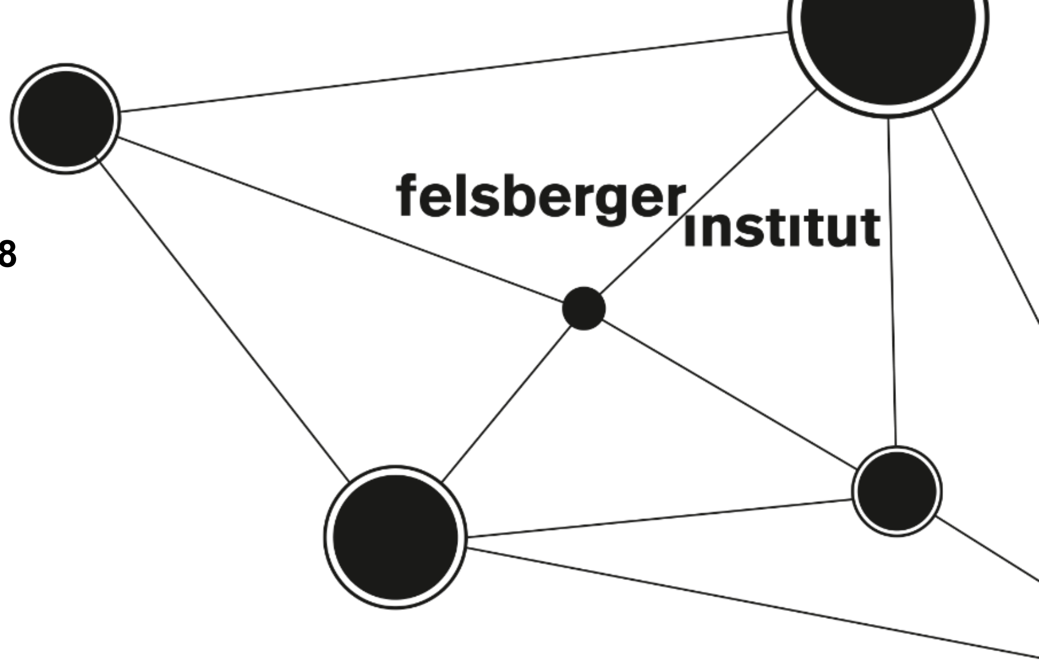

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Bargaining with Intensity

Arms and the Signalling of Insurgent Capacity
in South Sudan (2005–2016)

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Arms and the Signalling of Insurgent Capacity in South Sudan, 2005–2016
(zugleich BA-Arbeit, Institut für Ethnologie, LMU München, 01/2017)
Marius Mehrl

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Abbreviations

CPA = Comprehensive Peace Agreement
DDR= Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration
NCP= National Congress Party
SPLM/A = Sudan People's Liberation Movement / Army
SPLA-IO = Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition
SPLA-N = Sudan People's Liberation Army North
SSDF= South Sudan Defence Force
SSDM/A = South Sudan Democratic Movement / Army
SSDM/A-Cobra = South Sudan Democratic Movement / Army - Cobra faction
SSLM/A = South Sudan Liberation Movement / Army
SAF = Sudanese Armed Forces
UCDP = Uppsala Conflict Data Program
UN= United Nations
UPDF = Ugandan People's Defence Force

1 Introduction

The international community regularly reacts to intense armed conflict by calling for an arms embargo on the country the conflict is active in. It is supposed that a decrease in the amount of weapons reaching the conflict zone would lead to a successive decrease in conflict intensity and may even open up a path towards peace. While this assumption is broadly accepted by policy makers and activists alike, evidence for a link between the availability of arms and conflict intensity is actually surprisingly spotty. Some statistical findings indicating a correlation between the two variables exist, however, all studies to date lack a compelling mechanism of how exactly and by what mechanism the procurement of arms should lead to higher conflict intensity. This paper contributes to the literature on conflict intensity by providing exactly such a mechanism: building on bargaining theory, it links rebels' arms procurements to the intensity of conflict by arguing that arms cause a rebel group's military capacity to increase, potentially improving the group's bargaining position, but that rebels have to credibly signal this capacity to the government in order to achieve the improvement. It is further argued that rebels could increase either the duration or the intensity of fighting to do so but that due to the risky environment and a propensity for short-term gains they prefer the second option. Hence, it is expected that insurgents react to obtaining arms by signalling this rise in military capacity to the government by way of increasing the intensity of their fighting; thus, the mechanism linking arms and conflict intensity is hypothesized to be based on an environment of private information where intensity is used by insurgents to signal their capacity and improve their bargaining position. To examine the theory's applicability, a case study of armed conflicts in South Sudan since the 2005 peace agreement is carried out. It finds that the conflict parties' patterns of behaviour in the country's insurgencies match theoretical expectations while also offering promising avenues for further theoretical development. The next chapter discusses the state of the art of the literature on conflict intensity and surveys applications of bargaining theory to civil war. Chapter three builds develops the bargaining theory of conflict intensity summarized above while chapter four applies it to armed conflict in South Sudan. Chapter five discusses the empirical results and their implications for further theory building and chapter six concludes.

2 Conflict intensity and bargaining theory: Definitions and the state of research

The following chapter discusses the quantitative literature on conflict intensity, focusing on how this concept is defined and measured as well as on its predictors. Afterwards bargaining theory will be discussed in order to apply it to conflict intensity later, covering how it explains why civil wars are fought when it would be more efficient for both sides to simply negotiate a bargain and what different sides in a civil war – the governments and insurgents – are incentivized to do in an environment with private information and dynamic capabilities.

2.1 Conflict intensity: Conceptual issues and the state of research

In 2015, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) counted 50 active state based armed conflicts[1], all except for one[2] of which were intrastate conflicts (Themnér & Melander 2016:202). This number includes highly publicized civil wars in Syria, Iraq, Ukraine or Yemen, but also lesser known conflicts like the one between the Ethiopian Government and the Oromo Liberation Front or between the Russian Government and the Forces of the Caucasus Emirate. Conflicts also greatly vary in their fatalities, UCDP data estimates about 45,000 battle-related deaths[3] for the Syrian conflict in 2015 and ca. 2,000 such deaths for the conflict involving Boko Haram and an alliance of West African states, but less than 100 battle fatalities for conflicts in Ethiopia, Kenya or Thailand (Melander et al. 2016:736ff.).

These numbers illustrate that there are significant differences in the number of fatalities of armed conflict. Thus, it is not surprising that a literature focusing on the determinants and effects of variations in battle-related deaths and the larger concept of conflict intensity has evolved over the last few years. Conflict intensity is usually measured as the number of battle related deaths in a given timeframe[4]. This proxy

[1] The UCDP defines state-based conflict as “a contested incompability that concerns government and / or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a calendar year” (Themnér 2016:1). While this definition includes conflict between as well as inside states, this paper only concerns the latter.

[2] The exception is the border conflict between India and Pakistan.

[3] The definition used by the UCDP as well as the PRIO Battle Deaths Data states that battle deaths are “deaths resulting directly from violence inflicted through the use of armed force by a party to an armed conflict during contested combat” (Lacina 2009:3). Thus, it does not include targeted violence against civilians or the execution of prisoners of war.

[4] A few scholars argue that this measure should be normalized by the population of a country (Mueller 2016) but this view has not yet found a larger following.

measure has been accepted by most scholars even though discussions on it are still ongoing as it neglects targeted violence against civilians[5], non-lethal physical violence and psychological violence as well as famines or epidemics caused by infrastructural breakdown (Brzoska 2016; Steflja & Trisko Darden 2013). Conceptual issues do not stop there though, as different authors also use different timeframes and thresholds: Older papers look at the total death counts of armed conflicts while controlling for conflict duration or average the total death count of a conflict over its duration (e.g. Lacina 2006; Heger & Salehyan 2007; Lujala 2009). More recently the actual number of battle deaths per year (Petersohn Forthcoming) or even per month (Hultman et al. 2014; Hultman & Peksen Forthcoming) is used. This difference is crucial as the latter method of measurement can account for the dynamics of a single conflict whereas the former cannot; monthly data also does a better job at this than yearly data. Additionally, Lacina (2006) only includes casualties from conflicts with at least 900 battle deaths / year in her analysis while Balcells and Kalyvas use data from conflicts with at least 1,000 such casualties (2014); in contrast, authors using UCDP data include fatalities from minor armed conflicts beginning at 25 battle deaths / year in their analyses (e.g. Hultman et al. 2014).

Because of these differences, results obtained from different datasets using different timeframes and thresholds may sometimes contradict each other[6], nonetheless a number of relevant results on determinants of conflict intensity can be identified. The strongest results concern the negative influence of a state being a democracy on the intensity of conflicts that are fought on its territory as confirmed by a host of papers (Lacina 2006; Heger & Salehyan 2007; Lujala 2009; Balcells & Kalyvas 2014). In hypothesizing this effect, it is argued that democracies are more constrained by institutional and public checks in their use of intense force against insurgents than autocratic regimes while also being better able to keep rebels from intensifying their fighting by co-opting them (Lacina 2006; Heger & Salehyan 2007). These arguments are consistent with the notion that conflicts are more severe the smaller the ruling

[5] Data on violence against civilians (Eck & Hultman 2007; Melander et al. 2016) and sexualized violence (Cohen & Nordås 2014) exists but has not yet been integrated into a broader measure of conflict intensity.

[6] Another confounding factor is the use of different estimation techniques. Many authors use OLS regression to estimate the effect of different variables on the intensity of conflict (e.g. Lujala 2009; Moore 2012) while others argue that the number of battle related deaths is a count variable and hence use count regression models to estimate its determinants (e.g. Balcells & Kalyvas 2014; Hultman & Peksen Forthcoming).

coalition of a country is[7] because smaller ruling groups should face less internal opposition against such measures as each member obtains a higher payoff than in larger coalitions (ibid.). While the variable used there to measure the size of the ruling coalition may implicitly measure ethnopolitical dynamics, other authors explicitly argue that ethnic wars should be more intense due to strong antipathies but actually find negative correlations of conflict severity and both ethnic fractionalization[8] (Balcells & Kalyvas 2014; Lujala 2009) and polarization (Lacina 2006; Lujala 2009; Moore 2012). Thus, Armed conflict is either indeed less intense the more ethnic groups live in a country and if a large ethnic minority exists or existing relations are at least much more complex than can be measured using these two indicators.

Focusing on the costs and benefits of fighting, another strand of the literature shows conflict intensity to be affected by economic factors: arguing that low opportunity costs make more people participate in fighting thereby raising its intensity, Chaudoin et al. (2017) propose that poorer countries experience more intense conflict while others note that falling prices for commodities and agricultural goods (Bazzi & Blattman 2014; Dube & Vargas 2013) and negative shocks to land productivity in regions dependent on agriculture (Gawande et al. 2017) also increase conflict intensity.

In contrast to this but stemming from the same notion of insurgents as economic actors, it is argued that rising prices for conflict resources[9] increase the profits combatants can make from obtaining them, thus also increasing the intensity of fighting (Angrist & Kugler 2008; Dube & Vargas 2013) but also that only some of these resources globally influence the level of fighting, that their influence hinges on their geographical location and that one specific kind of conflict resource – oil and

[7] Heger & Salehyan (2007) use the size of the ethnic group of the head of state to proxy for the size of the ruling coalition. While this proxy does have a negative effect on conflict intensity, it is very debatable if this is a convincing variable to measure the proposed relationship.

[8] Petersohn finds a significant and positive relationship between “ethnic fragmentation“ and conflict severity, attributing this to the high stakes all parties in ethnic wars supposedly face (Forthcoming:18), but fails to disclose how he measures this variable (Forthcoming:12). Eck (2009) further argues that minor armed conflicts (i.e. 25–999 battle deaths / year) where ethnic mobilization takes place are significantly more likely to escalate into wars (more than 999 battle deaths / year) than minor armed conflicts where no such tactics are used.

[9] Resources like oil, gas, gemstones and drugs have been hotly discussed as possible predictors of civil war onset and duration, leading to the notion of a resource curse and the designation of these resources as “conflict resources” (for reviews of this literature see Ross 2015; Koubi et al. 2014). While formal modelling of the expected impact of price shocks in these commodities on conflict violence has been published (Dal Bó & Dal Bó 2011), empirical applications of these models appear to be limited to the two papers on the Colombian conflict discussed here.

gas extracted outside the area of conflict – actually decreases conflict intensity (Lujala 2009).

While the determinants of conflict intensity discussed up to now focus mostly on country level variables, some of which are supposed to measure the individual costs and benefits of fighting, there are also some group level variables relevant to this discussion: the most prominent of these are state and rebel capacity as both should enable the respective party to ramp up its fighting efforts. However, a state's military quality has no effect on the variable of interest (Lacina 2006; Moore 2012) and neither have its military expenditures (Petersohn Forthcoming). External support for governments also does not exhibit a stable positive relationship to a conflict's fatality count (Balcells & Kalyvas 2014) but support by private military and security companies does (Petersohn Forthcoming). On the other hand, weaker rebels seem to fight in less intense conflicts according to some (Lujala 2009; Heger & Salehyan 2007) but not to others (Hultman et al. 2014; Hultman & Peksen Forthcoming) and the number of distinct rebel groups is found to be a negative (Hultman & Peksen Forthcoming), a positive (Butler et al. 2015) or no predictor of intensity (Hultman et al. 2014). There is, however, some compelling evidence that external support to rebels increases the number of battle casualties in a given timeframe (Balcells & Kalyvas 2014; Melander & Svensson 2016) as does the transfer of major conventional weapons[10] (MCW) to rebels (Moore 2012) and that wars in which both sides use such arms are more deadly than assymetrical wars where only the government operates MCWs (Balcells & Kalyvas 2014). To summarize, whereas neither a state's capacity nor external support to it have been found to have a stable relationship with the intensity of conflict in that state and the same may be said for the number and capacity of rebel groups, material support to them has invariably been found to increase conflict intensity. While this looks to be a promising path for further research, there is a lack of theoretical explanations for why only support to insurgents but not to governments should have this effect. In order to be able to tackle this question in the course of this paper, the following chapter discusses the application of bargaining theory to intrastate wars.

