



South Sudan – Conflict Risk Diagnostic

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Executive Summary

This conflict risk diagnostic assesses the current status of 9 clusters or indicators related to the overall political, economic and social standing of the state of South Sudan. These 9 clusters are based on the analytical methodology used by the Country Indicators for Foreign Policy (CIFP) project. Upon analysis, South Sudan's history of armed conflict, governance and political stability, population heterogeneity, demographic stress, and its economic performance are all considered high risk. Militarization, human development, and environmental stress are considered medium risk factors. In totality, the risk of conflict is high in South Sudan, with the factors all at high or medium risk and mostly in deteriorating form.

Background

South Sudan, the world's most recently formed state, achieved independence from Sudan in 2011. Following this success, the country fell into Civil War, classified as an « active war » in 2014. By 2015, the conflict dissipated slightly and was downgraded to an « international armed conflict ». As of 2019, militant rebel groups created on ethnic lines, arising notably out of the southern Equatoria region, have been in direct conflict with the government led by Salva Kiir and made up largely of officials from the majority Dinka ethnic group. The situation in South Sudan remains highly unstable and volatile, as it ranks among the world's worst in many performance metrics, notably ethnic tension and economic factors. The nation is severely lacking democratic freedoms as a result of the authoritarian nature of the Kiir government.

Internal Stakeholders

The most important internal stakeholder is the Kiir government, staffed primarily by the dominant Dinka ethnic group. The Dinka-led government has used violent means to restrict civil, political and economic rights especially among members of the 2nd-largest ethnic group, the Nuer. The Nuer are another vital internal stakeholder, forming ~15% of the total population of South Sudan. In addition, Thomas Cirillo Swanka, a prominent Equatorian intellectual, has created a National Salvation Front, a militant rebel group that seeks to end what it perceives as Dinka persecution and violence.

External Stakeholders

The most notable external stakeholders include the African Union (AU) and the United Nations, which both aim to mediate ongoing conflict and provide aid, external pressure, and guidance to South Sudanese leaders. For example, UNMISS which had over 19,000 personnel deployed in South Sudan as of September 2019, has operated in the country since 2011 with the objectives of consolidating peace and security and helping establish conditions for successful economic and political development of South Sudan.ⁱ Similarly, the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), which deployed 4,400 personnel as of October 2019, has operated in the disputed Abyei region along the border between Sudan and South Sudan since 2011.ⁱⁱ UNISFA's mission includes ensuring security, protecting civilians, strengthening the capacity of the Abyei Police Service, de-mining, monitoring/verifying the redeployment of armed forces from the area, and facilitating the flow of humanitarian aid.

Furthermore, the Red Cross trained 328 people in first aid, as well as medically treated 34,994 cases (51.9% women and girls) and 46,800 children from malaria, pneumonia and diarrhea.ⁱⁱⁱ The Red Cross also drilled 40 new and 30 rehabilitated boreholes to provide safe drinking water for 35,000 people.^{iv}

Similarly, World Vision Canada, CARE Canada and Oxfam Canada helped stimulate the economy in South Sudan by providing technical services and agricultural inputs through farmer field schools, which helped to increase the percentage of women owning and controlling agricultural assets from 43% to 73% in targeted areas between 2015 and 2018.^v This work coincides with that of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Citibank, the IFC, and the Corporate Council on Africa who are trying to promote South Sudan's resources and attract private firms in key sectors like agriculture. For example, the South Sudanese government have agreed for the Madhvani Group to revitalized government-owned sugar plantation and processing facility in Mangala Payam. The World Bank also investment loans to South Sudan's Ministry of Roads and Bridges to build rural and inter-urban roads and highways.

