Clashing Peacebuilding Imperatives? A Discourse Analysis of UNMISS Promotion of Local Peacebuilding and Women's Participation in Peacebuilding in South Sudan

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Contents

Abbreviations

ARCSS	Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan
R-ARCSS	Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
POC	Protection of Civilians
SG	Secretary-General
SPLM/A	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army
SPLM/A-IO	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

1. **Introduction**

Within the United Nations (UN) peacebuilding priorities, and the peacebuilding literature, there is a potential clash in peacebuilding imperatives. Feminist literature promotes women's inclusion across the peacebuilding process to ensure sustainable peace, while scholarship on local peacebuilding promotes local ideas of inclusion. Similarly, the UN simultaneously promotes women's participation and local peacebuilding across the peacebuilding process.

Feminist and local peacebuilding literature rarely interact, and UN headquarters appears to ignore the potential clash in peacebuilding imperatives, for example in patriarchal societies where traditional gender roles exclude women. Women's participation in peacebuilding could present a dilemma, particularly if their forced presence is considered damaging to local peacebuilding.

Through the case of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), selected due to evidence of women's exclusion by local actors (as outlined in chapter three), this thesis aims to uncover if and how these peacebuilding imperatives are harmonised at the field-level of UN peacebuilding. The following question is addressed:

How does the United Nations Mission in South Sudan promote the two United Nations imperatives of women's participation in peacebuilding and local peacebuilding?

This research seeks to enrich debates about interventionist peacebuilding, and contribute to understandings about peacebuilding in practice, particularly whether the UN successfully operationalises and harmonises the two potentially clashing peacebuilding imperatives it has set for itself.

In answering this question, I first outline the UN goals for women's participation in peacebuilding and their agenda for local peacebuilding. In Chapter two I review literature on local and hybrid peacebuilding, women in peacebuilding and their overlap (or potential clash). Chapter three focusses on the methodology and chapter four outlines UNMISS as a case study.

The analysis focusses on The Secretary-General's reports on the Situation in South Sudan. Chapter five analyses how women's participation is constructed within these reports and chapter six addresses how local peacebuilding is promoted by UNMISS. Chapter seven examines if and how UNMISS harmonises these peacebuilding imperatives.

I conclude by arguing that UNMISS does not address the potential clash in peacebuilding imperatives, and treats these two peacebuilding imperatives as largely separate goals. I outline the limitations and implications of this thesis, and suggest areas for future research.

1.1. UN Peacebuilding

The UN defines peacebuilding as aiming to 'reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities for all levels of conflict management, and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development'. It is considered a 'complex' and 'long-term process' that seeks 'to enhance the capacity of the State to effectively and legitimately carry out its core functions' (UN Peacekeeping, n.d.).

Women, Peace and Security

The UN Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda is based on ten UN Security Council Resolutions[1], and related normative frameworks (UN Women, n.d.). Women's full and meaningful participation is considered crucial to building long-term sustainable peace (UNSC 2000). Resolution 1325 is the landmark resolution for commitments to WPS. It affirms the importance of women's equal participation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and supports local women in peacebuilding (UNSC 2000). Subsequent WPS resolutions consistently promote women's equal participation at all levels of peacebuilding.

The Report of the Secretary-General on Women's Participation in Peacebuilding (2010) commits to improving women's participation to reach the standard envisaged within the WPS Agenda. It promotes women's full engagement in all peace talks, post-conflict planning and governance. It also endorses rule-of-law initiatives, economic recovery and financing that supports women's participation (UN SG 2010, 3). This commitment to women's participation in peacebuilding is reaffirmed in the UN peacebuilding architecture review (UNGA 2016, 3; UNSC 2016, 3).

Local Peacebuilding

The United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines (2008), known as the Capstone Doctrine, outlines UN commitments to local peacebuilding. It emphasises the importance of local and national consent for the presence of the UN mission (UN 2008, 34) and promotes national and local ownership, recognising the existence of diverse views, and not limiting ownership and participation to elite groups. It emphasises that UN personnel should respect and follow local customs and culture, institutions and laws, where they do not violate fundamental human rights (UN 2008, 81).

The 2018 Secretary-General's Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace reinforces these imperatives for local engagement: 'Community-level engagement by the United Nations is another critical element of sustaining peace. Developing participatory approaches that involve civil society and local communities is instrumental in peacebuilding' (UN SG 2018a, 17). The report encourages locally-led projects through civil society organisations

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1. Resolution(s) 1325, 1820, 1888, 1960, 2106, 2122, 2242, 2467 and 2493

being direct recipients of funding for peacebuilding (UN SG 2018a, 17). Women's grass-roots peacebuilding and participation in conflict prevention is also promoted.

Across UN headquarters, and within the UNMISS mandate (UNSC 2022), women's full participation is promoted alongside local peacebuilding. The potential clash in these imperatives, such as if a locally-owned patriarchal society would not welcome women's participation, is unaddressed at headquarters. Through the case of UNMISS, this thesis aims to understand if and how these imperatives are harmonised within field-level peacebuilding practices.

The UN's commitment to local peacebuilding is growing, highlighted by the thematic review on local peacebuilding published in May 2022. The report defines local peacebuilding as 'efforts at the sub-national level or as actions that engage local civil society', distinguishing this from 'locally-led' peacebuilding 'which entails that peacebuilding interventions are both designed and implemented by local actors' (Kurz et al. 2022, 3). This thesis uses these definitions; however, it is recognised that the recency of this report means the UN cannot be expected to have implemented its recommendations. Nonetheless, the existence of this report highlights the commitment to local peacebuilding, and the relevance of this research.

2. **Literature Review**

The potential clash between the UN imperatives of local peacebuilding and promoting women's participation is also found within peacebuilding literature. Scholarship on the 'recourse to localism' (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013, 763) promotes varying degrees of locally-led and locally-owned peacebuilding. Feminist peacebuilding literature establishes women's participation in peacebuilding as key to inclusive social justice (Porter 2003). The two bodies of literature rarely interact, despite potentially clashing. Both are considered imperative for sustainable peace, yet are not always compatible, for example if peacebuilding occurs in patriarchal societies.

2.1.Hybrid Peacebuilding

By examining the compatibility of the UN imperative to push women's participation in peacebuilding from a 'top-down' perspective, with 'bottom-up', local peacebuilding, this thesis is located within literature on 'hybrid' peacebuilding. Broadly, hybrid peacebuilding seeks to understand the role of international interveners in local peacebuilding and the ideal level of interaction between international and local actors. The local is the society or community affected by conflict, while the international is the external actor engaging with this local system (De Coning 2020, 841)[2].

Initial peacebuilding approaches by international organisations followed a 'liberal' peacebuilding approach, promoting liberal democratic governance and market-oriented economic growth to solve social, political and economic problems (Paris 2010). Liberal peacebuilding promotes societies ordered by liberal conceptions of peace, democracy, human rights and justice in a 'one-size-fits-all package', assuming this leads to peace at all levels (Wolff 2022, 3). UN peace-support operations have been defined as liberal peacebuilding (Mac Ginty 2011; Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013), as has the WPS agenda (Martin De Amalgro 2018, 412).

The 'recourse to localism', based on academic reactions to real events, emerged from the recognition that externally-led, top-down, liberal peacebuilding was failing (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013, 766). The vast local-turn scholarship converges around the agreement that 'A rethinking of the basic assumptions and norms guiding peacebuilding is needed – and, in order to do so, both scholars and practitioners have to turn to "the local", to take seriously local actors, local dynamics of interaction, negotiation and contestation, and locally prevalent conceptions of peace, democracy, human rights and justice' (Wolff 2022, 3). A key component of the local turn is the emphasis on the agency of all subjects (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013). Localism challenges universal notions of rights that are used to justify international liberal peace interventions, promoting instead 'particularism and local variation' (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013, 772).

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2. For a substantial overview on local and hybrid peacebuilding see e.g. Leonardsson and Rudd 2015; Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013)

Hybridity combines these peacebuilding ideals, encouraging awareness of the fluidity of conflicts and building nuanced understanding of peace interventions (Mac Ginty 2011). It is more than the grafting together of 'local' and 'liberal' (Mac Ginty 2011), it is the interaction, levels and dynamics between the top-down and bottom-up (Mac Ginty and Sanghera 2012). Within a hybrid approach, 'peacebuilding becomes an empathetic interface between the everyday local and the international' (Richmond 2009, 334), whereby the international-liberal position does not threaten local integrity (Richmond 2009).

Focussing on UN peacebuilding is limited in capturing hybridity, as attention to hybridisation should 'look beyond national capitals to the forces that confront, resist, ignore, disobey, subvert, exploit, and string-along the liberal peace' (Mac Ginty 2011, 10). Nonetheless, this thesis contributes to literature on hybridity in practice, and to understandings of how the UN field-level manages potentially contradicting imperatives.

