International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (IJTSRD)
Volume 10 Issue 5, Sep-Oct 2026 Available Online: www.ijtsrd.com e-ISSN: 2456 – 6470

Reforming Security Sector Governance: In whose Interests? Understanding Evolutional Dynamics in South Sudan's Security Sector

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ABSTRACT

This study examined governance and security sector reform in Africa, with particular emphasis on how civilian oversight can be enhanced to strengthen accountability and security-sector professionalism in post-conflict South Sudan. The study pursued four objectives: to assess the effectiveness of formal civilian oversight mechanisms; examine the contribution of customary justice systems, traditional authorities and civil society actors where formal oversight is weak; analyse the influence of political and ethnic patronage on disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration and the unification of armed forces under the R-ARCSS; and assess the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms in addressing abuses, impunity and unchecked authority within the military, police and intelligence services. The study adopted pragmatism as its overarching research paradigm permitting the researcher to draw on different forms of evidence where each contributes to answering the research questions. The quantitative sample was determined using a probability-based sample-size procedure appropriate to the size and structure of the accessible population. $n0 = Z^2pq/e^2$, where n0 was the initial sample size, Z was the standard normal value corresponding to the selected confidence level, p was the estimated proportion of the population possessing the characteristic of interest, q was 1-p, and was the desired margin of error. Using the conventional 95 per cent confidence level, Z = 1.96. Where no defensible prior population proportion was available, p = 0.50 and q = 0.50 were used. At a margin of error of 0.05, the initial large-population estimate was approximately 384 respondents and the verified accessible population was applied using $n = n0/[1 + (n0 - 1)/N]$, where N represented the accessible population. The findings showed that formal civilian oversight was institutionally present but operationally weak, particularly in budgetary scrutiny, access to information, technical capacity, independence and the practical ability to influence security-sector conduct. Community, customary and civil-society actors made useful contributions through local information, mediation and social accountability, but their effectiveness was constrained by limited civic space, intimidation risks and weak formal channels for acting on their evidence. DDR and force-unification processes were adversely affected by perceived political and ethnic patronage, including concerns about recruitment, rank harmonisation, merit, command relationships and resource allocation. Accountability mechanisms were weakest at the stages linking complaints to impartial investigation, sanction, victim redress and protection from retaliation, while impunity remained a major obstacle to reform. The study concludes that sustainable security-sector reform requires civilian oversight to operate as a connected governance system in which legal mandates are supported by information access, institutional capacity, autonomy, enforceable accountability, community participation and transparent personnel and resource-management systems. The thesis proposes an integrated civilian oversight-security professionalism framework and provides institutional and policy recommendations for strengthening democratic security governance in South Sudan.

KEYWORDS: *Security Sector Reform; Civilian Oversight; Accountability; DDR; Force Unification; Professionalism; South Sudan.*

How to cite this paper: Ajang J. Atem "Reforming Security Sector Governance: In whose Interests? Understanding Evolutional Dynamics in South Sudan's Security Sector" Published in International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (ijtsrd), ISSN: 2456-6470, Volume-10 | Issue-5, October 2026, pp.1350-1374, URL: www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd142204.pdf

IJTSRD142204

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1. INTRODUCTION

Security sector reform (SSR) has become a central element of post-conflict state-building because the restoration of public authority after war depends not only on rebuilding armed and police institutions, but also on placing those institutions within lawful, accountable and democratically supervised systems of governance. Contemporary SSR therefore extends beyond training, equipment and organisational restructuring to include civilian direction, legislative scrutiny, judicial accountability, transparent resource management and responsiveness to the security needs of citizens (Schroeder and Chappuis, 2014; Detzner, 2017; Berg, 2022). Within the African context, this broader understanding is reflected in the African Union's conception of SSR as the reorientation of security policies, structures and capacities so that security institutions become effective, efficient and responsive to democratic control and to people's security and justice needs (African Union, 2013). The question of civilian oversight is particularly important in post-conflict states where armed organisations may have developed during liberation struggles or civil wars, where political and military structures have historically overlapped, and where formal state institutions may still be consolidating authority. Research on African SSR shows that reforms often encounter entrenched institutional legacies, informal power relations, weak local ownership and gaps between formal governance arrangements and the everyday practices through which security is produced (Ansorg, 2017; Bagayoko, Hutchful and Luckham, 2016; Donais, 2018). These challenges make civilian oversight more than a constitutional principle: it becomes a practical question of whether elected institutions, courts, civilian ministries, oversight bodies, civil society and communities can influence how coercive authority is exercised and can hold security providers accountable for their conduct (Gordon, 2014; Donais and Barbak, 2021). South Sudan presents an especially important setting for examining this problem because the country has had to build state security institutions out of a liberation-movement legacy while simultaneously managing armed fragmentation, post-independence conflict, successive peace arrangements and continuing efforts to unify and professionalise the organised forces (Abatneh and Lubang, 2011; Wassara, 2015; Onapa, 2019). The Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) places security-sector reform, transitional security arrangements, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), and the unification of forces within the country's peace architecture, yet implementation has remained uneven and contested in practice (IGAD, 2018; United Nations Security Council, 2025; United Nations Secretary-General, 2026). Against this background, this chapter introduces the study on governance and security sector reform in Africa with specific emphasis on enhancing civilian oversight in post-conflict South Sudan, and presents the background, statement of the problem, purpose and objectives, research questions, justification, significance, scope, limitations and delimitations, conceptual framework and organisation of the thesis.

1.1. The History of Security-Sector Governance and Civilian Oversight

The contemporary idea of security-sector governance emerged from a broader transformation in thinking about security after the Cold War, when attention increasingly moved beyond the defence of territorial sovereignty towards the relationship between security institutions, political authority, human rights and the safety of individuals and communities (Schroeder and Chappuis, 2014; Berg, 2022). This shift did not remove the state's responsibility for defence and public order, but it widened the standards by which security institutions were expected to be judged, particularly in societies emerging from violent conflict (Donais, 2018; Donais and Barbak, 2021). Security institutions were increasingly expected to operate under law, to be answerable to legitimate civilian authority and to provide security in ways that reinforced rather than weakened public trust (Gordon, 2014; African Union, 2013). As a result, post-conflict reconstruction came to involve not merely the re-establishment of armies and police services, but the construction of governance arrangements capable of controlling coercive power, allocating security resources transparently and connecting institutional performance to citizens' security needs (Detzner, 2017; Berg, 2022). Security sector reform developed within this changing policy and scholarly environment as an attempt to link the effectiveness of security institutions with democratic governance and accountability (Schroeder and Chappuis, 2014; Detzner, 2017). Earlier externally supported reform programmes frequently concentrated on institutional capacity, technical training and the formal organisation of security agencies, whereas later scholarship increasingly questioned whether technically stronger institutions would necessarily become more accountable or more responsive to the public (Gordon, 2014; Donais, 2018). This concern encouraged a broader understanding of SSR in which reform includes institutional rules, civilian control, public accountability, justice, local ownership and relationships between formal and informal providers of security (Bagayoko, Hutchful and Luckham, 2016;

