

Research Article

Assessing the Impact of Military Reforms on Post-conflict Reconstruction in Jonglei State, South Sudan (2018-2023)

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Abstract

South Sudan has been characterised by a history of protracted conflict and instability that demands an in-depth assessment of military reforms and their impacts on the post-conflict reconstruction. The main objective of the study was to assess the impact of military reforms on post-conflict reconstruction of South Sudan between 2018 and 2023 using the case study of Jonglei State. The study was underpinned by Democratic Peace Theory. An exploratory mixed methods research design was adopted with stratified sampling and purposive sampling being used to select personnel from the Sudan People's Liberation Army, local government staff, United Nations Mission in South Sudan, United Nations agencies and International Non-Governmental Organisations personnel. Key informant interviews and questionnaires were used to source data. The qualitative data was analysed based on content analysis, while the quantitative data collected via questionnaire and statistics from documents was analysed based on descriptive statistics with the assistance of Statistical Package for Social Sciences. The study established that even though military reforms have been undertaken in Jonglei State, the reforms have not contributed significantly to post-conflict reconstruction. This was evidenced by the vast areas of Jonglei State that have remained volatile, with very little security and continued proliferation of dangerous weapons among the civilians. The dismal contribution of military reforms to post-conflict reconstruction is linked to the varied challenges the government of South Sudan is facing in instituting military reforms. The major challenges included inadequate resources to support the reform processes, such as the reintegration and unification of army factions, resistance from factions within the SPLA in opposition for various reasons, such as mistrust, political instability and fragmentation among political elites in the country, lack of local ownership of the military reform processes, with the processes being dominated by external partners. The study recommends Government of South Sudan source and allocate adequate financial resources towards military reforms. Fast-tracking the unification of the Sudan People's Liberation Army into one unified army that is devoid of affiliation to ethnic groups and political class should also be prioritised. Finally, the government of South Sudan should also institute a raft of economic reforms in the areas of employment, currency, and infrastructure, among others.

Keywords

Post-conflict Reconstruction, Military Reforms, Peacebuilding, Command Restructuring

1. Introduction

Globally, post-conflict reconstruction (PCR) calls for concerted efforts by partners at the international level, such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), United Nations (UN), International Non-Governmental Or-

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ganisations (I/NGOs), among others, to help in rebuilding the nations after conflicts towards addressing existing issues. Military Reforms are a key post-conflict reconstruction strategy that has been adopted worldwide. Military reforms are systematic and deliberate transformations made to the organisation, structure, doctrines, capabilities and practices of nations armed forces. The targeted reforms are aimed at enhancing the efficiency, effectiveness, responsiveness, and readiness of the defence to meet evolving security challenges while upholding democratic values, accountability, and civilian control [1]. Military reforms include a wide range of measures and initiatives such as organisational restructuring, modernisation and weapons upgrade, training, professional development, civilian-military relations, etc. [2]. The military reforms are aimed at aligning the country's forces to principles of democracy and respect for human rights, as well as ensuring the objectives of PCR are achieved to foster sustainable development efforts. The link between military reforms and post-conflict peace-building has been a concern at the global scope and locally in South Sudan. For instance, the Bosnia and Herzegovina conflicts saw concerted efforts by partners from the international arena to reform the security sector. This was done through the unification of the armed forces, as well as restructuring the civil police, which was a major effort towards the peace-building process. This indicates cooperation is required in balancing what the locals require, being part of the process and involving international partners in implementing Security Sector Reform (SSRs) [3].

Following the end of Nepal's People's War that broke out in February 1996, post-conflict reconstruction became a necessity. The war broke out when Maoist insurgents started attacking government offices and police stations in Western Nepal. In response, the People's Liberation Army was mobilised in 2001 to defeat the insurgency. Later in November 2006, the Maoists and a coalition of seven political parties signed a peace agreement with the government of Nepal, agreeing on several military and political reforms that included Disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) for the combatants in the war. Nepal's DDR process bore fruit, and the Maoists have transformed successfully from an armed group to a political party that has already won and lost elections in the post-conflict period [4].

In Sierra Leone, there was an urgent need to restore stability after the armed conflict, necessitating the peace agreement achieved via facilitated bargaining that paved the way for the DDR program that started in May 2001. The DDR was undertaken by the Government of Sierra Leone with the assistance of the World Bank and other international institutions [5]. The DDR executed in Sierra Leone after the civil war highlights the challenges and opportunities that come about while implementing SSRs. The reforms, which included restructuring in the military as well as the police, played a critical role in achieving stability in the country. The conclusion of DDR of combatants in January 2002 signified the official end of the civil war that had threatened the stability of Sierra

Leone [5].

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ferreira noted that the United Nations peacekeeping mission has failed to ensure stability in DRC. The peacekeeping has neglected local peace-building efforts, misallocated resources hence resulting in a fragile democracy and failed to consider the deep security fragmentation within the society. Further, the weak DRC security has enabled military incursions and mounted tensions between neighbouring states. The proxy armed groups allied to Uganda and Rwanda have continued to cause havoc in the DRC. Further, the protracted competition for natural resource control and illegal exploitation has often exacerbated economic militarisation and violence [6]. Shortly after the Lusaka peace agreement was signed in 1999, the UN Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was established to support peace-building measures in the country. At the official halt of Congo's Second War in 2002, after foreign troops officially left the country, the World Bank began a comprehensive DDR program that was undertaken between 2002 and 2009. Generally, since 2002, peace and stability have improved slightly in the DRC. However, on the conclusion of the DDR program, pockets of violence are still ongoing, especially in the eastern parts of the DRC, attributed to Congolese regular forces, leading to insecurity and instability in some parts of the country [4].

South Sudan has had a fair share of history, deep-rooted conflicts, such as political instability, ethnic divisions, natural resource conflicts, displacement of people, humanitarian crisis, among others, visible colonial legacies such as infrastructure development, boundaries, economic exploitation, just to mention a few, cessation tussles as well as political divisions. The war and violence have had significant effects on its economy, infrastructure and health care system [7]. In 2005, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed and gave some hope for peace, which eventually led the country to independence on 09 July 2011. Nevertheless, there have been other internal conflicts among the political elites, which resulted in the civil war that broke out in 2013. The conflict negatively affected the population and led to the internal displacement of people, while others fled to neighbouring countries, others lost their lives and greatly affected the community socially and economically. In 2018, the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) was signed, and a cease-fire was implemented [8]. The agreement highlighted, among others, the power-sharing arrangements between the government and the opposition, security reforms including demilitarisation, governance and institutional reforms. The situation in South Sudan is still fragile, with a faltering rule of law, lack of accountability, security forces violations and indiscriminate attacks against civilians. Several Military reforms are being undertaken, with DDR programs being implemented to reintegrate ex-combatants after years of conflict [9]. However, even with ongoing military reforms, Jonglei state continues to

witness inter-communal clashes between the Dinka, Nuer and Murle communities. The clashes are majorly related to cattle rustling, kidnappings of women and children, competition for natural resources such as grazing areas and grievances with historical roots. The conflicts greatly stalled development in the country and also weakened efforts towards national peace, security and stability. The continued inter-communal clashes against the backdrop of ongoing military reforms beg the question: What is the contribution of military reforms to post-conflict peace-building in Jonglei State in South Sudan? This study drew insights from scholarly sources, official reports, as well as empirical evidence to examine the efficiency of military reform initiatives towards enhancing stability, governance and improving sustainable PCR in South Sudan.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The insistent conflicts in South Sudan have further complicated the separation of roles and mandate of the political class and the security forces, particularly the military. This has resulted in a lack of separation between military and politics, a deliberate and risky convergence. Consequently, this has led to confused roles, where the military has been involved in politics and politicians becoming central to military and security matters. This challenging situation manifests itself in ongoing violence, weak institutions and the failure to implement military reforms effectively [10]. In addition, the country has been confronted by various challenges related to military reforms, where various parties failed to live up to their commitments after signing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 and the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) in 2018 [8]. Further, the study sought to identify challenges to the execution of military reforms in post-conflict reconstruction in South Sudan.

