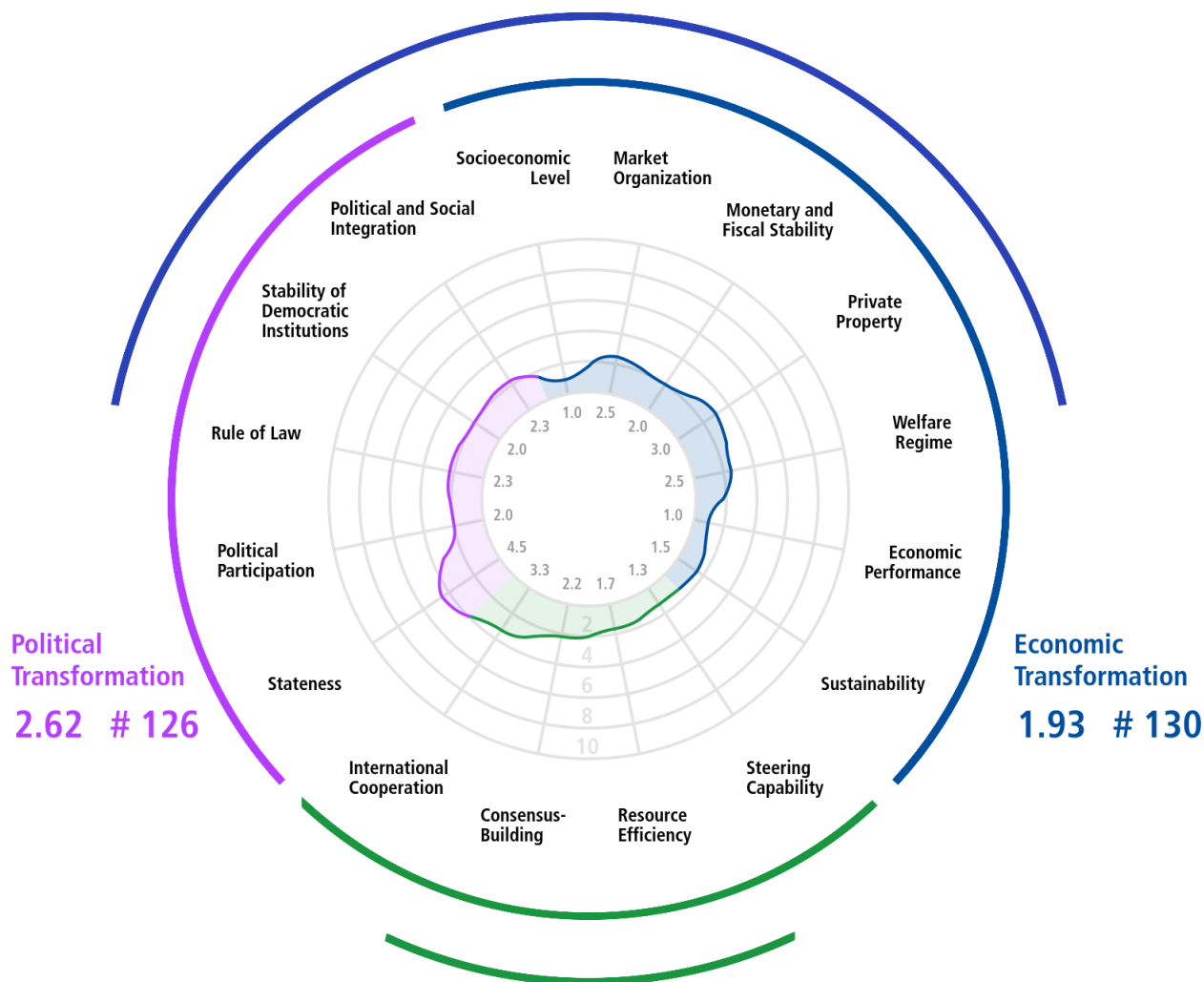


South Sudan

Status Index

2.27 # 128

on 1-10 scale out of 137



Political Transformation
2.62 # 126

Economic Transformation
1.93 # 130

Governance Index

2.09 # 129

on 1-10 scale out of 137

This report is part of the **Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) 2024**. It covers the period from February 1, 2021 to January 31, 2023. The BTI assesses the transformation toward democracy and a market economy as well as the quality of governance in 137 countries. More on the BTI at <https://www.bti-project.org>.

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Key Indicators

Population	M	10.9	HDI	0.385	GDP p.c., PPP \$	-
Pop. growth ¹	% p.a.	1.5	HDI rank of 189	191	Gini Index	44.1
Life expectancy	years	55.0	UN Education Index	0.345	Poverty ³	% 86.5
Urban population	%	20.8	Gender inequality ²	0.587	Aid per capita \$	196.1

Sources (as of December 2023): The World Bank, World Development Indicators | UNDP, Human Development Report 2021-22. Footnotes: (1) Average annual growth rate. (2) Gender Inequality Index (GII). (3) Percentage of population living on less than \$3.65 a day at 2017 international prices.

Executive Summary

South Sudan is still in a fragile state between war and peace. In February 2020, after a two-year process, parties to the ongoing conflict led by President Salva Kiir Mayardit and former First Vice President Riek Machar finally agreed to implement the 2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS).

Machar was once again sworn in as first vice president in a new unity government, officially ending the civil war after seven years of fighting. The stalemate on the national level is relatively stable, but new violence could erupt at any time. The United Nations reports that civilian casualty numbers have fallen but also that substantial acts of violence between different armed groups and frequent atrocities against civilians continue at the local level. As part of the peace agreement, South Sudan returned to the constitutional 10 states, which had been increased to 32 by Kiir. Governors were sworn in, and some minor improvements in terms of administrative capacity seem to have taken place. The United Nations reported noticeable progress in the implementation of the peace deal, most prominently a working parliament. Other important benchmarks included in the peace agreement have not been reached. National elections were rescheduled multiple times and are now slated for December 2024.

The Kiir government's approach to peace negotiations from 2015 to 2020 demonstrated the leaders' distrust of the international community and determination to avoid political interference, as the ruling faction manipulated the terms of repeated peace deals. Prior to the 2020 agreement, some international partners were close to canceling all support for South Sudan, while others had predicted that there would be no lasting peace with the current generation of political leaders.

The United Nations estimates that by the end of 2022, armed conflicts in the country have caused 2.2 million people to be internally displaced. Additionally, 2.26 million individuals are now refugees in neighboring countries, and more than two-thirds of the population, specifically 8.9 million people, are in need of humanitarian assistance. The civil war alone resulted in an estimated

383,000 fatalities. Since 2019, South Sudan has also been severely impacted by floods, affecting over 1 million people. Moreover, the level of socioeconomic development in the country is extremely low, ranking among the lowest in the world. According to the U.N. Development Program's Human Development Index, South Sudan is positioned last out of 191 states. Adherence to the rule of law is not guaranteed, as a combination of political, economic and military power creates substantial obstacles to the investigation of corruption and the prosecution of influential figures. As a result, prospects for peace in the region remain uncertain.

In September 2022, the peace process aimed at improving the country's human rights and stabilizing was revitalized, and it was set to end in February 2023. However, sporadic violence has continued, and therefore it is unclear whether the process will continue.

History and Characteristics of Transformation

South Sudan's independence was the result of a January 2011 referendum in which the people of South Sudan voted overwhelmingly (98.83%) for an independent state. The high voter turnout rate and the strong support for a separate state were driven by the strained relations between northern and southern Sudan. The Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), which played a central role in the 2005 peace agreement, transitioned into a regional administration and then government after 2011, solidifying its military and political control over the new state. Its efforts to build a state mainly focused on institutionalizing this power, while neglecting the deep-seated internal tensions and unresolved history of violence and grievances within South Sudan, until the outbreak of civil war in 2013. The violence between different factional groups within South Sudan following the 1991 split in the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) resulted in more civilian displacement and deaths than those caused by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) since the start of the civil war in 1983. One of the prominent SPLA commanders to break away was Riek Machar, the former vice president and current leader of the rebellion. The failure to address these historical grievances within South Sudan fueled the escalation of violence and factionalism within the SPLA after the outbreak of the civil war in 2013.

Since its creation as the political wing of the SPLA in 1983, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) has claimed to be a transformative movement aiming to promote democratic principles, the rule of law and the formation of a non-discriminatory "New Sudan." However, it became evident from the beginning of the interim period in 2005 that the wartime framing of democracy was merely a strategy to secure victory.