1. History of Armed Conflict	High Risk	Deteriorating ↓
Stabilizing Factors	<p>As noted by the UCDP, South Sudan was classified as an ‘active war’ in 2014 as there were over 1,000 battle-related deaths in the region.^{vi} However, because battle deaths per year since 2015 have been less than 1,000, the conflict in South Sudan can now be classified as an ‘international armed conflict.’^{vii} This indicator suggests that there has been some form of conflict de-escalation in South Sudan since 2015.</p>	
Destabilizing Factors	<p>Although the number of battle-related deaths has remained below 1,000 per year since 2014, from 2014 to 2018 the total number of deaths in South Sudan was 4,753, with 2,239 being premised on state-based violence, 1,552 were caused by non-state violence and 962 due to one-sided violence.^{viii} In addition, the annual death toll appears to be increasing. For example, the number of battle deaths increased from 495 in 2015 to 733 in 2016.^{ix} These indicators imply that while there has been some de-escalation of conflict, there seems to be a risk of future escalation in the conflict intensity level. This possibility may be due to the fact that the Government of South Sudan itself has been involved in the interstate, intrastate and one-sided categories of UCDP organized violence.</p> <p>Likewise, the UNHCR has noted an increase in resettlement departures from South Sudan and has approximated that the conflict has led to the region producing 2,215,037 refugees and asylum seekers in 2019.^x This data correlates with that found between 2012 to 2016 which saw the number of refugees increase from 87,009 to 1.4 million and the number of internally displaced people (IDPs) rise from 345,670 to 1.8 million.^{xi} The UN also notes that in 2019 there were 1.46 million IDPs in South Sudan with 13% inside six UNMISS Protection of Civilians site. Out of the refugee population, 63% are children (under 18 years old).^{xii} These figures are problematic as they could lead to further destabilization in the country.</p>	
Assessment	<p>The figures found in relation to the history of conflict in South Sudan indicate that in order to achieve long-term, sustainable peace, it is crucial to consider the history of violence in the region prior to the eruption of civil war in 2013. The instability present in the region prior to the emergence of the civil war most likely brought the quick escalation of violence and the inability of the domestic and international communities to prevent the conflict from erupting. As well, the continued increase in deaths, refugees and IDPs further contribute to the escalation and persistence of violence and encourage other issues such as high food insecurity and decreased access to sanitation.</p>	

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2. Governance and Political Stability	High Risk Deteriorating ↓
Stabilizing Factors	<p>According to Freedom House, South Sudan Press, Freedom status is “Not Free”.² From 2016 till 2019, the score of civil rights is constant, which is 7/7.³ The score of political rights remained unchanged from 2015 to 2019, with score 7/7, indicating no freedom.⁴ In addition, in 2019, South Sudan was ranked as one of the worst human rights violating countries.⁵ According to World Data Atlas, South Sudan press freedom score slightly dropped from 46.88 in 2018 to 45.65 in 2019, displaying an improvement, but when tracking the overall trend it deteriorated from 2015 to 2019.⁶</p>
Destabilizing Factors	<p>In 2019, South Sudan was ranked as “gravely lacking democracy”.¹ In the UN Civility report, it scored 2/100 in freedom rating, 10/90 in human rights and 0.2/90 in democracy score in 2019. In 2017, South Sudan was ranked as a state of “high fragility”.⁷ Moreover, South Sudan is classified as a “failed occupied” state by Polity IV. South Sudan's corruption perceptions are deteriorating. In 2015, the country scored 15/100, and in 2019 scored 12/100.⁸ In 2010, Kiir was elected as president of the South Sudan Region and inherited the presidency of South Sudan in 2011, which indicates low durability of the regime.⁹ Violence is continuing in South Sudan, 9 were killed due to a number of clashes involving youth militias, fighting over the renaming of a county. In addition, 3 were killed from the governor’s vehicle, who was attempting to mediate this fight.¹⁰ According to UNHCR, between 2013 and 2019, the conflict in South Sudan has created over 2.2 million refugees.¹¹ Thousands of desperate people have been crossing the border to escape fighting and violence against civilians. People are fleeing clashes that started between the army and one of the rebel groups, the National Salvation Front (NAS). The clashes are blocking humanitarian access to the affected areas.</p>

Assessment

The ongoing brutal conflicts in South Sudan has forced millions to flee their homes, which led to the largest refugee crisis in Africa. This is due to the instability and lack of governance in South Sudan.¹² However, in order to maintain political stability in South Sudan, the conflict between the rebel groups and the government has to come to an end.