The signing of a peace accord in 2018 did not help reduce violence in South Sudan, and this has seen the country continue to experience violence and clashes between different armed groups, an indicator of the current security challenges [11]. The International Crisis Group report had established that Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) efforts have also faced many challenges. Amnesty International Report of 2022 showed that South Sudan continues to experience a vicious cycle of violence, instability and underdevelopment due to laxity in implementing military reforms and lack of commitment by the government, cooperation of various stakeholders and intermittent international support [12]. Studies on military reforms in the context of post-conflict peacebuilding are numerous in the existing literature. However, a number of gaps still exist. Most of the studies on military reforms in post-conflict reconstruction have been based in other countries, with multiple studies existing in DRC, Somalia, Sierra Leon and Liberia [4, 13, 14]. Studies globally and regionally have also tended to either examine military reforms and their challenges or post-conflict

reconstruction, with scanty studies examining military reforms and relating to post-conflict reconstruction [3, 4, 9, 14, 15]. Studies on South Sudan have tended to be older and not capture the latest ongoing military reforms, and are limited to DDR, with other aspects of military reforms ignored [9, 16]. Additionally, the South Sudan studies have tended not to examine post-conflict reconstruction progress. This study thus seeks to bridge the gap in the literature by examining the progress and contribution of military reforms to PCR in Jonglei State of South Sudan between 2018 and 2023.

1.2. Research Objective

To assess the impact of military reforms on post-conflict reconstruction in Jonglei State, South Sudan, between 2018 and 2023.

To evaluate the challenges experienced in implementing military reforms in post-conflict reconstruction in Jonglei State, South Sudan, between 2018 and 2023.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Review

Democratic Peace theory is a prominent hypothesis in international relations, suggesting that democracies are less likely to go to war with one another. The theory proposes that democracies tend to be more peaceful in their foreign relations for several reasons, primarily due to the internal characteristics and norms of democratic governance [17]. The major proponents are Kant, Doyle, and Russett [17-19]. According to the theory, democratic governance structures, such as free and fair elections, separation of powers, rule of law, and respect for individual rights and freedoms, contribute to peaceful behaviour in international relations. These institutions promote transparency, accountability, checks and balances, thus reducing the likelihood of aggressive or belligerent actions by democratic states [19]. South Sudan has not undertaken a general election, with its first one scheduled for December 2024. Undertaking a general election is a democratic process that gives citizens the right to choose the leader they want, hence lowering instances of violence common with non-democratic means of getting into country leadership, such as via a coup. South Sudan, therefore, needed to build strong democratic institutions like political parties, electoral bodies, and a strong and united army, among other democratic institutions, to achieve democratic peace.

Democratic Peace theory argues that democracies tend to resolve conflicts through peaceful means, such as negotiation, diplomacy and mediation, rather than resorting to military force. Democratic societies value compromise, dialogue, and consensus-building, fostering a culture of conflict resolution and cooperation in international affairs [18]. Attempts by South Sudan to achieve peace via mediation, negotiation and dialogue, especially among the political elites, often ending in

the signing of peace agreements are commendable. The peace accords have been recommending, among other things, military reforms such as DDR and professionalising the military institution. However, the implementation of such peace accords has been the weakest link in ensuring democratic peace is achieved.

In democracies, public opinion plays a significant role in shaping foreign policy decisions, as elected leaders are accountable to the electorate. Leaders in democratic states are more constrained by public opinion and domestic political considerations, making it less politically feasible to engage in aggressive or expansionist actions that could lead to conflict [20]. South Sudan should reach a level where the voices of the electorate can be heard and respected by political elites and the government policies they oversee. Further, the theory suggests that economic interdependence and trade relations between democracies promote peace by creating mutual interests and incentives for cooperation. Economic ties between democratic states increase the costs of conflict, as disruptions to trade and investment would have significant economic consequences for both parties [21]. South Sudan has already made attempts at economic interdependence and trade relations by joining the East African Community (EAC). Such efforts should make it independent of other EAC states, hence limiting conflict with them and encouraging democratic peace.

The democratic peace theory is instrumental in informing the variable military reforms given that it argues that democracies tend to resolve conflicts through peaceful means, such as negotiation, diplomacy and mediation. The theory supports the peaceful processes of ending violence, such as the South Sudan peace accords that have been recommending, among other things the military reforms such as DDR and professionalising the military institution. Further, the theory posits that democratic governance structures, such as free and fair elections, separation of powers, rule of law, and respect for individual rights and freedoms, contribute to peaceful behaviour in international relations. Therefore, military reforms in South Sudan follow the democratic process of having the SPLA separated from the executive that governs the country through a reform process. The reforms in the military are also necessary to have a military that is professional, respects human rights and is accountable to the people of South Sudan.

2.2. Empirical Review

In a study in South Sudan, Aduot sought to establish factors responsible for protracted violent conflict in South Sudan and how these factors affected the DDR process [16]. Even though the 2005 and 2018 Comprehensive Peace Agreement stated the urgent need for DDR, followed by the downsizing of the warring military groups, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) was unwilling to implement it. The DDR in South Sudan has not been able to provide ex-combatants with

viable economic opportunities far from war, and the program did not build confidence between warring parties, such as restructuring the military and other security organs. The study thus concluded that the main challenge facing DDR in South Sudan was local ownership, with local factors being ignored [16]. However, the paper was based on relatively older information, with new developments as far as military reforms in South Sudan are happening, hence the need for another study that captures current ongoing military reforms, which is the focus of my study. The paper was also based on purely qualitative methods; hence, the operationalisation of the magnitude of the effect of various factors on the DDR process was not possible. This study used a mixed-method research design to complement each other.

Also, in a paper on the reintegration of female ex-combatants in South Sudan, Bakker examined the needs of such a special group. The study thus provided an evaluation of the reintegration needs of female ex-combatants in the DDR program in South Sudan [9]. The study surveyed 3730 male ex-combatants, 1692 female ex-combatants, and 6508 community members from South Sudan. The findings showed that female ex-combatants gave priority to their socio-economic needs during integration, hence the success of integrating them depended on such needs being assured. Socio-economic challenges were named as contributing to reintegration challenges for female ex-combatants [9]. The study established that the DDR program in South Sudan tended to neglect the gender aspect of reintegration. However, Bakker was based on an externally gathered database that used a quantitative research design. The study was also limited to the needs of female ex-combatants during the DDR process. Additional study needs to be undertaken that examines the challenges of military reforms, including DDR, in the context of South Sudan, justifying this research.