During the interim period, the SPLM initially stated that it had transformed from a rebel movement into a political party based on democratic principles. Nevertheless, the leadership of the SPLM remained largely composed of generals within the national army, the SPLA. Simultaneously, the military dominated the executive branch of the government (including roles such as cabinet ministers, state governors and county commissioners). The military, in turn, is led by members of the executive branch appointed by the president, who was also SPLM party chairman.

On the other hand, the National Legislative Assembly consisted of SPLM members appointed by the president at the beginning of the interim period. However, due to the ethnic targeting of civilians following outbreaks of violence in December 2013 and July 2016, a significant proportion of parliament members either abandoned their positions to join the rebellion, sought protection from the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) or fled to neighboring countries.

In response to this, the president appointed new loyalists to replace those who departed, predominantly from the Dinka ethnic group. Consequently, the lines between the executive, legislative and military have blurred further, making it increasingly difficult to differentiate between their respective roles. SPLA generals have exploited their military positions to advance the interests of the SPLM and intimidate opposition members within the National Legislative Assembly. Moreover, as the executive is also dominated by the military, its members have utilized their positions to advocate for a constitution that grants the executive powers to dismiss elected officials. This has consequently bestowed the executive with the authority to rule by decrees, often bypassing the elected legislatures.

Shortly after independence, the government passed several controversial bills that restricted the political space for the emergence of new political parties. The Political Party Act, which includes several conditions that are rarely met by an emerging political party, further limited the political space. The limited political space was exacerbated by the National Security Bill passed in March 2015, which prohibits freedom of assembly and expression without the consent of the Ministry of National Security – also dominated by SPLM/A.

The BTI combines text analysis and numerical assessments. The score for each question is provided below its respective title. The scale ranges from 1 (worst) to 10 (best).

Transformation Status

I. Political Transformation

1 | Stateness

As of January 2023, the South Sudanese state's monopoly on the use of force was still contested in multiple ways, and government control is only directly enforceable in small parts of the country.

First, large parts of the country cannot be accessed by government forces or officials due to a lack of infrastructure. This is particularly evident during the rainy season (May to October), and the significant increase in floods in recent years has worsened the access issues. Even prior to the onset of the South Sudanese civil war in December 2013, establishing a monopoly on the use of force in all parts of the country was a difficult task.

Second, as a result of the civil war, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), which was the dominant armed actor in South Sudan, has been divided into factions. Former army units have been structured into regional and personal commands under these political-military factions. Political and military power are interconnected, and numerous political figures are affiliated with armed groups or possess the potential to mobilize and co-opt armed forces, including armed civilians. In practice, there has been no significant advancement toward crucial security sector reform and the reintegration of combatants.

Third, despite the cease-fire at the national level, the state's control over the use of force is being challenged by various smaller armed groups, including militias and self-defense groups affiliated with clans or villages. These groups, for the most part, were not participants in the civil war at the national level. While they claim to be focused on enhancing local security for roads and communities, they frequently become involved in local disputes.

Fourth, although their mission is to support the state and help restore peace and security in South Sudan, the presence of a 13,200-member United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) is, in itself, a symbol of the absence of a clear monopoly on the use of force by the South Sudanese state.

Question
Score

Monopoly on the
use of force

3

'06 _____ '24 10



1

The splintering of several opposition forces in the aftermath of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) in September 2018 and again in 2022 has further undermined the state's monopoly on the use of force. The United Nations reported that a permanent cease-fire, in effect since February 2020, continues to hold in most parts of the country. However, the state still lacks the ability to protect the civilian population. As of February 2023, there is widespread conflict and localized violence involving nonstate and government forces in the majority of the eastern regions of South Sudan. Additionally, there are localized incidents of cattle raiding, clashes between militias and community violence in areas west of the Nile. The national police, government forces and other armed actors associated with the government are responsible for a significant number of human rights violations.

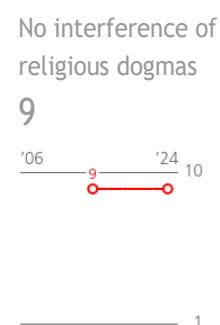
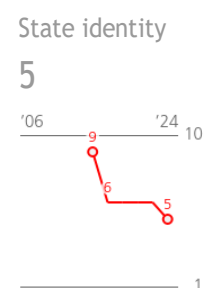
An overwhelming majority (98.3%) of the people of South Sudan voted for an independent state in 2010. The concept of the nation-state and the creation of South Sudan enjoyed high levels of support in general, as the SPLM's war against the Sudanese regime led to state independence. However, during the transition period from 2005 to 2011, there were sustained regional conflicts between state forces and local communities, particularly in Jonglei. Since 2011, the state has rapidly lost legitimacy among large parts of the population.

Since independence, without an external struggle against Sudan, South Sudanese political solidarity has crumbled. Ethnic and regional identities were politicized and used as mobilizing logics for conflict throughout the civil war with Sudan, and this has continued in independent South Sudan. Dominant factions, specifically those led by Kiir and Machar, have mobilized support along regional and ethnic lines. This has fostered social disintegration, enhanced competition for state positions along ethnic and regional lines and provided a political and cultural cover for individual rivalries.

A long-term political process needs to address not only the dominant conflicts within the newly formed government but also the numerous inter-group conflicts on the local level – many of which center on control of resources, land and services. Recent public opinion research indicates that South Sudanese citizens support the principle of a democratic, fair nation-state, but believe that many people are treated as “second-class citizens” across the country.

South Sudan is a secular state de jure and de facto. The current transitional constitution of 2011 guarantees the separation of religion and politics in Article 8. The country is predominantly Christian, with particularly large Catholic and Anglican congregations. Most towns have Muslim minorities, while further north toward the border with Sudan, Islam is more widely practiced. In addition to Islam and Christianity, a large proportion of South Sudanese practice traditional religions.

The separation of religion and state originates from the war against Northern Sudan, which was premised on the imposition of Islam and Islamic law on non-Muslims. This has prevented religion from becoming a contentious political issue, at least for the moment. Churches and faith-based organizations played important roles during



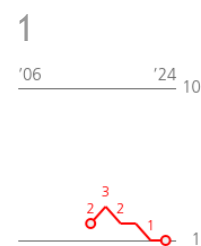
the war. They not only provided emergency relief, education and health services to displaced people but also facilitated reconciliation processes between communities and on the national level. Religious leaders today play important roles on the local level. It is unlikely that religion will become a political dimension, as it did during the north-south civil war.

The constitution of South Sudan provides for an administrative structure based on a decentralized system of governance. Following the constitution, the country inherited 10 states from Sudan, which were further divided into counties, payams and bomas (bomas being the smallest administrative unit). However, in October 2015, President Salva Kiir increased the number of states to 28, and later to 32 in January 2017, thereby violating the peace deal of 2015. It was only when Kiir agreed to reverse his decision that a political process became possible. In February 2020, Kiir announced that South Sudan would revert back to 10 states, along with the addition of three administrative areas, as part of the formation of the new government of national unity.

The effects of sustained civil war, economic collapse since 2013 and the factional power play over administrative boundaries collectively mean that the territorial administration lacks capacities, funding and skilled personnel. Local administrations are mostly unable to implement government decisions and provide services to the population. Similarly, in rural areas, the central administration is unable to regularly collect taxes and dues that could finance public goods. Most South Sudanese have no regular access to state-based judicial functions, which are expensive and operate only in towns. Most people rely instead on local customary court systems. Since December 2018, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan has offered a mobile statutory law court (since 2020 a Joint Special Mobile Court), but this is not a structure that supports South Sudanese institutions.

Due to the seven years of civil war and the fractured security situation, a number of international aid providers have downscaled their activities or have had to withdraw from the country altogether, leaving a gap in the provision of services to the population. In addition, the lack of government transparency regarding the implementation of projects funded by international donors has resulted in the reduction of project funds given directly to the government. Collectively, this has led to a near-complete breakdown in basic administration and service delivery across many parts of South Sudan, especially in rural areas and in areas directly affected by the civil war and local violence. As a result, more than 70% of the population is suffering from famine and malnutrition. The World Food Program speaks of the “worst hunger crisis ever.” In 2020, according to the World Bank, 41% of the population had access to a basic water source, and only 15.8% had access to basic sanitation. About 7.2% of the population had access to electricity in 2020.