[10] The external provision of major conventional weapons to the government may have the same effect: Moore finds that this is the case if MCWs delivered up to five years before the onset of the conflict are included in the analysis but not if only MCWs procured during the conflict are (2012:340). Hultman and Peksen (Forthcoming) argue that the imposition of arms embargoes reduces conflict intensity by limiting the government's fighting capacity. In addition, at least one case study (Sislin & Pearson 2006) describes a connection between both sides of an intrastate conflict obtaining weapons and following escalations in fighting.

2.2 Bargaining Theory and the Study of Conflict

Bargaining Theory is relevant in the context of this paper as it may help elucidate the answer to the question why the parties to a conflict should be interested in increasing the intensity of said conflict, i.e. why should they strive to kill a higher number of their opponents? This question is fundamentally linked with the question why wars are fought, hence, proponents of e.g. wars as the product of deep-rooted ethnic hatred may have a different answer to this than authors who view conflict as caused by a group of people trying to gain something, be it financial resources, autonomy or political power. This later group, although quite diverse, is united in that they maintain that individuals, groups and states begin or participate in armed conflict in order to obtain some kind of short- or long-term, material or immaterial[11] benefit, therefore trying to minimize their costs of war while maximizing their benefits. Based on this background, James Fearon states that "the central puzzle of war […] is that wars are costly but nonetheless wars recur" (1995:379), arguing that "as long as both sides suffer some costs for fighting, then war is always inefficient *ex post* – both sides would have been better off if they could have achieved the same final resolution without suffering the costs" (ibid.:383). Put differently, parties to a potential conflict should always look to negotiate a bargain regarding the partition of the good in question as fighting is costly and the result of said fighting could always have been negotiated without these concurrent costs. So why do groups of people still go to war over all kinds of negotiable goods?

Two basic kinds of problems have been found to inhibit successful negotiations over these goods – *information problems* and *commitment problems*[12] (Fearon 1995; Powell 2006; Walter 2009a). *Information problems* may frustrate settlements if the parties have private, i.e. not publicly available information on their own relative military capabilities and their resolve to fight and also face incentives to misrepresent such information. Such an incentive could simply be that party A gets a better deal on power-sharing, the location of a border or the distribution of natural resource rents from party B the higher B thinks A's capabilities and resolve are; A would then look to exaggerate these attributes as much as possible. This is only possible though if B has no own information on A's relevant attributes and therefore has to look to A for

[11] Such immaterial motives may be religious (Toft 2006) but also "emotional and moral" (Wood 2003:2).

[12] Fearon (1995) and Walter (2009a) also identify indivisibility, e.g. ownership over a symbolically important piece of land, as an additional barrier to peaceful settlements whereas Powell (2006) maintains that this is just one variant of commitment problems.

such information. Of course, B cannot know if A represents its attributes truthfully and can also not simply settle at the level A proposes as this would risk incurring unnecessary costs due to A actually being weaker than it represents itself to be. Hence, B would have to demand some kind of costly signal from A as a credible show of power before settling (Fearon 1995). From this point of view, the existence of armed conflict could be regarded as belligerents signalling each other their capacities in order to reach a point of settlement that is efficient for both sides.

Commitment problems impede successful negotiations if one party has incentives to renege from a settlement at a later point in time. This is for example the case if a temporarily weak state reaches a bargaining solution with its opponent by conceding (at least) exactly as much as that opponent could get by continuing to fight but later becomes stronger again. Then, the formerly weak state would renege on the settlement to exploit its new capacities causing fighting to begin anew. This means that the amount of resources a party can credibly offer its adversary in negotiations is limited by future shifts in power, the larger these shifts will be, the smaller the amount that can credibly be promised (Powell 2006). One could then attribute armed conflict to the belligerents' inability to credibly commit to a peaceful settlement for fear of having their opponent renege.

While both Fearon and Powell discuss these issues of bargaining in the context of militarized disputes between states, a more recent literature shifts the focus to intrastate conflicts where a government is fighting one or more insurgent groups. Barbara Walter argues that both information and commitment problems should be particularly severe in intrastate conflicts: on the one hand, governments face a lack of information about "the size of potential rebel armies, their financial flows, the degree of support among the population and, and their organization" (2009a:246) whereas insurgents have very high incentives to withhold this knowledge. On the other hand, the often large differences in the military power of insurgents and the government incentivize the latter to renege on settlements, especially so as insurgent groups tend to become weaker during peace processes when their members are disarmed and reintegrated into civil society.

Walter (2009b) also states that governments face additional disincentives to settle conflicts with insurgent groups as this would make them appear weak to other potential insurgent groups and induce these groups to start rebellions of their own. Hence, she argues that governments would aim to build a reputation of power and

willingness to fight by incurring the short term costs of taking military action against present insurgencies because this reputation would prevent other groups from staging future rebellions. The combat or settlement of these future insurgencies would be more costly to the government than sending a signal of might by repressing the present one. However, governments' incentive to fight off insurgents instead of offering them accommodation should depend on the number of potential insurgent groups; the fewer such groups there are, the smaller the incentive to build up a reputation of power should be. Accordingly, Walter finds that not only are governments "significantly more likely to accommodate ethnic minorities seeking self-determination if there were few additional ethnic groups in a country" (2009b:203) and that their decision to accommodate or repress such movements also hinges on the power of other potential challengers as well as on the value of the land these other groups occupy but that potential challengers actually react to governments' past behaviour, "being significantly more likely to challenge if a government had backed down to another group" (ibid.).

In a similar vein, Cunningham et al. (2009) argue that rebels' military capacity should influence conflict duration. Strong rebels would either win the conflict outright or, more relevant to this discussion, be accommodated by the government whereas weak rebels should neither be accommodated nor have any incentives to disarm unilaterally; they do indeed find that conflicts become shorter if participating insurgents are strong. Sawyer et al. (Forthcoming) cite informational insecurity in their discussion of why only certain kinds of external support to rebels may inhibit conflict termination, claiming – and finding statistical evidence – that if rebels are provided with fungible resources like money and weapons, governments' uncertainty about the insurgents' capability rises due to not knowing whether these resources are used for military activities or for something else. The authors further link this to potential rebel commitment problems, arguing that governments may be highly unlikely to even start formal negotiations with rebels who receive arms or finances from external supporters if they believe that these provisions are large enough to induce future reneging on any deal. To mitigate such commitment problems, it has been found to be necessary that a third party, e.g. another state, a group of states or

an international organization, guarantees the accords of peace between the warring parties[13] (Walter 2002).
Both information and commitment problems seem to be at the core of why civil wars are fought: All sides in such a war face commitment problems that usually arise from changes in state capability but can also be induced by external support to insurgents. Additionally, governments often lack information on the capabilities of insurgents while also facing strong incentives to settle conflicts only with proven strong challengers and to send a signal on their ability and willingness to fight by combating all other challengers. Insurgents, thus, are incentivized to make themselves look as strong as possible.

3 Towards a bargaining theory of arms, insurgent capacity and conflict intensity

This chapter sets out to build a theory of insurgent bargaining behaviour in intrastate conflicts, arguing that when they obtain additional armaments, rebels attempt to raise the intensity of fighting to the highest level possible in order to show the state that their capability is so high that they have to be accommodated in their demands. In fleshing out this theory, I proceed in three steps: first, the idea of information problems as discussed in the preceding chapter is expanded to better fit intrastate conflicts and it is argued that insurgents may signal their military capability to a government by either intensifying their fighting or prolonging it. In a second step, the notion of military capacity is discussed in more detail in order to argue that – if given the choice – insurgents would be more likely to choose the former way of signalling their capacity and that the procurement of arms is the most significant form of an increase in military capacity raising this choice. Thirdly, a universe of cases the theory should be best suited to explain is identified. Building on this, the last part of this chapter selects a case the framework will be applied to and sets out the behavioural patterns conflict parties in this case would be expected to exhibit.

[13] However, Blattman and Miguel (2010:14) make the point that such third party peace interventions could also prolong civil conflict if rebels have to fear being prosecuted on war crimes by international courts. Hence, guarantees against the international prosecution of the respective insurgent leaders may have to be part of any such intervention looking to minimize commitment problems in intrastate wars.

3.1 How to signal capacity: Insurgent bargaining in intrastate conflict

According to bargaining theory insurgents look to strike a favourable deal with the government if flat out military victory is unlikely as is the case in most insurgencies. However, if there is more than one group of active or potential challengers – as is the case in most countries – the government is highly disincentivized to offer any kind of accommodation to one such group in order not to set a precedent for others. Governments choose this path of non-accommodation calculating that the long term costs of fighting present challengers are smaller than accommodating them and then being faced with future challengers that look to cash in on the government's weakness. In order to be accommodated by a government facing multiple challengers, an insurgent group has to change this calculus. This means that it has to credibly show its capability to inflict such high costs on the state that the government perceives the future costs of further holding off on negotiations with this group to be higher than striking a bargain with it and then being potentially faced with more armed groups demanding concessions (Walter 2009a; 2009b). The question is then, how can an insurgent organization credibly show that it is able to inflict a certain amount of costs on the government in an environment of private information in which the government won't believe most claims of rebels' strength?

It has been argued that this can be accomplished by simply attacking the government: from this perspective, the onset of intrastate conflict is explained by the government not trusting the information a claimant group gives on its ability to induce costs and instead demanding a costly and credible signal from the group (Fearon 1995; Walter 2009a). The group's attack on the state is then to be seen as such a signal and the government is thought to deduce the future costs a group is capable to inflict from the ones it has already caused in the present. Two issues with this information-based approach to civil war are that it can't explain why a war may linger for a prolonged amount of time or even do so and then suddenly be settled or at least enter a phase of negotiations (Powell 2006; Blattman & Miguel 2010) and, relatedly, that the amount of costs an insurgent group is able to inflict, i.e. their capability, is thought to be constant and unchanging over time.

However, I argue that if it is recognized that insurgent capability can vary over time as groups may become weaker or stronger, it also becomes understandable why the parties to protracted wars may suddenly enter negotiations at some point. The bargaining theory of war sketched out on the preceding pages is essentially static: it

argues that a government G does not find a challenger C's claims about its capability credible and thus demands a costly signal; to provide such a signal C attacks G and inflicts an amount of costs X on G. X is then seen as adequately describing C's capability and based on it G decides whether to accommodate C or to fight it. Thus, an intrastate conflict should either end with a quick settlement or not at all. Realizing the apparent limitations of this view, Walter argues that "the longer a group is able to fight, the more likely it is to be well funded, and the more likely a government is to make a deal" (2009a:249). From this perspective, a government would interpret staying power as a sign of capability as the costs a group inflicts on the government accrue over time. Under this added dimension, G would fight C until it either defeats it or C causes constant damages X for a sufficient amount of time as to be accommodated; to obtain accommodation, insurgents would look to stay in conflict with a government as long as possible while not taking any risks executing offensives or trying to take territory. Empirically, this version of events still does not quite hold. Hence, I argue that insurgents have another path to signal their capacity to their adversary: changes in X. As their capacity becomes larger, insurgents have the means to intensify fighting and execute exactly the offenses and attacks on territory held by the government they should refrain from carrying out if staying power is the only signal governments understand. Instead, we regularly see rebel forces performing these kinds of attacks. My argument is that such attacks, i.e. a higher conflict intensity, also serve as costly signals to the government where insurgents show that they can inflict actual, relevant costs. The government would then use this new information to update its perception of the insurgents' capability to induce further costs and, based on this, decide whether to offer negotiations or keep fighting.

It's therefore possible to add to the static bargaining theory of war by introducing time and intensity. By doing so, the nature of X changes: while in the static account X is the constant capability a rebel group exhibits when a war happens, in the reworked version it becomes a dynamic composite of the intensity of their fighting and the duration of the conflict. I argue that, when looking for signs of insurgent capability, governments look at the amount of time a group has been fighting while also taking into account how intense that fighting has been: a group that was capable of killing 500 persons in one month is likely to be militarily stronger and better able to induce future costs than one that was in combat with the state for the same amount of time

but only responsible for the death of 30 people[14]. This in turn means that insurgents wanting to get accommodated by the government must, in order to signal their capability, either make sure to stay in conflict as long as possible or raise its intensity – it seems likely that it is actually necessary to exhibit both some kind of minimum intensity and minimum staying power as a government may otherwise just dismiss a group either as harmless or as one-hit-wonder.