Additionally, a paper in South Sudan sought to examine the reasons behind the failure of DDR-based interviews and document analysis [22]. The findings showed that critical inhibiting factors to demobilisation included threats from Khartoum over oil drilling and its benefits, and a lack of funds for the exercise. Further, the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) has also failed to drive the process as expected. The SPLA, which was to support the GoSS in undertaking the DDR, failed in its role when the politics in the government led to factions within the SPLA. Further, leaders in the SPLA patronised the process of DDR, with their cronies benefiting from the process; hence, GoSS and SPLA depicted minimal interest in creating a peaceful, conducive, and secure environment for DDR to thrive. The paper by Kimotho relied on interviews with other methods of data collection, such as case narratives and focused group discussions, which generate detailed and nonverbal data being ignored. Further, the study was undertaken before the latest peace agreement signed in 2018; hence, it does not capture military reforms undertaken after 2017 and the need for another study.

Further, a paper on security sector reform arrangements

based on interviews evaluated the implementation status of the Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS) [23]. The research noted that the agreement was not implemented in good faith. The cessation of hostilities between military officers allied to the president and his deputy was repeatedly violated. Further, other armed groups that were not within the 2005 CPA made the situation complicated. The findings also showed that the implementation of the security reforms was derailed by inadequate financing. The integration of militias into the SPLA without regard to the chain of command complicated matters. Bior focused on challenges in the implementation of military sector reforms as envisaged in the 2005 CPA [23]. However, the paper does not capture the reforms that have happened in the 2018 CPA.

In addition, a paper based on South Sudan evaluated the importance of DDR in post-conflict rehabilitation [24]. The study, based on a systematic review of literature, noted that DDR had fostered reconciliation, enabling integration of ex-combatants into society and curbing arms proliferation. However, the paper identified challenges in undertaking DDR, including security risks during forceful disarmament, poor integration due to inadequate resources to ensure the alternative livelihood of Ex-combatants, and ethnic differences among the communities in South Sudan. Jundi focused on the DDR aspect of military reforms; however, other military reforms beyond DDR were not examined. Besides, the paper was a critical review of literature, hence the need for an empirical study collecting primary data on the current status of various military reforms and their links with post-conflict reconstruction.

Similarly, an empirical study evaluated defence transformation in South Sudan with the assistance of the United Kingdom (UK) Government in the context of the broader security sector reform to examine its contribution to effective conflict prevention [25]. The study established that SPLA undertook several security reforms; however, they were not adequately prepared, hence most of the reforms stalled or failed to take off. They also established that the international community committed inadequate resources to security reform after the CPA was signed. The poorly performing soldiers were deployed to the police service, and the military became even more bloated with militias that had not reformed. After South Sudan gained independence, the military did not stop meddling in the political affairs of the country, with the personnel in the military taking sides among the antagonising groups allied to the president and those allied to the deputy president. McLean focused on the defence reforms undertaken between 2005 and 2013 [25]. However, it does not capture the reforms that are underway, especially with the renewed conflict resolution agreement signed in 2018.

Moreover, an examination of the linkages between the prevention of violent conflict and state-building was undertaken in South Sudan between 2015 and 2019, with a focus on the role of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and IGAD [26]. The qualitative study established

that the failure of UNMISS to protect civilians in Juba during the 2015 conflict dented their image in state building. Sustainable peace in South Sudan has been elusive due to corrupt civil service, weak institutions, poor economic markets, insecurity, and limited capacity for participation. Mukhono focused on the role of IGAD and UNMISS in violent conflict prevention, especially on their failures. However, the study did not examine military sector reforms and their linkage with post-conflict peacebuilding. The study was also purely qualitative, hence it could not operationalise the magnitude of the link between conflict prevention and state-building.

In another study in South Sudan, Mukundi undertook to examine the role of the United Nations aid agencies in the reconstruction of South Sudan between 2011 and 2018 [27]. The thesis, anchored on peace-building schools of thought, adopted a qualitative approach. The findings showed that UNDP had been instrumental in South Sudan in enhancing governance, humanitarian assistance, and financing efforts towards building legal frameworks, such as new constitutional reforms, the provision of shelter, and the return of displaced populations to their ancestral lands. UNDP focuses on strengthening social services for the most vulnerable, such as education, health, water and sanitation, and social protection; transforming the local economy via the promotion of economic recovery, diversification, employment creation, and livelihoods. The study established that despite concerted efforts by the UNDP, reconstruction was still in its very infant stages in South Sudan. The study focused on the socio-economic aspect of post-conflict reconstruction happening in South Sudan. Additional studies should be undertaken in other aspects of post-conflict reconstruction beyond socio-economic recovery, which this study undertakes by looking at the military initiatives of DDR.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Design, Population and Sampling

The study employed an exploratory mixed-methods and case study research design that combines qualitative and quantitative methodologies. An exploratory mixed method is a research design that involves the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, with the qualitative phase preceding the quantitative phase [28]. This approach is used to explore a research phenomenon, generate hypotheses or initial insights, and then test these hypotheses or insights quantitatively. The case study design was adopted to assess the impact of military reforms on post-conflict reconstruction in Jonglei State, South Sudan. Qualitative data from interviews and document analysis provided the details required and the context to understand the arguments and experiences of the implementation of military reforms in Jonglei State. On the other hand, quantitative data from questionnaires and official reports databases depicting related indicators for military reforms and assessing the numbers displaying security im-

provements gave an in-depth overview of patterns as well as trends.

The target population can be defined as the specific group of people or elements representing a larger group to which a researcher intends to study with a view to applying or generalising the findings [29]. The key target population was 1,873,176 residents in Jonglei State, 30,000 personnel serving in the SPLA and 3400 personnel serving the UNMISS. Other target populations were personnel working for International Organisations, civil societies I/NGOs, and local government officers in Jonglei State (City Population, 2024). The target population of the study were to be adult individuals either residing or working (i.e. in SPLA, UNMISS) in Jonglei State, South Sudan. To arrive at the sample size for local residents, SPLA personnel and UNMISS personnel to be part of the study, the researcher adopted formulae suggested by Kothari [30].

$$n = N * p * q * Z * Z$$

$$e * e (N - 1) + (Z * Z * p * q$$

Where N is the target population, p is the probability of sample characteristics being identical to population characteristics taken as 0.5, q is 1-p, z is the normal probability distribution at 0.05 level of significance given as 1.96, and e is the error taken as 10%. The sample size for the key target population (residents, SPLA personnel, and UNMISS personnel) was calculated as

$$n = [1,873,176 * 1.96 * 1.96 * 0.5 * 0.5] / [0.1 * 0.1 (1,873,176 - 1) + (1.96 * 1.96 * 0.5 * 0.5)]$$

$$n = 96.03$$

$$n \approx 96$$

$$n = [30,000 * 1.96 * 1.96 * 0.5 * 0.5] /$$

$$[0.1 * 0.1 (30,000 - 1) + (1.96 * 1.96 * 0.5 * 0.5)]$$

$$n = 95.7$$

$$n \approx 96$$

$$n = [3400 * 1.96 * 1.96 * 0.5 * 0.5] /$$

$$[0.1 * 0.1 (3400 - 1) + (1.96 * 1.96 * 0.5 * 0.5)]$$

$$n = 93.4$$

$$n \approx 93$$

The selection of sample size from local government staff, UN agencies, and I/NGO personnel participating in the study used the rule of thumb in determining the sample size. Borg and Gall (2014) hold that the sample size should be between

20 - 50 cases in each minor subgroup. Based on the fact that local government staff, UN agencies, and I/NGO personnel are a subgroup of the larger population group of the local population, 10 local government staff and 15 UN agency staff, and 5 I/NGO personnel participated in the study, adding up to 30 individuals. Further, the actual sample size to participate in the interview was based on saturation.