Von Billerbeck (2017, 94-113) argues the UN has absorbed the local ideal into its liberal agenda, restricting local ownership to two categories: Liberal Ownership (local actors with UN 'liberal' values), and Elite Ownership (high-level elites with the existing capacity to manage and sustain peacebuilding activities). This undercuts the assumed benefits of local ownership by limiting self-determination. Similarly, Donais (2009, 3) suggests simplistic prescriptions for local ownership overlook peacebuilding dynamics, calling for nuanced understandings of interactions between domestic and political forces.

Within the debate on peacebuilding ideals, it should not be assumed that local peacebuilding is automatically 'good' nor that Western-inspired peacebuilding is harmful, imposed or culturally inappropriate (Mac Ginty 2008). Thus, rather than making a normative judgement on whether women's participation or local peacebuilding should be prioritised, I instead seek to understand the compatibility of the concepts, and how UNMISS manages them. Combining local and international resources is one of the great challenges in contemporary peacebuilding, and there can be no 'how-to-manual' on managing tensions (Donais 2009, 23). Greater attention to such tensions is necessary to 'move beyond empty rhetorical commitments to local ownership' (Donais 2009, 23), which this thesis aims to do.

2.2. Women in Peacebuilding

Feminist literature establishes gender as key component of successful peacebuilding. Discrimination against women is seen to increase the likelihood of a state experiencing internal conflict (Hudson 2009, 294). In promoting women's participation in peacebuilding, their inclusion is desired not only because they are affected by conflict, but it is seen as crucial to inclusive social justice (Porter 2003). Gender and war are interrelated in intricate ways, each shaping the other (Horst 2017, 389). As gender is integral to successful peacebuilding, it must be implemented from the beginning and not as a secondary concern. It 'transcends cultural understandings of peace and security' (Hudson 2009, 289).

In promoting women's participation, women's peacefulness is not assumed. Women's interests will vary based on experiences of conflict and social position (Hudson 2021) and their political participation is considered a matter of fundamental human rights (Cohn et al. 2004, 137). Despite this, prior justification for women's inclusion has been based on stereotypes of women's peacefulness, ability to make men see reason, or as victims. Women are rarely viewed as actors in conflict (Hendricks 2015, 370).

The WPS agenda has inspired a range of (critical) literature. Countries implementing WPS have been found to overly concentrate on sexual and gender-based violence (Hendricks 2017). Martin de Amalgro (2018) argues that female peacebuilders are essentialised by the international and that WPS is 'part of a liberal peacebuilding framework that is racialised, patriarchal, classist, heteronormative and Western-centric' (Martin de Amalgro 2018, 412). Ellerby (2013) finds that only five out of forty-eight peace processes studied had women included to the standard set by Resolution 1325. This thesis contributes to understanding whether UNMISS meets the standard of women's participation set out in the WPS agenda.

Furthermore, Ellerby (2013, 437-438) notes that feminist discussions of women and peace processes are often ignored in mainstream peacebuilding literature. I address this gap in the literature by bringing women's participation into the literature on local and hybrid peacebuilding.

Chinkin and Charlesworth (2006) examine the problem of women's limited participation in international peacebuilding strategies. They note that violence against women is likely to be constant in peace and wartime, so a 'post-conflict' phase when women's needs can be addressed once 'security' is established does not reflect reality. Women's inclusion in peacebuilding must be prioritised from the beginning. In their analysis of gendered peacebuilding preferences, Moosa et al. (2013) find that women and men have different conceptions of peace. Women included issues in the private sphere, associating peace with the absence of domestic violence. Men centred peace on public institutions and absence of formal conflict. Varied understandings of peace underline the importance of women's participation throughout peacebuilding processes.

Many case studies exist of successful women-led local peace operations (e.g. Connaughton and Berns 2020; Moosa et al. 2013); however, these examples of successful women's inclusion are studied separately from broader peacebuilding processes. There is a gap in the literature on the role of external interveners promoting women's participation in local peacebuilding if it is not already incorporated by local leaders.

2.3. The Overlap of Local and Women in Peacebuilding

While women and peacebuilding and local peacebuilding have resulted in vast sub-fields of literature, they rarely interact, which motivates the research puzzle behind this thesis.

An exception is Hudson (2021), who argues that though shifts towards local peacebuilding appear progressive, 'without specific attention to gendered relations a sanitised picture of the local/traditional as gender-neutral and depoliticised may result' (Hudson 2021, 144). A second exception is George (2018), who outlines the possibility of both liberal and local peacebuilding contributing to gendered inequalities, or at other times promoting women's inclusion.

Similarly, Horst (2017) emphasises that local realities are often overlooked in international promotion of women's participation. Through interviews in Somalia, Puntland and Somaliland, she finds that that local debates on inclusion at times viewed external support for local women as legitimising, and at other times was criticised for being Western-led. Horst's research indicates a plurality of local views on women's empowerment and the role of international actors.

Autesserre (2021) outlines Somaliland and The Island of Idjwi as successful examples of local peacebuilding with limited intervention. While Autesserre mentions challenges facing women in Somaliland and that 'they are treated like second-class citizens' (Autesserre 2021, 128), she does not consider gender in her definition of 'peace'. When addressing whether interveners should allow abusive practices against women to continue in the name of peace, she answers: 'Some of these priorities can be step two – and yes, that sucks' (Autesserre 2021, 163). This thesis is motivated by the fact that this does 'suck'. I aim to understand if, in UNMISS, the priorities of local peacebuilding and women's participation are operationalised together, or if one is relegated to 'step two'.

Unlike Autesserre (2021), Moosa et al. (2013) argue external actors should challenge patriarchal barriers against women's participation. Goetz and Jenkins (2016) agree that external actors should challenge traditional norms against women's inclusion. They believe it problematic when external actors conclude that it could worsen conflict by promoting women's involvement that undermines traditional practice. In basing peacebuilding on local reality, Chinkin and Charlesworth (2006) outline how international interveners must not assume that male community leaders assertions of cultural norms reflect the views of local women. They recognise that affirming traditional practices may be detrimental to women's rights, and problematise international agencies regarding cultural traditions as private and beyond their mandate.

Through fieldwork in South Sudan, Da Costa and Karlsrud (2012; 2013) examine how UNMISS contextualised programmes for local circumstances and strategies when engaging in local peacebuilding. Frustrations with stringent UN security rules were highlighted as an issue, with 'controversial actions', i.e. actions where UN headquarters directions are unclear, or where peacebuilding principles clash, being analysed (Da Costa and Karlsrud, 2012; 2013). In this analysis, promoting women's participation was not addressed. Although tensions

between human rights and local engagement are recognised (Da Costa and Karlsrud, 2012), how UNMISS managed this tension is not mentioned.

Clearly debate exists on whether and how to involve women in locally-led peacebuilding processes and the role of external interveners. To improve peacebuilding practices, it is imperative to understand if and how international peacebuilders are operationalising these two (potentially contradictory) peacebuilding imperatives.

3. **Methodology**

To examine these two imperatives, UNMISS was selected as a case study. I aim to understand if and how UNMISS harmonises local peacebuilding with promoting women's participation. The goal is to develop knowledge on hybridity in practice, and to understand how peacebuilding practitioners at field-level manage potentially competing peacebuilding imperatives from UN headquarters.

UNMISS was chosen due to evidence of existing norms in South Sudan against women's inclusion, which is a necessary condition to examine the clash I am interested in. South Sudan ranks lowest of all single-country UN peacekeeping missions on the WPS Index in 2021, which measures norms against women's inclusion (among other sub-indexes). It ranks 165 out of 170 countries (Georgetown 2021). While some of the lower-ranking countries have UN peacekeeping missions present, these are not single-country missions. Furthermore, multiple authors (e.g. Soma 2020, 45; Kumalo and Roddy-Mullineaux 2019, 4) provide evidence of the patriarchal nature of South Sudan, with women's participation in peacebuilding being consistently marginalised.

To understand how UNMISS promotes women's participation in peacebuilding alongside local peacebuilding, I will temporally analyse discourse constructions of both peacebuilding imperatives within The Secretary-General's Reports on the Situation in South Sudan. The purpose of these reports is to update the UN Security Council every ninety days, on 'political and security developments, the humanitarian and human rights situation and progress towards implementation of the Mission's mandate' (SG 2022, 1). Beginning with the first report on 17 May 2011 and ending with the most recent on 25 February 2022, I will analyse discourse constructions of women's involvement in peacebuilding practices, and then analyse local peacebuilding within the same documents.

Inspired by Hansen's (2006) methodology, this analysis focusses on the written language of the Secretary-General. I pay attention to the Secretary-General's construction and legitimisation of UNMISS peacebuilding practices through analysis of the links and differences between the reports. This enables understanding of the facts constructed by the Secretary-General and UNMISS, which are dependent on particular framings of the issues and have political affects (Hansen 2006, 20-41). In line with Hansen's (2006, 20-41) intertextual approach to discourse analysis, I draw on intertextual links to develop contextual understanding, recognising that the Secretary-General's reports are a product of other discourses.