It should be noted that this account is quite a departure from the ‘classic’ bargaining problem of private information as set out by Fearon (1995) and described earlier. In the classic version, wars between states happen because opponents do not know each other’s true strength and hence – not knowing the right amount to offer – do not want to settle. As soon as they have found out about each other’s relative capability, they would start negotiations and settle at the point indicated by their capabilities because war is inherently inefficient in this setting. In an intrastate setting, armed conflict is not necessarily inefficient for the government. So even though G gets to know C’s capability, shown by X, quite soon, it won’t offer a settlement unless X crosses a certain threshold meaning that it is higher than the costs associated with fighting or accommodating all the other challengers G expects to face as a result of accommodating C. This means that while this account is still based on the idea of information problems inhibiting peaceful settlements, the reputation building governments engage in when faced with multiple challengers (Walter 2009b) is a crucial and necessary part of it. Having established how an enhanced version of information problems is fruitful even in discussing ongoing conflicts and what options insurgents have to signal their capacity in order to obtain accommodation from the government in such conflicts, the next chapter disseminates what insurgent capacity means in detail, discussing how changes in capacity may be caused and how different kinds of capacity may lead to insurgents either increasing the intensity of their fighting or their staying power.

[14] Some statistical support for this can be gleaned from Walter (2002:73). There the determinants of the start of peace negotiations between the government and an insurgent group are tested. It is found that the likelihood of negotiations is significantly and positively influenced by the duration of the conflict – this is the result Walter’s claim quoted on the preceding page is based on. Additional to this, however, she finds a similar positive and significant effect for the number of war-related deaths, an effect that is – as durations is controlled for – independent of how long a war is fought for. Walter fails to sufficiently discuss this effect any further, so no information on the relative effect sizes of intensity and duration is available.

3.2 Military capacities and the maximization of their utility

In order to receive accommodations from the government, insurgents have to send costly signals credibly showing their capacity to inflict costs on the state. To do so, they may either intensify their fighting or raise their staying power in order to achieve a long conflict duration – both may be seen as ways of signalling capacity. It may now be asked how insurgents select a way of signalling; to do so, the concept of capacity and how it may change have to be discussed in more detail. Up to now, capacity has been used as shorthand for the ability of an insurgent group to inflict costs on an adversary. It is the attribute that makes a group more or less dangerous to a government and accordingly more or less likely to receive an accommodation. This ability encompasses (at least) two dimensions: "Offensive strength, or the ability to inflict costs on a government […], and the ability to resist or evade government repression" (Cunningham et al. 2009:575). In other words, insurgents have an offensive capacity to attack the government and a defensive capacity to withstand government attacks. Crucially, this latter capacity also enables them to inflict costs on the government as it allow them to have the government expend costly resources to attack them without the benefit of actually obtaining victory. So, how can these two dimensions be changed?

Rebel capacities are significantly shaped by their access to resources (Hazen 2013): Their offensive capacities may rise with the procurement of financial resources, better weapons or more combatants. Their defensive capacities are influenced by the same variables but may also increase if a group obtains bases in an area that is hard to control for the government due to e.g. mountainous terrain or thick vegetation (Fearon & Laitin 2003) or because it is beyond its reach in a neighbouring country. Hence, when insurgents obtain financing, recruits or weapons, this entails a potential increase in both their offensive and defensive capacities depending on how they choose to use their new assets. They may choose to use them to raise the intensity of their fighting, signalling the government their increased ability to directly inflict costs on it by killing soldiers, destroying infrastructure etc. Or they may choose to invest their new assets in fortifying their defensive positions, thereby leading to an increased ability to withstand government attacks and also raising their staying power in the conflict – another signal to the government of their increased capacity.

When insurgents are faced with this choice, it seems likely that they decide to choose the former option: for conflict duration to have a significant effect on the likelihood of

negotiations between insurgents and the government, a conflict has to drag on for at least six years (Walter 2009a:249, note 8). However, actors in intrastate conflicts probably prioritize short term gains over profits in the future due to the risky environment. Bates and colleagues argue that, when faced with a shortened time horizon, agents of violence (in their case autocratic rulers) do not shy away from predation in order to obtain profit while they can (Bates et al. 2002; Bates 2008). Others find that individuals living in communities that were exposed to civil war violence are on average more risk seeking in their economic behaviour but also significantly less patient than inhabitants of comparable communities unexposed to the conflict (Voors et al. 2012) and that people previously exposed to violence exhibited an increased preference for certainty (Callen et al. 2014). Hence, it may be argued that violence makes individuals value profits that can be obtained in the short term over such they have to wait for and that, in order to receive them, they are willing to take considerable risks including predation on others. Thus, when faced with the prospect of a state finding their staying power sufficient to offer accommodation only after six years, it seems likely that insurgents choose predation instead, i.e. increase their fighting intensity in order to obtain accommodation sooner. Arguably the most important factor in the increase of insurgents' capacity to inflict costs on the government by offensive action is a qualitative or quantitative raise in their armaments. A sufficient supply of weapons is necessary to make recruiting fighters feasible or even reasonable (Marsh 2007a). Weapons are the most common form of support given to insurgents by external actors, as such transfers happened in 54% of all conflict years between 1975 and 2009[15] (Karlén 2016), and, while still fungible, are less easily used for non-military means than financial resources (Sawyer et al. Forthcoming). Thus, I argue that insurgents react to receiving additional arms by looking to signal this added capacity to the government in order obtain an accommodation. To do so, insurgents try to increase the intensity of their fighting, aiming to inflict more costs on the government than they did before. They could also

[15] This means that in the other 44% of conflict years arms were only procured domestically if at all: almost all groups get their weapons from domestic sources – by buying them or by raiding government stockpiles or patrols - at some early point of the conflict and may keep doing so if the government is unable to put a halt to such leakages and the group fails to find other sources (Jackson 2010). Some insurgent groups have also acquired sufficient know-how to produce ammunition and weapons themselves, even including simple armed vehicles (Abel 2000; Sislin & Pearson 2006). Note, however, that it is also argued that finding external support is crucial to rebels' hopes of being successful as internal procurement is often insufficient to fight long wars and cause significant damage (Hazen 2013).

exhibit increased capacity by staying in the conflict for a long time, this option is less attractive though due to short time horizons.

In a nutshell, I argue that arms transfers to rebels lead to higher conflict intensity. This argument is hardly new as at least one author (Moore 2012) finds statistical evidence for this effect and Marsh and colleagues have been describing firearms' role as multipliers of violence for years (Marsh 2007b; Greene & Marsh 2012; Jackson & Marsh 2012). However, these contributions simply state that the connection should exist without giving any reasons for why this should be the case whereas the argument discussed here provides a theoretical underpinning for why fighting in intrastate armed conflict escalates after insurgents have received weapons. The next chapter examines if this argument is applicable to the whole universe of intrastate armed conflicts and identifies a subset of cases it is best suited to explain.

3.3 Limits to a bargaining theory of conflict intensity

While it is desirable to develop a theory on insurgent bargaining behaviour as general as possible, one has to ask where the practical limits of generalization are, i.e. when does the theory become so broad that it is of no use to explain actual cases anymore? On the other hand, if a theory is limited to some cases while being inapplicable to others, it is necessary to discuss the attributes a case must have in order to fall into the first group.

The argument for why arms transfers to insurgent groups may increase the intensity of the conflict these groups are active in largely rests on economically inspired reasoning. Both insurgents and governments are viewed as rational and utility maximizing actors that are hardly restricted in their choices by variables not pertaining to their material welfare. This goes hand in hand with the assumption that the conflict parties can realistically and independently of any outside interests or ideological reasoning negotiate a bargain that is profitable for both sides. Additionally, fighting capacity is seen as hinging heavily on material factors while the intricacies of tactical capabilities and choices are ignored[16]. Hence, this argument can be argued to dovetail very clearly with economic theories of conflict (e.g. Elwert

[16] This means that a given set of weapons is assumed to be employed in the same way by all insurgent groups while ignoring that e.g. self-ascribed Maoists may follow the strategical reasoning laid out by Mao himself (Eck 2014:386) whereas insurgents that went through more conventional military training or lack all tactical education are unlikely to do so.

1997, 2004; Collier & Hoeffler 1998; Collier et al. 2009) while being somewhat less consistent with approaches emphasizing rebels' grievances (e.g. Gurr 1970; Horowitz 1985; Cederman et al. 2013) and especially their ideological motivations (e.g. Wood 2003). Grievances are often caused by disparities in the access to easily negotiable goods like political office or profits from taxation and thus need not be an insurmountable obstacle to negotiations as long as they do not reflect "cemented cleavages" (Walter 2009a:252) between different parts of society. In contrast, wars involving highly salient ideological differences may fit a view of armed conflict as bargaining failures less clearly: there, combatants are more committed to their party's stated goals (Weinstein 2005) which usually do not include finding a workable bargaining solution but rather total military victory. Belligerents may receive substantial support from an ideologically inclined outside actor – as happened e.g. during the Cold War – and may therefore be limited in their ability to negotiate due to the meddling of this outside party. Combatants motivated by religious or ideological beliefs may also exhibit unusually long time horizons and not perceive fighting as all that costly (Toft 2006), causing them to not want to settle a conflict as soon as possible. Thus, interpreting such conflicts as processes of bargaining may be unreasonable as combatants may not view the issues at stake as divisible, may be more likely to not want to negotiate and may not be able to do so freely even if they wanted to. A bargaining logic of conflict intensity as proposed here may therefore offer less explanatory power in conflicts that took place during the Cold War or where insurgents base their mobilization efforts on religion or political ideology than in more recent and less ideological conflicts.

This logic may be best suited to explain the dynamics of the symmetrical wars that became more common after the end of the Cold War: Kalyvas and Balcells (2010) argue that this event levelled the technological playing field between governments and insurgents in many countries. It caused governments that had already been weak to weaken even further due to losing external support and hence match rebels' low level of capacity. And elsewhere it brought about the dissolution of the state during which insurgents were able to acquire enough MCW to make a symmetrical, conventional war possible[17]. Symmetrical conflicts feature smaller capacity differences between the belligerents. There, qualitative or quantitative increases in rebels' armaments may be argued to have a more significant effect on their ability to

[17] It is also argued that due to the stop of external support to rebels engaged in asymmetrical warfare, such conflicts often mellowed into becoming inactive (Kalyvas & Balcells 2010).

inflict costs on the government. More importantly, in many of the weak or dissolving states of the period after the Cold War the system of governance as well as the people controlling it have been described as oriented towards the maximization of the material welfare of a select few. Especially the state in sub-Saharan Africa has been argued to have failed as elites looked to fortify their positions or gather as much profit as possible in the face of losing outside support by increasing predatory behaviour as well as militarizing and informalizing the state (Bates 2008; Reno 1998; Bayart et al. 1999). There, large parts of the population have been excluded from political participation and face an unaccountable and nonresponsive government concerned not with the public good but the private wealth of its members. As a result, large parts of society lack peaceful means of contesting power, causing armed conflict in many of these countries (Walter 2015).

These conflicts may arguably be predisposed to being understood from a bargaining perspective as they feature governments consisting of small ruling elites looking to maximize their material gains instead of democratically elected politicians. Such elites should be looking for credible threats to their power more actively and be more willing to accommodate strong insurgents if this is cost efficient to them as they have higher material incentives to stay in power than larger ruling coalitions (Heger & Salehyan 2007) and are less susceptible to a loss of popularity and credibility possibly caused by granting benefits to a group previously attacking the state and its citizens. Thus, it can be expected that the bargaining logic of conflict intensity proposed here is especially observable in weak states ruled by small elite coalitions that are unaccountable to the rest of the population. Against this, it could be argued that the ruling coalitions of such states are often based on strongly politicised ethnic identities (Posner 2005; Heger & Salehyan 2007), possibly making these states more prone to ethnic conflicts where cleavages between the belligerents are so deep as to make accommodating rebels virtually impossible to the government (Walter 2009a). Indeed, Wimmer (2013) argues that ethnic conflict may stem from either a group being excluded and using this politicised ethnic identity to mobilize for conflict or from conflict over profits inside ruling coalitions if their size is too large, but also notes that "ethnic group formation […] result[s] from a renegotiation of the relationship between rulers and ruled" (ibid.:5) and that ethnicity may not be a cause but an instrument of political struggle. Hence, "ethnic politics is […] generally and fundamentally about the distribution of state power along ethnic lines" (Wimmer et al. 2009:317) as ethnicity is

used as one form of social organization in a quest to find the most efficient winning coalition. Concurringly, it is argued that insurgent groups seek to be part of rebel coalitions that are just strong enough to defeat the state but that they either ignore ethnicity in doing so (Christia 2012) or even attack co-ethnic civilians to hurt rivalling groups' support bases in inter-factional power struggles (Cunningham et al. 2012); Seymour (2014) even finds that ethnicity did not have an effect on the likelihood of armed groups switching sides in armed conflicts in Sudan[18].

While ethnicity should not decrease the explanatory power of the argument described previously, the insurgent side of armed conflict has to be addressed in more detail: up to now armed intrastate conflict has implicitly been treated as being fought between one government and one cohesive rebel organization and hence bargaining as taking place between these two unitary actors. While this approach is quite common in the literature on armed conflict as a bargaining game, it is also somewhat deficient as most conflicts involve multiple rebel organizations that may not only form coalitions but also splinter and split up[19] (Cunningham 2013; Pearlman & Cunningham 2012). This causes a number of issues for questions regarding the settlement of armed conflict as insurgent organizations may for example splinter due to disagreements over a settlement (ibid.). Regarding the link between arms procurement and conflict intensity treated here, the possible implications of both a multitude of actors and their cohesion arguably only serve to reinforce the mechanism: a group that has procured arms may seek to increase its military capacity by distributing surplus weapons to other rebels in order to bring them into their fold or to create an alliance; as a result the group would either look to demonstrate its increased numbers by intensifying its struggle against the state or have their new ally do so. The procurement of weapons by an insurgent organization may contribute to an organizational split though if it causes a balance of power between different factions inside the organization (Tamm 2016); however, this would not inhibit all factions' desire to present themselves as viable threats and thus rightful negotiating partners to the state. In this case and also if many independent insurgent

[18] This finding is rather surprising as shared ethnic identity is argued to make collective action in armed conflict easier to organize due to shared norms and networks, reciprocity and the possibility to sanction non-cooperative individuals (Weinstein 2005, 2007; Habyarimana et al. 2007). Thus, Co-ethnicity should inhibit defections. One possible explanation may be that governments try especially hard to goad insurgent factions belonging to the main ethnic group of an insurgency into switching sides as counterinsurgents are also argued to be most effective against members of their own ethnic group due to the same reasons (Lyall 2010).