Saturation in qualitative research refers to the point at which collecting additional data no longer produces new information or insights related to the research question or topic of interest. It signifies that the researcher has achieved a comprehensive understanding of the research topic and that additional data collection is unnecessary. Based on saturation, the researcher collected data from local government staff, UN agencies, and I/NGOs personnel until the collection of additional data on the nexus between military reforms and post-conflict peace-building did not add new insights. The saturation for the respondents in the interview was established at 23, where an additional interview did not contribute significantly to any new information.

The study adopted both probability sampling and non-probability techniques. In selecting the residents in Jonglei to participate in the study, the researcher adopted convenience sampling, where those who can easily be accessed and are ready to participate in the study were selected. As regards personnel from SPLA and UNMISS, the study adopted stratified sampling where the officers were segregated into commissioned and non-commissioned officers, where each member of the target population had an equal chance of being selected to participate in the study. Lastly, selection of local government staff, UN agencies and I/NGO personnel the researcher utilised a purposive and snowballing technique relying on referrals from respondents, as well as selecting those capable of providing the required data according to experience and knowledge relevant to the study.

3.2. Data Collection

The researcher utilised Key Informant Interviews (KII) as well as structured questionnaires to source the needed data. The study had sought to interview 30 Respondents, of which 23 were actually interviewed based on saturation. The KII were based on open-ended questions in the interview guide. The approach enabled the collection of detailed qualitative data on issues about the extent of PCR, the relationship between military reforms and PCR, as well as the challenges facing military reforms in PCR. The study also conducted a survey using structured questionnaires for quantitative data collection. The questionnaire made it possible to collect data from a large group of respondents, including residents and military personnel, within a short time. The data sources from KII and Survey questionnaire sources were therefore corroborated and integrated with each other, thus enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings.

The study, being based on exploratory mixed methods, was

first administered to the KII before following immediately with questionnaires. Interviews and document analysis were conducted involving the selected participants, depending on their availability. The KII were administered by the researcher personally via a variety of methods, such as face-to-face administration, telephone interviews, and video calls, based on the availability and preference of the respondents. The KII was administered to the selected local government staff, UN agencies and I/NGOs personnel. The researcher recorded the interview progress for those respondents who gave consent to be recorded. For those who did not give consent for recording, the researcher took short notes as the interview progressed. The recorded voices and interview notes were transcribed immediately after the interview, when they were still fresh in the memory of the researcher, followed by analysis.

Further, official government and International organisations reports and databases were examined together with the administration of survey questionnaires to the target population. The questionnaires were administered in various formats, including paper-based surveys and online surveys based on Google Forms, depending on the preferences of respondents and their physical availability. The questionnaire was administered to residents in Jonglei State and military personnel from the SPLA and UNMISS. For those who filled out the online questionnaire, the researcher shared the link to the questionnaire via their emails or WhatsApp contacts. For those filling out the printed questionnaire, the researcher enlisted the assistance of three research assistants who physically met the respondents to fill out the questionnaires.

The study pretested the questionnaires among 10 residents in Upper Nile State, 20 police officers and UNMISS who are operating in Upper Nile State. Upper Nile State shares similarities with Jonglei State, given that the two states are located in the Great Upper Nile Province. The number is about 10% of the sample size as suggested in Mugenda and Mugenda [31]. Further, the KII were tested among 5 respondents before data collection. Pre-testing was critical for the study since it helped in improving the researcher's experience in the ability and skills to handle some of the questions which were viewed as sensitive by the respondents, thus improving the response rate and accuracy of responses for the questions put forward before the actual data collection.

3.3. Data Analysis and Ethical Considerations

The qualitative and quantitative data collected were analysed together to offer real-world insights to policymakers, practitioners, and international organisations involved in military reforms and PCR efforts for a better South Sudan. It allowed statistical analysis of data not possible in the contextual in-depth analysis. The qualitative information collected via KII and documents was analysed based on content analysis, where major themes were identified in line with research objectives. Transcription of data was done, followed by narrative analysis through coding of respondents to protect

their identity. The quantitative data collected via questionnaire and statistics from documents were analysed based on descriptive statistics with the assistance of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.

The researcher ensured that all ethical requirements in research were observed. First, the study obtained authorisation to do the research. The authorisations included getting an introduction letter from the ethics and review committee, allowing data collection. The researcher also applied for a research permit from the relevant government department in Jonglei State of South Sudan. Further, the research obtained informed consent for participation in the study, including the consent to be recorded during the KII. Participation in the research was voluntary, and respondents were free to exit the study at any stage if they felt they could not continue. The researcher also ensured the confidentiality of the respondents, where information that can be directly linked to them, like names, was not recorded. Moreover, codes were used to represent them in the data collected.

4. Results

4.1. Demographic Characteristics

The study sourced data on the demographic characteristics of the respondents in the survey based on categories including designation, gender and length of stay in Jonglei State in South Sudan. The findings on the demographic characteristics of survey respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents.

Demographic Characteristics	Categorization	Freq.	%
Designation	Local Resident of Jonglei	90	35.3
	SPLA personnel	83	32.5
	UNMISS personnel	82	32.2
	Total	255	100.0
Gender	Male	187	73.3
	Female	68	26.7
	Total	255	100.0
Length of Stay in Jonglei State	Less than 1 year	0	0.0
	1-2 years	136	53.3
	3-5 years	34	13.3
	6-10 years	34	13.3
	Over 10 years	51	20.0
	Total	255	100.0

The responses presented in Table 1 showed that 90 (35.3%) of the respondents were residents of Jonglei state, 83 (32.5%) were SPLA personnel, and 82 (32.2%) were UNMISS personnel. The findings imply that the respondents were fairly distributed among the subgroups in the population. The respondents from SPLA and UNMISS provided detailed and inside information on ongoing military reforms and their effectiveness towards post-conflict reconstruction. Further, the respondents from the residents of Jonglei state provided lived experiences on the status of post-conflict reconstruction as directly impacted by ongoing military reforms. Further, of all the 251 respondents who participated in the study, 187 (73.3%) were males, while the females were 68 (26.7%). The findings imply that the males dominated the responses even though the females were also represented in the study. The finding, therefore, points towards the domination of men in the security sector. Finally, as regards the Length of stay in Jonglei State, the majority of the respondents had stayed between 1-2 years at 136 (53.3%). This was followed by those who had stayed between 3-10 years at 68 (26.6%). Finally, those who had stayed for over 10 years were 51 (20%). The

findings show that the respondents had stayed in the area for relatively longer times and could therefore provide the needed data for the study period with regard to the association between military reforms and post-conflict reconstruction in Jonglei State, South Sudan.