Basic
administration



2 | Political Participation

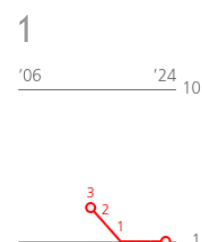
Since the formation of South Sudan as an independent state in 2011, there have been no national or state elections. The government claims legitimacy based on elections in 2010. The first national elections in South Sudan were scheduled for 2015. As part of the peace deals of 2015 and 2018/2020, national elections were deferred multiple times. This has solidified President Kiir's dominant position and maintained the power dynamics between the SPLM and Vice President Riek Machar's faction of the SPLM-IO. In April 2015, the South Sudan parliament voted to amend the transitional constitution of 2011, extending the presidential and parliamentary terms until July 9, 2018, with a significant SPLM majority. Subsequently, the elections were postponed again in July 2018 to August 2021 and once more in 2022 to December 2024. Kiir's SPLM faction maintains its political supremacy, while the only opposition present comes from splinter groups of the SPLM, which comprise a combination of political and armed factions. It appears unlikely that civilian political parties without ties to any armed actors would have a realistic chance in future elections. Many observers in 2022 noted that national elections would likely provoke violence before, during and after the ballot.

Since the civil war in 2013, political power has been held by actors with combined economic, military and political power. Many of these actors are rooted in longer factional histories from the divisions of the second Sudanese civil war (1983 – 2005), which has created strong patronage networks, regional military strongholds, and historical rivalries and grievances. In principle, the constitution of South Sudan creates a democratic and relatively balanced system of governance; however, during the “transition period” that has gone on since 2018, the president has enormous political power, and his decrees generally function as law with regard to border changes, political appointments and other key decisions. This effectively means that elected bodies, such as the National Assembly, are redundant forums. President Kiir has repeatedly used presidential decrees to replace governors, reshuffle military commands and replace members of parliament at the national and state levels. The biggest reshuffle of state representatives by the president happened in line with the creation of new states in 2015 and 2017, and again in 2020 after the reduction to 10 states. Outside of the capital Juba, in government-controlled territories, centralized decision-making from President Kiir's ruling faction reaches down to the local level. Elsewhere, outside of government control, military-governed rebel factions recreate similar centralized systems of informal taxation and everyday governance.

Free and fair elections



Effective power to govern



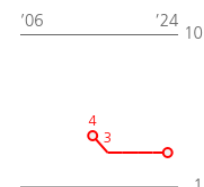
The constitution of South Sudan guarantees the freedoms of association and assembly in Article 25. However, due to sustained localized conflicts in large parts of the country, the exercise of such liberties is threatened by both state and nonstate actors. The government introduced a National Security Bill (NSB) in 2015 that, in contravention of constitutional provisions, considers gatherings of citizens, including private meetings, without prior approval from national security services to be illegal and punishable by the state. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other NGOs have criticized these regulations as a violation of the constitution and international law. This criticism includes concerns about insufficient oversight over security forces by the judiciary and the high likelihood of abuses of power. The NSB has created a further obstacle for political parties and civil society groups critical of the government. It has consolidated national security forces' well-established practices of intimidation of political opponents and critics; these forces are suspected of a series of murders and disappearances of prominent journalists and human rights activists.

As part of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS), the reconstituted National Constitution and Amendment Committee (NCAC) is meant to revise the National Security Service Act, as well as other relevant laws, and draft new legislation in accordance with the 2020 revitalized peace agreement. As of January 2023, there is no evidence that this process has been finalized. Human rights groups continue to criticize the practices of the national security services and their violations of human rights.

While de jure, the 2011 Transitional Constitution of South Sudan guarantees the right to freedom of expression in Article 24, both the existing legal framework and government practice de facto inhibit the exercise of these rights. The Penal Code Act (2008), the Media Authority Act (2013), the National Security Service Act (2014) and the National Security Bill of 2015 are not in line with the constitution's protection of freedoms of expression and media. As the civil war intensified, the government restricted various media outlets, including newspapers. According to Human Rights Watch, the freedom of the press and media is violated mostly by various government security forces and, to a lesser extent, by civilian authorities, including governors, ministers and the Media Authority. Other armed actors are also able to threaten and hamper journalists. These developments foster a growing self-censorship among all news providers. According to UNESCO, no journalist was killed in South Sudan in 2021 or 2022. Reporters Without Borders has attested to improvements for the free press since the end of the civil war in February 2020 and raised the country's index ranking to 128th place worldwide in 2022 (2021: 139th, 2020: 138th, 2019: 139th; 2018: 144th). One prominent recent example of problematic pressure on journalists was an incident in January 2023, where six journalists of the state-run South Sudan Broadcasting Corporation were detained by South Sudan security forces over viral footage of the president apparently urinating on himself at a public event.

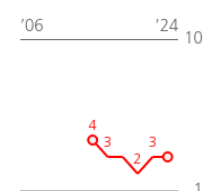
Association / assembly rights

3



Freedom of expression

3



3 | Rule of Law

Art. 48 of the constitution of South Sudan establishes a presidential system with separation of powers. On paper, South Sudan has a fairly strong separation of powers, including a ban on ministers holding a parliamentary mandate. However, the constitution's extensive transitional provisions grant the president very strong powers that contradict the broader constitutional principles. For example, the ability for a president to appoint members of parliament is a clear violation of the principle of separation of powers. Furthermore, in practice, the mixing of political and military power severely undermines the separation of powers. Even prior to the onset of the civil war, it was often unclear whether state officials were acting in their military or security-force capacity, or in their civil function as local public servants or members of parliament. These dynamics were exacerbated during the civil war from 2013 to 2020. The combination of political and military powers within the SPLM/A allows the armed forces to utilize their powers for political purposes. Additionally, military personnel cannot be tried in civilian statutory courts. In summary, the separation of powers does not function effectively in South Sudan.

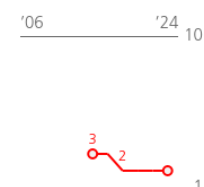
Formally, Article 122 of the 2011 transitional constitution established an independent judiciary in South Sudan. The South Sudanese judicial system is organized in a centralized manner, with a national body of appeals and no separate judicial system in the member states. This arrangement is outlined in Articles 122-134 of the constitution, in conjunction with Annex A No. 8. This system provides for a uniform appeal process, without a functional division into civil, criminal and administrative courts.

Despite the equality before the law enshrined in the constitution (Article 14), there is a widespread feeling among South Sudanese that the political and military elite abuse their powers to influence court cases or end criminal investigations, including through direct bribery as well as intimidation. Despite the presence of corruption and political influence, some judges seem to work independently on low-profile cases. According to Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, the government and security forces regularly obstruct the independence of the judiciary. Numerous individuals within the government and the armed forces who committed human rights abuses have never been charged. Many South Sudanese see the traditional courts as more inclusive and closer to the people than the statutory courts. However, when the Local Government Act formalized the role of the chiefs in the judicial system, their role as independent voices and representatives of ordinary people was placed under pressure.

According to Chapter Five of the Revitalized Peace Agreement of 2018 (implemented as of 2020), the new Transitional Government of National Unity of South Sudan has the obligation to create a Hybrid Court for South Sudan (HCSS) as a transitional justice institution that is meant to investigate and prosecute war crimes

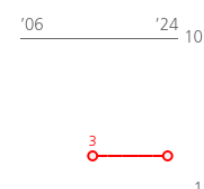
Separation of powers

2



Independent judiciary

3



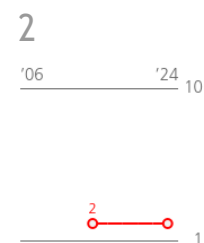
in the civil war. The HCSS is meant to be created in close cooperation with the African Union (AU) and to apply both international and South Sudanese law. This court could potentially be more independent due to its international involvement, enabling the prosecution of military commanders, but it is unlikely that the primary adversaries of the civil war will be held accountable. South Sudanese authorities have blocked the establishment of the HCSS for quite some time. After international pressure, the necessary Memorandum of Understanding between the AU and South Sudan was signed on January 30, 2021, but as of November 2022, Amnesty International reported that no progress had been made.