[19] Weak governments may also lack cohesion due to being unable to control all their representatives.

organizations exist due to weapons being easily acquirable (Marsh 2007a; Duquet 2009; Strazzari & Tholens 2010) the logic of conflict intensity as a signal of the ability to inflict costs on the state may be supplemented but not supplanted by one where a higher number of insurgent groups also leads to increased inter-group fighting (Cunningham et al. 2012). Multiple actors and their level of cohesion may therefore add to the positive effect of weapons procurement on the intensity of intrastate conflict but should not significantly change the proposed mechanism.

It is sometimes the case that inside one region, a number of conflicts exist that are fought only by non-state actors. Such conflicts often occur in countries already experiencing a concurrent intrastate conflict and are most common in sub-Saharan Africa where they are mostly fought by groups loosely organized along shared communal identities (Sundberg et al. 2012; Melander et al. 2016). While it is argued that a third of all African conflicts of this kind do not see a state intervention and, if one occurs, it is often biased (Elfversson 2015), it is also possible that other non-state actors intervene in such conflicts in a biased way by giving material support to one party. In doing so, the intervening group may look to receive support in its own struggle. This means that if an insurgent group gave weapons to a communal group engaged in conflict with another such group, it would expect that communal group to join its insurgency, start fighting the state and hence cause a higher conflict intensity there. On the other hand, one may also expect a communal group receiving new weapons to follow the logic discussed in the previous chapters and increase the intensity of its attacks on its communal rival in order to signal its stronger capacity.

This chapter has argued that the theory of conflict intensity as a means of bargaining may vary in its applicability to different cases. While it has been argued that the participation of a multiplicity of armed groups does not significantly challenge the argument set out previously, it has been noted that its usefulness rests on the assumption that actors behave according to economic reasoning and look to maximize their material utility. This behaviour has been argued to be more likely in cases without strong ideological cleavages or combatants motivated by religion. Based on these considerations, the next section selects a case by means of which the mechanism proposed here will be subjected to a first test and also formulates expectations for what behavioural patterns should be observable if the mechanism is indeed helpful to understand why rebel arms procurement may lead to raised conflict intensity.

3.4 Case selection and expectations

Based on the reasoning laid out before, it appears sensible to select a conflict in a weakly institutionalized African state that has been active after the Cold War to test if the argument regarding the influence of weapons procurements on conflict intensity actually helps in explaining empirical cases. This conflict should not involve an insurgent group that could reasonably be argued to be motivated by an ideological or religious cause. In order to ascertain if my argument actually holds in cases where multiple insurgent groups fight the government and when the armed groups accounted for also include groups engaged in non-state violence, a selected case would further need to include both of these characteristics.

These conditions are met by the case of South Sudan: the country has only been independent since July 2011 and was an autonomous part of Sudan for the six years before, but has experienced strife throughout its existence as President Salva Kiir's government has been attacked by various insurgent movements since its inception (Small Arms Survey 2011; De Waal 2014), the largest manifestation of these struggles being the current civil war that started in December 2013. Kiir's government consists of a small elite whose power is based on its background in the armed forces (Pinaud 2014; de Waal 2014). Governmental control over the territory of South Sudan has been patchy at best. This lack in the rule of law allows for many communal conflicts between different groups mostly organized along ethnic cleavages to continue unhindered (Rolandsen & Breidlid 2012) as their number has only increased after South Sudanese autonomy (Brosché & Elfversson 2011). The dynamics of the multiple conflicts in South Sudan will be discussed in more detail on the following pages. But before doing so, some observable implications of the theory proposed here need to be formulated: If conflict intensity and arms procurement were indeed connected, what behavioural patterns would one expect to see in South Sudan's conflicts?

The clearest implication of the theory is that rebels, as they are incentivized to send credible signals to the government showing their added capability, can be expected to react to acquiring weapons by attacking the state with increased intensity. This leads me to expect that *1) insurgents that have received weapons from an external supporter subsequently carry out offenses against the state's armed forces or its allies which increase the death toll of the conflict between the government and that insurgent group.*

As communal groups may receive weapons from insurgent groups looking to increase their capacity and would in turn be expected to assist in the insurgent groups' struggle and following expectation 1), I also expect that *2a) communal groups in South Sudan that have received weapons from an insurgent group subsequently carry out offenses against the state's armed forces or its allies which increase the death toll of the conflict between the government and the insurgent group.*

However, these communal groups would also be in conflict with another group[20] in which they would be expected to signal the additional military capacity obtained through these weapons to their opponents. This expectation follows the same logic as in the case of insurgent groups but is also supported by some of the anthropological literature on conflict between non-state groups in north-eastern Africa: In describing warfare between two communities in southwestern Ethiopia, Turton (1991) argues that one group reacted to an outstandingly severe raid by an adversary using automatic weapons, none of which had been used in the conflict before, by planning a counter raid; only this would restore the perception of balanced military capacities necessary to reach a peace deal between the two groups.

In a similar vein, violent confrontations between communal groups in South Sudan can be understood as a way of rebalancing power relations after they were altered by government intervention (Pendle 2014) as groups who were affected negatively use military force to try regaining their former positions while groups that experienced an increase in relative power or at least did not lose any look to take advantage of their increased capacities by attacking their weakened rivals[21] (Hutchinson & Pendle 2015; Pendle 2014; Van de Vondervoort 2014). Hence, communal groups arguably behave similarly to insurgent groups in signalling their military capacity; their capacity and bargaining positions are also significantly influenced by external interventions and the procurement of weapons. This leads me to expect that *2b) communal groups in South Sudan that have received weapons from an insurgent group subsequently carry out offenses against other groups they have already been in conflict with, thereby increasing the death toll of the conflict between the two communal groups.*

[20] Otherwise they would arguably lack a motive to take the weapons offered to them by the insurgent group.

[21] Similar dynamics have also been described in the northern border region of Kenya and Uganda (Knighton 2010; Stites & Akabwai 2010; Eaton 2008; Mukutu 2010).

4 Weapons and conflict intensity in South Sudan's armed conflicts, 2005–2016

In order to ascertain if these theoretical implications can indeed be observed in reality, the case of South Sudan and its numerous conflicts will be examined, tracing how armed non-state groups – including both insurgent and communal groups – behaved militarily over the course of their fight against the government or other non-state actors. To contextualize this analysis, a summary of political events and armed conflict after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) ending the second Sudanese civil war was signed precedes this analysis.

4.1 Politics and armed conflict in South Sudan

South Sudan became an independent state in July 2011 after a huge majority of all voters had opted for independence from Sudan in a referendum six months earlier. This referendum was held due to the 2005 peace agreement between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement / Army (SPLM/A) stipulating that South Sudan would become an autonomous region of Sudan that same year and that six years later, citizens would vote on independence (Rolandsen & Daly 2016). The peace agreement has been described as the result of "negotiations between political parties, the [Sudanese ruling party] NCP, and the SPLM/A, which now divided Sudan between them" (ibid.:139) and autonomous South Sudan was indeed created as a non-inclusive political system in which all power was to be concentrated inside the insurgent movement-turned-governing party SPLM/A (Rolandsen 2015; Brosché & Höglund 2016).

In order to achieve this and to inhibit a continuation of the civil war, the newly formed South Sudanese government worked to reduce the significant influence other armed groups held by either integrating them into the state security forces or disarming them[22] while also trying to downsize the SPLA and demobilize, disarm and reintegrate (DDR) many of its soldiers into civilian life (Warner 2016). Hence, e.g. the South Sudan Defence Force (SSDF), a group controlling a portion of South Sudan similar to that held by the SPLA at the time of the signing of the CPA (Young 2015) was integrated following the 2006 Juba Declaration as were many other, smaller militias (Thomas 2011). Such integration often included military promotions for group

[22] This goal of integration or disarmament of all groups not part of the SPLA, the Sudanese Army, their joint units or the UN mission in Sudan was also stipulated in the CPA (Pendle 2015).

leaders, material benefits and the prospect of regular pay (Warner 2016) as well as impunity for any acts committed during the previous war (Scherr 2016). It also meant that integrated groups were not deployed throughout the SPLA but stayed under the command of the same individual as before (Breitung et al. 2016). This contributed to soldiers' loyalties continuing to be largely directed towards their previous and present commander, especially as commanders used salaries and resources acquired during their insurgencies to skilfully create patron-client relationships (Pinaud 2014; De Waal 2014).

As the SPLA also failed to reach its downsizing and DDR goals (Phayal et al. 2015; Warner 2016), no substantial change from being a factionalized rebel force into functioning as official army of a state could be attained and it remained a cluster of clientelistic networks lacking cohesion and working only to distribute wealth to select individuals (De Waal 2014; Breitung et al. 2016). Not all armed groups were offered integration though, the SPLA engaged in a bloody and mostly unsuccessful disarmament campaign against the *dec bor*[23] and other groups after the option of voluntarily laying down arms had largely been ignored (Young 2016; Breidlid & Arensen 2014). The decisions on who would be offered integration and who would have to disarm seem to have been based on the size of the respective group (Breitung et al. 2016) but also on the politics of ethnic power relations of a country where ethnicity is heavily politicized and institutionalized in administrative borders (Rolandsen 2015). Thus, many Dinka local defence groups (*titweng*) were transformed into state actors by assuming the role of community police while the similar *dec bor* were forced to disarm (Pendle 2015) and the then-governor of Unity state engaged in a heavy-handed, targeted disarmament campaign against the Bul Nuer in 2011 as he saw them as a threat to his position in power (Small Arms Survey 2016).

Hence, autonomous South Sudan saw a significant amount of armed conflict[24] caused by disarmament efforts but also by ethnic groups or different sections belonging to the same group carrying out raids on each other or even engaging in larger scale fighting (Brosché & Elfversson 2011). A number of new conflicts arose after the general elections in 2010 and the vote for independence in January 2011

[23] *Dec bor* is a Nuer term meaning white army. It is used to describe a loose organization of various Nuer defence groups and is based on the opposition of their plainclothes members to the uniformed soldiers of the *dec char*, i.e. the regular army (Breidlid & Arensen 2014).

[24] See Fig.1 and 2 in the appendix for maps of all deadly fighting recorded by UCDP up to and including 2010 and from 2011 to 2015.

when at least three individuals started insurgencies against the government after either themselves or candidates they had backed had not been elected into office (Breitung et al. 2016; Brosché & Höglund 2016), all three of which were aided by Khartoum (Small Arms Survey 2012). Khartoum and Juba were also engaged in more direct conflicts, the most consequential of which was over oil: unable to agree on a price for the transfer of oil from South Sudan to a Sudanese port, Juba decided to shut down production in January 2012 in order to pressure Khartoum into making concessions (de Waal 2014). While this failed and oil production resumed 15 months later, the economic costs for South Sudan were enormous and were one cause of the political events that followed (ibid.).

Spring 2013 saw the SPLA-internal opposition to Salva Kiir, including Vice-president Riek Machar, confront Kiir over the lack of preparation for the SPLM national convention where elections for the party chairmanship[25] were supposed to be held; Machar and two others also announced their candidacies for the position (Rolandsen & Daily 2016). This caused Kiir to dismiss his cabinet in July 2013 and appoint a new one consisting only of individuals loyal to him and, in November of the same year, to announce plans of reshaping the party structure that would have made it even less democratic (Johnson 2014a; Rolandsen 2015). The opposition reacted to these events by accusing Kiir of being incompetent and autocratic (ibid.). Shortly afterwards fighting broke out between different factions of the presidential guard in their barracks in the capital and spread into other parts of town where Nuer were victims of targeted killings (Rolandsen & Daly 2016). Kiir's government called the fighting a failed coup attempt and moved to imprison politicians belonging to the internal opposition while Machar managed to escape Juba and resurfaced in Jonglei a few days later announcing the establishment of an insurgent SPLA in Opposition (SPLA-IO) (Johnson 2014a,b).

In his fight against Kiir, Machar was joined by a number of other high ranking SPLA commanders from the three north-eastern states Jonglei, Unity and Upper Nile that had been integrated only shortly before or after the CPA[26] while the government received support from the Sudanese SPLA-offshoot SPLA-North[27], the Darfuri

[25] This position is significant as the chairman would more or less automatically also become the party's presidential candidate.

[26] Machar re-joined the SPLA in 2002 after breaking away with a splinter group in 1991 (Johnson 2011).

[27] The SPLA-North (SPLA-N) consists of former SPLA members from the border regions in southern Sudan. The two groups appear to be still connected as the SPLA-N has also received financial and material support from Juba before (Small Arms Survey 2012; Gramizzi & Tubiana 2013).