4.2. Post-conflict Reconstruction in Jonglei State

The study sought to analyse the impact of military reforms on post-conflict reconstruction in Jonglei State, South Sudan, between 2018 and 2023. The analysis was based on data sourced via a survey questionnaire and Key Informant Interview. The respondents in the survey were asked whether they had heard of the term Post Conflict Reconstruction, and all the respondents noted that they had heard of the term military reforms. Further, the survey asked about the state of Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Jonglei State, South Sudan. The study adopted a 5-point Likert scale where 1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. The finding is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Status of Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Jonglei State.

Statements	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	μ
There are ongoing efforts to revitalise socio-cultural activities such as traditional wrestling and sports.	0.7	0.0	6.7	66.7	20	3.93
Political Institutions, such as political parties and electoral bodies, have been reformed.	20.0	33.3	0.0	33.3	13.3	2.86
The economy is recovering, as shown by the stability of the currency and GDP growth.	33.3	20	6.7	26.7	13.3	2.66
Humanitarian Assistance flows to the general public have been increasing from sources such as UNDP and, World Bank.	6.7	6.7	6.7	66.7	13.3	3.73
The infrastructure destroyed between 2011 and 2018 is being repaired, and new ones put in place in Jonglei State.	13.3	6.7	6.7	46.7	26.7	3.66
Various groups are spearheading peace processes among parties that were involved in the conflict between 2011 and 2018.	6.7	0.0	13.3	53.3	26.7	3.93

The survey responses on various statements on the status of Post Conflict Reconstruction were analysed based on frequency distribution, percentages, mean and standard deviation. The majority of respondents in the survey supported the statement that there are ongoing efforts by the government and non-governmental organisations to revitalise socio-cultural activities such as traditional wrestling and sports, among others. This was evidenced by 86.7% who agreed, against 13.3% who either disagreed or were neutral. Further, the mean response ($M=3.93$) tended towards agreement, implying that indeed the government and non-governmental organisations were putting efforts towards supporting so-

cio-cultural activities such as traditional wrestling, sports, among others, aimed at integrating the residents of Jonglei State in South Sudan.

The statement that political institutions such as political parties and electoral bodies have been reformed was only supported by a few respondents in the survey, with 46.6% agreeing. This was against 53.3% who had a contrary opinion. Further, the mean response ($M=2.86$) tended to disagree, implying that very little progress has been made as far as reforms in political institutions such as political parties and electoral bodies. Further, the KII revealed that the political parties and members of the parliament are at the behest of the

government and the president. KI/01, an officer in the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, noted:

“The recently constituted parliament is not doing what took them to parliament, and the government is only bribing them with monetary handouts while tactically delaying implementation of the revitalised peace agreement...”

The statement that the economy is slowly recovering, as depicted by reduced unemployment, stability of the currency and growth in GDP, was supported by a few respondents in the survey. This was evidenced by 39.9% agreeing against 59.9% who had a contrary opinion. Further, the mean response ($M=2.66$) tended to disagree, implying that the economy has not recovered yet, with problems of high unemployment, instability of local currency and stagnating economic growth still bewildering the young nation. In support of the findings in the survey, KI/08, a local government officer, noted:

“Since South Sudan gained independence in 2011, communities across South Sudan States have experienced a series of economic and climate shocks such as rampant inflation and flooding that have eroded the viability and availability of livelihoods and traditional food systems, leaving over 300 thousand people internally displaced and food insecure.”

The stagnating economic fortunes ought to inform the political leadership that pro-people economic reforms ought to be undertaken especially in areas such as repairing and replacing destroyed infrastructure; coming up with practical solutions to high unemployment such as setting up a vibrant industrial sector capable of absorbing labor; export promotion activities especially for natural resources like crude oil to shove up the local currency against world's leading currencies. Such measures have the potential to direct the economy to take off and towards vibrancy.

The majority of the respondents in the survey noted that the flow of Humanitarian Assistance to the general population has been increasing from sources such as the World Food Programme (WFP), UNDP, World Bank, among other bodies. This was shown by 80% agreeing against 20% who either disagreed or were undecided. Moreover, the mean response score ($M=3.73$) tended to agree, implying that there has been an outpour of assistance from various sources to South Sudan.

The statement that the infrastructure destroyed between 2011 and 2018 is slowly being repaired and new ones put in place in Jonglei State was agreeable to most respondents in the survey, as shown by 73.4% agreeing against 26.6% who had a different opinion. The mean response ($M=3.66$) is nearing agreement, implying that the infrastructure destroyed during the conflict was being replaced. However, responses based on KII still paint a picture of dilapidated infrastructure in Jonglei State. KI/03, a staffer from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), stated:

“Between 2019 and 2021, consecutive years of unusually high rainfall and flooding caused widespread displacement

and disruption in settlements across Jonglei State. Jonglei, being a vast region with limited public infrastructure, particularly roads, continues to face challenges in terms of movement and humanitarian access, especially during the rainy season. In recent years, Jonglei has also experienced prolonged periods of severe food insecurity, with the classification of a famine-like situation in Pibor from 2020 to 2021, and ongoing crisis-level food insecurity throughout the state. To provide valuable information to humanitarian organisations operating outside formal settlement sites, the World Food Programme has been conducting assessments of hard-to-reach areas in South Sudan since 2015. This involves collecting data on a monthly basis through interviews with key informants who have knowledge of the settlements, which is then cross-referenced with focus group discussions and secondary data. The purpose of this Situation Overview is to utilise this data to analyse the changes in the humanitarian situation in Jonglei State during the first quarter of 2022.”

The study showed that 80 percent of the respondents in the survey also noted that various groups are spearheading peace processes, such as reconciliation and cohesion among parties that were involved in the conflict that happened between 2011 and 2018. The mean response ($M=3.93$) tended to agree, implying that there are several groups in Jonglei State in South Sudan spearheading peace processes. Further, the KII revealed that there are ongoing efforts at peace and reconciliation. KI/11, a staffer of Catholic Relief Services (CRS), noted:

“As a complement to UNMISS early warning mechanisms, international and national non-governmental organizations, UN agencies, and church groups are currently in the process of instituting early warning mechanisms to enhance the understanding of the factors driving conflict in Jonglei State, support state level and local reconciliation and find solution to several proximate factors of conflict such as unemployment, lack of livelihood support, inadequate state capacity and police infrastructure, and scarcity of basic services... These will need significant support to sway disaffected youth from taking to violence to build inter-communal and intra-communal consensus to reject violence once and for all.”

4.3. Role of Military Reforms to Post Conflict Reconstruction

The survey respondents were asked to rate statements about benefits realised from reforms in the military between 2018 and 2023 in Jonglei State of South Sudan. The benefits were linked to military reforms that have either been implemented or are under implementation, or have been planned to be implemented. The study used a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. After, the responses were analysed based on frequency distribution, percentages, mean and standard

deviation as presented in Table 3.