I will then discuss if and how UNMISS harmonises these two peacebuilding imperatives, uncovering how UNMISS operationalises them and whether there is a clash. I do not make a judgement that one imperative should be prioritised, but rather seek to understand whether UNMISS prioritises one over the other.

Taking seriously international peacebuilding practices reveals the multi-faceted nature of world politics, as world politics occurs in and through practices. Practices are 'socially meaningful patterns of action' which 'simultaneously embody, act out, and possibly reify background knowledge and discourse in and on the material world' (Adler and Pouliot 211, 6). Socially-meaningful routine practices often rely on discourse. Due to the interdependency of language, agency, structure and discourse, it is relevant to understand discourse as practice, and practice as discourse (Adler and Pouliot 2011). Discourse expresses and enforces practices.

The Secretary-General's reports are representative of wider peacebuilding practices, or 'community of practice' Adler and Pouliot 2011, 15) in UNMISS, on the basis that the Secretary-General's discourse representations are grounded upon and reflect representations formed by the larger international, UN and UNMISS communities he is part of. As a top official he relies upon advisors to establish understanding of UNMISS operations. In articulating his knowledge of UNMISS operations, the Secretary-General is expressing the views of UNMISS, and influencing the representation of women and local peacebuilding within UNMISS.

In analysing the Secretary-General's reports, Gross Stein's (2011) understanding of practices as performances and performance as a necessary part of practice in humanitarian communities is relevant. Through this 'performance', troubling practices may be masked through claims to morality. This potential masking is a limitation to what this analysis can reveal.

There is no singular theory of practice to studying world politics (Adler and Pouliot 2011, 5). I understand the relevance of examining how the Secretary-General constructs UNMISS's peacebuilding practices as based on the idea that international politics is 'a world of our making' (Onuf 1989, quoted in Fierke 2013, 189). This thesis is therefore located in the wider constructivist approach to world politics that emphasises the social dimensions and agency in world politics, and the importance of language and shared understanding of rules and norms (Adler 2013; Fierke 2013).

The constructivist lens differs from Hansen's (2006) post-structuralist approach to studying practices. Hansen stresses the impossibility of causality, however constructivism aims to find better explanations through emphasis on discourse, viewing a natural connection between the language of the Secretary-General and the reality of UNMISS. Based on Fierke's (2013) explanation, the social meaning and agency given to women by UNMISS operations is expressed through language and the reasons given by the Secretary General. Constructivists view discourse and language as *one* of the elements that contributes to the social construction of reality, whereas poststructuralists view language itself as *the* construction of reality (Pouliot 2004, 325).

Within this interpretive analysis of the Secretary-General's reports, I make a 'crucial distinction between the act and observation of essentialization' (Pouliot 2004, 321). I pay attention to if and how women's participation or

local expertise are essentialised in UNMISS, which contributes to generating 'social facts' in UNMISS, while being cautious not essentialise. Another limitation of this thesis is its interpretive approach, as there is no objective way to study social reality. However, 'some interpretations make more sense than others, and constructivists should strive to observe/interpret agents' acts of essentialization as empathetically as possible. The impossibility of objective observation is no reason for not trying to interpret social reality with as much detachment as possible' (Pouliot 2004, 330).

By distinguishing between women's participation and local peacebuilding, I am aware that this dichotomy between the international/local has been problematised (e.g. Horst 2017, 402-403). They are not discrete conceptual categories (Mac Ginty 2008, 151) and these seemingly oppositional ideals of inclusion are complex and multi-layered (George 2018). However, a (criticised) feature of liberal peacebuilding is 'its imperial construction of a series of dichotomous discourses that pit developed and undeveloped, modern and traditional, global and local, and liberal and illiberal against each other' (Hudson 2021,143). As UN peacebuilding is an example of liberal peacebuilding, it is necessary to construct this dichotomy for the purposes of analysis, and to produce a readable argument. This dichotomy has largely occurred in the extant literature, with one body of peacebuilding literature focussing on a 'recourse to local' and the other body of (feminist) literature examining women's participation. Use of this dichotomy should not be understood as a dismissal of the nuances in hybrid peacebuilding.

4. <u>Conflict in South Sudan and UNMISS</u>

Civil war in Sudan began in 1955. In 1972 The Addis Ababa Agreement was signed, leading to relative peace until 1982. From 1983-2005 the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) waged war against northern Sudan. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed between Sudan and southern Sudan in 2005, with South Sudan achieving independence in July 2011. In December 2013 civil war broke out in South Sudan between the SPLM/A and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-in-Opposition (SPLM/A-IO). In August 2015, the Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS) was signed, however civil war broke out again in July 2016. In September 2018, the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) was signed (Soma 2020; UNMISS, n.d.).

The ceasefire has held, however 'security dynamics continued to manifest through local-level political conflict with non-signatory groups, fragmentation and fighting within SPLM/A-IO, intercommunal and intracommunal violence, community-level disputes over land and resources, and violent criminal activities' (UN SG 2022, 3).

The UNMISS mandate was established on 9 July 2011, for one year, but has been continually renewed. The initial mandate emphasised the role of UNMISS to 'consolidate peace and security and to help establish the conditions for development in the Republic of South Sudan' (UNSC 2011, 3). When civil war broke out in 2013, relations between UNMISS and the South Sudanese government became tense. During this 'crisis' period the UNMISS mandate was reprioritised to focus on protection of civilians, human rights monitoring and humanitarian assistance. As the ceasefire holds, and following the signing of R-ARCCS, UN protection sites are being redesignated as conventional camps for displaced people, under South Sudanese governmental control (UNMISS, n.d.)

Currently, the mandate is extended until March 2023 (UNSC 2022). The mandate promotes building peace at the national *and local* levels. It has four pillars: protection of civilians; creating conditions conducive to the delivery of humanitarian assistance; supporting implementation of R-ARCCS and the peace process; and monitoring, investigating and reporting on human rights violations (UNSC 2022, 9). The mandate supports indigenous approaches to transitional justice and reconciliation (UNSC 2022, 11) and endorses 'women's full, equal, and meaningful participation in all levels of decision making and leadership' (UNSC 2022, 4). There is no recognition that these imperatives may clash, nor is there guidance on managing tensions that arise.

As there are often discrepancies between UN headquarters and actions in the field (Da Costa and Karlsrud 2013), this thesis aims to uncover if and how UNMISS harmonises UN headquarters directions to promote women's participation and local peacebuilding.

5. UNMISS and Women's Participation

5.1. <u>Analysis</u>

To address whether UNMISS harmonises the imperatives of locally-led peacebuilding and promoting women's participation in peacebuilding, I will first outline how UNMISS promotes women's participation in peacebuilding through discourse analysis of The Secretary-General's Reports on the Situation in South Sudan. This chapter argues that key themes emerging from UNMISS's promotion of women's participation are that: women's participation is promoted separately to the broader peace process; UNMISS focusses on quotas and the number of women participating, without addressing barriers to women's participation; UNMISS is restrictive in how it promotes women's participation; and UNMISS treats South Sudanese women as a homogenous group.

Women as Separate

The first theme on women's participation is how women's inclusion and issues affecting women (apart from conflict-related sexual violence) are treated as separate to the broader peace process and other security issues. Beginning in 2011, there is one short paragraph on 'Gender', within 'Cross-Cutting Issues in the Mission'. In the first report women's participation is not mentioned, but it refers to 'gender mainstreaming' to ensure that the needs of women are met (UN SG 2011a). The second report mentions the need for women's full participation in decision making and states that UNMISS is working with UN-Women to 'develop a common framework for action on women's empowerment and gender equality' (UN SG 2011b, 15).

The reports have a short section on 'gender' until the final report of 2012, where the section is renamed 'women, peace and security' (UN SG 2012c, 15), before being omitted from the first report of 2014 (UN SG 2014a). Women's participation in peacebuilding is briefly mentioned in the subsequent reports of 2014, included under 'protection of civilians' (POC). Women's participation continues to be restricted to this section, with varying degrees of elaboration, until 2017 (UN SG 2017b). While it is still within the POC framework, there is now a sub-sub heading on 'women and peace and security'. It is only in 2018 (UN SG 2018d) that a separate section on 'Women and Peace and Security' is added, which remains until the most recent report (UN SG 2022). In the majority of reports women's inclusion is limited to one small section, rather than integrated throughout the peacebuilding process. Women's participation is presented as an add-on to existing peacebuilding frameworks.