Justice and Equality Movement and – at the beginning – the Ugandan Armed Forces (UPDF) (Johnson 2014b; De Alessi 2015). The latter's involvement[28] was especially instrumental as UPDF troops staved off the SPLA-IO assault on Juba and also recaptured the Jonglei capital Bor (Ylönen 2014). The two sides had fought each other to a stalemate in late 2014 (Rolandsen et al. 2014) and agreed to a power sharing agreement in August 2015 that only became active in April 2016 when Machar returned to Juba to resume his Vice-presidency (Small Arms Survey 2016). However, three months later intense fighting between the two sides flared up in the capital, causing the death of an estimated 300 people and Machar's second escape, this time to Khartoum via the DRC (Mayai 2016; Kindersley & Rolandsen 2016; ICG 2016). Fighting has intensified again since then but largely relocated from the Northeast to the Equatoria region bordering Uganda and the DRC (Maihack 2016) and to Western Bahr el Ghazal (ICG 2016). It also appears that the ethnic divide between Dinka associated with the government and other groups has become so salient recently that UN officials warned of a potential genocide if violence escalates further (VOA News 2016b; Maihack 2016).

4.2 Conflict, intensity and arms procurement by insurgent groups

This section looks at how the conflict intensity in South Sudan's various insurgencies has changed over time and how this may be connected with the procurement of weapons. It focuses on insurgent groups, discussing the most prominent cases, whereas communal groups will be treated in the following section. This differentiation follows from the descriptions of armed groups in South Sudan in the empirical literature: there, what I call insurgent groups are usually referred to using an acronym (e.g. SPLA-IO, SSDM) or, more often, the name of its leader while communal groups are referred to using either broad terms specific to an ethnic group, e.g. *dec bor* and *titweng*, or more general ones like Lou Nuer youth or Murle cattle guards[29].
This terminological difference is mirrored in the groups' organizational structure as insurgent groups tend to be organized in a top-down pattern using military ranks

[28] UPDF involvement in South Sudan goes back at least 20 years as Kampala has been one of the major supporters of the SPLA since at least 1997 and also fought the LRA in South Sudan (Schomerus 2012; Schomerus et al. 2013). Its action in the early period of the civil war seems to have been paid for by Juba however (Ylönen 2014).
[29] For examples of this, compare e.g. Hutchinson (2009), Small Arms Survey (2011), Rolandsen & Breidlid (2012), Thomas (2015), Todisco (2015), Schomerus & Rigterink (2016) and Young (2016).

(Young 2016:18) while communal armed groups are organized much more loosely and lack a central military command (Schomerus & Rigterink 2016). This loose organization is balanced out by the fact that participation is informal and not based on age sets anymore. Thus, a large share of a group's male population ranging from young boys to men in their late forties may theoretically be part of the societal segment responsible for defence and raids against other groups but not participate in all such actions (Pendle 2015; Breidlid & Arensen 2014). Insurgent groups, on the other hand, may try to base their recruitment efforts on existing communal defence groups (LeBrun & Leff 2014; Todisco 2015) but as they are more stringently organized, joining them also means that one has to participate not only in select actions. Thus, it seems sensible to differentiate between the two kinds of groups and to look at the dynamics of conflicts they participate in and their arms procurement separately.

As previously mentioned, the period between South Sudan's general elections in 2010 and its independence witnessed the onset of a number of insurgencies, among them Peter Gadet's defection from the SPLA in March 2011 to create a group called South Sudan Liberation Movement / Army (SSLM/A)[30] (Small Arms Survey 2012; Craze & Tubiana 2016). Gadet managed to bring a number of other militias into his group, some of whom had already been active in Unity while others had been based in Khartoum (Small Arms Survey 2013). Even though the SSLA complained about the fairness of the elections held a year prior when announcing its insurgency (Brosché & Höglund 2016), Gadet, who had previously been a deputy divisional commander in the SPLA due to being integrated after the Juba Declaration (Small Arms Survey 2011b; Warner 2013), seemed to be mainly motivated by being passed over for promotion and was looking for gains in political and economic power (Breitung et al. 2016). Gadet's forces assaulted and captured Mankien town in Mayom Country, Unity one week after declaring their insurgency, tried to further advance towards the county capital and also attempted to retake Mankien after SPLA reinforcements had recaptured it (Small Arms Survey 2011a). Fighting did not last longer than three months though as Gadet met with state officials in July to discuss terms of a ceasefire which was subsequently signed in early August (Craze & Tubiana 2016). Nonetheless, the short phase of combat caused at least 320 deaths and displaced about 25,000 people but also lead to Gadet being reintegrated into the

[30] Young (2015) disagrees by noting that a militarily weak SSLM/A had existed before Gadet's defection.

SPLA and receiving a command post in Jonglei (Small Arms Survey 2011; Sundberg & Melander 2013; Warner 2013). It also constituted a significant rise in the intensity of fighting against the government in Unity and in the activity of militias that had joined the SSLM/A. In organizing his struggle, Gadet received significant support from Khartoum in the form of weapons including assault rifles, ammunition and rocket launchers before even announcing its existence (Small Arms Survey 2013; Craze & Tubiana 2016).

While Peter Gadet re-entered the SPLA only months after founding the SSLA, most of his commanders did not follow him: They instead kept fighting Juba, accusing Gadet and his close followers of being bribed, but were seemingly unable to keep up the intensity achieved previously[31] (Sundberg & Melander 2013) and began to splinter in April 2012 after receiving arms shipments from Sudan control over which was contentious (Small Arms Survey 2013). The remaining parts of the SSLM/A, however, accepted an amnesty and reintegration deal offered by Juba in 2013 after having previously fought against the SPLA in heavy clashes over the disputed oil-producing Hejlij area on the border of Unity and Sudan that caused approximately 130 casualties (Sundberg & Melander 2013) and in the Sudanese Army's (SAF) war against the SPLA-N, receiving weapons and other supplies from Khartoum to do so (Small Arms Survey 2013).

Another insurgency starting right after the 2010 elections was that of George Athor, who had previously run for governor in Jonglei (Brosché & Höglund 2016). Athor, formerly also part of the SPLA, lost these elections but could found a group called South Sudan Democratic Movement / Army (SSDM/A) on the basis of lower-ranking SPLA defectors and his ability to leverage his access to military support from Sudan and Eritrea into recruiting combatants willing to fight the SPLA (Small Arms Survey 2012, 2013). When Athor was killed in combat in December 2012 after having fought a deadly campaign[32] in Jonglei and three other states that was heavily aided by Sudanese material support including weapons (Small Arms Survey 2011a), his

[31] See Tab.1 in the appendix for a table including casualty data for all battle events between the SSLM/A and state security forces recorded by UCDP. Note, however, that this data may underestimate deaths in conflicts fought in remote areas and in countries with a restricted or non-English language media (Eck 2012; Restrepo et al. 2006). Hence, actual battle deaths for all conflicts treated here may actually be higher. A case in point is the count of battle-related deaths for the conflict between Lou Nuer and Murle in 2009. UCDP data (Sundberg et al. 2012) estimates a fatality number of 1195 (see Tab.4 in the appendix) while Thomas, citing a South Sudan-specific source, states that over 2000 deaths were recorded in that conflict year (Thomas 2015:218).

[32] See Tab.2 in the appendix for a table including casualty data for all battle events between Athor's SSDM/A and state security forces recorded by UCDP.

successor agreed to reintegrate into the SPLA, taking a majority of the SSDM/A's force with him (Small Arms Survey 2013).

However, two factions of the group continued to fight: Johnson Olony's faction, mainly consisting of ethnic Shilluk like himself, continued activity along the border of Upper Nile and South Kordofan, allegedly being based in the latter and skirmishing with the SPLA-N there while also receiving material support and training from the SAF (ibid.). The group only integrated into the SPLA in 2013 under the same amnesty that also brought the remaining SSLM/A leaders into Juba's fold after Olony received an ultimatum from the Shilluk king[33] to end his fight (ICG 2016; Small Arms Survey 2013). The second SSDM/A offshoot still active after Athor's death was David Yau Yau's SSDM/A-Cobra faction that had already accepted amnesty three months before Athor's death and had only been able to muster ca. 200 fighters at that time (Todisco 2015). Yau Yau, an ethnic Murle, revived his insurgency in summer 2012 after going to Khartoum some months earlier. There he was joined by former members of the SAF and of a Murle militia that fought alongside the SAF in the second Sudanese civil war while also acquiring substantial support from a Sudanese intelligence service (Thomas 2015; Todisco 2015). To justify his second insurgency, Yau Yau cited the political marginalization of the Murle and a violent disarmament campaign carried out against them from March 2012 on (Lebrun & Leff 2014; Thomas 2015) but was also seemingly discontent with the rank he had acquired in the SPLA after his first insurgency (Todisco 2015). The disarmament campaign meant that many people did not have any weapons, this enabled SSDM/A-Cobra – receiving airdrops of weapons from Khartoum (LeBrun & Leff 2014) – to recruit large numbers of Murle youth into its forces as this meant access to rearmament (Todisco 2015; LeBrun & Leff 2014). But while the SSDM/A-Cobra was active in Jonglei since August 2012, it only began to acquire substantial support in mid-2013 after SPLA forces had been indiscriminately targeting Murle civilians and also arming other ethnic groups to do so, the idea of a separate federal region for the minorities of the state was endorsed the same year (Todisco 2015). Hence, Yau Yau's faction became able to engage in significant combat with the SPLA in 2013[34], leading to a peace agreement between the two belligerents in January 2014 that arranged for the

[33] Olony appears to be genuinely motivated to further the Shilluk cause and first became active in 2010 after land disputes between the Shilluk community and the Upper Nile government and a violent SPLA campaign to disarm the group (Small Arms Survey 2013; Young 2015).

[34] See Tab.3 in the appendix for a table including casualty data for all battle events between the SSDM/A-Cobra and state security forces recorded by UCDP.

establishment of an autonomous administrative unit including two counties of Jonglei as well as the transformation of the group's forces into the state security forces responsible for that area (Rolandsen et al. 2015; Todisco 2015). Juba was ready to hand out this deal in order to prevent a coalition between the SSDM/A-Cobra and the SPLA-IO, accordingly the former has largely refrained from joining the current civil war[35].

This is in contrast to the other commanders discussed here: Some of the leaders of the SSLM/A have become "the effective rulers of Unity at present" (Craze 2016:6) while siding with the SPLA in the conflict (Craze & Tubiana 2016). Peter Gadet defected from the SPLA at the start of the war and took large parts of the division he commanded at the time with him (Young 2015), becoming the SPLA-IO military commander for Unity state, but failed to win substantial support from his own ethnic group, the Bul Nuer, for the insurgency (Craze & Tubiana 2016). Gadet was dismissed from the group's leadership in 2015[36] (Young 2015) and is now located in Khartoum but may become active if the Sudanese government decides to support insurgents in South Sudan again (Craze & Tubiana 2016): In what may be a turning point of the war, Sudan and South Sudan have very recently agreed to stop supporting each other's rebel groups (ICG 2016). While the SPLA-IO had previously received ammunition and weapons from Khartoum sufficient to at least keep up the fight if not take it to the enemy (Craze & Tubiana 2016), it is now faced by a dearth of external support causing a lack of supplies (ICG 2016). Thus, while the SPLA-IO still has substantial forces in Equatoria and Bahr el Ghazal, some of its smaller factions may be pressured into accepting a peace deal from Juba (ibid.); this also concerns Johnson Olony's troops who are the SPLA-IO's best-armed faction after defecting from Juba in May 2015 but may be amenable to switch sides again if no support is forthcoming and the Government is willing to offer a deal similar to the one Yau Yau got (ibid.).

However, it is also argued that the SPLA-IO will have to execute significant offensive action in the upcoming dry season in order to re-enter negotiations with Juba: When

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[35] One SSDM/A-Cobra commander defected to the SPLA-IO in February 2015, this was argued to be an individual case though (Todisco 2015). Cobra forces under a new commander took up arms against Juba in late September 2016 though (VOA News 2016b; Radio Tamazuji 2016a) and were joined by a Murle SPLA General and his troops claimed to be more than 5000 fighters strong (Radio Tamazuji 2016b).

[36] A group of SPLA-IO military leaders including Gadet had written a letter to Khartoum criticizing the SPLA-IO's political leaders and asking to provide support directly to them. This caused the dismissal of most of them.

Machar fled the capital, he was replaced as vice president by Taban Deng Gai who had formerly been in the SPLA-IO's political leadership and its chief negotiator and now claimed to represent the group in the Government of National Unity mandated by the 2015 peace deal (Craze & Tubiana 2016; Kindersley & Rolandsen 2016). While this was furiously denied and called a defection by Machar and a majority of SPLA-IO forces, it was accepted by Juba and the international community (Craze 2016). It remains to be seen if the SPLA-IO will be able to fight its way back to the negotiation table or if its recent lack of external support and supplies will prevent this. This chapter has described the most prominent smaller insurgencies taking place in South Sudan between 2010 and 2013 as well as the country's recent civil war, focusing on the dynamics of their intensity and its possible relationship with rebel groups' procurement of arms. While neither fully reliable data on the lethality of each insurgencies battle events nor on the amount and timing of external support for insurgent groups treated here is available, it is nonetheless possible to detect some interesting patterns: Both Gadet's SSLM/A and Athor's SSDM/A received accommodation from Juba after fighting short but deadly insurgencies[37] as did the post-Gadet SSLM/A after having some substantial clashes with the SPLA in March 2013 and fighting its ally SPLA-N later that year. The SSDM/A-Cobra also received an accommodating peace deal even after causing less conflict intensity than the other groups but was most likely aided in this by the additional danger its possible coalition with SPLA-IO would have meant to Juba. All these groups received substantial material support from Khartoum and in Athor's case Asmara; both Gadet and Yau Yau had even travelled to the Sudanese capital before declaring their struggle to make sure that they would receive sufficient weapons and ammunition to carry out an efficient insurgency. Such careful planning was apparently not afforded to the SPLA-IO but it was nonetheless able to begin negotiations with Juba in early 2014 due to international pressure (Rolandsen & Daly 2016). Their main result, a government of national unity in place since April 2016, was changed significantly after Machar's flight when Taban Deng Gai assumed the office of vice president. This change caused the SPLA-IO to lose both its negotiation position and external support from Khartoum and has at least one author expecting it to try fight its way back into the negotiations.