Despite the official policy of zero tolerance for corruption, both political and economic corruption are widespread in South Sudan. The abuse of power by public officeholders is theoretically controlled by various safeguards, the most important of which are the separation of powers, the judiciary and several independent bodies. These bodies include the Anti-Corruption Commission (Article 143 of the constitution), the National Audit Chamber (Article 186), and other independent institutions such as the Human Rights Commission (Article 145), all of which have the mission of providing government oversight. Additionally, freedoms accorded to journalists and other non-governmental actors should ideally provide further checks and balances within the South Sudanese political system. However, in practice, the separation of powers is weak, and independent oversight is not guaranteed. The intertwining of political, economic and military power makes it exceedingly difficult to investigate corruption and prosecute influential individuals. Furthermore, both the constitution and the Local Government Act grant immunity from prosecution to senior government officials (executive and legislative branches) and to senior chiefs, as well as to the armed forces.

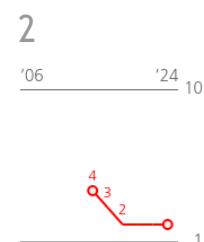
The constitution (Articles 9 – 34) provides for civil rights based on international standards. However, in practice, respect for civil rights has been almost nonexistent, particularly following the start of the civil war in 2013. Despite the legal provisions, even the most basic of civil rights, “the right to life” (transitional constitution Article 11), is far from guaranteed. Both the government and opposition forces have been accused of killing civilians and engaging in sexual violence and ethnic targeting, especially during the civil war from 2013 to 2020. Approximately 3.81 million people (1.62 million internally displaced persons, 2.19 million refugees) were forced to leave their homes due to the violence.

Security forces control movements, gatherings, public venues and other sites where dissident voices could potentially be heard. The incidence of arbitrary arrests and disappearances has been on the rise in recent years, mostly justified by vague accusations of linkages with the former opposition forces. Reports suggest that government forces are increasingly involved in robberies, looting civilian properties, rapes and murder. In addition to human rights violations in the context of the war, multiple levels of violent actors commit human rights violations in the absence of the

Prosecution of
office abuse



Civil rights



rule of law. Ordinary citizens increasingly report that they fear the authorities and security forces. The official peace agreement in 2018 has not significantly ended these abuses, particularly in the areas of the Jonglei, Upper Nile and Lakes states where intense conflicts continued into 2023. Even if the hybrid court collaborates with the African Union to prosecute war crimes and genocide in the future, it is unlikely that important officeholders or members of the elite will be held accountable without significant political change.

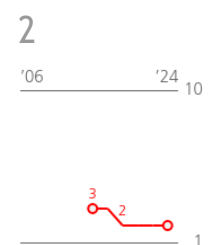
4 | Stability of Democratic Institutions

Principles of democracy and the rule of law are enshrined in the constitution. However, some democratic institutions are not in place, and most of those that exist do not perform effectively. The constitution grants absolute powers to the executive, particularly the president. For example, the president has the authority to dismiss or replace elected government officials without challenge from the National Legislative Assembly or cabinet ministers. The constitution (Article 188) also grants the president the right to dissolve or suspend the National Legislative Assembly in a state of emergency, including a civil war, and assume decision-making responsibilities that would normally fall under the jurisdiction of the assembly. Additionally, Article 101 gives the president the right to dismiss elected governors.

Since elections have yet to be conducted in South Sudan, the government's claim to legitimacy is based on the 2010 elections held before South Sudan became an independent state. Shortly after independence in 2011, the president began replacing state governors with new appointees by presidential decree. On October 2, 2015, President Kiir relieved the governor of Eastern Equatoria State, the last of the governors elected in 2010, of his position. Subsequently, the president adjusted the number of states to 32 in 2017 and then back to 10 in 2020 after the peace deal. In May 2021, President Kiir dissolved and reconstituted the National Legislature in accordance with the terms of the 2018 peace agreement. Both houses were expanded in the new legislature, the Transitional National Legislative Assembly, to 550 appointed representatives, and the Council of States increased from 50 to 100 seats.

The Local Government Act of 2009 suggests that chiefs should be directly elected by local communities. The act also suggests that all counties should have an elected legislative council, with members representing each payam. There is no evidence that any county has conducted elections for its council legislative assemblies. However, some commissioners, in consultation with head chiefs, managed to appoint council members in their counties. While some local community elections for chiefs have taken place, many chiefs, particularly in rural areas, were appointed by the SPLM/A during wartime or after the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). At the statutory judicial level, the court system relies on appointments and is undermined by low pay, corruption and political pressure. In addition, state institutions often lack the financial resources to provide public services. In short, democratic institutions in South Sudan fail to perform their duties effectively.

Performance of democratic institutions

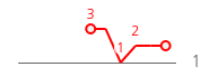


Political actors in South Sudan are aware of the international value attributed to democratic government and try to act accordingly. All political actors claim to be democratic and to be protecting democracy and democratic institutions, but they do not act this way in practice. President Kiir and his allies use their powers to undermine the democratic system and the checks and balances enshrined in the constitution. Several newly established laws, as well as government practice, are purposely designed to silence political opposition (e.g., party regulations) and government critics, such as the free press. There is no evidence that suggests armed opposition groups are more likely to promote democratic institutions.

Commitment to democratic institutions

2

'06 '24 10



5 | Political and Social Integration

On paper, South Sudan has a multiparty political system. However, due to the seven years of civil war and lack of democratic history, this is largely a façade. The Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), which emerged from the former rebel movement, technically remains the main political party in the country. In order to consolidate its political monopoly, collaboration between the three branches of government, including the army, has resulted in regulations that make it difficult for new political parties to emerge. Political, social and military power are interlinked. As a result of the civil war and a disastrous security situation, political parties and armed movements are usually the same. Most political parties are either effectively vehicles for individual politicians' ambitions or political fronts for splinter factions of the SPLM in opposition (SPLM-IO) or other armed groups that have emerged since 2013. As these oppositions are a result of personal power struggles, they mostly do not espouse clear alternative political programs or mobilize support on the ground via party structures.

Party system

2

'06 '24 10



For instance, the most serious opposition party apart from the SPLM-IO, which tried to challenge the SPLM during the 2010 election, has been the SPLM-Democratic Change (SPLM-DC), now known as Democratic Change, headed by Lam Akol. While there are officially about 14 political parties in South Sudan, they cannot really be considered parties in the sense of having a support base, institutional capacities or political programs. Other sources speak of about 50 parties operating in Juba.

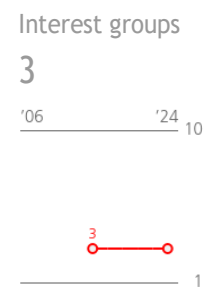
The South Sudan Opposition Alliance (SSOA), originally consisting of seven parties and armed groups and now eight, is part of the 2018 peace agreement. The SSOA has experienced multiple splits and reorganizations since 2018. The South Sudan National Democratic Alliance (SSNDA) consists of four armed groups, three of which are splinter groups of SSOA factions and are not part of the peace agreement. Other political parties without military power, such as the South Sudan Communist Party and the South Sudan Liberal Party, do not have any meaningful influence or political relevance. Clientelism and ethnic polarization are widespread structural problems.

As a consequence of the SPLM's dominance of the National Legislative Assembly, legislation has been passed that hampers the success or relevance of new parties. The Political Parties Act, which was slightly reformed in 2022, stipulates that to register a political party, the party must have at least 500 members drawn from two-thirds of the 10 states and must prove that it has not received external funding, including funds from international NGOs working in South Sudan. The internationally criticized National Security Bill of 2015 defines public gatherings, including those of political parties, as illegal if they have not been approved by the SPLM-controlled national security services. It remains to be seen whether these circumstances will change with a potential normalization of political affairs in South Sudan.

During the CPA period, from 2005 to 2011, and in the first years after independence, a vibrant civil society emerged, thanks to support from international donors. This civil society included human rights activists, unions, business clubs, and women's and youth associations. While many of these groups are small and operate in localized areas, a few organizations have achieved national significance. Despite substantial international funding and support for civil society groups, their political influence over the government and the SPLM remains relatively limited.

During the civil war from 2013 to 2020, the space allowed for civil society and the work of both national and international NGOs significantly shrank. International actors reduced funding or had to reduce their international personnel. The National Security Bill of 2015 fundamentally affected civil society activities, particularly those that were perceived as being directed against the government or that received funding from international NGOs accused of working for "regime change" in South Sudan. Some civil society organizations tended to take sides in the conflict, or were perceived as taking sides in the highly charged political atmosphere based on ethnic or regional affiliation.