Donais and Barbak, 2021). The African Union similarly frames SSR as a nationally led process concerned with democratic control and the security and justice needs of people, thereby connecting institutional reform to governance rather than treating it solely as a military or policing project (African Union, 2013). Civilian oversight is a central component of this governance-oriented understanding because security organisations possess exceptional coercive authority and therefore require institutional restraints that distinguish lawful public power from discretionary or partisan use of force (Manea and Rüland, 2020; Donais and Barbak, 2021). In democratic systems, civilian oversight is ordinarily distributed across several institutions rather than being exercised by one actor alone, including the executive, legislature, judiciary, civilian ministries, audit and accountability bodies and, in a wider societal sense, civil society and the media (Manea and Rüland, 2020; Gordon, 2014). Effective oversight is consequently concerned with both direction and accountability: civilian authorities establish policy and legal mandates, while oversight institutions scrutinise budgets, conduct, compliance and the use of public resources (African Union, 2013; Berg, 2022). The quality of civilian oversight therefore depends not only on the existence of laws and committees, but also on whether those bodies possess information, expertise, independence, access, resources and the political space required to perform their mandates (Manea and Rüland, 2020; Donais and Barbak, 2021). A further development in SSR thinking has been the recognition that formal state institutions do not exhaust the ways in which security and justice are governed, particularly in conflict-affected African settings (Bagayoko, Hutchful and Luckham, 2016). Research on hybrid security governance shows that citizens may encounter state police, customary authorities, community structures, local mediators, civil society organisations and other non-state actors within the same security and justice environment (Bagayoko, Hutchful and Luckham, 2016; Schroeder, Chappuis and Kocak, 2014). Such arrangements are neither automatically effective nor automatically democratic, but they demonstrate why analysis restricted to formal ministries, parliaments and security agencies can overlook important sites of authority, accountability and dispute resolution (Bagayoko, 2012; Donais, 2018). The implication for post-conflict SSR is that reform must understand how formal and informal institutions interact in practice, including whether community-level mechanisms complement, challenge or reproduce weaknesses in formal security governance (Gordon, 2014; Donais and Barbak, 2021). The issue of local ownership became prominent precisely because reforms designed externally can fail to engage the political and social institutions through which security is actually governed (Bendix and Stanley, 2008; Ansorg, 2017). Studies of SSR in Africa have found that internationally promoted templates can understate institutional path dependence, domestic political interests and the practical knowledge of local communities (Ansorg, 2017; Schroeder and Chappuis, 2014). Local ownership, however, should not be equated simply with endorsement by national political elites because security institutions affect citizens at multiple levels and because communities may experience insecurity differently from central state actors (Gordon, 2014; Donais, 2009). A more substantive interpretation therefore links ownership to meaningful participation, responsiveness and the capacity of domestic institutions and communities to shape priorities and hold security providers to account (Gordon, 2014; Donais, 2018).

1.2. The Security-Sector Reform in the African Continent

These developments are particularly relevant in Africa, where security-sector reform has frequently occurred in states emerging from civil war, authoritarian rule, military intervention in politics or contested processes of state formation (Detzner, 2017; Ansorg, 2017). The continent's reform experiences demonstrate considerable variation, but recurring challenges include weak institutional capacity, limited parliamentary expertise, politicised security institutions, fragmented command arrangements, dependence on external support and tensions between formal legal structures and informal practices (Detzner, 2017; Bagayoko, Hutchful and Luckham, 2016). Comparative research cautions against assuming that institutional designs transferred from other contexts will produce equivalent outcomes where historical trajectories and domestic power relations differ (Ansorg, 2017; Schroeder and Chappuis, 2014). This has encouraged African SSR scholarship to place greater weight on national ownership, context-specific reform, state-society relations and the interaction between formal and informal governance systems (Bagayoko, Hutchful and Luckham, 2016; African Union, 2013).

The African Union's SSR framework reflects this contextual approach by linking security-sector effectiveness to democratic control, rule of law, human rights and nationally determined reform priorities (African Union, 2013). The framework also recognises that security institutions include more than the armed forces and police, extending attention to justice, intelligence, oversight and other actors involved in security governance (African Union,

2013). This broad institutional conception is important in post-conflict states because failures of security governance may arise from weak coordination across institutions as much as from the internal organisation of a particular force (Detzner, 2017; Berg, 2022). It also means that civilian oversight must be assessed across the chain through which security policy is formulated, budgets are authorised, operations are legally bounded, misconduct is investigated and citizens seek redress (Manea and Rüland, 2020; Donais and Barbak, 2021). African reform experiences have also shown that professionalisation cannot be reduced to technical competence or the acquisition of equipment because a capable force can still operate in ways that are politically partial, financially opaque or weakly accountable (Detzner, 2017; Berg, 2022). Professional security institutions are generally associated with clear legal mandates, disciplined command structures, merit-based personnel systems, political neutrality, respect for rights and accountability to legitimate civilian authorities (Manea and Rüland, 2020; African Union, 2013). These institutional characteristics depend on incentives, oversight and organisational norms as well as formal training (Berg, 2022; Donais and Barbak, 2021). Consequently, the relationship between civilian oversight and professionalism is not automatic but requires empirical investigation of whether oversight arrangements actually influence behaviour, resource use, accountability and institutional culture (Donais, 2018; Berg, 2022).

1.3. The Evolutional Development of Security Governance in South Sudan

South Sudan's security-sector trajectory must be understood against a distinctive history in which armed struggle, political organisation and the construction of state authority were closely interconnected before independence (Zambakari, 2012; Abatneh and Lubang, 2011). The Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) developed as both a political movement and an armed organisation during the long conflict with successive governments in Khartoum, creating institutional legacies that did not disappear with the transition to autonomous government and later statehood (Zambakari, 2012; Wassara, 2015). The 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement created a framework for Southern self-government and opened a period in which public institutions, including the police and other security bodies, had to be developed rapidly in a setting shaped by war, limited administrative capacity and multiple armed constituencies (Abatneh and Lubang, 2011). Research on police reform during this period already identified the difficulty of building professional civilian policing while broader state institutions were still being formed (Abatneh and Lubang, 2011). The transition from a liberation movement to state institutions created a demanding governance problem because structures developed for wartime mobilisation were required to perform peacetime constitutional and administrative functions (Zambakari, 2012; Wassara, 2015). Institutionalisation involved defining mandates, establishing civilian ministries, creating legal frameworks and developing systems for personnel management, finance and public accountability (Abatneh and Lubang, 2011; Wassara, 2015). At the same time, the post-war environment contained multiple armed groups and networks whose integration into state structures was politically and organisationally complex (Breitung, Paes and van de Vondervoort, 2016). These conditions meant that security-sector transformation in Southern Sudan and later South Sudan was inseparable from the broader process of state formation and from questions about how political authority would be separated from military organisation (Abatneh and Lubang, 2011; Zambakari, 2012). Independence on 9th July 2011 transformed these institutional challenges into the responsibilities of a sovereign state, but it did not by itself resolve the legacies of prolonged armed conflict or the difficulties of consolidating unified national institutions (Wassara, 2015; Roach, 2016). Scholarly accounts of the early post-independence period emphasise that South Sudan entered statehood with weak administrative systems, continuing communal insecurity, contested relationships between political and military actors and substantial demands on public institutions (Wassara, 2015; Zambakari, 2012). The security sector therefore had to address conventional defence, policing, internal security, community violence and the integration or management of armed constituencies at the same time that civilian governance institutions were still developing (Wassara, 2015; Mayai, 2020). This combination placed considerable pressure on mechanisms of oversight, budgeting and institutional accountability (Mayai, 2020; Roach, 2016). The political crisis that escalated into armed conflict in December 2013 exposed the fragility of the institutional arrangements that had developed after independence and deepened fragmentation within the security environment (Roach, 2016; Wassara, 2015). Academic analyses differ in their explanations of the conflict, but several identify the interaction of elite political competition, militarised institutions, factional organisation and weak systems of accountability as important elements of the crisis (de Waal, 2014; Pinaud, 2014; Roach,

2016). Because these interpretations are contested, they are best treated as scholarly explanations rather than as a single settled account of causation (de Waal, 2014; Pinaud, 2014). What is less disputed is that renewed war complicated the development of unified, professional state security institutions and made security-sector governance a core component of subsequent peace efforts (Roach, 2016; Onapa, 2019).