3. Militarization	Moderate Risk Deteriorating ↓
Stabilizing Factors	<p><u>Fall in Military Expenditure</u>: South Sudanese military spending as a percentage of GDP has fallen year over year from 2015-2018: 10.561% (2015), 4.59% (2016), 2.35% (2017), 1.329% (2018)^{xiii}.</p>
Destabilizing Factors	<p><u>Rebel Militarization</u>: Several rebel movements that have fomented in the southern part of the country (Equatoria) are gaining in size. They are motivated by the perceived domination of the Dinka ethnic group in the military. Thomas Cirillo Swaka, a prominent Equatorian intellectual, has launched a new rebel movement called the National Salvation Front that is likely to grow^{xiv}.</p> <p><u>High Proportion of Armed Forces Personnel</u>: The total armed forces per 1000 people has fallen year over year from 2013-2017 in South Sudan. However, it has a very high proportion of its total population working in the armed forces in comparison to other countries with similar numbers of armed forces personnel (Germany, Poland)^{xv}.</p>
Assessment	<p>While military expenditure as a percentage of GDP has fallen consistently year over year, the high proportion of armed forces personnel and the rise of rebel militant groups make militarization a deteriorating indicator.</p>

4. Population Heterogeneity	High Risk Deteriorating ↓
Stabilizing Factors	<p><u>Low Religious Diversity:</u> 60.5% of South Sudan’s population is Christian, 32.9% are animist, and 6.2% are Muslim^{xvi}. Buddhists, Jews, and Hindus each account for under 1% of the population^{xvii}.</p>
Destabilizing Factors	<p><u>High Ethnic Diversity:</u> There are at least 64 distinct ethnic groups living in South Sudan^{xviii}. The Dinka (35.9%) and Nuer (15.6%) are the two largest and makeup about half of the country’s total population. Then there are the Azande (6.03%), Bari (4.29%) and Shilluk (3.22%) who make up another 15% of the total population^{xix}. Following that, there are dozens of small groups that account for the remaining population.</p> <p><u>High Ethnic Tension:</u> South Sudan ranks 11th worst on the Group Grievances indicator of the Fragile States Index^{xx}. The risk of ethnic rebellion is very high as a vast swath of ethnic groups are becoming increasingly hostile to the Dinka. Many see the Dinka as abusing their political influence to forcefully displace other groups in a bid of ethnic domination^{xxi}.</p> <p><u>Religious Violence:</u> While not being targeted on a religious basis per se, there have been instances of houses of worship being attacked by gunmen seeking out members of rival ethnic groups. At least 40 church leaders had been killed as of 2017, while President Kiir acknowledged that Muslims had been targeted by land seizures^{xxii}.</p>
Assessment	<p>South Sudan has a high level of ethnic diversity and tension. Ethnically motivated killings by the Dinka have been commonplace and thus there is rising hostility towards them among rebel groups composed of various minority ethnicities. Rebel movements have begun to consolidate especially in Equatoria.</p>