By 2023, influential civil society groups are mainly active in urban centers, especially Juba. The churches represent a major social force that extends into all corners of South Sudan. In particular, the Anglican and Catholic churches have organizational structures that connect local parishes with those at the state and national levels. For years, the church played an active role in mediating conflicts. Since the start of the civil war, it has also become very vocal in its criticism of the warring parties. On the local level, particularly in rural areas, churches remain the most important institutions with regard to managing social life as well as moderating and mobilizing people's interests.



There is no public opinion survey data available to assess how strong the citizens' approval of democratic norms and procedures is.

Approval of
democracy

n/a

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South Sudan has associational cultures rooted in supporting community survival during decades of war, including self-help associations, mutual savings groups, displaced committees and refugee camp organizations. However, since the CPA in 2005, there have been no serious efforts to reconcile the people of South Sudan and address intercommunity violence and abuses by armed parties. During the civil wars from 2013 to 2020 and the continued conflicts across the country, violence and the politicization of ethnic identity have had a great impact on people's trust in each other and in government.

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Social capital

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Due to the lack of rule of law and security, people rely heavily on self-help systems, in which interethnic tensions, cattle raids, and disputes over land and aid can lead to breakdowns of trust and violence. The inclination to extend social trust beyond immediate kinship networks has been negatively affected by the conflict. South Sudan has an overwhelmingly young population: About 51% of the population is under 18 years of age and 72% is under 30 years of age. Many of South Sudan's citizens have grown up outside the country, as refugees in neighboring countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya or Uganda or as internally displaced people in Sudan. Frequent displacement; pressures on mutual aid systems from repeated crises; conflicts over space and land in urban centers; chronic, unresolved conflicts; and past violence all undermine social organization and association.

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II. Economic Transformation

6 | Level of Socioeconomic Development

The level of socioeconomic development in South Sudan is among the lowest in the world. There are not many internationally comparable indices available for South Sudan due to the lack of statistical data. The U.N. Development Program ranked South Sudan at position 191 out of 191 states in its Human Development Index (score: 0.385) in 2021, representing a minor decline from 2019. Drawing on data from 2019, the World Bank estimates that 86.5% of the population lived below the poverty line. The literacy rate among adults is estimated at 27%, and only 16% for women. The World Bank estimates the gross enrollment rate for primary education at 85.7%, but this education is often interrupted by a lack of teacher pay, limited training, conflicts and environmental crises. Many people depend on international NGOs and churches for the provision of basic public goods, particularly access to health care. An estimated 25% of people have access to primary health care. Urban areas are more developed than the vast rural parts of the country, where humanitarian agencies find access very difficult even without the risk of armed violence. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 8.9 million people are in need of international help (2022 report: 7.5 million). The vast majority of South Sudanese depend on small-scale subsistence farming and cattle herding that, in the best-case scenario, produces enough food for their (extended) family and allows families to survive environmental crises. This is supplemented by a growing cash labor market, which allows families to purchase school and health care supplies, as well as transport, but which is also used in many regions to supplement food production. The World Food Program estimates that more than 40% of households spend over 65% of their income on food. As of December 2022, about 2.3 million people from South Sudan were refugees or asylum-seekers in neighboring countries, primarily in Uganda and Sudan, according to the UNHCR. In addition, 2 million people were internally displaced within South Sudan. Insecurity and displacement greatly affect people's livelihoods and food security. Women were especially affected by the civil war. For instance, women in South Sudan suffer the highest maternal mortality rates in the world, according to the UNDP. In addition, women are targeted for sexual abuse and are discriminated against in most aspects of social life.

Although the lack of available data is problematic, it is clear that the seven years of armed conflict were a significant setback for the country's socioeconomic development. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic coincided with the end of the conflict and further exacerbated the economic crisis due to the imposition of lockdowns on markets.

Question
Score

Socioeconomic
barriers

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Economic indicators		2019	2020	2021	2022
GDP	\$ M	-	-	-	-
GDP growth	%	-	-	-	-
Inflation (CPI)	%	87.2	29.7	10.5	-6.7
Unemployment	%	12.2	13.7	13.5	13.0
Foreign direct investment	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Export growth	%	-	-	-	-
Import growth	%	-	-	-	-
Current account balance	\$ M	-194.0	-1717.5	-6.6	-
Public debt	% of GDP	42.8	49.9	52.5	37.8
External debt	\$ M	-	-	-	-
Total debt service	\$ M	-	-	-	-
Net lending/borrowing	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Tax revenue	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Government consumption	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Public education spending	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Public health spending	% of GDP	0.8	0.4	-	-
R&D expenditure	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Military expenditure	% of GDP	3.3	2.3	2.6	3.0

Sources (as of December 2023): The World Bank, World Development Indicators | International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Economic Outlook | Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Military Expenditure Database.

7 | Organization of the Market and Competition

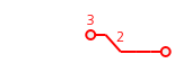
Business development in South Sudan faces numerous constraints, including the weak rule of law, widespread corruption and the overall security situation. Additionally, poor infrastructure, a lack of reliable transport routes, limited access to electricity and internet connectivity, and extremely low levels of education and skills among the population contribute to the list of challenges. Despite these obstacles, following the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), traders and businessmen from neighboring countries flocked to South Sudan to establish retail and wholesale businesses, construction firms, hotel and restaurant establishments and telecommunication companies. Moreover, individuals from the diaspora and educated South Sudanese have started companies, often with close ties to government or military personnel. It is estimated that over 80% of South Sudanese work in the informal sector. However, due to the ongoing war, many business owners have been forced to leave the country, particularly in 2016. South Sudan is viewed as an emerging market, and the government seeks to create a favorable environment for both internal and external investors. Unfortunately, the civil war, which lasted from 2013 to 2020, has spread to previously peaceful areas, resulting in the destruction of more businesses. The fragile situation has significantly eroded investor confidence.

The economic objectives section of the transitional constitution states that all levels of government shall encourage free markets and the prohibition of monopoly (Article 37 (2a)). The Investment Promotion Act, as well as the Competition Act of 2009, defines mechanisms for safeguarding and preventing the development of economic monopolies in the market. But in practice, senior military and government officials are heavily engaged in economic activities themselves and as local partners of international investors. Agreements between investors, local government license offices, political elites, and military and security forces have created some degree of monopoly over major economic sectors, facilitated by an array of mostly regional commercial actors. As a consequence of the strategy to control trade, the petroleum trading industry is dominated by Somali traders; the hospitality sector by Ugandans and Kenyans; construction by Ugandans, Chinese, and Sudanese companies; and water supply by Eritrean workers and companies. Companies that operate in fields like telecommunications, infrastructural development and government procurement are highly dependent on connections, bribes and corrupt practices to make their companies successful. The government and the military are both important contractors. Good relations with people in the government and the army are indispensable.

Market
organization

2

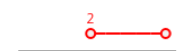
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Competition policy

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Trade is liberalized in South Sudan. The government's main source of income is oil production, and lucrative investment opportunities in mineral and gold mining, logging, coffee, gum arabic, peanuts and other agricultural products are increasingly being exploited by military-political and commercial actors, with only nominal attempts at the local and national levels to provide regulatory legislation and enforcement. Internal and border tariffs and checkpoint taxes have increased in recent years as part of the localization of military incomes and because of the long-term economic crisis.

Landlocked South Sudan relies on its neighboring states for its supplies of food, construction materials and various consumer goods. The northern part of the country is primarily supplied by Sudan, but due to escalating tensions between their governments, Sudan frequently closes its borders with South Sudan, resulting in shortages of fuel and other goods. Given the unstable political situation in Sudan, the future of the relationship between Sudan and South Sudan is difficult to predict. Conversely, the southern part of the country is supplied by Uganda and Kenya. Uganda provides food items, while the Mombasa port in Kenya serves as a source of shipped consumer goods for South Sudan.

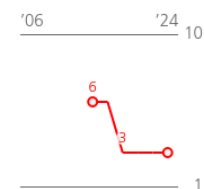
One challenge South Sudan faces is land-grabbing by foreign investors. According to the Land Matrix database, prior to the civil war, investors from countries including the United Arab Emirates, Sudan, and other Arab and Western nations owned approximately 10% (2.5 million hectares) of the country's land, using it for purposes of resource extraction, oil mining and agricultural production.

South Sudan joined the IMF in April 2012 and is not yet a member of the WTO. The country became a member of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in 2011, but its membership was later suspended due to unpaid contribution fees. In 2016, South Sudan joined the East African Community (EAC), although it did not actively participate in EAC meetings for several years. The first delegates from South Sudan were elected in September 2022.