1.4. The Post-Conflict Security Arrangements, DDR and Force Unification in South Sudan

The 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan attempted to restore a political and security framework after the first phase of the civil war, but renewed fighting in 2016 further disrupted implementation and reinforced mistrust among the parties (Roach, 2016; Onapa, 2019). The later R-ARCSS, signed on 12 September 2018, again placed security arrangements at the centre of the transition and expressly mandated security-sector reform and transformation (IGAD, 2018). Chapter II of the R-ARCSS addresses the permanent ceasefire, transitional security arrangements, strategic defence and security review, cantonment, training and the unification of forces, while other provisions connect the transition to accountability and institutional reform (IGAD, 2018). This architecture shows that the peace process treats security-sector transformation not as a peripheral administrative matter, but as one of the institutional conditions for a stable political transition (IGAD, 2018; Onapa, 2019). The unification of forces under the R-ARCSS is especially important because it seeks to move personnel associated with different parties and armed formations into common national security structures (IGAD, 2018). In principle, such a process requires agreed command arrangements, transparent selection and training, coherent deployment, sustainable personnel management and an institutional identity that is stronger than factional affiliation (IGAD, 2018; Berg, 2022). In practice, unification has proceeded slowly and incompletely, with the United Nations Panel of Experts reporting that the process had largely stalled after 2022 and that many of the approximately 53,000 Necessary Unified Forces who graduated in 2021 and 2022 had not been effectively deployed (United Nations Security Council, 2025). The Secretary-General's 2026 benchmark assessment further reported limited progress across key security-sector benchmarks, indicating that the institutional transformation envisaged by the peace agreement remained unfinished (United Nations Secretary-General, 2026).

The DDR is closely connected to force unification because post-conflict security institutions cannot be stabilised simply by incorporating every armed participant into permanent state employment (Detzner, 2017; Berg, 2022). Effective DDR is expected to distinguish between personnel retained in organised forces and those transitioning to civilian life, while providing reintegration pathways that reduce incentives for remobilisation (IGAD, 2018; United Nations Secretary-General, 2026). In South Sudan, however, DDR has repeatedly faced resource, sequencing, institutional and political constraints, and its progress has remained linked to the unresolved design and deployment of unified forces (Breitung, Paes and van de Vondervoort, 2016; United Nations Secretary-General, 2026). These difficulties make it important to examine not merely whether DDR structures exist, but how political and ethnic patronage may influence selection, command, deployment and access to security-sector opportunities (Breitung, Paes and van de Vondervoort, 2016; Onapa, 2019). Patronage is relevant to SSR because security institutions can become arenas through which political coalitions distribute positions, ranks, salaries and access to resources, especially where formal personnel systems are weak or where armed constituencies remain politically significant (de Waal, 2014; Pinaud, 2014). In the South Sudan literature, scholars have used different concepts to analyse these relationships, including patronage, military factionalism and elite bargaining, but they broadly agree that informal political relationships have affected institutional development (de Waal, 2014; Roach, 2016). Such claims require careful empirical treatment because they concern politically sensitive relationships and should not be assumed to apply uniformly across institutions or personnel (Roach, 2016; Berg, 2022). For this study, the relevant question is therefore not whether every security-sector outcome is caused by patronage, but whether and how political or ethnic patronage influences DDR, force unification and civilian oversight within the period under investigation.

1.5. The Formal Civilian Oversight and Institutional Accountability in South Sudan

Civilian governance of the security sector in South Sudan operates through a formal institutional architecture that includes the executive, civilian ministries, the Transitional National Legislative Assembly, courts and justice institutions, alongside the leadership structures of the organised forces. The Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs provides a civilian governmental location for defence policy, while the Ministry of Interior is central to policing and internal public-security administration, and the National Security Service operates within a separate statutory mandate. Parliamentary institutions are

expected to exercise legislative and budgetary functions, while courts and other legal institutions provide mechanisms through which the legality of state action can be scrutinised. The effectiveness of this architecture, however, depends on how formal mandates operate in practice, the information available to civilian institutions, and their capacity to scrutinise powerful security organisations (Manea and Rüland, 2020; Donais and Barbak, 2021).

The existence of civilian offices does not by itself establish effective civilian oversight because formal authority may be weakened by information asymmetry, limited technical expertise, fragmented institutional responsibilities or political constraints (Manea and Rüland, 2020; Donais and Barbak, 2021). Legislatures require access to credible budgetary and operational information if they are to scrutinise expenditure and policy meaningfully, while civilian ministries require administrative capacity to translate political direction into enforceable institutional rules (Manea and Rüland, 2020; Berg, 2022). Courts and accountability bodies likewise depend on legal independence, access to evidence and the practical ability to enforce decisions (Donais and Barbak, 2021). These conditions are especially demanding in post-conflict environments where institutional rules may coexist with informal practices and where national security concerns can restrict transparency (Schroeder, Chappuis and Kocak, 2014; Berg, 2022). Security-sector budgeting provides a concrete lens through which the relationship between civilian governance and institutional performance can be examined (Mayai, 2020). Mayai's analysis of South Sudanese security-sector spending between 2006 and 2018 found that higher security expenditure was not consistently associated with improved public safety, raising questions about the effectiveness, allocation and oversight of security resources (Mayai, 2020). The significance of this finding is not that expenditure on security is inherently undesirable, but that resource levels alone cannot substitute for governance, institutional discipline and accountability (Mayai, 2020). Transparent budgeting, audit, legislative scrutiny and credible personnel systems are therefore relevant to professionalisation because they influence whether resources support operational capability, welfare, training and public-security priorities rather than being dissipated through weak administrative controls (Mayai, 2020; Berg, 2022). Oversight also concerns the conduct of security institutions toward civilians because the legitimacy of state coercion depends upon legal restraint and mechanisms for redress when authority is abused (Donais and Barbak, 2021; Roach, 2016). South Sudan's post-independence literature documents recurring concerns about accountability for conflict-related violations, arbitrary exercises of authority and weak institutional mechanisms for addressing abuses, although the scale and attribution of particular violations must be established through evidence rather than generalisation (Roach, 2016; United Nations Secretary-General, 2026). Accountability mechanisms may include internal disciplinary systems, civilian complaints processes, courts, parliamentary inquiries, human-rights institutions and independent monitoring arrangements (Donais and Barbak, 2021). Their effectiveness can be assessed through questions of accessibility, independence, investigative capacity, follow-through and whether findings lead to institutional correction or remedy (Donais and Barbak, 2021; Berg, 2022). The role of intelligence services raises a particularly demanding oversight question because intelligence institutions require confidentiality for legitimate operational reasons while also possessing powers that can affect individual rights and political life (Donais and Barbak, 2021). Democratic oversight therefore seeks a balance between necessary secrecy and lawful accountability through clear mandates, authorised procedures, review mechanisms and civilian supervision (Manea and Rüland, 2020; Donais and Barbak, 2021). In a post-conflict setting, weakly defined boundaries between national-security functions and ordinary law-enforcement functions can complicate this balance and make civilian oversight especially important (Berg, 2022). The study therefore treats intelligence accountability as part of the wider governance of coercive authority rather than as an operational inquiry into classified intelligence activities.

1.6. The Societal and Community-Level Oversight in South Sudan

Civil society forms another dimension of oversight because democratic security governance is not confined to relationships among state institutions (Gordon, 2014; Donais, 2018). Civil-society organisations can contribute by documenting community security concerns, monitoring rights, providing policy expertise, facilitating dialogue, supporting victims and communicating public priorities to formal institutions (Gordon, 2014; Donais and Barbak, 2021). In South Sudan, civil-society actors have participated in peace processes and public debate, but research also identifies fragmentation, uneven capacity and political constraints that can reduce their collective influence (Magara and Rivers, 2024). Their contribution to civilian oversight should therefore be examined empirically rather than presumed, including whether participation translates into access, influence,

accountability or improved responsiveness by security institutions (Magara and Rivers, 2024; Gordon, 2014).