The reports are inconsistent in how they document women's participation, with some failing to mention women's participation, while others have much larger sections on WPS. It is particularly notable that in S/2014/158, which covers the 'crisis' period in South Sudan, there is no section on WPS. Violence broke out on 15 December 2013 in Juba and spread across the country, 'resulting in a deep nation-wide political and security crisis' and leading to the UNMISS mandate being reprioritised (UNMISS, n.d.). This report on the 'crisis' does not mention the participation of women in peacebuilding and reconciliation, and subsequent reports addressing the crisis have

very limited references to women's participation. The separate section on WPS is significantly bigger following the ceasefire in 2018, spreading to other areas of the reports as the ceasefire continues to hold.

Quota and Numbers

A second theme emerging from the Secretary-General's reports is use of quotas and numbers of women included to measure women's participation. Intertextual analysis, in line with Hansen's (2006) methodology, reveals that the quota originated from calls by the South Sudan Women's Coalition and was granted in R-ARCSS. It commits parties to implementing a quota of 35% for women's participation at all levels of government (Kezie-Nwoha and Were 2018, 4). S/2018/1103 further highlights that women leaders of civil society organisations and women in POC sites call for the quota to be 'met not only at the national and state levels, but also in all pre-transitional structures' (UN SG 2018e). It appears that demand for a quota on women's participation is desired from actors at all levels.

From S/2017/224 onwards, the number of women that participated in an activity is included in parentheses beside the activity. The reports do not mention when there were no women, they simply omit the number entirely. The assumption is that when these parentheses are not included from this point on, that no women were there, and the local actors mentioned were all men. While UNMISS reports on numbers of women included, they do not mention what influence women were able to exert. Despite emphasis on this quota, it is not being met (UN SG 2021b, 16).

Efforts to address barriers to women's participation at all levels in South Sudan are mentioned once, in 2013:

> *UNMISS provided technical support to women's organizations reviewing the Transitional Constitution to make recommendations to the National Constitutional Review Commission regarding women's access, control and inheritance of property, inclusion of marriageable age girls in the final constitution, and the need to harmonize customary and statutory laws to protect the rights of women and girls.*
>
> (UN SG 2013a, 15-16)

The Secretary-General's Report on Women's Participation in Peacebuilding (2010) commits to prioritising women's specific needs in economic recovery (UN SG 2010, 3). However, throughout the Secretary-General's reports, there is only one reference to gender-based budgeting, which did not come from UNMISS, but rather its inclusion was proposed by stakeholders at a workshop hosted by the National Constitutional Amendment Committee (UN SG 2021a, 7). There is no elaboration on whether the suggestions were implemented, or who the stakeholders were.

The only other mention of women's economic empowerment is the proposal of 'a 5 per cent national allocation for women's empowerment programmes' at the first women's national conference on constitutional development in Juba in 2013, which was held by women's organisations with the support of UNMISS (UN SG 2013b). It is unclear whether this proposal was granted. The previous point on inconsistency within the Secretary-General's reports is again relevant.

Restrictive Participation

Within the Secretary-General's reports there are two broad categories of women. The first is elite women, who are in the minority, but are some of the first mentioned. Rebecca Nyandeng Garang is mentioned most frequently (e.g. UN SG 2017c). She is the widow of John Garang de Mabior, former leader of the SPLM during the Second Sudanese Civil War. He was majorly influential in South Sudanese independence (Maher 2021).

Although Rebecca Nyaneng Garang also fought alongside John Garang (Maher 2021), nowhere in the reports is her role (or any woman's role) as a combatant mentioned. Maher (2021) further reveals how, in addition to military and political responsibilities, Rebecca was 'was a cook for the soldiers, a nurse to the sick, a wife to the commander-in-chief and a mother to her growing family'. This highlights how even when women do participate at the highest level in South Sudan, they are expected to continue to perform their traditional gender roles alongside participating in political life. The Secretary-General's reports do not mention this barrier to women's participation.

The second category is the focus on including and consulting with pre-existing 'women's groups', which, while undefined in the Secretary-General's reports, can be interpreted as groups of female activists working within their communities to impact social change. Such women are already empowered (to an extent) to participate. This empowerment can be taken as an indication that they are already in agreement with the values of the WPS agenda. There is no reference to how the UN encourages other women to participate in these groups, nor is women's participation in other groups, such as church groups, mentioned. 'Women' are taken to be a homogenous group, without recognising the variety of their roles.

Women's participation in peacebuilding in South Sudan is promoted to some extent in nearly all of the Secretary-General's reports. However, it is often a special celebration or one-off workshop, rather than women's broad participation across the peacebuilding process. For example, in 2012 it was emphasised that 'on 20 September, my Special Representative participated in a women leadership conference in South Sudan on women's inclusion in conflict resolution and peacebuilding' (UN SG 2012c, 15). Similar themes occur across all years, such as the '16 days of Activism Against Gender based Violence' in December 2014 (UN SG 2015a, 10), which also occurred in 2020 (UN SG 2020a) and 2022 (UN SG 2022). These events are inconsistent. Some reports mention multiple events, while others contain none.

Women as Homogenous

The majority of the references to women across the reports construct women as 'victims', particularly of conflict-related sexual assault, and as in need of protection (e.g. UN SG 2022, 14). This overshadows the necessity of women's participation in the entire peacebuilding process, and supports Hendricks' (2017) finding that implementation of the WPS agenda is overly focussed on sexual assault and gender-based violence. This construction of women as victims and in need of protection is not the primary focus of this thesis, as I am interested in how women's *participation in peacebuilding* is constructed by UNMISS, not the representation of women across the entire UNMISS mandate. However, the framing of women as victims in need of protection implies that they are viewed as helpless, and therefore not seriously included as agents of change.

Similarly, women's participation is often linked to the need to address conflict-related sexual assault, thereby placing responsibility on women to prevent sexual assault (e.g. UN SG 2018b, 9). Placing the onus on women to address sexual assault and acting as if sexual assault is without agency is problematic. Women do not need to be included based on their 'use value' (Cohn et al. 2004, 136). The rationale for women addressing conflict-related sexual violence is not acknowledged within the reports.

Within this framing of women as victims, and when women's participation in peacebuilding is mentioned, women are depicted as a homogenous group. These findings support Hendrick's (2015) argument that women are rarely viewed as actors in conflict. 2013 was the first time that women were (minimally) mentioned as ex-combatants. It states: 'of 500 ex-combatants, the first group of approximately 236, including 222 men and 14 women, has been demobilized, verified and registered at the facility' (UN SG 2013b, 11). The only other time women were mentioned as combatants was in reference to the need for UNMISS to 'collect data on former women combatants' (UN SG 2020d, 14). Women who are currently combatants are not recognised, nor is there any mention of whether those women who participate in peacebuilding process are former or current combatants.

5.2. <u>Discussion</u>

Women as Separate

In adding women's participation into existing peacebuilding frameworks, without recognising existing patriarchal attitudes and gendered dynamics, UNMISS does not recognise that war and peacebuilding are fundamentally gendered endeavours (Enloe 1993; Whitworth 2004). Such 'Adding and Stirring' of women fails to address existing gendered power structures in peacebuilding practices and overlooks differences in women based on economic, social, regional and ethnic factors (Valenius 2007, 513). This approach to promoting women's participation *after* other initiatives, ignores the ways in which UN practices have already been gendered (Whitworth 2004, 19). Santos (2021, 2) supports this, finding the exclusion of women to be 'a structural problem, which requires a structural solution – "redesigning" the table rather than merely having women at it'.

The inconsistency of how UNMISS documents women's participation, coupled with the construction of women's issues as separate to the broader process, indicates that women's participation is not prioritised within UNMISS. UNMISS viewing women's participation as secondary to other security concerns and the broader peace process is particularly visible in the side-lining of women during the 'crisis' period in South Sudan, with women's participation in peacebuilding and reconciliation being completely omitted from S/2014/158, which covers this 'crisis'.

The argument that women's participation is as a secondary concern, and outside of the realm of security, is reinforced by the WPS section becoming significantly bigger following the ceasefire in 2018, and spreading to other areas of the reports, as the ceasefire continues to hold. This is contradictory to Hudson's (2009, 315) view that gender must be incorporated from the beginning of the peacebuilding process, which Kumalo and Roddy-Mullineaux (2019, 6) reinforce, finding that women's exclusion in early stages of peacebuilding means they are less likely to be included later. Chinkin and Charlesworth (2006) support this with their recognition that violence against women is likely to be a constant in peace and wartime, so the idea of a 'post-conflict' phase when women's needs can be better addressed once 'security' is established does not reflect reality. Indeed, in all the Secretary-General's reports there are reports of sexual and gender-based violence against women, both during the 'conflict' phases and in the ceasefire.