[37] Gadet's insurgency caused 320 casualties in battle events distributed over three months. Extrapolating from this to a full year the conflict would have qualified as a full scale civil war with more than 1000 battle deaths.

It seems clear that external support played a significant role shaping the insurgencies described here, but not always quite in the way implied by the theory set out previously: While the cases of the SSLM/A and Athor's SSDM/A fit in as expected by being settled quickly after short but intense conflicts that were preceded by the procurement of significant arms, the insurgencies of Yau Yau's and Olonys SSDM/A factions point to a different story. That Yau Yau received a favourable settlement one month after a much larger insurgency had started may be understood to mean that different conflict dyads including the government of a country do very much influence each other. Here, they lowered the government's threshold of costs a group had to inflict before a settlement was negotiated as the existence of another conflict dyad made the future costs the group would be able to cause appear much higher. Contra Walter (2009b), it also seems that when faced with a new, dangerous insurgency, a government may actually look to settle smaller insurgencies in order to prevent having to fight on multiple fronts[38]. The integration of Olony's faction, on the other hand, implies that just as some individuals and groups rebel because of grievances pertaining to exclusion or nonmaterial reasons like ideology or religion – as Olony and many individuals Yau Yau recruited in 2013 probably did – they can also stop doing so for the same reasons, even on an organizational level: While Olony had first refused Juba's 2013 amnesty offer, he later took it not after its terms had been changed but due to the intervention of the highest authority of the community he perceived himself to be fighting for. The case of the SPLA-IO's fight against Juba centres the importance of continual resupplies for fighting a drawn out war while also providing some additional evidence that offenses and the concurrent increase in conflict intensity are interpreted as signalling an insurgent group's military capacity and hence the necessity to enter negotiations with them. The cases discussed here have further implications for the bargaining theory of conflict intensity and weapons procurement described above that will be discussed in chapter five. The next section extends the theoretical framework to provide a short examination of communal groups and how the intensity of their conflicts both with the government and other non-state groups may be influenced by arms procurements.

[38] I have previously argued that governments like the one in South Sudan, consisting of a small ruling elite with a short time horizon, would be more likely to look for insurgents signalling their capacity. These same attributes may also work to make a government more willing to accommodate smaller insurgencies when faced with a powerful opponent as the option to enter a power sharing agreement with this one present opponent may be viewed as more costly than to buy off less threatening and thus 'cheaper' groups and be faced with more opponents in a future perceived as distant.

4.3 Conflict, intensity and arms procurement by communal groups

Armed conflict between communal groups follows different temporal patterns than fighting between insurgents and a government. While the latter lasted more than four years in the period from 1946 to 2005 on average (Kreutz 2010), conflict between loosely organized communal actors is characterised by "short outbursts followed by […] equally rapid de-escalation" (Melander at al. 2016:730). Accordingly, while the UCDP counts 19 such conflicts in South Sudan since 2005, twelve of them were only active for one year and merely two saw at least 25 battle deaths in more than three years[39]. One of them, between Nuer and Dinka, caused an estimated 500 fatalities between 2010 and 2015 while the other one was fought by Murle and Lou Nuer from 2006 to 2013 and caused over 3,000 battle deaths[40].

These conflicts were of course not fought by whole ethnic groups but by specific parts of them organized as security providers. As previously mentioned, membership in such segments of a group is rather loose, hence, up to 50% of a community may have participated in a group's actions at some point (Schomerus & Rigterink 2016). While these defence groups generally lack a clear top-down structure of command and decision making (Young 2016), the Nuer *dec bor* have a pyramid-like organizational structure that enables them to gather and coordinate even large amounts of forces (Breidlid & Arensen 2014) and Equatoria's Arrow Boys at least feature clear local command structures (Schomerus & Rigterink 2016). Control over these groups can mostly be enacted by traditional authorities of the respective community like chiefs and village elders but also prophets[41] (Hutchinson & Pendle 2015; Young 2016). While defence groups are organized along ethnic lines in most cases – mirroring the deep entrenchment of ethnicity in the politics and societal organization of South(-ern) Sudan since at least colonial times (Leonardi 2011; Rolandsen 2015; Thomas 2015) – and conflicts between them can therefore be described as taking place between 'Nuer' and 'Dinka', it is not the case that they follow some tribal logic where different ethnic groups fight each other because of a deep-seated hatred: instead, they are regularly fought not between ethnic groups but

[39] For a list of communal conflicts recorded by UCDP in South Sudan, 2005–2015, see Tab.4 in the appendix.

[40] I focus on these two conflicts due to their lethality, longevity and general relevance as they account for two thirds of all battle fatalities in communal conflicts in South Sudan and also for a third of conflict years.

[41] The *dec bor* have been described to have been instigated to attack the Murle and Dinka by prophets named Dak Kueth and Nyachol, respectively (Hutchinson & Pendle 2015; Young 2016) while other Nuer prophets have been argued to promote peace between the different ethnic groups (Hutchinson & Pendle 2015).

between clans or segments of one group (Johnson 2009; Breidlid & Arensen 2014; Pendle 2014) as even the *dec bor* have separate command structures for different clans (Young 2016) and are generally described as being instigated by elites looking for a personal gain in power and status[42], an opinion that is also shared by both Nuer and Dinka community leaders (Hutchinson 2009).
Both Machar and Kiir have followed this logic of ethnic mobilization in the current conflict: the former has managed to pull large parts of the *dec bor* on the side of the SPLA-IO[43] whose fighting force has subsequently been dominated by this group without integrating it completely though (Breidlid & Arensen 2014; Young 2016). Kiir, on the other hand, began mobilizing the *Mathiang Anyoor*, a militia consisting of Dinka *titweng*[44] from his home region, in 2012, had them stationed in Juba in the following year where they participated heavily in the December 2013 violence and then proceeded to formally integrate them into the SPLA in early 2014 (Pendle 2015; Warner 2016). The *Mathiang Anyoor* had been mobilized by the provision of material supplies including arms (Pendle 2015; Small Arms Survey 2013) and their involvement in the current civil war has been argued to have contributed substantially to the construction of the Nuer as homogenously hostile to both the government and the Dinka (Pendle 2015) and consequentially a politicization of ethnicity sufficient to cause concerns over a possible genocide.
Comparable arming of communal groups took place in 2011 when the government supplied weapons to Murle youth to fight David Yau Yau's first insurgency (LeBrun & Leff 2014), probably in an attempt to capitalize on the conflict between different Murle age sets Yau Yau was involved in (Todisco 2015). More influential were the weapons George Athor provided to Lou Nuer youth in order to have them fight the government but that were subsequently used to carry out large scale raids on Murle (LeBrun & Leff 2014; Rolandsen & Breidlid 2012; Small Arms Survey 2011). Somewhat ironically, Athor also provided weapons to Yau Yau who passed them on to Murle defence groups after receiving an amnesty in September 2011; these weapons were then used to attack Lou Nuer communities (Todisco 2015; Brosché & Höglund 2016). Hence, the weapons Athor gave out to increase his military capacity and further his

[42] Compare e.g. Breidlid & Arensen (2014), Johnson (2009), Rolandesn & Daly (2016), Brosché & Höglund 2016, Scherr 2016 and Leonardi & Santschi 2016.
[43] The provision of arms and ammunition seems not to have been decisive in doing so as the *dec bor* have been described to mainly get their weapons on the battlefield (Young 2016), carrying out attacks against the SPLA and even UNAMISS peacekeepers (Berman & Racovita 2015) for this reason.
[44] *Titweng* were also the main Dinka combatants in their conflict with the Nuer.

political aims ended up on both sides of the most lethal one of South Sudan's communal conflicts and were instrumental in making 2011 the year with its highest death count. This dynamic of the government or insurgents trying to pull a communal group on its side by providing weapons in order to increase its military capacity is hardly new to South(-ern) Sudan and has been described for both the first (Hutchinson 1996) and the second civil war (ibid.; Johnson 2009; Rolandsen & Daly 2016); the results have also been similar as such provisions increased the intensity of inter- and intraethnic fighting during both wars and lead to what have been termed the "Nuer civil wars" (Johnson 2009:31) when Riek Machar established a SPLA splinter group in 1991 and subsequently transferred Khartoum-sourced weapons to Lou, Jawar and Jikany Nuer[45] (Rolandsen & Daly 2016; Johnson 2009; Young 2016; Hutchinson 1996).

While the *Mathiang Anyoor* and *dec bor* are the most prominent communal defence groups active in the current civil war, the recent emergence of intense fighting in Equatoria has also brought defence militias into the conflict there: having been neutral for most of the war (Schomerus & Rigterink 2016), parts of the Arrow Boys started attacking government forces in late 2015 after receiving military support from the SPLA-IO (Young 2016; Maihack 2016). More generally, Equatoria has seen a recent proliferation of small armed groups engaging in violence against the SPLA but also civilians thought to be Dinka (Panel of Experts on South Sudan 2016). This is attributed to local grievances over land disputes between Equatorians and former Internally Displaced Persons and soldiers who moved to the region after the CPA[46] (Bohnet 2016; Justin & van Leeuwen 2016). Similar conflicts between the SPLA and local militias already existed during the second Civil War and coincided with Sudanese support for the latter (Young 2016). Unsurprisingly, a number of small Equatorian groups have allied themselves to the SPLA-IO but due to the SPLA-IO's current struggles with obtaining supplies it seems unlikely that they receive substantial materiel (ICG 2016).

I have argued above that communal groups in armed conflict should behave similarly to insurgent groups in that they want to signal military capacity to their adversaries

[45] These transfers and the subsequent use of the weapons for intra- and interethnic raiding have been described as the beginning of both the *dec bor* and the *titweng*, their militarization being subsequently fuelled by frequent raids and counter-raids between the two groups (Young 2016; Pendle 2015).

[46] These people claim to have a legitimate right to land in the region as they fought and suffered for the liberation of South Sudan while Equatoria was largely spared from intense fighting during the second Sudanese Civil War and only experienced some conflict between local defence groups and the SPLA (Schomerus & Rigterink 2016; Leonardi 2011).

and would also engage in increased violence against the opponent of the actor that brought about a rise in military capacity for them. The cases discussed here give credibility to the first notion as the most intense communal conflict in South Sudan took place between two groups heavily armed by insurgent groups. The second most intense conflict was fought between two groups that were or had been given arms by either the SPLA / Juba or Machar and similar patterns have also been described in accounts of Sudan's previous civil wars. The existence of the latter mechanism is less clear as the literature doesn't make any mention of attacks on government forces carried out by Lou Nuer or Murle groups armed by Athor or Yau Yau, respectively. However, the Arrow Boys' entry into the current conflict has been argued to have taken place after receiving materiel from the SPLA-IO, indicating that such a mechanism may have been at play here. Hence, while the procurement of weapons by communal groups seems have the expected influence on conflict between these groups, there is rather scant evidence for such an influence on the groups' fighting behaviour against the enemy of the actor providing the arms[47].

5 Discussion:
Implications of the case for a bargaining theory of Conflict intensity

On the preceding pages I have advanced an argument for why the procurement of weapons by armed non-state groups engaged in conflict should lead to an increase in conflict intensity. Based on bargaining theory mainly used to explain the onset and termination of inter- and intrastate armed conflicts (Fearon 1995; Powell 2006; Walter 2002, 2009a, 2009b), I have argued that since insurgents have to signal a certain military capacity to the government they are fighting in order to get accommodated but military capacity may change throughout a conflict, insurgents attempt to showcase any positive changes in their capacities during a conflict in order to receive a settlement. To signal their capacity, the argument goes, they can either increase their staying power as costs inflicted on the government accrue over the duration of a conflict or they can choose to increase the intensity of their fighting. Higher fighting

[47] One reason for this may be that individuals that have received weapons from an organized group are viewed as being part of that group when fighting the group's enemy. Cases in point may be David Yau Yau's arming of Murle Youth in 2012 and the creation of the *Mathiang Anyoor*: In both cases groups of individuals received weapons to fight an 'official' enemy as members of the militia but were not and could not be hindered from using them for other purposes, too (Todisco 2015; Pendle 2015). Thus, they may have been perceived to be members of the SSDM/A-Cobra or Mathiang Anyoor in the first case but Dinka or Murle Youth in the second.

intensity leads to more costs for the government and hence makes a settlement in the near future more likely. Since actors in armed conflicts have been argued to be impatient but risk-taking in the short-term (Bates et al. 2002; Bates 2008; Voor et al. 2012; Callen et al. 2014), I have theorized that the procurement of weapons and the subsequent rise in military capacity induce armed groups to increase the intensity of their fighting, leading to a higher conflict intensity.