Before the civil war, the South Sudanese government aimed to strengthen its ties with other East African countries, especially in terms of trade. Plans were underway to construct an oil pipeline to Lamu in Kenya, which would reduce South Sudan's reliance on Sudan's unreliable and costly pipelines. However, with the escalation of the civil war, oil production has significantly decreased, exacerbating the impact of declining global oil prices. Another proposed project is the construction of a highway from South Sudan to Mombasa, which would facilitate regional transportation and trade. Neither of these projects has secured funding at this time.

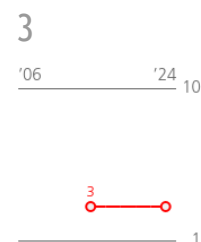
Liberalization of
foreign trade

3



The banking sector in South Sudan is seriously underdeveloped. As of the end of 2022, 30 commercial banks were registered in the country, but only a few of them operate nationwide. Most banks have offices only in select urban areas, such as Juba, Yei and the capitals of the 10 states. Few people in South Sudan have bank accounts, and there is no recent data available on this issue. However, according to the IMF, many domestic banks face a significant lack of capital and a growing number of non-performing loans. The government and the army have plans to pay salaries through bank accounts, but this initiative has not been implemented yet. Making international bank transfers to or from a South Sudanese bank is still complex. Consequently, most foreign companies, NGOs and other organizations hold accounts with regionally operating banks like the Kenya Commercial Bank. Access to credit remains a major challenge, leading many businesses to rely on international banks. In addition to the formal banking system, an informal money transfer system is also in place, with small companies facilitating transactions between towns in South Sudan. A significant shortage of foreign currency, especially U.S. dollars, has created a parallel black market. International withdrawals are not currently possible. Like other economic sectors, banks in South Sudan are heavily influenced by political actors. A study conducted in 2018 revealed that more than half of the country's banks, specifically 14 out of the 26 surveyed, were partially owned or controlled by political elites who exploit these institutions for purposes of money-laundering and arms trading. To address these challenges, the African Development Bank has been supporting South Sudan and other countries in the Horn of Africa through the Digital Market Integration project since 2022, aiming to develop digital financial services and payment systems.

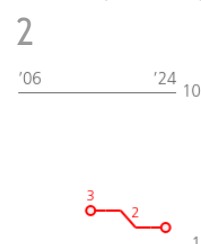
Banking system



8 | Monetary and fiscal stability

The central bank of South Sudan was established after independence in 2011 via the Bank of South Sudan Act. The bank is de jure independent according to the constitution and the Bank Act. Shortly after its creation, the bank introduced its currency, the South Sudanese pound (SSP). In recent years, South Sudan has been able to stabilize its inflation rates, reducing hyperinflation rates of 379.8% in 2016, 187.9% in 2017 and 83.5% in 2018 to 17.6% in 2022 (30.2% in 2021). This inflation is still driven by the high dependency on oil exports. The IMF estimates that the inflation rate will reach 21.7% in 2023. The inflation rates in recent years have encouraged currency trading on the black market. In late November 2014, the central bank issued an order banning black market currency transactions. At that time, the official exchange rate was SSP 3.16 to \$1, compared to more than SSP 5 to \$1 on the black market. In December 2016, the Bank of South Sudan allowed the foreign exchange rate to float freely and printed more South Sudanese pounds. This resulted in a rapid rise in the exchange rate, from SSP 3 to \$1 in June 2016 to SSP 669 to \$1 by the end of January 2023. The South Sudanese pound is the third-worst-performing currency in the latest ranking of African currencies against the U.S. dollar. The rates

Monetary stability



for the U.S. dollar on the black market remain significantly higher than the official rate. The difference between the official exchange rate and the black-market exchange rate has created significant distortions in the economy.

President Kiir regularly replaces the governor of the central bank and occasionally the deputy governor (January 2017, May 2018, January and November 2020, January and August 2022). This practice has significantly impeded the ability of the central bank to take regulatory action and raises doubts about its de facto independence. The impact of the central bank's recent directive to price transactions solely in pounds, issued in January 2023, has yet to be assessed.

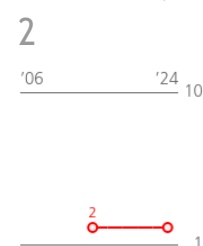
The collapse in oil production in 2012 exposed the vulnerability of the South Sudanese economy to this single source of revenue. This resulted in a rapid drop in GDP from \$17.83 billion in 2011 to \$10.37 billion in 2012. As a result, the government was forced to consider austerity measures in order to reduce the national budget by 40%. The revival in oil production in April 2013 led to an increase in GDP to \$13.80 billion. Since the start of the civil war, the economy has been in free fall, with a national GDP of \$2.90 billion in 2016, which is the most recent available data. The seven years of civil war have had a significant impact on the South Sudanese economy, primarily due to the collapse in oil production in certain areas affected by the war. Before 2012, South Sudan was producing about 500,000 barrels per day, but since then, it has fallen, stabilizing at around 150,000 barrels per day in 2022. The reduction in oil production, combined with the rapid decline in world oil prices and a shift in government spending priorities to fund the war, has resulted in a complete economic collapse. In 2021, public debt amounted to 64.7% of GDP. In general, economic data from South Sudan is of poor quality, and projections even for 2021 remain uncertain, mainly due to a lack of reliable data. The government's focus on security issues has led to extra-budgetary spending, which in turn has contributed to increased deficits. Along with the conflict and the decrease in oil production, the low global oil prices are a genuine cause for concern and may further hinder much-needed macroeconomic stability.

9 | Private Property

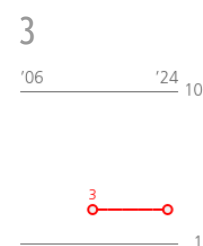
Despite the transitional constitution guaranteeing the right to own property (Article 28), including for women (Article 16.5), there are numerous problems related to property in South Sudan. These problems most often revolve around issues of land. The Land Act of 2009 has created a framework under which land belongs to the people of South Sudan but is regulated by the government. Land is categorized as public, community or private land. The conversion of community land into government land has been particularly contested.

Local communities in the vicinity of urban areas, for instance, can be forced to release communal land for public purposes (with compensation). According to the Land Act, these public interests could include urban development, resettlement and reintegration, or control over land for defense purposes (Section 73 (5)). The

Fiscal stability



Property rights



boundaries between the various types of land use and property are not entirely clear, and, as the chairperson of the South Sudan Land Commission admitted during a meeting, the Act can be interpreted in various ways. The everyday reality is arguably more complicated than what the Land Act suggests.

First of all, property rights are easily and often trespassed upon by people with political power or armed forces. Conflicts may also arise when local elites engage in discussions with (foreign) companies about concessions without also pursuing prior consultations with the community. In addition, some cultural practices in South Sudan do not acknowledge land ownership by women, which contradicts the right to property ownership in the constitution.

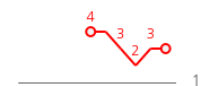
Apart from land ownership, the protection of movable properties is not guaranteed due to the ongoing conflict, the lack of the rule of law and the poor security situation. Intellectual property rights are violated regularly. The confusion over property and access may be a source of future problems.

Before the Civil War, the government made efforts to stabilize inflation, implement austerity measures and create an enabling environment to attract investors for the purposes of business development in South Sudan. These efforts aimed to increase employment opportunities, diversify the economy and enhance the country's overall condition. However, during the seven years of civil war, these endeavors were put on hold. Nonetheless, a limited number of national and international companies continued to operate within the country. These international corporations are engaged in infrastructure projects, telecommunications, transportation and other logistical activities. As the war persisted, these companies either withdrew or scaled down their operations. Achieving a stable security environment following the end of the civil war will be crucial in order to enhance the business climate and attract more investment to South Sudan. The challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and extreme flooding in recent years have further complicated these efforts. Past experiences have shown that the success of private investment depends on the relationships between investors and the government, as well as between investors and the military. This has been problematic due to conflicts of interest, resulting in a lack of clarity regarding the proper process for establishing a private business. Consequently, some foreign investors who lacked strong connections to the government or the army have been expelled. To promote both foreign and domestic investment in the country, structural reforms within the private sector will be necessary.