5. Demographic Stress	High Risk Deteriorating ↓
Stabilizing Factors	<p><u>Total Population and Population Growth Rate (Annual %)</u>: The population growth rate of South Sudan has significantly decreased since the outbreak of civil war in 2013. In 2011, South Sudan held an annual growth rate of 3.72%^{xxiii}. The population growth rate has been steadily decreasing, with a significant drop in 2013 at 3.27%^{xxiv}. The decreasing levels of population growth are reflective of stability for South Sudan as their 2018 mid-year population was 12 323 4192 million people with a growth rate of 2.78% in 2017^{xxv}. Given that South Sudan has a relatively small population in comparison to countries of a similar size (644,329 sq km), their total population is a stabilizing factor with a Global Rank of 5 out of 9. This is further mitigated by their population density which was approximately 18 people per sq km. Although the decreasing rate population growth may be a result of sub-optimal conditions such as violence and mortality rates, it is arguable that a decreasing growth rate is beneficial in that it poses less strain on limited resources and allows for a rise in the income per capita^{xxvi}. Therefore, South Sudan has received a Global Rank of 3 out of 9 for population growth as it acts as a stabilizing factor in this case.</p>
Destabilizing Factors	<p><u>Urban Population and Urban Population Growth Rate</u>: Urban South Sudan faces an array of factors that contribute to the demographic stress. With a total population of 12,323,4192 million, the urban population represented 19.615% in 2018 while growing at a rate of 1.9%^{xxvii}. Although the growth rate has decreased significantly from 4.292% in 2011, the overall urban population has continued to grow from 18.032% in 2011^{xxviii}. As a result of continued urban population growth, South Sudan continues to be unable to counteract urban stress. Urban infrastructure in South Sudan is poorly maintained, if not non-existent, and such a concentrated portion of the population in such an urban center contributes to the instability within South Sudan.</p> <p><u>Youth Bulge</u>: In 2018 the overall youth population within South Sudan had risen from 4,267,678 in 2011 to 4,590,143. A large youth bulge is strongly correlated to with conflict and is therefore a destabilizing factor that contributes to the demographic stress.</p>
Assessment	<p>As a result of the growing urban population, a slowly decreasing urban population growth rate, and a large youth bulge the demographic stress within South Sudan indicates instability. Growth within urban centres, along with the inadequate infrastructure and youth bulge indicate opportunity for conflict, as well as an increased opportunity for youth involvement and recruitment in armed conflicts.</p>

6. Economic Factors	High Risk	Deteriorating ↓
Stabilizing Factors	South Sudan enjoyed consistently high GDP growth rates during 2015 (10.8%) and 2016 (13.8%), a sign that its small economy is growing. Its FDI net inflows have also stabilized after the worst of the Civil War, moving from -4.304% in 2013 to 0.001% in 2015.	
Destabilizing Factors	Although the GDP growth rate is steady, GDP per capita in South Sudan is extremely low. In 2015, it was 1,119.7 USD, before falling precipitously to 353.17 USD in 2018 and 275.18 USD in 2019. South Sudan has had extremely high inflation rates from 2015 (52.81%) to 2018 (121.4%). In addition, its official exchange rate (expressed as SPP/USD) has grown astronomically from 2015 (3.60) to 2018 (141.38). Its FDI net inflows have also decreased in recent years. South Sudan's total debt service was \$1.4 billion USD as of June 2016, which represented 38% of its total GDP. Since South Sudan gained independence, its trade openness (expressed as % of GDP produced by trade) has recovered from 50.81% in 2013 to 65.55% in 2015. However, this is much lower than the level it enjoyed prior to independence. Finally, South Sudan has a high level of income inequality relative to other countries, with a Gini score of 46.34 in 2009.	
Assessment	South Sudan is in economic crisis, and many of the most indicative economic measures express great concern.	

7. Human Development	Medium Risk	Deteriorating ↓
Stabilizing Factors	<p><u>Life Expectancy</u>: The life expectancy of people within South Sudan has steadily increased since 2011. The life expectancy in 2011 was 55 years of age and has risen to 57 years of age in 2017^{xxix}. Although this displays growth and stability, it is still 15 years less than the average life expectancy for the global population in 2016^{xxx}.</p> <p><u>Infant Mortality Rate</u>: The infant mortality rate has decreased from 66.9 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2011 to 63.7 in 2018^{xxxi}. Although this number is higher than the average amongst countries in the African region at 51 deaths per 1,000 live births, the decrease remains a stabilizing factor^{xxxii}.</p> <p><u>Secondary School Enrollment (% of Relevant Age Group)</u>: The enrollment of secondary school children has increased from 5.078% in 2011 to 5.484% in 2015^{xxxiii}.</p>	