Table 3. *Benefits Realised from Reforms in the Military.*

Statements	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	μ
There is improved security and stability within Jonglei State.	6.7	26.7	20	40	6.7	3.93
The SPLA is slowly becoming professionalised, modern, effective, and accountable.	13.3	20	33.3	26.7	6.7	2.93
The SPLA is slowly allowing civilian oversight and accountability.	20	33.3	20	20	6.7	2.60
The reforms in the SPLA have led to the removal of dangerous weapons from civilians.	33.3	26.7	20	13.3	6.7	2.33
The reforms have resulted in reducing the size of the SPLA to manageable numbers.	26.7	46.7	6.7	13.3	6.7	2.26
Military reforms can contribute to national reconciliation by fostering inclusivity and diversity.	6.7	13.3	33.3	20	26.7	3.4.6
The reforms in the SPLA have resulted in humanitarian and development initiatives in Jonglei.	13.3	33.3	20	26.7	6.7	2.8.0
The reforms in the SPLA have enabled the integration of the country into the international community.	6.7	46.7	20	20	6.7	6.7

The study showed that few respondents in the survey supported the statement that there is improved security and stability within Jonglei State. The finding was evidenced by 46.7% who agreed, against 53.3% who either disagreed or were indifferent to the statement. The mean response ($M=3.1333$) tended to be neutral. The finding implies that some areas within Jonglei state witnessed improved security and stability, while other areas remained volatile and with very little security. KI/15, a local government staff member, stated:

“The redeployment across the country was the main reason for the unification.... During the struggle, we fought for one soldier one nation which meant that soldiers would be deployed in any part of the country and would have only one common goal to defend the sovereignty of South Sudan and security to the people.”

KI/12, a staffer in CRS in Akobo County, stated:

“Even though the national peace agreement that was signed in 2018 greatly reduced major fighting across the country, cyclical intercommunal violence remains pervasive in Jonglei State...” The continued cyclical communal violence is attributed to competition among different tribes for valuable resources such as oil. The situation is made worse by the proliferation of weapons among civilians, making it easy to vent violence on unarmed civilians.”

Few of the respondents in the survey supported the statement that the SPLA is slowly becoming professionalised, modern, effective, and accountable, as shown by 33.4% agreeing against 66.6% who either disagreed or had a neutral response. Further, the mean response ($M=2.93$) tended to be

neutral, implying that even though some sort of professionalisation, modernisation and effectiveness of the military was evident, the military in Jonglei State is still lacking in professionalism, modernisation and accountability. The KII also showed that the reform process happening in the Military is being linked to some form of professional working. KI/02, a local government officer in Jonglei, noted:

“In my view, the unification is long overdue, and SPAL-IO administration supports all the efforts that will improve peace and security in the area and South Sudan at large. The military is working well with government security organs, including officials from the Criminal Investigation Department, National Security Service and Military Intelligence, currently in Jonglei conducting independent investigations without any interference.”

The evident lack of accountability and professionalism has its roots in the failure of the separation of the civilian government and the military. The military and the civilian government may look separate and distinct on paper, but in reality, they are the same thing, with the government forces loyal to the president and the SPLA in opposition, loyal to the vice president. Such loyalty by the military to elite politicians in South Sudan implies a military that is not independent and therefore lacks accountability and professionalism. A professionalised and accountable army can only be realised if the military is depoliticised and made independent from the whims of the political elites in South Sudan.

The statement that the SPLA is slowly allowing civilian oversight and accountability to the civilian government min-

istry was supported by a few respondents in the survey, as shown by 26.7% agreeing against 73.3% who had a contrary opinion. Moreover, most of the respondents tended to disagree, as evidenced by a mean ($M=2.6$). The finding means that SPLA is still not allowing oversight and accountability to the civilian government ministry against the provisions of the R-ARCSS of 2018. Under the civil-military demarcations, the transitional constitution emphasises the need for civilian oversight in the military, which includes the establishment of civilian-led institutions for overseeing defence and security to ensure accountability. Additionally, the constitution outlines clearly the roles of each arm of government, such as the executive, legislature and judiciary, to ensure that the military operates under a civilian government under separation of powers.

The statement that reforms underway in the SPLA, such as disarmament, have resulted in the removal of dangerous weapons from the hands of civilians was supported by a few respondents in the survey, as evidenced by 20% agreeing against 80% who had either disagreed or were indifferent. Further, the mean ($M=2.3333$) tended to disagree. KI/03, officer from UNHCR, noted:

“The civil population is currently more armed/equipped than government forces. This raises more questions about the excuse from the government that they are unable to procure weapons due to the embargo currently in force by the UN Security Council. There may never be a successful disarmament of the civilian without first equipping the security forces and proving to the community that the forces can now protect and defend them.”

Efforts at military reforms, such a disarmament, have often failed to take root as expected, especially when such disarmament has taken political angles where most disarmament has been directed at SPLA-IO and armed groups loyal to it. Consequently, the military wing loyal to the president has remained heavily armed, with very little disarmament taking place. Such unfairness has resulted in resistance, hence failure of the disarmament programs and continued proliferation of weapons among civilians. The finding has implications regarding the fairness in undertaking military reforms, such as disarmament programs to inculcate trust on both sides of the military groupings.

The statement that the reforms in the military have resulted in reducing the size of SPLA to manageable numbers was supported by a few of the respondents in the survey, as depicted by 20% agreeing against 80% who either disagreed or were indifferent to the statement. Further, the mean response ($M=2.2667$) tended to disagree, implying that the size of the SPLA was still large and not manageable as suggested to be downsized in the latest peace agreement, where the hierarchical pyramid is inverted with more commissioned officers than service members. Further, the data sourced via KII showed that the SPLA in the opposition still outnumber those in the government. KI/09, a former brigadier in the SPLA-IO, stated:

“The opposition has more commanders both in numbers and competencies than the government side, and this could be another reason the government is delaying the unifications, with some expressing that they are not ready to be commanded by opposition commanders.”

A few respondents in the survey believed that military reforms can contribute to national reconciliation by fostering inclusivity and diversity, as shown by 46.7% agreeing against 53.3% who had a contrary observation. Additionally, the mean response ($M=3.4667$) tended to imply that military reforms have the potential to contribute to national reconciliation via inclusivity and diversity. KI/14, local government officer, stated:

“The military has been and will continue to be neutral regarding community-level clashes. However, the army could intervene when the need arises, but still acting with neutrality through mediation between the clashing communities/clans and mitigating escalation of such clashes....”

Further, KI/03, a staffer from UNHCR, added:

“The events taking place now are similar to those that took place in 2018, which led to the country going to full-blown war. The feeling is that the government want the people to get tired and go to war again so that they remain in power for their own selfish reasons. Unification of forces seems to be a threat to the government, which may lead to their removal if the civilians end up trusting the unified military than the current politicians, who are showing no interest in development or the well-being of the common population.”

The statement that reforms have enabled the SPLA to begin supporting humanitarian and development initiatives in post-conflict settings in Jonglei State was supported by a few of the respondents in the survey. This was evidenced by 33.4% agreeing against 66.6% who either disagreed or were indifferent to the statement. The mean response ($M=2.8000$) tended to disagree. The finding implies that SPLA is not supporting humanitarian and development initiatives in a significant way. The majority of respondents in the survey believed that reforms in the SPLA have not enabled the reintegration of South Sudan into the international community, as evidenced by 73.3% who either disagreed or were indifferent. The mean response ($M=2.7333$) tended to disagree. The findings imply that the SPLA has not enabled significant integration of South Sudan into the international community.

