

Contested Arenas of Public Authority. The Competition over Influence in Post-war Southern Sudan

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In the current context of post-conflict state-building processes in Southern Sudan various actors negotiate public authority, influence and access to resources in local political arenas in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal state. Among these former and current government officials, traditional authorities, youth and women's groups and returnees engage in these dynamics. Doing this they mobilize diverse repertoires which often relate to their role during the past war as well as to the new post-conflict context to strengthen their claims.

Bordering Northern Sudan Northern Bahr el-Ghazal state has been heavily affected by the violent conflict which ended in 2005. As a result many residents fled to the current state capital Aweil town, to Northern Sudan or joined the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M). During the war the Government of Sudan (GoS) mainly controlled Aweil town whereas the SPLA/M controlled most of the rural areas.

After the signing of the comprehensive peace agreement (CPA) in 2005 the GoS and the SPLA/M administrations merged and new executive, legislative and judiciary institutions are in the process of being set up. Competition over political and administrative posts and over influence in local political arenas is high. New actors such as returnees try to find their position in these power configurations. At the same time other actors who were present during the war also try to re-position themselves in the changing context.

The competitions go along different lines. For instance Southern Sudanese who worked for the Government of Sudan in garrison towns such as Aweil during the war and referring to their experience in administration and professional training compete with military and administrators of the SPLM/A who frequently underline their struggle against the Government of Sudan. In my paper I will explore the ways these actors try to legitimize their claims for influence and public authority and the repertoires they mobilize.