In order to examine the argument's validity and understand whether it has any explanatory power in the analysis of real world cases, I have scrutinized the behaviour of armed groups in South Sudan engaged in conflict against the government but also against other non-state actors, finding that the bargaining theory of conflict intensity has its merits in the cases discussed here: a number of insurgencies taking place around the time of South Sudan's independence in 2011 were settled after causing short and intense fighting and lead to bargains that included material and financial benefits to the former insurgents as well as a rise in power for their commanders. Strikingly, all major insurgencies predating the current civil war received external backing in the form of weapons shipments and some insurgent leaders even went to Khartoum to ensure sufficient material support would be provided before declaring their fights.

While the pattern of these conflicts can therefore be interpreted to fit the theoretical argument perfectly, some other cases of conflict in independent South Sudan may be understood to point at details where the argument may be underdeveloped: the decision of an insurgent faction to agree to a settlement it had previously refused after the intervention of their community's foremost traditional authority may be interpreted to mean that even in South Sudan, a case selected due to the high probability of behaviour consistent with purely 'economic' considerations of money and power, insurgents do not only want to obtain a certain level of accommodation but also want to do so without running afoul of the community they are based in[48]. A further case where an insurgent group received a comparably lavish accommodation deal one month after the start of the civil war could be read to convey that different insurgencies interact in an unexpected way: There, the South Sudanese government was apparently ready to give out substantial concessions to one insurgent group in

[48] It may be argued that such behaviour actually corresponds with an economic understanding of armed conflict as it not only fits notions of immaterial benefits (Wood 2003; Oliver 1993) but also maintains the group's legitimacy as fighting for their community, allowing them to recruit from there. Conflict with community authorities could have led to a loss of legitimacy, a decrease in recruiting and hence a loss of military capacity.

order to better be able to concentrate on a larger, more dangerous one and prevent an alliance between the two. Both according to Walter (2009b) and the argument made in this paper the more dangerous and hence cost-inducing group should have been accommodated; the fact that accommodating the smaller group was possible by creating an autonomous region while the larger group looked to oust the government from power or at least obtain a significant share of posts in a coalition government implies that more attention should be paid to the different concessions necessary to accommodate different insurgent groups.

Current events in South Sudan's civil war further corroborate that the theoretical argument exhibits substantial explanatory power while also presenting relevant avenues for further development: In the face of recently losing its seat at the negotiation table, the main opposition group is expected to attempt to fight its way back there by carrying out an offense, this underscores the idea that conflict intensity is used for bargaining purposes. However, the group is also facing a severe lack of resupplies after losing external support, leading one to wonder whether it will be able to mount an offense sufficient to re-enter negotiations. Even though this further shows the relevance of material support, it emphasizes that not only weapons but a steady supply of food and ammunition is necessary to carry out all but the shortest insurgencies.

While these points extend the logic proposed here but leave its foundation intact, namely the idea that insurgents attempt to get accommodation from a government by signalling their capacity, some of the evidence collected and analysed here actually challenges this basic framework. Juba engaged in a large scale program of integrating armed non-state groups into its security forces right after the CPA was signed and continued to offer integration to a surprisingly high share of insurgent groups until the onset of the Civil War. And during this war, there has been a constant pattern of commanders on both sides defecting from their organizations, only to sometimes re-defect to the side they had originally been fighting for. This raises the question whether it is sensible to conceive only the government of the country a conflict is fought in as capable of accommodating an armed group or whether organizations that bring together various opposition groups (e.g. the SPLA-IO) and potential outside instigators like the Sudanese government should also be

treated as possible sources of accommodation[49]. Their inclusion into the theory proposed here would significantly increase its complexity while decreasing its parsimony but may be necessary to properly explain some complex cases of armed intrastate conflict.

It was further argued that insurgent groups may look to hand out surplus weapons to communally organized groups in order to mobilize them for their struggle and increase their military capacity, signalling this would require the mobilized communal groups to attack the government and hence intensify the insurgent groups fighting. Communal groups that had received weapons this way were also argued to look to capitalize on them by attacking rival groups and showcasing their increased military power. In accordance with the second argument, communal groups that had received weapons from insurgents or the government have engaged in intensified conflicts throughout the history of South(-ern) Sudan and the bloodiest recent conflict between two such groups was fought with weapons provided by insurgent groups. While this should be interpreted as evidence for the mechanism described above, it is not completely clear whether bargaining logic is actually at play here as it was impossible to find reports on peace settlements between communal groups after intense fighting. Thus, even though evidence (Turton 1991; Pendle 2014) exists to suggest that such fighting-to-bargain takes place in some societies in Ethiopia and South Sudan, more fieldwork and research would be necessary to determine if this is more generally the case in armed conflict between communal groups.

A similar constraint applies to the first argument relating to the behaviour of communal groups: While various insurgent groups in South Sudan have provided weapons to communities to mobilize them to fight for their cause, only minor evidence exists that this actually took place afterwards. However, the continuing provision of arms to communal groups by insurgents suggests that it can't be completely unsuccessful, otherwise this practice would most likely have stopped or become rarer. One issue possibly at play here is the question of how to differentiate between members of insurgent groups and members of communal groups acting on behalf of the former. To properly distinguish between the two, it would not only be necessary to have information on their respective loyalties and command structure

[49] Seymour (2014) does just this in his examination of determinants of side-switching by armed groups in Darfur and the second Sudanese Civil War, treating both the government of Sudan and the then-insurgent SPLA as capable of bargaining with armed groups fighting for their opponent. Similarly, Khartoum could be regarded as a constant threat to finance insurgent groups in South Sudan unless Juba would buy up all possible armed groups first.

but also to figure out how to categorize individuals that sometimes fight under the command of an insurgent commander against the insurgent group's enemy yet also engage in communal conflict. Further research would be required to ascertain how such a differentiation could work and if it would actually be sensible; the alternative being treating all combatants fighting against the government with weapons provided by a given group as members of that group and ignoring the potentially relevant differences in aims, command structures and control group leaders may have over them.

6 Conclusion

This paper offers a theoretical argument for why one should expect a connection between armed groups procuring weapons and the intensity of the conflict they are fighting in, thereby contributing to a literature on conflict intensity that has found statistical evidence for this correlation but has up to now lacked compelling explanations for it. Following well-known applications of bargaining theory in civil war settings, it has been argued that groups fighting the state aim to obtain a favourable settlement from their opponent while the state is incentivized to only settle with strong insurgent groups as accommodating weak groups would trigger future rebellions. From this basic idea, the paper has developed a bargaining theory of intensity which rests on the notions that military capacity is dynamic and that insurgents have to send credible signals about their capacity to the state in order to get accommodated; signals may be sent by prolonging a conflict or intensifying it, based on findings that actors in armed conflict have short time-horizons, it has been argued that insurgents that procure weapons would subsequently look to signal this increase in military capacity by increasing their fighting against the state, thereby raising conflict intensity.

A first qualitative application of this theory has been provided by examining conflicts in South Sudan. There it could be demonstrated that the bargaining theory of intensity is consistent with patterns of armed insurgencies while also offering up promising avenues of extension in order to better explain the intensity of more drawn out armed conflicts or to account for a complex multiplicity of actors. The theoretical framework has also been applied to conflict between communally organized non-state groups. While these groups appear to behave similarly to insurgent groups, a

lack of evidence that conflict intensity actually leads to negotiations between opposing groups has to qualify the finding that the bargaining theory of intensity applies to communal conflicts. For similar reasons, the question whether insurgents' provision of arms to communal groups leads to increased intensity in the insurgents' conflict with the state could not be treated in detail; while some minor evidence exists for this mechanism, no substantial conclusions should be drawn from it. The bargaining theory of intensity developed here could therefore be shown to have significant explanatory power regarding the complex conflicts that were active in South Sudan between 2005 and 2016. Future research on the link between arms and conflict intensity may include further qualitative, case-based applications of the theory but also quantitative analyses of multiple cases in order to evaluate the theory's more general applicability.

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Appendix

Tables

	best_est	year	state	side_a	side_b	date_start	date_end
626.	24	2011	Unity state	Government of Sudan	SSLM/A	2011-03-23	2011-03-26
627.	104	2011	Unity state	Government of Sudan	SSLM/A	2011-04-01	2011-05-31
635.	0	2011	Unity state	Government of Sudan	SSLM/A	2011-04-19	2011-04-19
636.	49	2011	Unity state	Government of Sudan	SSLM/A	2011-04-19	2011-04-22
637.	11	2011	Unity state	Government of Sudan	SSLM/A	2011-04-19	2011-04-22
638.	5	2011	Unity state	Government of Sudan	SSLM/A	2011-04-19	2011-04-22
639.	20	2011	Unity state	Government of Sudan	SSLM/A	2011-04-19	2011-04-19
640.	2	2011	Unity state	Government of Sudan	SSLM/A	2011-04-19	2011-04-19
641.	12	2011	Unity state	Government of Sudan	SSLM/A	2011-04-19	2011-04-21
642.	2	2011	Unity state	Government of Sudan	SSLM/A	2011-04-22	2011-04-22
651.	8	2011	Unity state	Government of Sudan	SSLM/A	2011-05-03	2011-05-03
655.	11	2011	Unity state	Government of Sudan	SSLM/A	2011-05-08	2011-05-09
663.	10	2011	Unity state	Government of Sudan	SSLM/A	2011-05-20	2011-05-21
670.	4	2011	Unity state	Government of Sudan	SSLM/A	2011-06-02	2011-06-02
700.	58	2011	Warrap state	Government of Sudan	SSLM/A	2011-06-13	2011-06-13
743.	24	2011	Unity state	Government of South Sudan	SSLM/A	2011-10-01	2011-12-21
747.	0	2011	Unity state	Government of South Sudan	SSLM/A	2011-10-09	2011-10-09
752.	78	2011	Unity state	Government of South Sudan	SSLM/A	2011-10-29	2011-10-29
753.	6	2011	Unity state	Government of South Sudan	SSLM/A	2011-10-29	2011-10-30
756.	0	2011	Unity state	Government of South Sudan	SSLM/A	2011-11-01	2011-11-03
757.	3	2011	Unity state	Government of South Sudan	SSLM/A	2011-11-07	2011-11-08
808.	127	2012	Unity state	Government of South Sudan	SSLM/A	2012-03-27	2012-03-27
810.	2	2012	Unity state	Government of South Sudan	SSLM/A	2012-03-27	2012-03-27
811.	8	2012	Unity state	Government of South Sudan	SSLM/A	2012-03-30	2012-03-30

Tab. 1: Number of Deaths for all battle events between the SSLM/A and state security forces as recorded by the UCDP Georeferenced Events Dataset (Sundberg & Melander 2013; Croicu & Sundberg 2015).

	best_est	year	state	side_a	side_b	date_start	date_end
519.	15	2010	Upper Nile state	Government of Sudan	SSDM/A	2010-04-30	2010-04-30
520.	16	2010	Jonglei state	Government of Sudan	SSDM/A	2010-04-30	2010-11-30
524.	3	2010	Jonglei state	Government of Sudan	SSDM/A	2010-05-07	2010-05-07
525.	5	2010	Jonglei state	Government of Sudan	SSDM/A	2010-05-10	2010-05-10
526.	6	2010	Jonglei state	Government of Sudan	SSDM/A	2010-05-12	2010-05-12
529.	5	2010	Jonglei state	Government of Sudan	SSDM/A	2010-05-14	2010-05-14
546.	8	2010	Jonglei state	Government of Sudan	SSDM/A	2010-06-15	2010-06-15
578.	12	2010	Jonglei state	Government of Sudan	SSDM/A	2010-12-18	2010-12-19
580.	20	2010	Jonglei state	Government of Sudan	SSDM/A	2010-12-19	2010-12-19
598.	89	2011	Jonglei state	Government of Sudan	SSDM/A	2011-02-09	2011-02-10
600.	74	2011	Jonglei state	Government of Sudan	SSDM/A	2011-02-09	2011-02-10
601.	34	2011	Jonglei state	Government of Sudan	SSDM/A	2011-02-09	2011-02-10
602.	44	2011	Jonglei state	Government of Sudan	SSDM/A	2011-02-09	2011-02-10
603.	16	2011	Jonglei state	Government of Sudan	SSDM/A	2011-02-09	2011-02-10
607.	2	2011	Jonglei state	Government of Sudan	SSDM/A	2011-02-25	2011-02-25
609.	40	2011	Jonglei state	Government of Sudan	SSDM/A	2011-02-27	2011-02-27
612.	17	2011	Jonglei state	Government of Sudan	SSDM/A	2011-02-28	2011-02-28
613.	25	2011	Jonglei state	Government of Sudan	SSDM/A	2011-02-28	2011-02-28
616.	4	2011	Jonglei state	Government of Sudan	SSDM/A	2011-03-04	2011-03-05
618.	37	2011	Jonglei state	Government of Sudan	SSDM/A	2011-03-07	2011-03-07
619.	14	2011	Jonglei state	Government of Sudan	SSDM/A	2011-03-07	2011-03-07
621.	77	2011	Jonglei state	Government of Sudan	SSDM/A	2011-03-07	2011-03-07
622.	19	2011	Jonglei state	Government of Sudan	SSDM/A	2011-03-08	2011-03-08
721.	60	2011	Upper Nile state	Government of South Sudan	SSDM/A	2011-08-19	2011-08-20
761.	19	2011	Jonglei state	Government of South Sudan	SSDM/A	2011-11-16	2011-11-20
777.	17	2011	Jonglei state	Government of South Sudan	SSDM/A	2011-12-11	2011-12-11
780.	3	2011	Central Equatoria state	Government of South Sudan	SSDM/A	2011-12-19	2011-12-19
819.	21	2012	West Bahr-al-Ghazal state	Government of South Sudan	SSDM/A	2012-04-27	2012-04-28