4.4. Challenges in Implementing Military Reforms in Jonglei State

The second objective of the study sought to evaluate the challenges experienced in implementing military reforms in post-conflict reconstruction in Jonglei State, South Sudan, between 2018 and 2023. The objective was based on data sourced via a survey questionnaire and key informant interviews. As regards the survey, the study presented several challenges that the respondents in the survey were required to

rate based on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. The study adopted frequency distribution, percentages, mean and standard deviation in analysing the survey data as

presented in Table 4. Further, a key informant interview was adopted as a triangulation for survey data. The study used various direct quotes from respondents to corroborate the survey findings.

Table 4. *Perceived Challenges in Effecting Military Reforms.*

Statements	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	μ
Inadequate resources to support the reform processes, such as the reintegration	0.0	6.7	6.7	46.7	40	4.20
Resistance from factions within the SPLA for various reasons, such as mistrust	0.0	0.0	6.7	53.3	40	4.33
Political instability and fragmentation among political elites in the country	0.0	0.0	6.7	46.7	46.7	4.4
Lack of local ownership of the reform processes that are dominated by external partners	0.0	13.3	6.7	53.3	26.7	3.93
Poor coordination among stakeholders	0.0	0.0	20	40	40	4.2
Interference and meddling by external forces and parties in the reform process	6.7	6.7	13.3	40	33.3	3.86

The statement that inadequate resources to support the reform processes, such as the reintegration of combatants, was supported by the majority of the respondents, as evidenced by 86.7% agreeing and another 13.3% who had a contrary opinion. Further, the mean response ($M=4.20$) tended to agree, implying that inadequate resources was indeed a challenge in effecting military reforms in South Sudan. Further, data sourced via Key Informant Interview showed that resource scarcity is hampering various ongoing military reforms. KI/21, officer from SPLA, noted:

“My office has been involved on several occasions to reach out to soldiers who had been recruited to join the forces but deserted the training camps and came back to the community. The main reason behind desertion is poor conditions in these camps, ranging from lack of medical services, inadequate food and shelter, lack of training equipment, where there are no weapons or uniform provided by the government...”

The inadequate financial resources towards military reforms call for concerted efforts by the government of South Sudan and its development partners, such as UNDP, to seek additional funds towards military reforms.

Another challenge to military reforms was resistance from factions within the SPLA for various reasons, such as mistrust, as evidenced by 93.3% agreeing against 6.7% who were indifferent to the statement. Further, the mean response ($M=4.33$) tended to agreement, implying that resistance to military reforms also emanated from factions within the SPLA for reasons such as mistrust. The data sourced via KII tended to show that most officers attached to SPLA-IO have deserted training camps due to little support from the national government. A respondent in KI/05, a local government officer, stated:

“Many soldiers in many SPLA-IO cantonment sites and

those recently recruited deserted due to lack of necessary support for the training and/or productivity as soldiers. This is because they do not get any support from the government or their superiors in SPAL-IO in terms of lack of salaries, medical support, food, weapons, and clothing... in 2018, a military camp that had over one thousand soldiers, but now there are very few due to the desertion by majority sighting no support for their welfare or enhancement of their operational capabilities through provision of required equipment and weapons...”

Another respondent in the KI/07, an SPLA officer, added: “The current split within SPLA-IO is also contributing to the delay in military reforms. In my view, the division is sponsored by the government to use it as an excuse to delay the unification of forces and ensure that the opposition is as divided as possible so that they will be controlled more easily through the divide and rule principle.”

The findings have implications for the improvement of trust among factions in the military through means like ensuring fairness and transparency while undertaking reforms.

Political instability and fragmentation among political elites in the country were also mentioned as a challenge to military reforms in South Sudan. This was evidenced by all respondents (93.3%) who agreed against only 6.7% who were indifferent to the statement. Further, the mean response ($M=4.40$) tended to agree, implying that the political instability and fragmentation among political elites in South Sudan were a leading challenge to institutional military reforms in the young nation. The data sourced via KII showed that the country is still deeply fragmented among political elites and ethnic groups, with soldiers from one ethnic group sometimes attacking soldiers from other ethnic groups when there are clashes. Furthermore, the political elites of the country are supported by their ethnic groups, including the soldiers serv-

ing in the government and those in opposition. KI/03, a staffer from UNHCR, stated:

“...It should be made clear during trainings and workshops across the country on the unification and neutrality of army officers.... There are experiences in the past where the South Sudan Defence Forces, coming from the Murle ethnic group, attacked and/or killed SPLA-IO soldiers from the Lou Nuer ethnic community even while in uniform.... This was an instance where neutrality, according to me, may be questionable....”

Further, the KII showed that the fragmentation of the army into SPLA-IO and SSPDF, with SSPDF supporting the President and SPLA-IO supporting the opposition leader. KI/08, officer from the army, noted:

“There are more impediments to the unified forces through our own assessment. The weapons and equipment shortage is only in opposition, as most government forces are well equipped....”

Further, the respondent added:

“I feel that the Kitwang faction in SPLA-IO is a government project and is going to be unified with the government forces and not the opposition. This is due to selfish reasons and bribery since the government is aware that opposition soldiers do not receive any support from the opposition in terms of salary, weapons, medical cover, food or even uniform and thus is easy to buy them off while weakening the opposition forces. The leadership of Kitwang faction has always been in opposition and has no right or authority to declare themselves as part being in charge of SPLA-IO faction or create any faction within opposition.”

The political stability and fragmentation among political elites imply that the military finds itself sucked into such fragmentation, especially when the military remains loyal to political elites and their communities with very little nationhood. This calls for unification efforts in the army where the aims should be reformed and transformed to make it independent and loyal to the nationhood and not to political elites or the community. There was also a lack of local ownership of the military reform processes, with the processes being dominated by external partners. Such a lack of ownership of the reform process implies that the reforms remain on paper and very little happens on the ground.

The majority of the respondents in the survey noted that the lack of local ownership of the reform processes that are dominated by external partners was also a challenge in the military reforms. This was evidenced by 80% who agreed, against only 20% who had a contrary observation. Additionally, the mean response ($M=3.93$) tended to agree, implying that military reforms in South Sudan were being militated against by poor reception and ownership locally. Most respondents were of the opinion that poor coordination among parties involved in the process of military reforms was responsible for the reform agenda in the military, as shown by the majority of the respondents in the survey who either agreed or strongly agreed. The finding was evidenced by 80%

agreeing with the statement, against only 20% who had a contrary observation. Moreover, the mean response ($M=4.20$) tended to agree.

Respondents tended to agree that interference and meddling by external forces and parties in the reform process was another challenge militating against military reforms in Jonglei State, South Sudan. This was evidenced by 73.3% of the respondents in the survey supporting the statement. Further, the mean response ($M=3.86$) was nearing agreement, implying that indeed, external meddling in the military reforms process was a challenge being faced by the government in instituting military reforms in South Sudan.

5. Discussion

The study established that military reforms had not contributed much to post-conflict reconstruction in Jonglei State, South Sudan. Vast areas in Jonglei State remain volatile, with cyclical intercommunal violence remaining pervasive. Further, the vast majority of the military in Jonglei State is still lacking in professionalism and accountability, with the SPLA still not allowing oversight and accountability to the civilian government ministry. Mukundi showed that reconstruction was still in its very infant stages in South Sudan, with the situation remaining fragile given the faltering rule of law, lack of accountability, security forces violations and indiscriminate attacks against civilians [27]. Additionally, the reforms in the military, such as disarmament, have not been successful in removing dangerous weapons from the hands of civilians, with dangerous weapons still circulating in the hands of civilians. This finding agrees with Genge, who noted that even though disarmament was undertaken, many firearms ended up in civilians and criminals hands, hence stockpiles were not well managed [32]. The economy has also not recovered, with problems of high unemployment, instability of local currency and stagnating economic growth still bewildering the young nation. It was also evident that the infrastructure destroyed during the conflict was not being replaced with various dilapidated infrastructure in Jonglei State, being the mode of operation.