Traditional authorities and customary justice institutions are similarly relevant because they remain important sources of local authority and dispute resolution in many South Sudanese communities (Mennen, 2010; Leonardi et al., 2011). Research conducted before independence showed that customary justice was not a fixed or purely traditional system, but a dynamic field shaped by local politics, state-building and debates about legal pluralism (Mennen, 2010; Leonardi et al., 2011). This means that customary institutions should not be romanticised as automatically representative or rights-protecting, yet neither should they be ignored in analysing how communities experience justice, security and accountability (Leonardi et al., 2011; Bagayoko, Hutchful and Luckham, 2016). Their potential contribution to civilian oversight lies less in formal command over national forces than in mediation, community reporting, local legitimacy, dispute resolution and channels through which security concerns are communicated to state institutions (Mennen, 2010; Gordon, 2014). The interaction between customary and formal institutions is especially significant in areas where the reach of courts, police and administrative bodies is limited or uneven (Mennen, 2010; Leonardi et al., 2011). Hybrid governance scholarship suggests that citizens may move between formal and informal institutions depending on accessibility, legitimacy, cost and the type of dispute involved (Bagayoko, Hutchful and Luckham, 2016). Such interactions can create opportunities for locally grounded accountability, but they can also generate uncertainty about mandates, rights and responsibility where institutional boundaries are unclear (Leonardi et al., 2011; Donais, 2018). A rigorous assessment of civilian oversight in South Sudan therefore needs to distinguish the formal legal authority of state institutions from the complementary or informal accountability functions performed by customary and community actors. Community engagement is also relevant to public trust, which is a practical resource for effective security institutions rather than merely an attitudinal outcome (Gordon, 2014). Citizens who perceive security institutions as lawful, predictable and responsive are more likely to cooperate with policing and public-security processes, whereas experiences of exclusion or abuse can reduce willingness to provide information or seek official assistance (Gordon, 2014; Donais, 2018). Trust is particularly difficult to build where communities have experienced prolonged conflict and where security organisations are associated with competing political or armed groups (Roach, 2016; Pendle, 2020). Civilian oversight may contribute to rebuilding trust when it demonstrates that misconduct can be investigated, community concerns can reach decision-makers and institutional rules apply consistently (Donais and Barbak, 2021; Gordon, 2014). Ultimately, the background suggests that the quality of security-sector reform in South Sudan cannot be judged solely by the adoption of agreements, creation of institutions, graduation of personnel or volume of security expenditure. The more demanding test is whether these changes are embedded in civilian institutions capable of directing, scrutinising and correcting the exercise of coercive authority, while remaining connected to citizens and local systems of accountability (Mayai, 2020; Donais and Barbak, 2021). Existing scholarship offers substantial evidence on individual elements of this challenge but has not sufficiently combined formal oversight, hybrid local accountability, patronage in DDR and unification, and mechanisms for addressing abuse within one empirical framework focused on post-independence South Sudan. This integrated gap provides the immediate foundation for the statement of the problem that follows.

2. The Literature Review

The review proceeds in five broad stages. First, it clarifies the principal concepts used in the study and shows how their meanings have evolved across security-governance scholarship. Second, it develops the theoretical framework by synthesising democratic civilian control, human security and new institutionalism, while showing the limitations of relying on any one of them in isolation. Third, it reviews wider African evidence on post-conflict SSR in order to locate South Sudan within comparative patterns of local ownership, hybrid authority, security-sector politicisation and institutional change. Fourth, the empirical literature is organised around the study's four specific objectives: formal civilian oversight; customary, traditional and civil-society oversight; DDR, force unification and patronage; and accountability for abuses, impunity and unchecked coercive authority. The final sections identify the conceptual, theoretical, empirical, methodological, institutional and temporal gaps that justify the present study. Throughout the chapter, South Sudan is treated as the primary empirical case, while African and wider post-conflict evidence is used comparatively to establish mechanisms, contrasts and plausible explanations rather than to assume that findings from other settings can simply be transferred. The evidentiary base is intentionally weighted towards peer-reviewed scholarship. The chapter draws on more than 100 peer-reviewed journal studies,

supplemented by leading scholarly books and primary African Union, IGAD and United Nations documents where institutional mandates or current peace-agreement arrangements require primary-source verification. The review is not organised as an annotated bibliography. Studies are brought into conversation across concepts, theories, African comparative cases and the four objectives so that agreements, contradictions, causal mechanisms and unresolved gaps remain visible. Older foundational works are retained where they established theories or concepts that continue to structure the field, while recent studies are used to test how those debates have developed in contemporary African and South Sudanese security governance.

2.2. The Governance Issues

Governance is broader than government because it concerns the processes, rules, relationships and institutions through which authority is exercised, decisions are made and collective resources are allocated. In the security field, this distinction is fundamental. A state may have a government with ministries, legislation and formal chains of command while still exhibiting weak governance if decisions are opaque, accountability is selective, informal networks override formal rules or citizens cannot effectively contest the use of coercive power. The governance literature therefore directs attention away from the mere existence of organisations towards the quality of authority exercised through them. Lund's (2006) analysis of 'twilight institutions' shows that public authority in many African settings is produced through actors whose status is neither fully state nor fully non-state, while Hagmann and Peclard (2010) conceptualise statehood as continuously negotiated among institutions and actors competing to define legitimate authority. Bagayoko, Hutchful and Luckham (2016) extend this reasoning directly into security governance by arguing that security and justice in Africa are often produced through hybrid arrangements in which official agencies coexist with customary authorities, local organisations, armed actors and informal networks. These approaches challenge a purely juridical conception of governance in which constitutional designation alone determines who governs. Governance in this thesis is therefore understood as the institutionalised exercise and oversight of public authority in accordance with law, accountability, participation and legitimate decision-making. Applied to security, it includes the ability of civilian institutions to determine policy and budgets; the capacity of legislatures, courts and independent bodies to scrutinise the exercise of coercive power; the existence of credible mechanisms for complaint, investigation and sanction; and the participation of society in defining security priorities. This conception avoids two opposite errors in the literature. The first is institutional formalism, which infers governance quality from constitutional design alone. The second is state displacement, which treats the presence of non-state authority as evidence that formal institutions are irrelevant. Hybrid-governance research instead suggests that the empirical question is how these spheres interact: whether non-state institutions complement, compete with, legitimise or are co-opted by formal state security structures (Baker and Scheye, 2007; Luckham and Kirk, 2013; Price and Warren, 2017; Jackson and Stratford-Tuke, 2023). For South Sudan, this approach makes it possible to examine the state security architecture without assuming that oversight occurs only through national-level institutions.

2.3. The Security Sector

The meaning of the security sector has expanded considerably from its earlier association with the military and defence establishment. Contemporary SSR scholarship generally includes the armed forces, police, intelligence services, border and correctional institutions, justice institutions, civilian ministries, legislative committees and other bodies responsible for management and oversight. It can also include non-state or semi-formal actors where they exercise significant authority in security and justice provision. The expansion is not simply semantic; it reflects the empirical recognition that coercive organisations are interdependent. A police service cannot be meaningfully accountable if intelligence agencies can detain outside ordinary legal processes; military reform can be undermined by politicised internal-security organisations; and courts cannot constrain coercive actors if they lack access, independence or enforcement capacity. Abrahamsen and Williams (2006) broadened the debate further by demonstrating how private security actors complicate state-centred assumptions, while Baker and Scheye (2007) showed that justice and security delivery in fragile states is frequently multilayered rather than monopolised by formal agencies. Bagayoko, Hutchful and Luckham (2016) consequently argue for analysis of actual security networks rather than idealised institutional charts. A relational conception of the security sector is particularly appropriate in post-conflict settings because the boundaries between provider, manager and overseer may be blurred. Liberation movements may retain partisan influence over armed forces; ministries may lack substantive control over commands they nominally supervise; police may perform military functions; intelligence organisations may occupy broad internal-security roles; and customary authorities may remain the first point of

recourse for citizens seeking dispute resolution or protection. The South Sudanese case exemplifies why the sector should be conceptualised as an architecture of coercion, management, justice and oversight rather than as the armed forces alone. Abatneh and Lubang's (2011) study of police reform in Southern Sudan illustrates the difficulties of building professional policing institutions in the context of state formation, while Mayai (2020) demonstrates the importance of linking security-sector expenditure to actual public safety rather than treating spending as a proxy for security capacity. Adeba (2020), from a different institutional angle, examines intelligence autonomy and oversight, showing that the effectiveness of civilian authority cannot be assessed solely through defence-sector institutions. These studies collectively support a sector-wide conception in which the central analytical concern is the distribution and regulation of coercive authority. The present study therefore uses 'security sector' to refer to the interconnected institutions and actors responsible for security provision, security management, justice and accountability. Its principal formal providers are the military, police and intelligence services; its management institutions include relevant executive and ministerial structures; its formal oversight institutions include the legislature, courts, justice institutions and other accountability bodies; and its societal dimension includes civil society, media, customary authorities and community-level mechanisms that may monitor, mediate or contest the exercise of security power. This broad definition does not imply that all actors have equivalent constitutional authority. Rather, it creates an analytical map capable of distinguishing formal legal competence from actual influence, thereby allowing the research to examine where oversight is effective, where it is displaced and where informal arrangements compensate for or reinforce formal weakness.

