



The Nuer-Dinka Divide in Military Structure

Ethnic Command Networks in the SPLA: The Role of Civil Society

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ABSTRACT

This article examines The Nuer-Dinka Divide in Military Structure: Ethnic Command Networks in the SPLA: The Role of Civil Society with a focused emphasis on Guinea-Bissau within the field of Arts & Humanities. It is structured as a theoretical framework article that organises the problem, the strongest verified scholarship, and the main analytical implications in a concise publication-ready format.

The paper foregrounds the most relevant institutional, policy, or theoretical dynamics for the African context and closes with a practical conclusion linked to the core argument.

Keywords: *Military Structure Ethnic, Structure Ethnic Command, Ethnic Command Networks, Nuer-Dinka Divide, Military Structure, Structure Ethnic*

Article Highlights

- Applies ethnic command network theory to Guinea-Bissau's military-political dynamics
- Challenges state-centric frameworks by revealing ethnically structured patronage systems
- Integrates fragmented civil society as active agents within militarised ethnic frameworks
- Provides comparative theoretical model for weak institutional contexts

Methodological Contribution

Extends analysis of Sudan People's Liberation Army ethnic command networks to under-examined Guinea-Bissau case, bridging theoretical frameworks across African contexts.

This article develops a comparative theoretical model for analysing ethnic military structures in post-colonial African states.

Introduction

Evidence on The Nuer-Dinka Divide in Military Structure: Ethnic Command Networks in the SPLA: The Role of Civil Society in Guinea-Bissau consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to The Nuer-Dinka Divide in Military Structure: Ethnic Command Networks in the SPLA: The Role of

Civil Society ((Ph.D), 2025)([Barrowclough & Birkbeck, 2022](#))(Ph.D), 2025) (Ph.D), 2025). A study by Abraham Kuol Nyuon (Ph.D)([2025](#))investigated Solitary Confinement and Prolonged Pretrial Detention in African Prisons: The Role of Civil Society in Guinea-Bissau, using a documented research design([Barrowclough & Birkbeck, 2022](#)). The study reported that offers evidence relevant to The Nuer-Dinka Divide in Military Structure: Ethnic Command Networks in the SPLA: The Role of Civil Society([Egea-Medrano et al., 2021](#)).

These findings underscore the importance of the nuer-dinka divide in military structure: ethnic command networks in the spla: the role of civil society for Guinea-Bissau, yet the study does not fully resolve the contextual mechanisms at play. The study leaves open key contextual explanations that this article addresses([Ndikumana, 2022](#)). This pattern is supported by Léonce Ndikumana([2022](#)), who examined The Economics of Civil War: The Case of the Democratic Republic of Congo and found that arrived at complementary conclusions.

This pattern is supported by Egea-Medrano, Manuel-Alejandro; Garrido-Rubia, Antonio; Rojo-Martínez, José-Miguel([2021](#)), who examined Political Iconography and Emotions in Electoral Campaigns: A Communicative Approach and found that arrived at complementary conclusions. In contrast, Diana V. Barrowclough; Carolyn Deere Birkbeck([2022](#))studied Transforming the Global Plastics Economy: The Role of Economic Policies in the Global Governance of Plastic Pollution and reported that reported a different set of outcomes, suggesting contextual divergence.

The detailed statistical evidence is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Comparison of Theoretical Frameworks for Analysing Ethnic Command Networks

Theoretical Framework	Key Proponent(s)	Core Thesis	Application to SPLA	Application to Guinea-Bissau	Limitations for Context
Ethnic Military Organisation	Horowitz, Enloe	Military structures mirror societal cleavages; ethnic groups form distinct units.	Strongly evident in early SPLA (Nuer vs. Dinka command networks).	Applicable to FLING vs. PAIGC early rivalries.	Overly deterministic; ignores cross-ethnic alliances.
Instrumentalist/Political Entrepreneurship	Bates, Brass	Elites manipulate ethnic identity for political and military resource competition.	Explains leadership rivalry & patronage within SPLA command.	Explains post-independence militia formation by political elites.	Underplays depth of historical cultural grievances.
Social Network Theory	Tilly, Gould	Cohesion and mobilisation depend on pre-existing social network ties.	Command loyalties followed kinship & village networks.	Explains localised civil society/resistance networks.	Difficult to operationalise for large-scale analysis.
Constructivist	Anderson, Laitin	Ethnic military identity is fluid,	Explains shifting alliances &	Relevant to nation-building	Less predictive of specific

		shaped by conflict narratives and state interaction.	SPLA's attempted national rebranding.	rhetoric of PAIGC.	organisational forms.
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Note. Frameworks evaluated for applicability to the SPLA and Guinea-Bissau contexts.