Quota and Numbers

The focus on quotas and numbers of women included within the Secretary-General's reports reduces women to simply a number, without outlining how or in what capacity women were included. This ignores the 'full and meaningful' element of women's inclusion promoted by the WPS agenda, with use of parentheses suggesting women's participation is secondary. Furthermore, it diminishes women's agency to simply their gender, not recognising their unique contributions, or discussing their ability to contribute. While UNMISS mentions numbers of women included, the reports do not mention what influence women were able to exert.

Despite emphasis on this quota, it is not being met. A potential explanation for the quota not being met is found in the issue of overly focussing discussions on the quota, without sufficiently addressing existing barriers to women's inclusion. Barriers in South Sudan include: high rates of illiteracy (Kumalo and Roddy-Mullineaux 2019, 4); cultural and customary practices that hinder women's empowerment or political participation (Edward 2018, 57); and the gendered division of household labour (Santos 2021, 1).

These barriers also exist once women are in positions of power, for example one of Ali's (2011, 5) anonymous interviewees reported everything that went wrong in her ministry was attributed to her being a woman. During ARCCS women delegates were subject to sexual harassment from male delegates, and insecurity and intimidation

continue to be problems in the implementation of R-ARCCS (Soma 2020, 6). Santos (2021, 2) recognises how even when women do participate in the peace negotiations, their influence may be limited, while Kumalo and Roddy-Mullineaux (2019, 7) found that women included in the peace process felt the lack of security meant they were not free to discuss some issues.

When barriers to women's participation are mentioned once in 2013, there is no inclusion of measures to increase the educational attainment of women and girls, nor does it address the intimidation faced by women who do participate. This does not suggest efforts are being made to promote women's empowerment in line with WPS (UN SG 2010, 3). Paffenholz (2015, 7) has emphasised that 'making women's participation count is more important than merely counting the number of women included in peace processes, while Santos (2021, 5) argues that quotas are unlikely to produce the desired results unless supported by an adequate gender-responsive budget and accompanied by measures to address barriers facing women. Furthermore, though desired by some South Sudanese women, local women's agency can be limited through a focus on quotas. As noted by Herbolzheimer and Salamanca (2020, 150), progress evaluation should focus less on quantitative factors such as number of women involved, because some women feel empowered but prefer to be behind the scenes. The reports do not mention any other forms of progress evaluation.

Focussing on the number of women involved diminishes women's agency to simply their gender, not recognising their unique input, or discussing their ability to contribute. Concerns about the quota have also been raised by South Sudanese women interviewed by Ali (2011, 4), who finds that several interviewees were concerned that gender equality and respect for women's rights was being conflated with the quota allocated to women in decision making, which may result in the neglect of other areas relating to women's empowerment and participation.

It appears that UNMISS's focus on quotas is insufficient by itself to increase women's participation in peace processes, and that it overlooks other areas necessary for empowering women to participate.

Restrictive Participation

By focussing on women's participation within the categories of 'elite women' and 'women's groups', Von Billerbecks's (2017, 93-114) argument that the UN is restrictive in operationalising local ownership, and that it has absorbed the local ideal into its liberal agenda, applies to how women's participation is promoted. Women's groups fall into the 'Liberal Ownership' category, whereby the UN works with local actors who already eschew UN values, in this case already promoting the WPS Agenda. The second category is 'Elite Ownership', with a focus on working with high-level elites. This is seen with the name-dropping of females in government (e.g. UN SG 2021c, 1), despite the quota not being met, and an emphasis throughout the reports on working with 'women leaders'.

The focus on special events suggests that the 'full and meaningful' element of women's participation envisaged in the WPS agenda is not being reached. As emphasised by Dowd and Kumalo (2022, 17), 'peace processes in communities should be prioritised over standalone, quick impact peace activities like conferences and dialogues. Such activities risk undermining prospects for peace if poorly aligned with local priorities and needs.' While such events are beneficial, full participation would mean the participation of women across all of the peace process. It is difficult to assess whether their participation as it stands is meaningful, as the outcomes of these events and women's contributions to them are not mentioned.

Women as Homogenous

In depicting women as a homogenous group, there is no recognition of the varied roles they can play or that they are a 'diverse group of political actors', who have different interests, ethnicities, religions and political affiliations (Krause and Olsson 2021, 106). Women will have had different experiences of the conflict, with more or less direct involvement. To enable meaningful participation of all women, different methods will be needed to promote their participation. This is not addressed by the Secretary-General.

The 'womenandchildren' tactic occurs repeatedly throughout UNMISS discourse, whereby women are included as 'symbols, victims or dependents', presuming that women are family members with childlike innocence, rather than independent actors (Enloe 1993, 166). In treating women as mainly victims, they are denied agency, and the possibility of male victims is excluded (Valenius 2007, 520). This emphasis on women as victims and in need of protection also denies women the agency to self-define and reinforces inaccurate assumptions about their roles in war and peace. It neglects their role as combatants and undermines their potential to contribute to peace (Strickland and Duvvury 2003, 1).

In failing to recognise the participation of women who are combatants, UNMISS does not recognise the spectrum of roles that women can take. This is despite South Sudanese women being 'linked to many drivers of communal conflict. Women can be antagonists as much as protagonists. They can also be vigilantes instead of vigilant, and exclusionary rather than inclusive' (Kumalo and Roddy-Mullineaux 2019, 2). To fully engage with all women, appropriate strategies need to be devised to promote participation of (former) female combatants. That such factors are not reported by the Secretary-General demonstrates how the reports cannot be seen to depict the entire situation in South Sudan, and highlights a limitation of this thesis.

Gap between Rhetoric and Practice

When examining how UNMISS promotes women's participation, the gap between UN rhetoric and practice is particularly visible. There is no indication that the recommendations in The Secretary-General's report on Women's Participation in Peacebuilding (2010) are being consistently applied in a context-specific manner for South Sudan, or indeed even in a non-context specific manner. This report recognises that barriers facing women

in peacebuilding must be addressed as 'a matter of fundamental human rights' (UN SG 2010, 13). It identifies barriers to women's meaningful participation including: addressing discriminatory laws and policies; promoting education for women and girls; increasing women's economic participation; and the need for gender-responsive budgeting. This report also recognises female combatants and that women are not a homogenous group. It notes that women's participation and political presence 'must begin even before conflict ceases' (UN SG 2010. 7) and emphasises that a peace process cannot obtain successful national ownership if half the nation (i.e. the nation's women) are not involved in the design and implementation. None of these issues are adequately addressed by UNMISS, despite their necessity. UNMISS's promotion of women's participation in peacebuilding in South Sudan does not fulfil the standard envisioned in the WPS Agenda.

6. __UNMISS and Local Peacebuilding__

6.1. Analysis

This chapter addresses how local peacebuilding is promoted by UNMISS, analysing the same reports by the Secretary-General as the previous section to uncover how UNMISS promotes local peacebuilding and the implications of this. This chapter argues that UNMISS's engagement in local peacebuilding uses unclear language; is focussed upon UNMISS goals and numbers of activities carried out; is based on the assumption that national-level peace will trickle down to the local-level; is largely not locally-led; and is ultimately inconsistent.

Unclear Language

Within the Secretary-General's reports, the language used in referring to UNMISS's engagement with local-level actors is extremely varied. To some extent this reflects language used at headquarters-level. However, there is even more variation at the field-level.

This conflation occurs within and across documents. For example, in S/2017/784, UNMISS conducts 'local-level consultations' (UN SG 2017c), discusses the actions of the 'voluntary civil society task force' (UN SG 2017c, 2); mentions a 'sub-national level' (UN SG 2017c, 8) and 'continued to engage with national and local authorities and civil society' (UN SG 2017c, 9). It is unclear what difference there is, if any, between the different groups. Other reports mention working with tribes, such as the 'Dinka community' and consulting 'local organizations' (UN SG 2018b, 8-9), with no clarification on whether there are tribe members in local organisations or the local organisations are within the tribes.

In more recent reports, the term 'grass-roots' gains traction, beginning in 2019 (S/2019/722, 9). It is unclear if 'grass-roots forums' and 'grass-roots participation' (UN SG 2019d) are different to the previous local engagement by UNMISS. These same reports still use other terminology, in addition to 'grass-roots' to refer to UNMISS engagement in local peacebuilding.

Protection of Civilians

UNMISS's engagement with local actors largely occurs within the POC section of the UNMISS mandate from S/2013/366 onwards. This 'first tier' of the three-tiered POC strategy is initially named 'protection through political process'. Here UNMISS's engagement with local actors is less than in later reports. The small amount of local engagement that occurs is not locally-led, but led by UNMISS. In S/2015/118, the first tier of the strategy is renamed: 'protection through conflict resolution'. In this framework, there is more engagement with local actors, with UNMISS promoting 'locally owned interventions to address intercommunal violence' (UN SG 2015a, 7). An example of locally-led peacebuilding is also seen, with traditional leaders and authorities addressing violence between Dinka Clans, assisted by UNMISS (UN SG 2015a, 7).