2.4. The Security Sector Governance (SSG)

Security sector governance (SSG) refers to the norms, institutions and processes through which security is provided, managed and subjected to public authority. The conceptual shift from 'security sector' to 'security sector governance' is important because it changes the central question from what security institutions possess to how power over security is exercised and constrained. Early SSR practice often privileged organisational restructuring, equipment, training and technical capacity, whereas governance-oriented scholarship increasingly emphasises accountability, rule of law, participation, legitimacy and the relationship between state institutions and society (Donais, 2009; Ansorg, 2017; Donais, 2018; Dursun-Ozkanca and Glusac, 2024). The distinction is visible in comparative research. Krogstad's (2012) study of Sierra Leonean police reform shows that technical improvements can be inseparable from political questions about force and authority, while Eriksson Baaz and Stern (2017) demonstrate in the Democratic Republic of Congo that being 'reformed' is itself a political and organisational process in which external reform agendas interact with the identities and incentives of security personnel. The implication is that governance cannot be added to technical reform as a final component; it determines whether technical reform is politically embedded and publicly accountable. Hybrid-security scholarship adds a second dimension by questioning whose norms count as governance. Schroeder, Chappuis and Kocak (2014) argue that hybrid security governance emerges where formal state systems coexist and interact with informal practices and actors, while Luckham and Kirk (2013) distinguish between security as experienced by citizens and security as organised by institutions. This distinction matters because governance may appear coherent from the perspective of national policy while remaining fragmented at local level. A community may experience protection, predation and dispute resolution through a combination of police, soldiers, chiefs, armed youth, religious authorities and civil-society intermediaries. Jackson and Stratford-Tuke (2023) show that customary authorities in the Horn of Africa can be integral to security and justice interventions, but their legitimacy, representativeness and relationship with formal systems must be assessed rather than assumed. In this sense, good security governance requires more than the extension of state presence; it requires mechanisms that align authority with legality, accountability and citizen protection. For this study, SSG is the overarching conceptual frame within which civilian oversight is located. Civilian oversight is one dimension of governance, alongside management, institutional capacity, legal regulation and societal accountability. The focus on governance allows the thesis to ask not only whether formal oversight bodies exist but whether they can access information, influence policy, scrutinise budgets, investigate wrongdoing, protect complainants and impose meaningful consequences. It also allows the research to examine how political will, patronage and institutional capacity mediate these functions. This is especially relevant to South Sudan, where historical processes of armed mobilisation and state formation have produced organisational continuities that may not correspond neatly to constitutional design (Branch and Mampilly, 2005; de Waal, 2014; Pinaud, 2014; de Simone, 2018; Roach, 2024).

2.5. The Security Sector Reform (SSR)

Security sector reform is best understood as a political process of transforming the institutions, relationships and practices through which security is governed, rather than as a discrete programme of military or police modernisation. This interpretation reflects a long evolution in the literature. Earlier reform agendas were strongly associated with post-Cold War democratisation, downsizing and public-expenditure concerns; later scholarship incorporated rule of law, human rights, local ownership, justice, gender, societal participation and post-conflict peacebuilding (Detzner, 2017; Ansorg, 2017; Donais, 2018; Ansorg and Haastrup, 2018). The conceptual broadening has generated productive disagreement. Supporters of comprehensive SSR argue that institutional interdependence makes narrow sectoral interventions unsustainable, whereas critics warn that increasingly expansive agendas can become normatively overloaded, externally driven and difficult to implement. Donais (2009) crystallises this tension through the question of local ownership: reforms need domestic legitimacy, but 'local' actors are neither homogeneous nor necessarily committed to democratic governance. Ansorg (2017) similarly finds persistent divergence between donor templates and local needs in African SSR, while Detzner (2017) shows that patterns of success and failure are rooted as much in political context and implementation as in reform design. The strongest literature consequently rejects both technocratic universalism and romantic localism. Schroeder, Chappuis and Kocak (2014) propose hybrid security governance precisely because reforms are negotiated through existing authority structures rather than introduced onto an institutional blank slate. Bagayoko, Hutchful and Luckham (2016) make a related argument that African security governance cannot be understood through ideal-type Weberian institutions alone, while Price and Warren (2017) argue that security pluralism requires SSR to engage with diverse security providers without automatically legitimising every local practice. In practical terms, this means that local ownership must be examined in relation to power: who participates, who is excluded, what interests reform protects, and whether 'ownership' refers to government elites, security institutions, communities or a broader public. The distinction is particularly important in post-conflict contexts where former belligerents occupy formal political and military positions and may therefore be both architects and objects of reform. Comparative evidence also shows that SSR outcomes cannot be inferred from institutional form. Sierra Leone is often treated as a comparatively successful case, but Krogstad (2012) demonstrates that reform remained closely tied to questions of force and political authority, while Albrecht and Jackson (2014) show how international state-building and local politics interacted over time. Liberia likewise offers evidence of institutional rebuilding, yet Karim and Gorman (2016) find that competence depends on organisational development rather than simply training, and Wonnawona (2025) identifies continuing tensions between policy commitments to local ownership and everyday police reform practice. The DRC literature provides a more sceptical counterpoint: Eriksson Baaz and Stern (2017) reveal how formal reform categories are interpreted and reshaped within military organisations, demonstrating why policy compliance should not be mistaken for deeper institutional transformation. Synthesised, these studies suggest that SSR effectiveness is a function of political incentives, institutional capability, legitimacy, enforcement and social embeddedness. In South Sudan, SSR is especially inseparable from state formation. The transition from liberation movement to governing authority and from armed movement to national security institutions created a context in which organisational transformation was expected to occur simultaneously with political settlement, state-building and the integration of diverse armed groups. Branch and Mampilly (2005) documented tensions in SPLM/A civil administration even before independence; de Waal (2014) later interpreted the 2013 war through the political economy of elite bargaining; Pinaud (2014) identified predatory military structures and a 'military aristocracy'; and de Simone (2018) showed how state fragility discourses interacted with SPLM strategies of external resource mobilisation. These studies do not produce a single explanation, but together they indicate that SSR cannot be reduced to correcting institutional deficiencies. It must address the political order that sustains those deficiencies. The present thesis therefore defines SSR as the deliberate transformation of security-sector institutions, rules and relationships to improve accountability, professionalism, effectiveness, legality and citizen-centred security under legitimate civilian authority.

2.6. The Civilian Oversight

Civilian oversight is conceptually distinct from the mere fact of civilian government. It refers to institutionalised processes through which non-military authorities monitor, direct, review and hold security institutions to account. Civilian control is often used to describe the overall supremacy of legitimate civilian decision-makers, while oversight refers more specifically to the mechanisms that make that supremacy observable and enforceable: legislative scrutiny, budget review, ministerial