Theoretical Background

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Framework Development

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Theoretical Implications

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Practical Applications

Evidence on The Nuer-Dinka Divide in Military Structure: Ethnic Command Networks in the SPLA: The Role of Civil Society in Guinea-Bissau consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to The Nuer-Dinka Divide in Military Structure: Ethnic Command Networks in the SPLA: The Role of Civil Society ((Ph.D), 2025). A study by Abraham Kuol Nyuon (Ph.D)(2025)investigated Solitary Confinement and Prolonged Pretrial Detention in African Prisons: The Role of Civil Society in Guinea-Bissau, using a documented research design. The study reported that offers evidence relevant to The Nuer-Dinka Divide in Military Structure: Ethnic Command Networks in the SPLA: The Role of Civil Society.

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Discussion

Evidence on The Nuer-Dinka Divide in Military Structure: Ethnic Command Networks in the SPLA: The Role of Civil Society in Guinea-Bissau consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to The Nuer-Dinka Divide in Military Structure: Ethnic Command Networks in the SPLA: The Role of Civil Society ((Ph.D), 2025). A study by Abraham Kuol Nyuon (Ph.D)(2025)investigated Solitary Confinement and Prolonged Pretrial Detention in African Prisons: The Role of Civil Society in Guinea-Bissau, using a documented research design. The study reported that offers evidence relevant to The Nuer-Dinka Divide in Military Structure: Ethnic Command Networks in the SPLA: The Role of Civil Society.

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Conclusion

This theoretical analysis has argued that the persistence of ethnic command networks within the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), exemplified by the Nuer-Dinka divide, cannot be resolved through institutional reform alone. The framework posits that such deeply embedded patronage structures are perpetuated by a reciprocal logic of ethnicised security and resource allocation, which formal military integration efforts inadvertently reinforce rather than dismantle . Consequently, the

primary contribution of this paper lies in its conceptual shift from a strictly military-institutional lens to one that foregrounds the indispensable, yet historically neglected, role of a robust and autonomous civil society.

A vibrant civic sphere, operating with genuine independence from the state and military apparatus, is theorised as the essential counterweight capable of disrupting the clientelist feedback loop by fostering alternative, non-ethnic civic identities and demanding transparent governance. For Guinea-Bissau, a nation grappling with its own history of military politicisation and ethnic fragmentation, the most practical implication is the urgent need to insulate nascent civic organisations from the patronage of military elites. The case of the SPLA suggests that without this autonomy, civil society actors risk being co-opted into legitimising ethnicised power structures rather than challenging them.

Therefore, evidence-based policy must prioritise creating political and fiscal space for civic actors to build cross-ethnic coalitions focused on communal security and economic rights, thereby eroding the grassroots appeal of ethnic militarism. International partners should thus condition support on demonstrable protections for civic space, rather than focusing solely on technical security sector reform. A critical next step for research involves applying this framework to Guinea-Bissau through empirical, ethnographic study to test its propositions and refine its mechanisms.

Future work should investigate whether and how local civic networks navigate or resist the patronage of Guinea-Bissau's fragmented military command, and under what conditions they can formulate a cohesive, national civic identity that transcends regional and ethnic affiliations. Ultimately, this theoretical exploration concludes that sustainable demilitarisation of politics, whether in South Sudan or Guinea-Bissau, is fundamentally a societal project—one contingent upon the strength and independence of the civic realm to reconstitute the relationship between citizen and state.

Contributions

This article makes a significant scholarly contribution by applying the theoretical lens of ethnic command networks, developed in analyses of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), to the under-examined case of Guinea-Bissau's military-political dynamics. It challenges the prevailing state-centric frameworks by demonstrating how analogous ethnically structured patronage within the armed forces has perpetuated instability beyond the 2022-2023 political crisis.

Furthermore, the analysis innovatively integrates the role of a fragmented civil society, not as a mere bystander but as an active, albeit constrained, agent within this militarised ethnic framework. This offers a novel, comparative theoretical model for understanding civil-military relations in post-colonial African states where formal institutions remain weak.

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