Private enterprise

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10 | Welfare Regime

South Sudan does not have a formalized welfare system of any meaningful sort. During the CPA period, some progress was made on the passage of a public service bill and the creation of a civil pension fund, but the extent to which they function is unclear and appears to depend significantly on personal connections, including for military pensions. With more than 80% of its population living in rural areas, many people in South Sudan depend on land for their livelihoods, and most social safety nets reflect this dependency, as well as the prevalence of community social support. Limited safety nets and reliance on markets for food and additional paid work, especially but not exclusively in urban centers, makes many civilians vulnerable to shocks such as illness – especially pandemics such as COVID-19 – as well as droughts, floods and other sources of insecurity.

Social structures are rooted in various traditional practices that provide social safety nets based on family, clan and ethnic community. However, repeated economic crises and climate shocks in most rural areas in recent years, as well as regionalized conflict and displacement, have put significant strain on these rural social safety nets. In most urban centers, the working class often shoulder the burden of assisting their relatives, providing funds for medical assistance and facilitating the education of children from rural areas in nearby towns, as these services are not available in the countryside. The South Sudanese diaspora continues to play a significant role in social assistance networks by sending remittances.

In general, social assistance is predominantly provided by NGOs. There is a sharp divide between rural areas and urban centers with regard to social assistance and access to key resources such as health care, clean water and education. Many people who fled conflict during the civil wars from 2013 to 2020 have remained in regional refugee camps, partly because these provide some access to services and safety. Increased urbanization resulting from the war has also increased the strain on urban communities. Additionally, many rural areas cannot be effectively reached by international aid, especially during rainy seasons. It is challenging to predict how this situation will develop after the end of the civil war, after the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, and with South Sudan experiencing rapid climate change.

Despite the lack of organized social safety networks, general indicators have previously suggested some positive trends. Between 2011 and 2020, for example, life expectancy increased, according to the World Bank, from about 55.3 to 58.1 years. As in other conflict zones, the quality of these data is questionable.

Social safety nets

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Despite numerous provisions in the transitional constitution guaranteeing equal opportunities regardless of gender, ethnicity or religious affiliation, there is little evidence that these rights are respected in practice. The government has acknowledged the underrepresentation of women in both the public and private sectors as a significant issue. In 2013, the government implemented a six-year affirmative action plan aimed at promoting women’s participation in education and the economy. At the political level, the government introduced a 25% quota for female representation, which was subsequently raised to 35% in March 2013. To facilitate the achievement of this objective, various international and national NGOs are actively involved in supporting women’s access to employment opportunities through a range of affirmative action programs.

However, in reality, the actual share of women in various sectors, including the public sector, falls well short of the initial target of 25%. Moreover, school enrollment rates are significantly lower for girls than for boys. According to the World Bank, in 2018, only 28.9% of women over the age of 15 were literate, in contrast to 40.3% of men. A study conducted by Oxfam attributes the limited attendance of girls in schools to early marriage as the primary contributing factor.

At the general level, the concept of “equal opportunity” has centered around the lack of transparency, characterized by high levels of patronage and clientelism. Patronage and clientelistic relationships are often tied to an individual’s involvement in the north-south civil war. For instance, employment opportunities are frequently granted to individuals who participated in the civil war or are perceived to be sympathetic to SPLM. Alternatively, positions are awarded based on what is known as “accommodation” in order to appease individuals who might otherwise vehemently oppose the government. While there is no concrete data on the preferential treatment of certain ethnic groups over others, the fact that this perception is widely shared poses a challenge to governance in the country. Equatorial communities, located closer to the borders of Uganda and Kenya, are viewed as having had unequal access to education and formal employment since the 1930s. The participation of the Dinka and Nuer on the SPLA side of the war resulted in better employment prospects for individuals belonging to these tribes, particularly within government institutions. As a result of the civil war from 2013 to 2020, a significant number of Nuer individuals lost their government positions due to dismissal or because they fled their homes. The ethnic aspect of employment has created a prevalent perception of “Dinka dominance” within government institutions, and it remains to be seen if this will change with the implementation of the peace deal.

Equal opportunity

3

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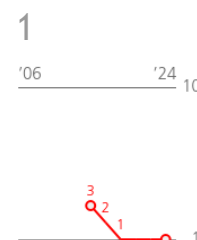


11 | Economic Performance

Due to the political and security situation in South Sudan, the country's economy is not performing as it should in order to generate sustainable, inclusive economic growth. However, the availability of quantitative data on South Sudan remains limited, and the quality of data is questionable. Given the immense size of the informal sector and the lack of data on trade, as well as the poor data-collecting capacities in the country, the figures may not be accurate.

South Sudan is still suffering from a sharp economic crisis, dating particularly from the beginning of the civil war in 2013 and exacerbated by a period of hyperinflation in mid-2015. Approximately 98% of the government's annual budget and 80% of its gross domestic product (GDP) stem from oil production and exports, both of which were disrupted and diverted due to the conflict. In terms of infrastructure, the conflict has led to the abandonment of development projects in progress before the civil war started, while also contributing to the destruction of existing infrastructure, especially in areas that have been repeatedly affected by conflict. The forced displacement of a large number of civilians caused by the war, as well as ongoing environmental crises, has hampered this population's ability to contribute to sustained, equitable and commercial economic production. This situation reflects the negative economic impact of the civil war. Currently, around 8.9 million people (last report: 7.1 million) are in need of assistance. The COVID-19 pandemic has further hindered economic recovery, although the World Bank estimated a low but positive growth rate of approximately 1% for 2022.

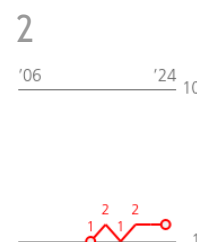
Output strength



12 | Sustainability

South Sudan's existing legal framework places a strong emphasis on environmental protection, with these provisions originating from Article 41 of the constitution. Since the start of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, environmental affairs have been coordinated by a directorate under the Ministry of Wildlife and Tourism. In 2016, a separate Ministry for Environment and Forestry was established as part of the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ACRISS). Also in that year, the National Legislative Assembly passed a national strategy governing the use of environmental resources. The Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS), concluded in September 2018, endorsed the ACRISS agreements and set a six-month deadline for the creation of a new Environmental Management Authority (EMA). However, as of January 2023, the EMA had not been established since the formation of the new government of unity in February 2020. Despite the increasing flooding, droughts and displacement resulting from these environmental crises, environmental protection ranks very low on the national agenda due to continuing local conflicts across large

Environmental policy



areas of the country. Environment programs have limited funding, and there has been no appreciable implementation of new environmental protection regulations, despite discussions in 2022 regarding potential river dredging for flood protection as part of a larger public crisis involving the proposed Jonglei canal scheme. The future role of the new EMA remains unclear.

Improving the quality of education is crucial not only for economic development but also for enhancing peace and security in South Sudan. A large number of youths are unemployed with few prospects for jobs, which has led to a massive increase in the recruitment of young people into the armed forces of the various conflict parties, as well as a rise in the incidence of criminal activities. In general, South Sudan lacks institutions to educate and train the professional workforce it needs to function as a state. However, the lack of data makes it difficult to get a clear picture of the state of education in South Sudan. According to the World Bank, South Sudan spent about 1.8% of its GDP on education in 2016 (the most recent data available), which is a very low share. As a result, South Sudan performed poorly on the U.N. Education Index in 2021, with a score of 0.345. There is no data available on research and development expenditure.

The overall literacy rate among adults is estimated at 34.5% (2018) and at only 28.8% for women. However, the World Bank estimates the gross primary education enrollment rate to be 85.7%. Due to anti-COVID-19 measures, schools were closed in 2020. UNICEF reports a significant increase in the number of out-of-school children, rising from 2.2 million in 2018 to 2.8 million in 2021. Many people depend on international NGOs and churches for the provision of basic public goods, particularly access to health care. An estimated 25% of people have access to primary health care. Urban areas are more developed than the vast rural parts of the country, where access by humanitarian agencies is very difficult even in the absence of armed violence.

In general, South Sudan has yet to make progress in building effective educational institutions. Efforts by various international NGOs have contributed to the development of primary and secondary education, resulting in a general increase in education enrollment figures. However, the quality of teaching and school infrastructure remains very low. Existing figures suggest that approximately 63% of school teachers lack formal training (unqualified according to UNICEF). Furthermore, most schools are concentrated in urban centers, with a consequent shortage of schools in rural areas. As a result, overcrowding and a lack of available teachers are common issues. Due to the poor quality of primary and secondary education, wealthier families choose to send their children to East African countries such as Kenya and Uganda for schooling.