supervision, judicial review, audit, complaints mechanisms, independent commissions, public reporting and societal monitoring. Feaver (1996) showed that the enduring civil-military problem is not solved by declaring civilian authority; it requires mechanisms for monitoring whether military agents comply with civilian preferences. Croissant et al. (2010) extend this insight by demonstrating that civilian control has multiple dimensions and can be weak even without coups. Bruneau and Matei (2008) similarly argue that democracies require an institutional relationship capable of producing control, effectiveness and efficiency rather than control as an abstract constitutional principle. Oversight scholarship also shows that different institutions perform different functions and that no single body can provide comprehensive accountability. Parliamentary committees can scrutinise budgets, legislation and policy but may lack access to classified information or independent expertise. Courts can enforce rights and legality but depend on jurisdiction, access and compliance. Executive ministries may possess detailed operational information but can be politically aligned with the agencies they supervise. Independent complaints or human-rights institutions can investigate misconduct but may lack enforcement powers. Civil society and media can expose patterns that formal institutions overlook, but their influence depends on civic space, information access and protection from retaliation. African studies illustrate these variations. Le Roux (2006) stresses the importance of parliamentary oversight of security expenditure, Lumina (2006) compares police accountability and oversight mechanisms in Southern Africa, Hope (2020) analyses civilian police oversight in Kenya, Muchwa (2021) identifies challenges in Uganda's intelligence oversight system, and Mugari (2023) compares contemporary police-oversight mechanisms across Europe, Australia and Africa. The synthesis across this literature is that oversight effectiveness depends on institutional authority plus usable capacity and political independence. This distinction is especially important for intelligence and internal-security institutions because secrecy creates an inherent information asymmetry. Dehez (2010) argues that SSR approaches in sub-Saharan Africa often fail when intelligence services are treated as peripheral to reform, while Adeba (2020) demonstrates in South Sudan that intelligence autonomy must be understood in relation to regime security and oversight institutions. These studies complicate conventional civilian-control theory because the main principal is not always a unified democratic civilian authority. Where political executives use security institutions for regime protection, stronger executive control can coexist with weaker democratic oversight. Civilian oversight must therefore be defined normatively and institutionally: it is not any civilian influence over security agencies, but accountable civilian authority exercised through legal and publicly legitimate institutions, with checks capable of constraining abuse and political instrumentalisation.

2.7. South Sudan's Formal Oversight Architecture as an Institutional System

The South Sudan case requires formal oversight to be analysed as an institutional system because the military, police and intelligence services are governed through different chains of authority yet operate within the same political order. The literature on police reform, intelligence autonomy, security spending and state formation already provides partial views of this system. Abatneh and Lubang (2011) show that police reform in Southern Sudan was linked directly to the formation of the state and therefore inherited the institutional weaknesses of a government being built in parallel with its security organisations. Adeba (2020) focuses on intelligence and demonstrates the tension between oversight, regime security and institutional autonomy. Mayai (2020) analyses security spending and public safety, showing that fiscal allocations need to be connected to actual security outcomes. Branch and Mampilly (2005), de Waal (2014), Pinaud (2014), Rolandsen (2015), de Simone (2018), Wassara (2015) and Roach (2024) provide the broader political context in which these sectoral institutions developed. Read together, this scholarship indicates that South Sudan's oversight problem is not located in one agency; it arises from the relationship between political authority, security organisation and weakly consolidated civilian institutions. The executive occupies a central position in this architecture because defence, policing and intelligence policy require political direction. Yet executive centrality creates a structural dilemma. In a young state emerging from liberation struggle, strong executive coordination may be justified as necessary for maintaining command and preventing renewed fragmentation, but excessive concentration can narrow the space for legislative and judicial scrutiny. Civil-military theory warns that civilian control exercised by one executive actor is not synonymous with democratic oversight (Croissant et al., 2010; Bruneau and Matei, 2008; Cottey, Edmunds and Forster, 2002). Intelligence research intensifies this concern because agencies close to the executive can accumulate political influence under the protection of secrecy (Dehéz, 2010; Adeba, 2020; Muchwa, 2021). The study therefore needs to examine not only whether civilian leaders direct security institutions but

whether executive authority is embedded in a wider system of checks and balances. Parliament is theoretically the institution capable of transforming security from an executive prerogative into a publicly authorised function. Through legislation, committee scrutiny, questions, inquiries and budget approval, Parliament can connect coercive institutions to representative politics. Yet the effectiveness of parliamentary oversight depends on organisational conditions that the literature often treats separately: availability of security information, committee expertise, party competition, research support, procedural rights and the willingness of security officials to appear before civilian bodies. Van Zyl-Gous, Janse van Rensburg and Heinecken (2022) demonstrate that even established parliamentary structures require institutional resolve to govern the security sector. In South Sudan, the wider literature on political-party dominance, conflict and state fragility suggests that formal parliamentary authority may operate under significant constraints (Brosché and Höglund, 2016; de Simone, 2018; Agwanda and Asal, 2020; Roach, 2024). A central empirical task is therefore to establish what Parliament can actually see, question and change in the security domain. Judicial and legal institutions provide a second horizontal check, especially where security conduct affects detention, bodily integrity, property or other rights. The literature on South Sudanese justice and transitional accountability indicates that access to remedies is an important but difficult dimension of reform. Owiso (2021) highlights the complexity of truth and transitional justice after multilayered conflict, while Valfredo (2024) examines the justiciability of rights within the legal system. Donais and Barbak (2021) provide a broader SSR argument that rule-of-law reform must connect formal law to local accountability. The institutional question is therefore whether courts, prosecutors and justice bodies can exercise authority over security actors when allegations of abuse arise, and whether decisions are respected. This is analytically distinct from whether rights are formally recognised. Independent commissions, audit bodies and human-rights institutions potentially bridge parliamentary and judicial oversight by conducting specialised monitoring. Their effectiveness depends on appointment procedures, budgetary independence, access to records and the legal status of their recommendations. Institutionalism predicts that organisations created to satisfy formal reform expectations may remain weakly coupled to the exercise of coercive power if political incentives do not support enforcement (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Hall and Taylor, 1996). This possibility is particularly important in internationally supported transitions, where legal and institutional reforms may be adopted partly in response to peace agreements and external expectations. The study must therefore distinguish institutional creation from institutional influence. The oversight system also includes administrative and internal accountability. Ministries, inspectors, professional standards units and command structures are often the first institutions capable of identifying misconduct or resource problems. Effective civilian oversight does not require every issue to be externalised to Parliament or courts; internal systems can resolve many operational and disciplinary matters. However, internal accountability becomes problematic when organisations investigate themselves in cases involving serious abuse, politically sensitive conduct or command responsibility. The literature on police and intelligence oversight suggests that internal and external mechanisms should complement rather than substitute for one another (Hope, 2020; Mugari, 2023; Muchwa, 2021). This complementarity is another reason to analyse the oversight architecture as a system. Recent institutional developments reinforce the continuing relevance of this perspective. Regional and United Nations reporting through 2025 and 2026 continued to identify outstanding security-sector and legal reforms as central to the transition, while UNMISS's mandate includes monitoring security-sector reform, legal reform, human-rights violations and accountability mechanisms. IGAD's March 2025 summit communiqué called for accelerated implementation of transitional security arrangements and the unification of forces, and later regional reporting continued to link political stability to implementation of the R-ARCSS. These official sources do not replace peer-reviewed analysis, but they demonstrate that the institutional issues identified in earlier scholarship remain active rather than purely historical. The study's 2011-2026 scope therefore allows it to examine whether the architecture of formal civilian oversight has become more effective across successive phases of independence, conflict, revitalised peace and extended transition. The central implication is that Objective One should not produce a list of institutions. It should evaluate an oversight chain. For each relevant institution, the analysis should ask: what is its legal mandate; what information can it obtain; what resources and expertise does it possess; how independent is it from the actors it supervises; what actions can it take; and what happens when security institutions do not comply? The same questions can then be compared across executive, legislative, judicial, financial and specialised

oversight. This approach transforms "effectiveness" from an abstract judgement into a set of empirically observable relationships and directly addresses the fragmentation identified in the literature. The present study conceptualises civilian oversight as a multidimensional system comprising formal state oversight and complementary societal oversight. Its effectiveness is assessed in terms of authority, information, capacity, independence, transparency, responsiveness and consequences. Authority asks whether an oversight actor has a recognised mandate; information asks whether it can obtain reliable evidence; capacity concerns expertise and resources; independence concerns freedom from improper interference; transparency refers to the public visibility appropriate to the institution's role; responsiveness concerns whether complaints and identified problems produce action; and consequences concern whether violations result in correction, sanction or institutional learning. This definition avoids measuring oversight solely through the existence of laws or committees and provides a basis for comparing formal and informal mechanisms without conflating their legal status.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The study employed a case-study design with post-conflict South Sudan as the principal empirical case within the broader African security-sector reform context. A case-study design is appropriate when a researcher investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its institutional or social context cannot be treated as wholly separate (Yin, 2018). Civilian oversight in South Sudan could not be analysed meaningfully without reference to the country's post-conflict institutions, the legacy of armed mobilisation, the R-ARCSS security arrangements, the relationship between formal and informal authority, and the practical capacities of civilian governance institutions. The case-study design therefore allowed the research to preserve contextual complexity while maintaining a clear focus on civilian oversight and security-sector reform.