Tab. 2: Number of Deaths for all battle events between the SSDM/A and state security forces as recorded by the UCDP Georeferenced Events Dataset (Sundberg & Melander 2013; Croicu & Sundberg 2015).

	deaths	year	state	side_a	side_b	date_start	date_end
742.	2	2011	Jonglei state	Government of South Sudan	SSDM/A - Cobra Faction	2011-09-26	2011-09-26
762.	4	2011	Jonglei state	Government of South Sudan	SSDM/A - Cobra Faction	2011-11-16	2011-11-16
863.	2	2013	Jonglei state	Government of South Sudan	SSDM/A - Cobra Faction	2013-04-27	2013-04-27
868.	4	2013	Jonglei state	Government of South Sudan	SSDM/A - Cobra Faction	2013-05-19	2013-05-19
869.	30	2013	Jonglei state	Government of South Sudan	SSDM/A - Cobra Faction	2013-05-22	2013-05-22
876.	40	2013	Jonglei state	Government of South Sudan	SSDM/A - Cobra Faction	2013-10-20	2013-10-20

Tab. 3: Number of Deaths for all battle events between the SSDM/A-Cobra and state security forces as recorded by the UCDP Georeferenced Events Dataset (Sundberg & Melander 2013; Croicu & Sundberg 2015).

	dyadid	sidea	sideb	year	bestfa~e
17.	2-105	Lou Nuer	Murle	2006	150
18.	2-105	Lou Nuer	Murle	2007	60
19.	2-105	Lou Nuer	Murle	2009	1195
20.	2-105	Lou Nuer	Murle	2011	1415
21.	2-105	Lou Nuer	Murle	2012	424
22.	2-105	Lou Nuer	Murle	2013	118
23.	2-106	Hol Dinka	Lou Nuer	2008	31
24.	2-106	Hol Dinka	Lou Nuer	2009	237
79.	2-11810	Amothnhon Dinka	Panyon Dinka	2013	25
246.	2-14678	Luac Jang Dinka	Thiyic Dinka	2015	92
249.	2-14724	Kuei Dinka, Pakam Dinka	Rup Dinka	2015	78
370.	2-20	Agar Dinka	Gok Dinka	2006	60
557.	2-32	Bor Dinka	Murle	2007	106
558.	2-32	Bor Dinka	Murle	2011	44
559.	2-32	Bor Dinka	Murle	2012	118
564.	2-322	Dinka	Nuer	2010	228
565.	2-322	Dinka	Nuer	2011	133
566.	2-322	Dinka	Nuer	2013	44
567.	2-322	Dinka	Nuer	2015	100
569.	2-323	Jikany Nuer	Lou Nuer	2009	71
615.	2-353	Ngok Dinka	Shiluk	2009	121
617.	2-356	Bor Dinka	Mundari	2009	37
618.	2-357	Aliap Dinka	Mundari	2009	52
619.	2-358	Luac Jang Dinka	Awan Dinka	2009	30
732.	2-424	Gok Dinka	Rek Dinka	2010	28
733.	2-424	Gok Dinka	Rek Dinka	2012	81
738.	2-427	Atuot Dinka	Ciek Dinka	2010	27
786.	2-456	Misseriya	Ngok Dinka	2011	212
787.	2-456	Misseriya	Ngok Dinka	2014	55
788.	2-456	Misseriya	Ngok Dinka	2015	47
789.	2-457	Gony Dinka	Thiyic Dinka	2011	95
830.	2-492	Bul Nuer	Luac Jang Dinka	2012	87
831.	2-494	Balanda	Dinka	2012	28

Tab. 4: Years of communal conflict and their respective battle deaths as recorded by the UCDP Non-State Conflict Dataset (Sundberg et al. 2012; Melander et al. 2016).

Figures

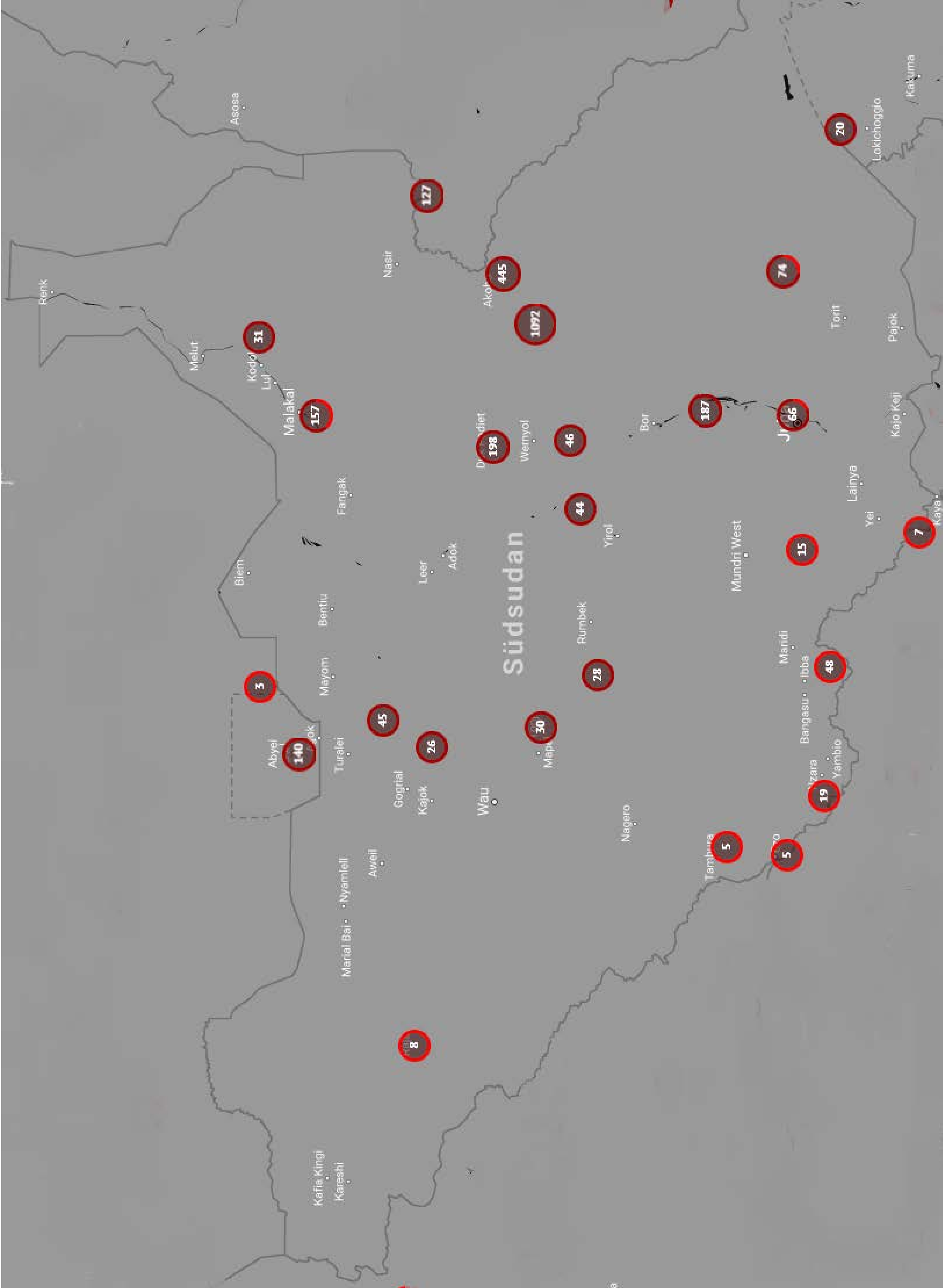

Fig. 1: Map of locations of all battle deaths recorded by UCDP in South Sudan, 2005-2010. Figures describe the number of people killed at each location. Lighter red indicates battle events to have taken place with the participation of government forces while darker red indicates that fighting took place between non-state actors. Source: UCDP 2016.

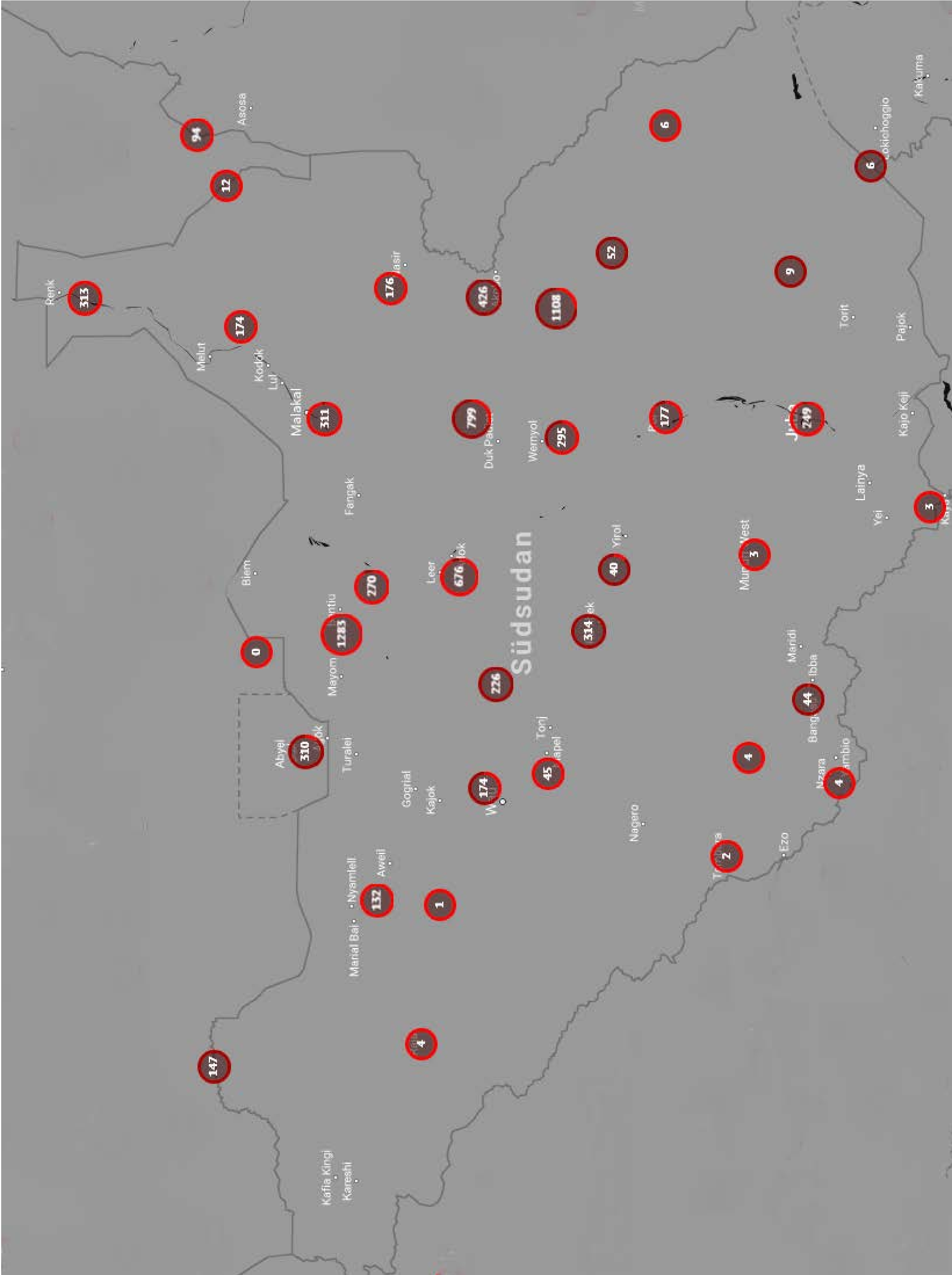

Fig. 2: Map of locations of all battle deaths recorded by UCDP in South Sudan, 2011-2015. Figures describe the number of people killed at each location. Lighter red indicates battle events to have taken place with the participation of government forces while darker red indicates that fighting took place between non-state actors. Source: UCDP 2016.

Das Felsberger Institut

Das ‚Felsberger Institut für Wissenschaft und Bildung e.V.' (FI) ist ein gemeinnütziger, eingetragener Verein mit dem Ziel, Kritikfähigkeit, Toleranz, kreative Betätigung, solidarisches Verhalten, internationale Gesinnung und Völkerverständigung anzuregen und zu fördern. Hierzu betreibt das Institut interdisziplinäre wissenschaftliche Forschung, initiiert Bildungsmaßnahmen, und ermöglicht Begegnungen.
Neben vergleichender Friedens- und Konfliktforschung ist die Schnittstelle von Migrationsforschung, Bildungswissenschaft und praktischer Bildungsarbeit mit Flüchtlingen und Migrant_innen ein zentrales Profilfeld des FIBW. Unter anderem führten wir 2012-2015 mit Unterstützung des Europäischen Flüchtlingsfonds (EFF) und des Bundesamtes für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF) ein umfassendes Projekt zur „Sprach- und Lernförderung Unbegleiteter Minderjähriger Flüchtlinge (UMF) zur Integration in das deutsche (Aus-) Bildungssystem" durch und arbeiten insbesondere zur mehrdimensionalen (sozialpädagogischen, psychosozialen und therapeutischen) Fallbetreuung der besonders schutzbedürftigen Gruppe Unbegleiteter Minderjähriger sowie zum Zusammenhang von psychosozialer und therapeutischer Betreuung und Sprachmittlung. Diesbezüglich kooperiert das Felsberger Institut mit dem Institut für Sprachen in Kassel.

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