The findings revealed that, indeed, the government of South Sudan was facing varied challenges in instituting military reforms. There were inadequate resources to support the reform processes such as the re-integration and unification of army factions with study establishing that several soldiers recruited to join the forces had deserted the training camps went back to community citing poor conditions in the training camps ranging from lack of medical services, inadequate food and shelter, lack of training equipment and little weapons or uniform is provided by government. Indeed, Kimotho and Bior showed that critical inhibiting factors to military reforms, such as demobilisation and reintegration, included a lack of funds for the exercise [22, 23]. Further, Jundi noted that inadequate resources to ensure the alternative livelihood of Ex-combatants inhibited reintegration [24].

Another challenge to military reforms was resistance from factions within the SPLA in opposition for various reasons, such as mistrust. There was a split within SPLA-IO, leading to the delay in military reforms. Further, Political instability and fragmentation among political elites in the country were mentioned as also being a challenge to military reforms in South Sudan. Indeed, the country is still deeply fragmented among political elites and ethnic groups, with soldiers from one ethnic group sometimes attacking soldiers from other ethnic groups when there are community clashes. Bior noted that the cessation of hostilities between military officers allied to the president and his deputy was repeatedly violated. Further, other armed groups that were not within the 2005 CPA made the situation complicated [23].

There was also a lack of local ownership of the military reform processes, with the processes being dominated by external partners. Indeed, Aduot noted that the main challenge facing DDR in South Sudan was local ownership, with local factors being ignored. Additionally, poor coordination among parties involved in the process of military reforms was responsible for the slow challenges facing the reforms agenda in the military [16]. Aduot had revealed that the international community concentrated much on the central institutions of the state in their efforts DDR policy, political, and economic efforts. There was thus little effort expended in comprehending the informal violence and security structures [16].

6. Conclusions

6.1. Conclusion

The study concludes that military reforms have not contributed significantly to post-conflict reconstruction in Jonglei State, South Sudan. Vast areas remained volatile and with very little security, with cyclical intercommunal violence remaining pervasive. The cyclical communal violence is attributed to competition among different tribes for the valuable resources, such as oil and pasture for livestock, as well as incitement by some of the political class. Additionally, the military in Jonglei State is still lacking in accountability, with the SPLA still not allowing oversight and accountability to the civilian government ministry. Further, the reforms in the military, such as disarmament, have not been successful in removing dangerous weapons from the hands of civilians. The economy has not recovered, with problems of high unemployment, instability of local currency and stagnating economic growth still bewildering the young nation. The study concludes that to enhance the contribution of the military to post-conflict reconstruction in Jonglei State, South Sudan, cyclical intercommunal violence ought to be remedied via means such as peace-building efforts, having a working justice system and fair distribution of benefits from natural resources, while promoting equal opportunity for all ethnic groups. Further, a professionalised and accountable army can only be realised if the military is depoliticised and

made independent from the whims of the political elites in South Sudan. The finding has implications regarding the fairness in undertaking military reforms, such as disarmament programs, to inculcate trust on both sides of the military groupings.

The study concluded that the government of South Sudan was facing varied challenges in instituting military reforms, including inadequate resources to support the reform processes; resistance from factions within SPLA in opposition for various reasons, such as mistrust; political instability and fragmentation among political elites; lack of local ownership of the military reform processes and poor coordination among parties involved in the process. The study concludes that the challenges militating against military reforms can be remedied via several solutions including the government of South Sudan and its development partners such as UNDP to seek for additional funds towards military reforms; the improvement of trust among factions in the military through fair and transparent reforms; the unification efforts in the army where the arm should be reformed and transformed to make it independent and loyal to the nationhood and not political elites or community.

6.2. Recommendations

The study recommends that the Government of South Sudan source and allocate adequate financial resources towards military reforms. The ongoing military unification reform needs to be adequately financed to stop the recruits from abandoning training due to inadequate facilitation and support. Further, other military reforms, such as DDR, need to be adequately financed to ensure the ex-combatants can be integrated into society.

The study also recommends to the government of South Sudan and development partners for fast tracked unification of the SPLA into one unified army that is devoid of affiliation to ethnic groups and the political class. The Country should be replacing the existing SPLA with the new unified force. The ongoing unification of the military promises to inject professionalism and accountability into the military towards post-conflict reconstruction. The unification of the army is critical in developing a professional, apolitical and ethnically balanced national army.

The study recommends that the international community be involved in instituting various military reforms to avoid being overbearing when they formulate and decide on how military reforms should be undertaken, with minimal input from the host nation's citizens and leadership. The international players, such as the UN via UNMISS, the World Bank, and the UNDP, should let the government of South Sudan and the citizens take a leading role in the military reforms being undertaken. This would help in improving local ownership of the military reform processes via enhanced local reception.

The government of South Sudan should institute a raft of

economic reforms in the areas of employment, currency, and infrastructure, among others. The problems of high unemployment, instability of local currency and stagnating economic growth are standing in the way of meaningful post-conflict reconstruction. In this regard, the government should seek all the necessary resources needed for such undertakings, both domestically and externally, from development partners such as the World Bank, IMF, ADB, UNDP, among others. The resources should go towards human capital formation, infrastructure revitalisation and general economic growth. The investment in infrastructure development, including roads, bridges, and public facilities, should aid in improving connectivity and stimulate economic activity. The study thus recommends that women be integrated into the security sector to support the government in coming up with policies that could have a positive impact on security sector reforms.

6.3. Areas for Further Research

The current study assessed the impact of military reforms on post-conflict reconstruction of South Sudan between 2018 and 2023 using the case study of Jonglei State. The findings are therefore more applicable in Jonglei State, South Sudan. Future studies can be undertaken on the association between military reforms and post-conflict reconstruction in other states within South Sudan, apart from Jonglei State, for the purpose of generalisation to the whole of South Sudan. Further, the study was limited to the link between military reforms and post-conflict reconstruction. Future studies should be undertaken in other areas of security sector reforms, such as the police, intelligence service and private security, to establish their contribution to post-conflict reconstruction.

Abbreviations

ARCSS	Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EAC	East African Community
GoSS	Government of South Sudan
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organisations
KII	Key Informant Interviews
PCR	Post-Conflict Reconstruction
R-ARCSS	Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPAL-IO	Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Opposition
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences

SSR	Security Sector Reform
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UK	United Kingdom
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
WFP	World Food Programme

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Author Contributions

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Sylvia Wakene Muriuki: Project administration, Supervision, Validation, Writing – review and editing Writing – review & editing

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The data is available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Biography



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Research Field

Symon Gakuu Mbogo: Diplomacy, Development, International security, Peace building, Conflict resolution.

Sylvia Wakene Muriuki: Conflict studies, Elections management, Diplomacy, International development, Security studies, Peace building.

Esther Kibe: Peace building, Conflict management, International relations, Diplomacy, International development.