3.1.1. Pragmatist Research Paradigm

The study adopted pragmatism as its overarching research paradigm. Pragmatism was appropriate because the study was concerned primarily with obtaining credible and useful answers to a complex governance problem rather than defending the exclusive superiority of either quantitative or qualitative forms of knowledge. Pragmatism treats methodological choice as being driven by the research problem and by the consequences of inquiry, thereby permitting the researcher to draw on different forms of evidence where each contributes to answering the research questions (Morgan, 2014; Ghiara, 2020). This orientation was particularly useful in a study of civilian oversight because formal institutional arrangements could be measured and documented, while the operation of those arrangements in practice also depended on perceptions, informal norms, political relationships and context-specific experiences that required qualitative interpretation. The pragmatist position enabled the study to combine a structured questionnaire with semi-structured key informant interviews and documentary analysis without treating the methods as philosophically incompatible. The quantitative strand generated comparable responses on the perceived effectiveness of oversight, accountability, DDR governance and professionalism, while the qualitative strand provided explanations for why those patterns existed and how they were experienced by actors positioned differently within the governance system. Documentary evidence allowed the study to compare reported practice with legal mandates, policy commitments, peace-agreement provisions, institutional reports and other public records. The value of pragmatism in mixed-method research lies precisely in this capacity to use the method or combination of methods that best addresses the substantive problem while remaining explicit about the assumptions, limits and purposes of each form of evidence (Morgan, 2014; Timans, Wouters and Heilbron, 2019).

3.1.2. Mixed-Methods Research Approach

The study adopted a mixed-methods research approach. Mixed methods involves the purposeful collection, analysis and integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence within a single study so that the combined interpretation is more informative than either strand considered in isolation (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018; Timans, Wouters and Heilbron, 2019). The approach was appropriate because the research questions combined evaluative questions about the extent and effectiveness of civilian oversight with explanatory questions about how institutional, political and social factors shaped actual practice.

3.2. Study Area

The study was conducted in South Sudan, with Juba serving as the principal fieldwork location because it is the country's capital and the main location of national institutions relevant to security-sector governance and civilian oversight. The institutional focus included actors associated with legislative oversight, civilian government administration, justice

and accountability, security-sector governance, civil society, media, research and community or customary authority. The selection of the study area was therefore driven by the concentration of institutions directly connected to the research objectives rather than by an intention to produce a geographically representative survey of the entire national population.

3.3. Target Population

The target population comprised individuals and institutions with relevant knowledge, responsibility or direct experience concerning civilian oversight, security-sector governance, accountability, DDR, force unification, peacebuilding and community security in South Sudan. The population was deliberately institutional rather than general-population based because the study investigated governance mechanisms that required respondents to possess sufficient exposure to the subject matter. The questionnaire therefore included a screening item asking whether respondents had directly participated in, monitored, researched or supported security-sector reform, civilian oversight, peacebuilding, DDR or related governance processes in South Sudan.

3.4. Sampling Techniques

The quantitative sample was determined using a probability-based sample-size procedure appropriate to the size and structure of the accessible population. Where a large or initially unspecified population was considered, Cochran's formula provided the initial minimum sample estimate because it gives a conservative sample size for estimating proportions at a specified confidence level and margin of error (Cochran, 1977). The formula was expressed as: $n0 = Z^2pq/e^2$, where n0 was the initial sample size, Z was the standard normal value corresponding to the selected confidence level, p was the estimated proportion of the population possessing the characteristic of interest, q was 1-p, and e was the desired margin of error. Using the conventional 95 per cent confidence level, Z = 1.96. Where no defensible prior population proportion was available, p = 0.50 and q = 0.50 were used because this produces the maximum variance and therefore the most conservative sample requirement. At a margin of error of 0.05, the initial large-population estimate was approximately 384 respondents. Where the verified accessible population was finite, the finite-population correction was applied using $n = n0/[1 + (n0 - 1)/N]$, where N represented the accessible population. The final target sample was then allocated across relevant respondent categories in proportion to their representation in the sampling frame where the frame permitted proportional allocation. The study distinguished between the target questionnaire sample and the questionnaires retained after data-quality screening. The Cochran procedure produced an initial target of approximately 384 questionnaire respondents for a large population at a 95 per cent confidence level and 5 per cent margin of error. The realised analytical sample was determined after eligibility checks, completeness screening and removal of duplicate or unusable responses.

3.4.1. Quantitative Sample Strategy

Respondent/Institutional Category	Relevance to the Study	Primary Instrument
Government/civil service	Civilian policy direction, administration and institutional capacity	Questionnaire and KII
Legislature/parliamentary actors	Legislative, budgetary and policy oversight	Questionnaire and KII
Judiciary/justice-sector actors	Legal accountability, remedies and institutional checks	Questionnaire and KII
Security-sector actors	Operational perspectives on accountability, professionalism and reform	Questionnaire/KII where lawful and ethically appropriate
Civil society/NGOs	External oversight, human rights, advocacy and community accountability	Questionnaire and KII
Traditional/customary authorities	Community security, mediation and complementary oversight	Questionnaire and KII
Media	Public accountability, information and reporting environment	Questionnaire and KII
Academics/researchers	Analytical and longitudinal understanding of SSR and oversight	Questionnaire and KII
Regional/international actors	R-ARCSS, SSR/DDR support and regional policy perspective	Questionnaire and KII

3.4.2. Qualitative Sample Strategy

The qualitative sample was determined purposively rather than through the statistical formula used for the questionnaire. Key informants were selected because they possessed specialised knowledge, institutional responsibility, direct experience or sustained engagement with security-sector reform and civilian oversight. Purposive sampling is appropriate when the aim is to identify information-rich participants who can illuminate a research problem rather than to estimate population parameters from a random sample (Palinkas et al., 2015). The adequacy of the qualitative sample was assessed in relation to information power and thematic sufficiency. The concept of information power holds that fewer participants may be required where the study aim is focused, the sample is specific, theoretical guidance is strong, interview dialogue is rich and the analytic strategy is intensive (Malterud, Siersma and Guassora, 2016). In this study, the use of clearly defined objectives and institutional respondent categories strengthened information power, while variation across categories helped ensure that the study did not reproduce a single institutional viewpoint. Key informants were selected purposively from the principal stakeholder categories, including civilian governance and oversight actors, justice-sector actors, civil-society representatives, traditional or customary authorities, researchers and other participants with direct knowledge of security-sector reform. Interview recruitment continued until the major objective-linked themes were sufficiently developed and additional interviews mainly confirmed or refined existing explanations. Respondent identities were protected through coding and broad category labels.

3.4.3. Qualitative Sample

Category	Basis for Inclusion	Survey Strand	KII Strand	Sampling Technique
Government/civil service	Civilian policy direction, administration and institutional capacity	Included where eligible	Included for specialised insight	Stratified/criterion-based survey selection; purposive KII
Legislature/parliament	Legislative, budgetary and policy oversight	Included where eligible	Included for oversight experience	Stratified/criterion-based survey selection; purposive KII
Judiciary/justice sector	Legal accountability, remedies and institutional checks	Included where eligible	Included for legal/accountability insight	Stratified/criterion-based survey selection; purposive KII
Security-sector actors	Operational perspectives on accountability, professionalism and reform	Included where lawful and accessible	Selected for relevant professional knowledge	Authorised access; purposive selection for specialised roles
Civil society/NGOs	External oversight, human rights, advocacy and community accountability	Included	Included	Stratified or criterion-based survey selection; purposive KII
Traditional/customary authorities	Community security, mediation and complementary oversight	Included where relevant	Included	Criterion-based and purposive
Media	Public accountability, information and reporting environment	Included where relevant	Included	Criterion-based and purposive
Academics/researchers	Analytical and longitudinal understanding of SSR and oversight	Included where eligible	Included	Purposive/criterion-based
Regional/international actors	Knowledge of R-ARCSS, SSR/DDR support and regional policy	Included where accessible	Included for specialist evidence	Purposive

3.5. Quality Control

The study arranged quality and error control during data collection of the study. Faults were subsequently avoided. Reliability and validity mechanisms of data collection were administered, and 308 sample size was collected without any problem.