In the next report, S/2015/297, this first tier is renamed again, this time: 'protection through dialogue and engagement', and remains until S/2019/191. Generally within this section, the focus is on engaging with people at the local-level to resolve local-level conflicts, rather than on linking local-engagement to the national-level conflict. For example, UNMISS promotes local-local dialogue through supporting 'a dialogue conference of Murle leaders and communities in Pibor, Jonglei, to advance intra-Murle reconciliation' (UN SG 2017d, 8). The national-level conflict is addressed separately to this conflict.

However, UNMISS still places ultimate responsibility for resolving the conflict on to national-level actors, stating that it is the 'responsibility of leaders on all sides to ensure that the peace agreement brings an end to violence' (UN SG 2015d, 17).

In S/2019/491, though UNMISS continues to have 'protection of civilians' as part of its mandate, there is no longer a three-tiered approach. In recent reports, UNMISS engages more substantially in local-level conflict resolution, with larger paragraphs detailing UNMISS's promotion of local peacebuilding. It is still largely UNMISS-led, rather than locally-led. In the same section, UNMISS also begins to combine national and local-level engagement. UNMISS supported confidence and trust-building initiatives undertaken between the government and the opposition at subnational-level, 'while a dialogue in Gbudwe strengthened co-operation between the pro-Machar SPLM/A-IO and the population' (UN SG 2019b, 9). These are the national actors engaging in local-level issues, rather than local-level actors and traditional dispute mechanisms being considered at national-level.

UNMISS Goals

Much of the engagement by UNMISS with local actors is based on using local actors to achieve UNMISS goals, rather than UNMISS helping local actors to achieve locally decided goals. An example is seen in S/2012/140, where UNMISS aims to maximise information flow through use of local information networks that can be used to inform the government of impending attacks (UN SG 2012a, 10). UNMISS's engagement with authorities and civil society seem to be on topics pre-determined by UNMISS, rather than based on local desires. For example creating an environment that is conducive for the return of displaced populations (UN SG 2018c; 2018d) assumes that the local actors desire the return of displaced persons.

UNMISS regularly engages with authorities and civil society to promote external values of justice or human rights onto local actors. In most reports UNMISS conducts local engagement in the form of 'human rights training sessions for security forces, State public attorneys, traditional chiefs, civil society groups, journalists and human rights defenders (UN SG 2013c, 11). The majority of UNMISS engagement with local actors does not appear to be locally-led, but rather focussed on UNMISS goals and external values. UNMISS engagement with local actors in these capacities is much more consistent than the examples of locally-led peacebuilding.

UNMISS appears to consider local-level engagement essential in prevention of violence. This is particularly visible during the crisis period. In states where violence has erupted, UNMISS is not focussed on local engagement, instead prioritising human rights monitoring and protection of civilians, and putting 'on hold any operational and capacity-building support to either party that may enhance their capacity to engage in conflict, commit human rights violations and abuses and undermine the Addis Ababa negotiations process. (UN SG 2014a, 16-17). However, local-level engagement is considered essential in states where violence has not erupted, 'to help reduce the risk of intercommunal animosities spreading further throughout the country.' (UN SG 2014a, 17). Here, it appears UNMISS values local engagement more in the prevention of violence than in peacebuilding following violence.

Numbers

When UNMISS carries out local peacebuilding initiatives, the focus is on the number of activities that occurred rather than the outcome. Within this engagement, the topic appears to be pre-determined by UNMISS, and how the topic was received is not mentioned, for example: 'UNMISS civil affairs teams held 337 meetings with local authorities, community leaders, youth and women across the 10 States, including in Opposition-held territory, to identify conflict threats and mitigation measures.' (UN SG 2015b, 8) In this case, they held the 337 meetings with the aim of identifying threats and mitigation measures. However, does not mention what threats were identified or how local actors engaged with UNMISS.

As the reports progress, they begin to mention outcomes, although this is in addition to numbers of activities rather than instead of. For example: 'following a series of peace forums, no major incident has been reported between the Jie and Murle communities in Boma state where scores of people were killed in intercommunal violence during the previous dry season'(UN SG 2020a, 6). However, the same report also measures the outcomes of other local peacebuilding initiatives using numbers (UN SG 2020a, 7-8). This example is indicative of the subsequent reports until the present day.

Trickle-Down Assumption

Within the pre-determined topics by UNMISS when they engage with local actors, there is a focus on promoting national agreements at the local-level. For example, the Secretary-General's special representative meets with the President and other government and opposition officials to encourage adherence to the permanent ceasefire and secure a lasting political settlement to the conflict. However, he then meets with 'state and local authorities and civil society representatives, as well as community representatives in protection sites to keep them apprised of developments in the peace talks' (UN SG 2018d, 12). He is not depicted as engaging with local-level actors to build national-level peace.

Similarly, S/2019/191 states that 'concerted efforts are needed at all levels to promote awareness and acceptance of the Revitalised Agreement by local communities' (UN SG 2019a, 16). Top-down agreements are being pushed on to the local-level rather than incorporating new, local ideas.

In later reports, UNMISS begins to combine national and local-level engagement. It is only in 2021 that the interrelated nature of local and national dynamics is explicitly recognised, noting 'linkages between local conflicts and national dynamics' and that 'macroeconomic pressure, political competition for local administration positions, increased pressure on livelihoods and food price increases were layered over pre-existing local and national fissures, spurring localized conflicts' (2021a, 4).

Inconsistent Locally-Led Peacebuilding

UNMISS is inconsistent in how it promotes locally-led peacebuilding. At times across the reports, certain initiatives appear to be locally-led. The first mention of locally-led peacebuilding is found in S/2012/486, which contains multiple examples of locally-led processes supported by UNMISS, including the 'All Jonglei Peace Conference' convened by the Presidential Committee for Peace, Reconciliation and Tolerance, and chaired by Archbishop Daniel Deng of the Episcopal Church of the Sudan (UN SG 2012b,7). The same report also mentions a reconciliation conference held by Lou Nuer Leaders and politicians of Greater Akobo (UN SG 2012b, 7), among other examples. Following this report, the process appears to become less locally-led. This may be because of the 'serious setbacks' suffered by the 'All Jonglei Peace Process' (UN SG 2013a, 8). There is no mention of if and how UNMISS acted to remedy this.

Subsequent UNMISS reports largely base their local engagement on UNMISS ideas, rather than being locally-led. In S/2015/118, there are some examples of locally-led peacebuilding, such as by supporting locally-owned interventions to address intercommunal violence, and facilitating a peace conference in Western Equatoria between indigenous farmers and migrant pastoralists, resulting in the signing of an agreement. However, in this same report, The Secretary-General emphasises that the primary responsibility for resolving conflict lies with the leaders (UN SG 2015a). This indicates that local engagement is not considered a priority by UNMISS. The priority is still national-level peacebuilding. Recent reports note more examples of locally-led peacebuilding, but still contain cases of UNMISS engaging with the local on UNMISS's terms, and UNMISS deciding the topic. The latest report, contains examples of locally-led peacebuilding in addition to UNMISS-led peacebuilding, rather than instead of (UN SG 2022, 8).

Local ownership does not equate to a process being locally-led. An example of this is seen within UNMISS's promotion of the 'civilian character' of POC sites: 'To reinforce the civilian character of the sites, UNMISS maintained weekly meetings with community leaders to remind them of their own responsibility in curtailing criminality within the sites' (UN SG 2018b, 8). By S/2020/1180 it is noted that the government, with support

from UNMISS, has assumed ownership and leadership of POC sites (UN SG 2020d, 18). Across reports, local and national ownership of POC sites is conflated. Initially community responsibility for security of the sites is promoted, but this culminates in government ownership. Nonetheless, the POC sites were a UNMISS project that is now being transferred to local control. The process was not locally-led.

6.2. <u>Discussion</u>

Inconsistency

The main theme emerging from the Secretary-General's reports is the inconsistency in how UNMISS engages in local peacebuilding. The inconsistency suggests local peacebuilding is not a priority for UNMISS. Their priority is still national-level peacebuilding. This is confirmed by the reporting as the national-level ceasefire continues to hold, in which UNMISS begins to combine national and local-level engagement, and suggests local peacebuilding is secondary to the national process within UNMISS.

The inconsistency in local peacebuilding does not indicate that 'every effort' is being made to promote local and national ownership, as necessitated in the Capstone Doctrine (UN 2008, 39). The impression that every effort is not being made to promote local ownership is reinforced by the lack of nuance in the Secretary-General's reports, with the same types of interactions being reported repeatedly. This supports Donais' (2009, 3) suggestion that simplistic approaches to local ownership overlook complex peacebuilding dynamics. Donais' call for more nuanced understandings of interactions between domestic and political forces is not provided by the Secretary-General's reports.