<p>Destabilizing Factors</p>	<p><u>Access to Improved Water Source (% of Total Population)</u>: As of 2015, 50% population using at least basic drinking-water sources^{xxxiv}. Access to safe water is defined as each person having access to 7.5-15 liters of water per person per day. Of the 50% of the national population that has access to basic drinking- water, 60% is within the urban areas and 48% is in the rural areas. Therefore, less than half of the population has access to safe water in rural areas.</p> <p><u>Access to Sanitation (% of Total Population)</u>: People using at least basic sanitation services within South Sudan has risen from 6.627% in 2011 to 11.322% in 2017^{xxxv}. This level of access to sanitation remains one of the lowest in the world.</p> <p><u>Maternal Mortality Rate</u>: South Sudan has documented 789 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2015^{xxxvi}. In 2017, this number stood at 1,150 deaths/100,000 live births ranking it as the highest maternal mortality rate in the world^{xxxvii}.</p> <p><u>HIV/AIDS (% of Adult Population)</u>: The percentage of the adult population contracting HIV/AIDS has risen from 2.4% in 2011 to 2.5% in 2018^{xxxviii}.</p> <p><u>Primary School Enrollment (% of Relevant Age Group)</u>: As of 2015 approximately 1,156,084 students were enrolled in primary education^{xxxix}. In 2011 approximately 43.4% of the relevant age group was enrolled in primary education. This number has since dropped to 35.2% as of 2015. Only an estimated 1 in 13 children will complete a full cycle of primary education if the current situation persists^{xl}.</p> <p><u>Children in Labour Force (% of 10-14 Age Group)</u>: Children in employment for 2008 is 45.6%^{xli}. According to the 2018 Out-of- School Children South Sudan Country Study, at least 2.2 million school-aged children across the country are now out of school^{xlii}. 45.6% (436,624) of children in South Sudan are engaged in the worst forms of child labour. Of this approximately 60.2% are in Agriculture, 38.2% are in Industry, 1.6% are in Services, and 10.9% of children ages 10 to 14 are engaged in work and school^{xliii}.</p>
<p>Assessment</p>	<p>South Sudan has consistently ranked among the lowest globally for vital human development indicators. Among the lowest remains maternal mortality rates, access to clean sanitation, access to safe water, and children involved in the labour force. These human development indicators pose a significant threat to the deteriorating stability within South Sudan.</p>

8. Environmental Stress	Medium Risk Deteriorating ↓
Stabilizing Factors	<p>According to the World Bank collection of development indicators, the Forest area in South Sudan was reported at 71570 square kilometres in 2016.¹ In addition, the rate of deforestation is reported to be between 1.2-1.5% per year. This indicates that deforestation does not generate threat to South Sudan, however, according to the UNEP's predictions it could pose a threat in the future.²</p>
Destabilizing Factors	<p>There are 23.87 people/per square hectare of arable, which is quite high compared to other countries.³ In 2016, arable land in Sudan was reported at 19823160 hm, while in 2014 was reported at 8.3431%.⁴ In 2016, about 90% of South Sudan's land was considered suitable for agriculture and it had over 30 million hectares of arable land with only 5% in use. However, in 2018, 80% of its land is arable and suitable for crop production, but only 4% of the total land area is being cultivated. This indicates a slight deterioration in agriculture in South Sudan, which led to an estimation of 57% of the population to face severe food insecurity and acute hunger in 2019.⁵ Moreover, in 2019 South Sudan is ranked as one of the world's eight worst countries suffering from food crises, because of the ongoing conflict and insecurity in its territories.⁶ Access to freshwater in South Sudan is under threat since 80% of South Sudanese do not have steady access to clean water, in 2019. In 2019, flooding in South Sudan resulted in the loss of lives, homes, and livelihood. In 2018, South Sudan was cholera free, expectations are to return back in 2020, because of the floodwaters.⁹</p>
Assessment	<p>The overall trend of environmental stress is indicating deterioration. According to UNHCR some towns in South Sudan are prone to flooding due to heavy seasonal rains in 2019.¹⁰ This raises concerns about the risk of the spread of diseases, such as cholera, resulting from water pollution.</p>