3.6. Reliability

The researcher also measured the reliability of the questionnaire items. Cronbach's alpha was also used to determine the coefficient between a sincere response and all other sincere responses of the same item that were drawn randomly from the same population of interest. The formula used was $\propto$=kr/ (1+ (k-1) r). It made use of the number of variables or question items in the instrument (k) and the average correlation between pairs of items (r): The researcher ensured reliability by constructing thorough conceptual framework in which the terms used in data collection instruments was explained and analyzed using Statistical package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

3.7. Validity

The validity of research instruments was evaluated using expert judgments, such as professional views from academic peers. Three experts were contacted, and they critically assessed the validity of the instruments. The experts were asked to rate questions depending on their relevancy. The Content Validity Index (CVI) was established by dividing the number of items rated relevant by and total number of items. It is clear that CVI was 0.775, which was above 0.7, and thus, research instruments were considered valid.

3.8. Data Analysis

The study was examined and analyzed using applications such as SPSS Statistics V. 21, charts, Excel, and, above all, descriptive analysis where data was interpreted and presented. Data cleaning was steered, and analyses were presented and rigorously discussed appropriately.

3.9. Study Piloting

A pilot study was conducted before the main fieldwork to test the clarity, relevance, length, sequencing and sensitivity of the data-collection instruments and to identify practical problems in the proposed procedures. Piloting is valuable because it enables a researcher to identify weaknesses in questions, recruitment, administration and data handling before those weaknesses affect the main study (Malmqvist et al., 2019). In this study, the pilot focused particularly on whether respondents understood the distinction between formal civilian oversight, complementary community oversight, accountability and professionalism, and whether any item was worded in a way that could be perceived as accusatory, leading or unsafe. The pilot participants were drawn from individuals with characteristics broadly similar to the intended study population but were excluded from the final analytical sample to avoid contamination where the same instrument was re-administered. The researcher recorded completion time, questions requiring clarification, patterns of missing responses, feedback on sensitive wording and any difficulties with the Likert scale or open-ended items. The interview guide was piloted for flow, probing, duration and the ability to elicit objective-relevant evidence without encouraging disclosure of classified or personally dangerous information. Following the pilot, unclear items were reworded, duplicated items were consolidated where necessary, instructions were refined and the order of some questions was adjusted to improve progression from less sensitive to more sensitive issues. The pilot dataset was also used for preliminary reliability assessment of the quantitative scales. Final modifications were documented so that the version administered in the main study could be distinguished from the pilot version. A pilot study was conducted with a small group of participants whose characteristics were comparable to those of the intended respondents but who were excluded from the main analytical sample. The pilot assessed clarity, sequencing, sensitivity, completion time and the practical administration of the questionnaire and interview guide. Feedback from the exercise was used to refine ambiguous wording, streamline instructions and confirm the feasibility of the instruments before the main fieldwork.

3.10. Research Ethics

The study was conducted beneath the highest ethical standards in any scientific research. The researcher study abided with the research norms including honesty, confidentiality, accurate handling of information and employed objectivity in the application of the data collection methods to arrive at the desired results. All respondents who were randomly surveyed, clustered, and interviewed were carefully treated with confidentiality. Therefore, there were no ethical problems encountered during this study.

4. Finding of the Study

The findings showed that formal civilian oversight is widely assessed as weak, especially in budgetary scrutiny, parliamentary information access, institutional capacity, independence and practical influence. These findings agreed with civil-military and SSR literature that distinguishes formal civilian authority from effective control and were best explained by the combined insights of Democratic

Civilian Control Theory and New Institutionalism. The research also showed that civil society, traditional authorities, customary justice actors and community participation contributed information, mediation and local accountability, but their effectiveness was constrained by restricted civic space, intimidation and weak referral pathways into formal institutions. This supported hybrid-governance and Human Security perspectives while confirming that community actors complemented rather than replaced constitutional oversight. The study also found that the weak governance of DDR and force unification, low confidence in merit, rank harmonisation, transparency and institutional loyalty, and strong concern about political and ethnic patronage. These results were consistent with literature on post-war networks, military integration and political brokerage and strongly supported a new institutionalist interpretation of force unification as institutional transformation rather than administrative incorporation. The study also identified serious weakness across the accountability chain, especially investigation, sanction, victim redress and protection from retaliation, while impunity was widely viewed as a major obstacle to reform. This finding connected accountability directly to organisational learning and professionalism. Across the four objectives, the recurring pattern was a gap between formal arrangements and their practical institutional consequences. The study therefore concluded that strengthening civilian oversight in South Sudan required a linked system of formal authority, societal information, transparent institutional rules, credible accountability and professional security-sector incentives and that formal civilian oversight in post-conflict South Sudan was institutionally present but operationally weak. Meanwhile, the weakest indicators were not peripheral matters; they concerned the core mechanisms through which civilian authority becomes meaningful: budgetary scrutiny, access to timely information, technical competence, institutional independence and the ability to influence actual security-sector behaviour. Consequently, the study did not interpret weak oversight as an absence of civilian offices or formal legal mandates. It interpreted it as a problem of institutional depth: civilian bodies could exist formally while lacking the informational, financial, technical or political leverage required to convert constitutional authority into sustained scrutiny and corrective action. The customary authorities, traditional leaders, civil-society organisations, media and community actors constituted an important complementary layer of civilian oversight, particularly where formal institutions were geographically distant, difficult to access or insufficiently responsive. At the same time, the study concluded that the effectiveness of community-based oversight was constrained by a weak feedback architecture. Civic space, protection from intimidation and the willingness of formal institutions to act on information generated by community actors received comparatively low ratings. The DDR and force unification remained a governance challenge rather than merely a technical or organisational exercise. Generally, the study was that the central security-sector reform challenge in post-conflict South Sudan was not the complete absence of institutions, laws or reform initiatives, but the limited conversion of formal arrangements into rule-bound, accountable and citizen-responsive institutional practice. Across all four objectives, the same pattern recurred in different forms. Formal oversight institutions existed but often lacked information, capacity, independence or consequence. Community and civil-society actors generated locally relevant information but were constrained by weak civic space and unreliable referral pathways. DDR and force unification created common structures but remained vulnerable to patronage, opaque personnel systems and factional loyalties. Accountability mechanisms existed but broke down between complaint, investigation, sanction, redress and protection. The common problem was therefore institutional linkage: the elements of governance were present in fragments but did not consistently operate as an integrated system. The study consequently concluded that security-sector professionalism should be understood as a governance outcome as well as an organisational attribute. The correlations reported in Chapter Four were modest, but each of the principal governance domains was positively associated with current professionalism, with accountability showing the strongest relationship. These results did not establish causation, and the study did not claim that civilian oversight alone determined professional behaviour. They did, however, demonstrate that professionalism was consistently connected to the quality of oversight, accountability, community linkage and DDR governance. A technically trained force operating under opaque recruitment, weak sanctions, fragmented command or politicised resource allocation could remain institutionally unprofessional. Conversely, stronger rule-based governance created conditions within which training, welfare, discipline and operational capability could contribute to legitimate professional security institutions. Finally, the study findings showed that trust was both a consequence and a condition of reform. Lawful conduct, consistent sanctions and responsive

institutions could strengthen citizen confidence, while greater confidence could improve reporting, cooperation and the information available to oversight institutions. Distrust, by contrast, encouraged avoidance of formal institutions and increased reliance on informal channels that might be more accessible but lacked formal authority. The study therefore concluded that trust should not be treated as a soft or peripheral outcome. It was part of the operational infrastructure of security governance because it influenced whether citizens were willing to engage with the institutions expected to protect them and hold coercive actors to account.

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