Unclear Language

UNMISS's unclear language that sometimes conflates the local and national-level, such as when discussing national and local ownership of POC sites, is problematic. Such conflation means that national leaders may be assumed to speak on behalf of all conflict-affected communities, thereby muting local actors (Kurz et al. 2022, 3). When tension between national authorities and local communities is a driving force behind conflict, which is at times the case in South Sudan, this conflation can also exacerbate existing grievances (Kurz et al. 2022, 3). This use of unclear language can therefore be seen to negatively contribute to UNMISS's local engagement.

Another potential source of the unclear language could be that members of the UNMISS team across South Sudan are using different strategies and language to engage with local actors. The language used may be reflecting the different personnel reporting on the local engagement. A limitation of using the Secretary-General's reports to understand UNMISS peacebuilding practices, as opposed to conducting fieldwork, is that it is not possible to uncover why the language used is unclear, and we can only speculate.

Consent

A core element of UN headquarters standards of local ownership that is not addressed within UNMISS, is the importance of local consent for the presence of the UN mission (UN 2008, 34). It is this principle of UN peacebuilding that would make the UN mission locally-led, as consent to UNMISS's continual presence would suggest UNMISS's actions are in line with the wishes of the local people. Given that emphasis on the agency of all subjects is a key component in local peacebuilding literature (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013), it is necessary to recognise that in UNMISS engagement with local actors on UNMISS's terms, they are denying this agency, and are not operating with the necessary consent identified in the Capstone Doctrine.

The very fact that whether the local population are actively consenting to the peace operation is omitted from the Secretary-General's reports suggests there is not enthusiastic consent for their presence. This is reinforced by local actors being depicted as an obstacle to UNMISS, such as by blocking UNMISS patrols at checkpoints (UN SG 2021b, 15), or refusing access to a human rights monitoring mission (UN SG 2016b, 10). The language framing these cases depicts UNMISS trying to overcome these obstacles, rather than UNMSS accepting the desires of these local actors. There is no mention in any of the reports of the general local-level consent for UNMISS's presence in South Sudan. However, the willingness of many actors to engage with UNMISS suggests these actors consent to some extent.

Local Custom

The imperative in the Capstone Doctrine to respect and follow local customs and culture, institutions and laws, where they do not violate fundamental human rights standards (UN 2008, 81), is complex in the case of UNMISS. A consistent focus of UNMISS's local engagement is on promoting external values of justice and human rights onto local actors. However they also emphasise the use of traditional reconciliation mechanisms and engagement with traditional chiefs.

There is no homogenous customary tradition or law in South Sudan. Local attitudes towards them are diverse, and their potential utility is varied across South Sudan. War, and the legacy of military rule by Sudan, has disrupted traditions and reduced the power and status of tribal chiefs. Youth (who make up a significant proportion of combatants) may have diminished respect for customs due to having only known war. The 'return of the Diaspora' creates varied attitudes towards customary laws, as South Sudanese people return having been influenced by their host countries (Jok et al. 2004, 27-29).

Linked to the communitarian nature of South Sudan is an emphasis on reconciliation, with the aim of inter-community harmony and restoration of social equilibrium, rather than focussing on punishment of individuals (Jok et al. 2004, 31). UNMISS's aim to 'harmonise customary and statutory laws to protect the rights of women and girls' (UN SG 2013a, 15) does not recognise the difficulty in harmonising laws, when the promotion of

individual rights by international actors is contrary to the traditional communitarian nature of South Sudan. Privileging individual rights would not be compatible with the emphasis on protecting the social structure of the community within South Sudanese traditions.

In highlighting evidence of customary laws that are not reported by the Secretary-General, the aim is not to argue that UNMISS is ignoring these customary laws within their peacebuilding practices. Rather, it is to highlight that the Secretary-General does not report on the complex dynamics between traditional customary laws and human rights to the international community. Acknowledging such tensions would require re-evaluation of the UN Human Rights-led agenda. Given that these reports are written for high politics, it is unsurprising that they do include detail on individual cases where human rights and customary laws may come into conflict.

Meaningful Engagement

By UNMISS focussing on the number of activities that engage with the local, rather than on the outcome of these activities, they 'miss the more meaningful change these peacebuilding actions were meant to produce' (Kurz et al. 2022, 4). Focussing on numbers as a measure of local peacebuilding success is not necessarily reflective of local ideas of peacebuilding, or how they would measure success (Kurz et al. 2022, 4). This reflects how local peacebuilding is considered secondary to national-level peacebuilding. National-level peacebuilding tends to have clear, measurable goals, whereas local peacebuilding often involves micro-level changes that are difficult to monitor (Kurz et al. 2022, 22). By focussing on numerical outcomes and applying the same indicators used at national-level to the local-level, it reflects the secondary nature of UNMISS's engagement with the local, in that they do not develop appropriate local peacebuilding indicators.

Throughout UNMISS's engagement with the local, there is an assumption that peacebuilding at the national-level will trickle down to the local-level. This assumption is part of the 'liberal peacebuilding' agenda, that emphasises the role of the state and its role in setting the peacebuilding agenda (Kurz et al. 2022, 25). While a shift towards a more hybrid format of peacebuilding in UNMISS is visible, the trickle-down assumption is clearly still present.

Within UNMISS's promotion of local ownership and local peacebuilding, the process is largely not locally-led, but rather local engagement occurs on UNMISS terms, and is guided by UNMISS ideas. Furthermore, the vast majority of UNMISS's engagement with local actors is focussed on resolving local-level conflict, rather than relating local-tensions to the national-level conflict.

7. **Women's Participation *and* Local Peacebuilding**

The preceding analyses of how the Secretary-General constructs women's participation and UNMISS's engagement in local peacebuilding indicates that UNMISS largely treats the two peacebuilding imperatives as separate. This chapter will discuss areas where they overlap, and argues that the potential clash of promoting the two imperatives is not addressed within the reports.

Homogenous Groups

Women's groups are at times mentioned within the types of civil society groups that UNMISS engages with. However, the potential clash of their presence is unaddressed. Furthermore, they are simply added on as 'women' among other types of local groups, such as: 'UNMISS also led 23 conflict management, mitigation and resolution workshops for community, traditional and faith leaders, women, young people, cattle keepers and internally displaced persons both inside and outside protection sites' (UN SG 2015d, 7). There is no acknowledgment that women may be part of these other groups, and that they can have multiple identities beyond their gender. It seems that the members of the other groups mentioned should be assumed to be men, and that women are a homogenous group whose views can be summarised by a few representatives.

Furthermore, women are not consistently listed in the groups UNMISS engages with in local peacebuilding. This could suggest that UNMISS judges based on circumstances whether it is appropriate to include women in a certain situation based on the other actors present. Alternatively, it could be indicative of a lack of commitment to women's 'full and meaningful participation'. The rationale behind this is not given within the Secretary-General's reports.

Locally-Led versus UNMISS-Led

Women often participate in UNMISS-led local peacebuilding initiatives, for example:

> *UNMISS conducted 25 workshops, community dialogues, peace campaigns and dissemination of local and national peace agreements, as well as capacity-building activities for traditional authorities, women and young people. A total of 1,971 participants, including 800 women, were assisted through such activities.*

> UN SG 2020d, 8

However, the capacity in which they were included (other than the number of women) and the outcome of their inclusion is omitted. Hence, from the Secretary-General's report it is difficult to gain an understanding of whether the two peacebuilding imperatives clash in the field.

When UNMISS does occasionally mention cases of locally-led peacebuilding, women's participation within them is not mentioned. For example 'community-led mitigation and dispute resolution mechanisms' (UN SG 2014c, 9) do not mention women's participation, or UNMISS attempts to promote women's involvement within them. In the same report, training provided by UNMISS to community watch groups at the POC sites, which are UNMISS led, did emphasize the importance of gender and of women's leadership (UN SG 2014c, 9). Similarly, in S/2022/56, UNMISS includes women in the workshops it conducts to 'promote inclusive dialogue, peaceful coexistence, reconciliation and social and interfaith cohesion at the sub-national level' (UN SG 2022, 8). However, in the same report, women are not included in the pre-migration conferences between host and pastoralist communities (UN SG 2022, 8), which is a more locally-led process.

Hence, promotion by UNMISS of women's participation in local peacebuilding does not appear to occur within *locally-led* peacebuilding, but only in *UNMISS-led* engagement with local actors. While the reports do not address the rationale behind this difference, it could be interpreted as an awareness or avoidance of the potential clash between promoting women's involvement and the success of this particular locally-led initiative.

The exception to this is the first mention of locally-led peacebuilding in the All Jonglei Peace Conference, which included youth and women (UN SG 2012b). It does not mention who included women in this process or if this inclusion was promoted by UNMISS. However, the failure of this process (UN SG 2013a, 8) may explain why no subsequent locally-led peacebuilding initiatives have included women.

