the boy is being prepared for adulthood. It is worth noting that the aggressive and bullying attitudes demonstrated by the Western Nuer boy are preconditions for dominance against his age mates during his adult life. A boy who seldom engage in such activities is always considered as a coward who loathes to confront his peers. It is against this reality that majority of the respondents concludes that the Western Nuer man aggressive and bullying attitudes as violent character at its best.

With regards to the impacts of the Western Nuer intra-communal violent conflicts, the research findings confirmed the increase in the culture of violence and aggressive behaviors among the current generations. Evidently, the testimonies from the respondents all suggested that the violent conflicts currently raging in the Western Nuer society are unprecedented. According to these testimonies, intra-communal violent conflicts were very rare in the past, and if at all they happened, they were not as rampant as is presently the case. Most respondents also agreed that the current Western Nuer young generations are not obeying their elders. This lack of respect exhibited by the youth reflects the culture of violence acquired in the interwar years during which these youth were born and raised.

The other research finding suggest unanimous affirmation of the majority of respondents that the present generation gun culture has a tremendous impact. These respondents attributed most of the violent conflicts to the proliferation of weapons in the hands of the civilian population and particularly the youth. Moreover, the respondents agreed that one problem with the Nuer is that they always go to war without properly ascertaining the reasons for their actions. They argued that even when they are unaware about the reasons for the conflict, they would insist on fighting refusing to bring their grievances before the law enforcement agencies. These kinds of behaviors perpetuate violent conflicts rather than mitigate them. Certainly, if matters are not brought before the court of law, it is probable that people take the law into their own hands thereby ignoring peaceful methods of conflict resolution.

The other impacts that the research findings have documented as despicable and horrendous are behaviors such as the burning of houses, killing of the elderly, the women and young children. These behaviors are not part of the social norms and are therefore unacceptable within the Western Nuer society. Ideally, the acceptable behaviors previously upheld by the people are the protection and preservation of the elderly, women and people with disabilities when war break out. The same also applies when the Western Nuer people fight with their external enemies. Finally, the killings of the vulnerable groups within the community as documented in the study is a complete departure from the acceptable moral behaviors and customs of the land.

In addition, the study affirmed that intentional murderers are taking advantage of the absence of capital punishment, lack of exacting this type of punishment renders murder as a simple crime that can be committed with impunity. However, it is to be recalled that during the colonial period, capital punishment was administered by the British colonial regime against intentional murderers. Accordingly, violent conflicts and premeditated murders disappeared from the Western Nuer society as a result of these punitive measures. Needless to say, these criminals came to the realization that intentional killing carries deadly repercussions for those who chose the life of violence.

The other finding is the lack of effective correctional measures; the study has shown how the prison authorities as well as the other law enforcement agencies compromised the law. These government institutions would prefer receiving material benefits in return for the release of dangerous and deadly criminals. This situation, according to the respondents, can only be remedied if there are real reforms in the correctional services. Therefore, it is necessary to prioritize people wellbeing over mundane issues such as briberies or corrupt practices. It is also crystal clear from the testimonies that once prisoners and criminals are left at large the consequences of these actions are far greater than anyone can imagine. The same criminals when left to roam freely will revert to committing crimes because there would be nothing to deter them from so doing. On the other hand, the victims' families would find justification to commit more crimes against their enemies as they will see the lack of arrest as an act of condoning crimes from the part of the authorities.

In this research, education has featured as an important remedy for the transformation of conflicts in the region, in fact, the respondents believe that without education; the youth future is very bleak. Eventually, the youth would constantly engage in violence to showcase their prowess and viciousness. Furthermore, the youth would use violence as a way to correct the injustices within the system as well as a means to express the situation of hopelessness they experienced in their life. Perhaps, given the level of understanding and how these young men manage their daily violence behaviors, such unbecoming attitudes should not be a surprise. Lastly but not the least, there is a rationale in the respondents' belief that conflicts cannot be transformed unless the cultural underlying issues are thoroughly and amicably addressed.

In discussing the three peace initiatives on the Western Nuer conflict resolution, it is discovered that when all the relevant conflict stakeholders own the settlement of their dispute, there is often a great likelihood of the attainment of peace. This is particularly true with the three conflicts discussed in this study which to all intent and purposes can be said to have been successfully concluded. The reason for this success is twofold; first, the participation of all the sectors of the society enhances the resolution of the conflict since it is a people-to-people peace where disputants vent their anger freely and without any hindrance. Second, because it is a grass root peace initiative, the approach befits the traditional African conflict resolution which is mainly a bottom-up approach as opposed to the conventional top-down approach. The disputants through this bottom-up approach will certainly own the settlement so that its outcome must be implemented in letter and spirit.

The other finding which deserves special consideration is the peace mediation spearheaded by a spiritual leader such as the one conducted by Magician Ziadior Tutroal Thac. This kind of peace resolution is always respected by the belligerents because according to Western Nuer custom and tradition, spiritual leaders are the most revered and respected figures within the society. Therefore, a peace brokered by a spiritual leader is likely to endure given that the protagonists loathe any attempt to tamper with the provisions of the agreement. The belligerents would fear the spirit of the deity will spell magical curse on the violators. The peace mediated between Cieng Bol Gany of Leek section endured to this day in spite of the bitterness that almost characterized the two disputing sub clans prior to the resolution of the conflict.

The peace building measures that were put in place in the aftermath of the conflict resolution of the three discussed peace initiatives significantly enhances the transformation of those conflicts. Empirical evidence revealed that once the belligerents are given the latitude to interact with one another particularly after the conclusion of a conflict, the resultant atmosphere would be that of trust, harmony and tranquility. The confidence building measures must also include the free movement between the two conflicting parties as well as the sharing of social occasions and festivities if the peace will have a meaningful impact. In addition, the engagement of the belligerents especially by providing job opportunities greatly help in the alleviation of the tension that brewed during the inter-war years. Moreover, the ringleaders who constitutes the main agitators in the conflict will find it very difficult to sustain the practice because the youth that can be mobilize will mind their newfound jobs objecting any further recruitment into the conflict.

To summarize, this research project has tried to cover as much as possible the causes of the Western Nuer violent conflicts and their attendant impacts. Though, the causes and impacts identified are not exhaustive, the study sufficiently provided the reader with adequate understanding about the nature and dynamics of these violent intra-communal conflicts. And in order to ensure inclusivity, respondents were given the opportunity to fully participate in an open and free discussions. Ultimately, this cordial and open dialogue, motivated the respondents to uncover all the facts associated with violence in the Western Nuer community. And since most of the problems discussed are common to all the Nuer, the findings would equally be applicable to all the Nuer in their various geographical locations.

In the same vein, these research findings would also be applicable to other nationalities in the Republic of South Sudan and particularly other pastoral communities. Furthermore, because most pastoralists share common traits, commonalities and similarities across cultures, the research findings would in equal measure be applicable to the other pastoral communities outside the territorial borders of South Sudan. Lastly but not the least, it is my utmost conviction and belief that these research findings would supplement academic as well as political understanding of the communal violent conflicts throughout the learning institutions across the globe.

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