9. International Linkages	Moderate Risk Deteriorating ↓
Stabilizing Factors	<p>Since its independence in 2011, numerous organizations have gotten involved in South Sudan. The most prominent being the African Union (AU) and the United Nations, which aim to mediate ongoing conflict and provide aid, external pressure, and guidance to South Sudanese leaders. For example, UNMISS which had over 19,000 personnel deployed in South Sudan as of September 2019, has operated in the country since 2011 with the objectives of consolidating peace and security and helping establish conditions for successful economic and political development of South Sudan.^{xliv} Similarly, the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), which deployed 4,400 personnel as of October 2019, has operated in the disputed Abyei region along the border between Sudan and South Sudan since 2011.^{xlv} UNISFA's mission includes ensuring security, protecting civilians, strengthening the capacity of the Abyei Police Service, de-mining, monitoring/verifying the redeployment of armed forces from the area, and facilitating the flow of humanitarian aid. Such international linkages are important because, in 2018, 33% of South Sudan's GDP went to military spending.^{xlvi} Thus, signalling the need for international organizations that assist with conflict and violence prevention and mediation. Furthermore, these organizations assist the Government of Sudan to fulfil international agreements focused on the demobilization of all child soldiers within the armed forces and opposition.</p> <p>Likewise, South Sudan benefits international assistance from organizations like the Red Cross which trained 328 people in first aid, medically treated 34,994 cases (51.9% women and girls) and 46,800 children from malaria, pneumonia and diarrhea.^{xlvii} The Red Cross also drilled 40 new and 30 rehabilitated boreholes to provide safe drinking water for 35,000 people.^{xlviii}</p> <p>Similarly, World Vision Canada, CARE Canada and Oxfam Canada helped stimulate the economy in South Sudan by providing technical services and agricultural inputs through farmer field schools, which helped to increase the percentage of women owning and controlling agricultural assets from 43% to 73% in targeted areas between 2015 and 2018.^{xlix} This work coincides with that of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Citibank, the IFC, and the Corporate Council on Africa who are trying to promote South Sudan's resources and attract private firms in key sectors like agriculture. For example, the South Sudanese government have agreed for the Madhvani Group to revitalized government-owned sugar plantation and processing facility in Mangala Payam. The World Bank also investment loans to South Sudan's Ministry of Roads and Bridges to build rural and inter-urban roads and highways.</p>

Destabilizing Factors	<p>In February 2018, the AU Chairperson Mousa Faki Mahama threatened sanctions against the South Sudanese leaders for violation of the ceasefire, expressing that ongoing peace talks are South Sudan's last chance before sanctions are imposed. Thus, indicating that South Sudan is in conflict with other regions as well.</p> <p>Moreover, while the state has signed agreements that seek to resolve militaristic and civil unrest, the recruitment and use of child soldiers continue to be a significant problem in the region with UNICEF estimating that more than 19,000 child soldiers have emerged in the nation since 2013.¹ Additionally, the UNDP argues that despite health and economic initiatives from IOs like the Red Cross, South Sudan's indicators are among the worst in the world, with food insecurity and malnutrition reaching unprecedented levels.</p>
Assessment	<p>South Sudan's international linkages are vital in stabilizing the region and providing the nation with economic, political, social, and humanitarian aid and resources. The assistance and funding from IOs will be necessary for the state's attainment of long-term, sustainable peace.</p>

Scenarios	
Best Scenarios	<p>The best-case scenario would be for South Sudan to be able to resolve its domestic conflict (i.e. civil war, ethnic disputes) and international disputes (i.e. with Sudan and Uganda). This would involve the cessation of violence and the implementation of measures to establish long-term peace.</p>

Worst Scenario	The worst-case scenario would be for conflict to continue and/or increase in South Sudan. The continuation of conflict would result in increased death rates, refugee levels, urban de-escalation, economic collapse, environmental concerns and interstate violence. This scenario would likely result in the furthered assistance from IOS like the UN and the Red Cross.
Most Likely Scenario	The most likely scenario is for the conflict to continue and further escalate in South Sudan.

ⁱ “The World Factbook: South Sudan,” *Central Intelligence Agency*, accessed on February 2, 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/od.html>.

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^{iv} Ibid.

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^{vi} “South Sudan,” *Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP)*, accessed February 2, 2020, <https://ucdp.uu.se/country/626>.

^{vii} Ibid.

^{viii} Ibid.

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- xxiv Ibid.
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