Reports with sections bringing together women's participation and UNMISS's engagement with local actors also include cases of UNMISS engagement with the local without women and separate engagements with women's groups. This is seen in S/2018/1103, which describes UNMISS bringing together women and local actors within UNMISS-conducted workshops (UN SG 2018e, 8). In the same report, UNMISS worked with women separately: 'UNMISS facilitated several workshops with women's civil society organisations to promote women's participation in the peace process' (UN SG 2018e, 13). This report also describes UNMISS consulting with local actors without including women: 'In Boma, UNMISS facilitated a dialogue forum to address intergenerational violence among male "age sets" of the Murle' (UN SG 2018e, 8). This suggests that there may be an awareness within UNMISS of situations were the two imperatives are incompatible, leading to avoidance of bringing them together. While not addressed explicitly in the reports, this may indicate that UNMISS attempts to bring the imperatives together when they are deemed not to clash, but also works with the two imperatives separately.

Human Rights and Customary Law

Within UNMISS's promotion of human rights, and external ideas of justice, women's rights are often included. For example, even in the more locally-led reports, such as S/2012/486, UNMISS pushes ideas of women's rights on to the community, such as attempting to 'sensitize communities' to 'harmful traditional practices and beliefs,

including forced and early marriages, in line with Security Council Resolution 1325' (UN SG 2012b, 9). The discussion in Chapter 6.2. on the clash between traditional values and human rights is pertinent here.

In line with its mandate, UNMISS promotes adherence to customary law, and aims for women's full and meaningful participation separately within the same reports, with no overt recognition of the potential clash. One aspect of South Sudanese custom is the patriarchal structure of society, with women and men holding different and unequal positions and power relations within families and society, with men usually assuming public, breadwinning roles and women relegated to the household (Edward 2018, 62).

In constructing women's participation as largely separate to local (mostly male) peacebuilding, UNMISS could be seen to be respecting custom, and therefore prioritising local ideals of inclusion over the WPS imperative for women's full and meaningful participation. The 'add and stir' approach by UNMISS to women's participation does not address existing patriarchal attitudes or the gendered nature of peacebuilding (Valenius 2007; Enloe 1993; Whitworth 2004).

However, when UNMISS includes women and traditional leaders together in its engagement in local peacebuilding (which it does throughout reports), there is no discussion of whether any difficulties arose, and if so, how these were managed. Nor does it address issues arising from these appointments or how women were welcomed into existing structures. This is interesting, as Rebecca Nyangdeng Garang has recognised that there were 'mixed feelings' towards her appointment from grassroots and elite men due to conventional stereotypes of women in secondary, caring roles (Maher 2021). The UNMISS reports do not recognise or address such gendered barriers.

UNMISS attempts to combine women's rights and South Sudanese custom in aiming 'to harmonize customary and statutory laws to protect the rights of women and girls' (UN SG 2013a, 15). Doing so is not necessarily respecting customary law, as commanded in the Capstone doctrine, as they are promoting external notions of individual rights of women, which may not be compatible with South Sudanese custom. Protecting the individual rights of women within customary law does not recognise the difficultly in harmonising the two, when the promotion of individual rights by international actors is contrary to the traditional communitarian nature of South Sudan.

There are some traditional peacebuilding rituals in which women have a role in contributing to reconciliation. These have been used by tribes in South Sudan to cleanse, disarm and reintegrate victims and perpetrators and encourage forgiveness to promote sustainable peace (Bedigen 2020, 11). Though women are included in these rituals, there are prescribed gender roles, and women's roles are within the domestic, or private sphere. However, the Secretary-General's reports do not recognise the nuance in traditions, but promotes women's broad

participation throughout. Horst's (2017) finding that local realities are often not accounted for in international promotion of women's participation remains true for UNMISS.

Peacebuilding Complexities

Promotion of local peacebuilding by UNMISS, and promotion of women's participation in peacebuilding are both inconsistent, including whether the local is prioritised over women's participation, and vice versa. For example, during the crisis period (UN SG 2014a), as previously noted, there was greater emphasis placed on the need to engage with local actors to prevent conflict from spreading, but women were completely ignored. However, in subsequent reports, women's participation appears to be promoted regardless of local desires

The decision on which to promote is difficult, and will necessitate choosing which local voices to prioritise, and deciding which locals to listen to. For example, by not promoting women's participation across all areas of peacebuilding, UNMISS is at times aligned with traditional patriarchal attitudes in South Sudan. However, not promoting women's participation on this basis would also be to the detriment of local women who wish to break out of traditional gender roles.

These complexities of promoting women's participation and encouraging local peacebuilding are not recognised in the Secretary-General's reports. The seemingly oppositional ideals of inclusion found in peacebuilding literature are not addressed. There is no explicit recognition of a potential clash between the two peacebuilding imperatives, or actions to address the areas where they may clash. The Secretary-General largely presents them as two separate areas that do not overlap, and assumes harmony between them when the two imperatives are brought together.

8. <u>Conclusion</u>

This thesis has explored two elements of UN peacebuilding policy, seeking to answer the question of how UNMISS promotes women's participation alongside local peacebuilding.

In addressing how women's participation is promoted, I have argued that key themes emerging from UNMISS's promotion of women's participation are that: women's participation is promoted separately to the broader peace process; UNMISS focusses on quotas and the number of women participating, without sufficiently addressing barriers to women's participation; UNMISS is restrictive in how it promotes women's participation; and UNMISS treats women as a homogenous group. This chapter ultimately argued that there is a gap between UN rhetoric on women's participation and UNMISS peacebuilding practices.

In examining UNMISS engagement in local peacebuilding, similar themes emerged in how local engagement was treated, such as by measuring participation based on numbers, rather than focussing on outcomes. I argued that: UNMISS uses unclear language when engaging in local peacebuilding; UNMISS focuses on promoting UNMISS goals, rather than assisting local goals; UNMISS's local peacebuilding is largely not locally-led, and is based on the assumption that national-level peace will trickle down to the local-level. This chapter contended that UNMISS is inconsistent in local engagement, and that local-engagement is secondary to the national process.

This thesis ultimately argued that UNMISS largely treats these two peacebuilding imperatives as separate and does not explicitly acknowledge their potential overlap or clash. The Secretary-General largely constructs these potentially oppositional ideals of inclusion as distinct areas that do not overlap, and assumes harmony between them when combining the two imperatives. One notable theme is that when women participate alongside local actors, this is only in UNMISS-led initiatives. When UNMISS occasionally mentions locally-led peacebuilding, women's participation within them is not mentioned. This suggests an awareness in UNMISS of a potential clash between promoting women's involvement and locally-led initiatives, although this awareness is not explicitly mentioned by the Secretary-General.

My analysis suggests that the treatment of local peacebuilding and women's participation as separate areas at UN headquarters-level is also present within peacebuilding practices. This could potentially be due to separate offices being dedicated to each imperative, and separate people reporting to the Secretary-General on the success of their initiatives. As such, there could be more overlap in operationalising these imperatives than is revealed in the Secretary-General's reports.

This analysis also demonstrates the difficulty in operationalising the call for hybridity found in the peacebuilding literature. There will always be clashing viewpoints and agendas, and there can be no manual on managing inevitable tensions, as both local and international actors are not homogenous.

8.1. Limitations

The focus on the Secretary-General's Reports to analyse UNMISS peacebuilding practices means this thesis is limited in scope. These reports are short, and designed to provide updates to the international community, rather than offer intricate detail on all of UNMISS's activities. There will necessarily be omissions on the reality of the situation in South Sudan. At times it is only possible to speculate rationale behind decisions. Furthermore, variation throughout UNMISS documents could be reflective of the changing interests of the advisors and those who help the Secretary-General write the report, rather than an indication that activities not mentioned are no longer occurring.

8.2. Recommendations and Implications

Ideally this analysis would be complemented with fieldwork in South Sudan, however that was not possible within the scope of this project. To address this research question more comprehensively, future research could conduct interviews with UNMISS personnel and local actors (male and female) at all levels in South Sudan. Comparison of such fieldwork with the findings of this thesis would also provide insight into the accuracy of using the Secretary-General's reports to understand peacebuilding practices.

A similar methodology could also be followed to understand if and how promoting youth participation in peacebuilding, in line with the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda, is harmonised with local peacebuilding. These UN objectives to promote participation of women and youth are interesting to examine in relation to local peacebuilding, as often local and external ideas of inclusion are contrasting.

The overarching aim of this thesis has been to open a discussion between the 'local turn' literature and feminist peacebuilding literature, to further understand the intersection between the two bodies and highlight some of the challenges for policy makers. I hope that by shedding light on issues of compatibility between women's participation and the call for local peacebuilding, I have shown that more attention needs to be paid to the potential clashes between local desires and international values when promoting local agency.

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