Because of the support that primary and secondary schools receive from international NGOs, the government has tended to focus on funding higher education. The three universities in South Sudan were developed by the government of Sudan before South Sudan achieved independence. The University of Juba was established in 1977, prior

Education policy /
R&D



to South Sudan's war with Sudan, while Upper Nile University and the University of Bahr el Ghazal were both established in 1991, during the war with Sudan. Before and after independence, South Sudan opened three additional universities: Rumbek University, Yambio University and the University of Northern Bahr el Ghazal. President Kiir serves as chancellor of all public universities, which further demonstrates his influence in every aspect of people's lives. In addition to the state universities, there are several private universities in South Sudan, including the Catholic University of St. Mary and the Bridge University, among others. In 2012, the Ministry of Higher Education closed down several private universities because they did not meet the minimum requirements.

Like the primary and secondary education sectors, universities in South Sudan face numerous challenges, including funding issues and staff availability. In principle, government-sponsored universities are funded by the government. However, the government's financial cuts and the country's ongoing conflict have impacted the education system. Additionally, before independence, most lecturers in government universities were from northern Sudan. After the secession, almost all northern Sudanese lecturers left their teaching positions to join universities in Sudan. This led to an acute shortage of teaching staff in South Sudan. Moreover, South Sudan adopted English as the country's official language after independence. This posed a challenge for some lecturers who had received their education in Sudan, where Arabic was the language of instruction in universities. As in many other countries, all schools were closed in 2020 due to anti-COVID-19 measures. This will further hinder the education of young individuals and the long-term development of the country.

Governance

I. Level of Difficulty

Sudan's top political echelons draw on the hierarchy of the decades-long fight against the government in Khartoum. The old rebel cadres were extremely dominant in the new country's politics, particularly in the first years after the CPA. Gradually, over the years, younger members of these political factions were given the opportunity to participate in governing the country. The structural constraints on governance and development in South Sudan are still very high in comparison to other conflict-ridden African countries.

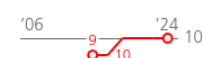
Among these structural restrictions is the absence of infrastructure, such as a reliable road network, especially due to the country's landlocked geographic position. During the rainy season, vast areas of countries become inaccessible. Some places are entirely flooded, while in other areas, a lack of bridges makes it difficult to cross some of the rivers. With a few notable exceptions (e.g., the towns of Yei and Maridi), there are no power generation or electric network facilities; the whole country relies on diesel generators. These issues of poor physical infrastructure and difficult access have worsened and will continue to worsen as South Sudan is strongly exposed to climate change and increasingly regularly occurring environmental disasters, including flooding and drought.

The service sector is also facing challenges beyond the lack of physical infrastructure. As with the education sector, various public service sectors (such as health care, sanitation and the provision of drinking water) were primarily funded by the donor community and implemented by NGOs. As a result of the civil war, certain NGOs involved in implementation have departed the country, while others have altered their funding strategies to prioritize relief efforts for individuals displaced by the conflict.

However, the country's largest structural problem is persistent insecurity throughout the nation. According to the OCHA's situational reports, the civil war caused 2.2 million people to be internally displaced, with 2.26 million becoming refugees in neighboring countries and 8.9 million now requiring external assistance (all these figures are higher than those in the BTI 2022 report). Only around 200,000 individuals have returned. Yet, insecurity was already pervasive in people's lives before December 2013, primarily due to the absence of the rule of law. This insecurity permeates all facets of life, eroding trust between communities, leading to poor crop yields, interrupted education and significantly diminishing people's confidence in the government. The seven years of civil war, coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic, have further exacerbated an already alarming situation.

Structural
constraints

10



1

Civil society traditions in South Sudan have primarily been centered on the various churches. Many faith-based structures have a long history in South Sudan and are active in all corners of the state. The church has also served as a mediator in the various conflicts in South Sudan, both during the interim period and since independence. However, during the civil war, the church has faced mounting challenges in carrying out its role.

For years, there has also been a steady increase in the number of civil society organizations operating in the country. Numerous youth, women, farmer and human rights groups have been established, often with support from international donors. The lack of a proper tradition in civic representation results in a civil society that is not always as inclusive as many donors have hoped. In many villages and towns, a rather small local elite participates in local politics, local associative life and the church.

With the end of the civil war, the need for the constructive intervention of civil society is increasingly crucial and will be even more as a means of emerging and building from the current fragile situation. Civil society organizations will be expected to play a role in promoting national healing and reconciliation among the various groups. However, civil society is also divided by the same political tensions and politicization of ethnicity as the rest of society, especially after nearly a decade of internal conflict. As tensions have grown between the government and NGOs, the government has become increasingly suspicious of civil society groups, as shown in the 2015 National Security Bill. Furthermore, the withdrawal of some NGOs or the downsizing of their activities because of the civil war has negatively impacted the performance of civil society groups dependent on the donor community.

Civil society is particularly weak in remote rural areas, which make up most of the country. Chiefs and other traditional leaders could act as pillars of civil society. However, the Local Government Act has co-opted chiefs and integrated them into the SPLM patronage system. Consequently, there is a risk that chiefs will be used by the government to achieve its own objectives rather than functioning as a check on and balance to excessive government action for the benefit of society.

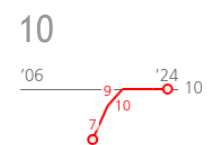
Conflict between communities has been a significant issue since the implementation of the CPA in 2005 and has remained a persistent problem. Intense conflicts persisted from 2005 to 2011, during the transitional period, and continued following independence from 2011 to 2013. The civil war subsequently exacerbated the situation, leading to several border skirmishes with Sudan. Small-scale conflicts have frequently escalated into larger conflicts, and what were originally power struggles among political elites have transformed into conflicts between communities and ethnic groups. In addition to ongoing disputes between different cattle herding groups, as well as between farmers and pastoralists, new forms of conflict have arisen, sometimes occurring between communities with no previous history of ethnic violence. The causes of these conflicts are often complex and interrelated, but land

Civil society traditions



1

Conflict intensity



1

plays a central role and is frequently the initial catalyst, particularly as environmental disasters have become more frequent over the past decade, resulting in increased displacement and mounting pressures on safe land and water resources throughout the country.

The onset of the civil war in 2013 exemplified the complex and multifaceted conflicts present in South Sudan. Initially, the conflict emerged as a power struggle among SPLM elites, particularly between President Kiir and Vice President Riek Machar. However, within a span of less than 24 hours, the violence took on an ethnic context, devolving into a war between the Dinka and Nuer communities. The deliberate targeting and killing of individuals from other ethnic groups showcased the alarming rapidity with which a political crisis can escalate. The repercussions of the ensuing civil war will endure, even if the new unity government established in 2020 proves to outlast the preceding interim governments. The violence has profoundly polarized and divided society.

The intensity of conflicts in South Sudan is also attributed to contradictions within the existing legal framework and the failure to address the root causes of these conflicts. Resolving cases through courts is a complex and costly process and is often beyond the financial capabilities of local individuals. Consequently, many people opt against pursuing their disputes through the legal system and instead resort to vigilante justice, resorting to violence.

II. Governance Performance

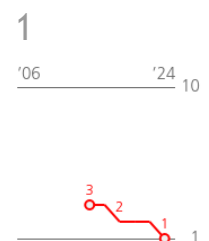
14 | Steering Capability

When the civil war broke out in 2013, it became evident that the government and its adversaries prioritized settling their differences through violence. Economic plans and priorities were suspended for approximately seven years. Both sides and the remaining institutional structures concentrated on financing the war rather than devising a strategy to enhance the economy or stabilize the situation for the civilian population.

All levels of government, including parliament, the army and the executive, became sharply divided as a result of the civil war. The succession of conflicts that have affected South Sudan are rooted in power struggles between senior SPLM members. The main cause attributed to the alleged coup of December 15, 2013, was the challenge to the president posed by Riek Machar and his group. Riek Machar's disaffected group did not challenge the president because his government had failed or developed dictatorial tendencies; rather, it waited until after its members were dismissed by the president in July 2013.

Question
Score

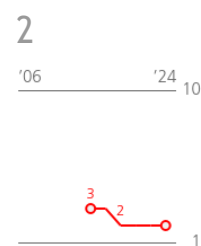
Prioritization



After two years of fighting, the signing of the August 2015 agreement brought hopes of reunifying the divided ruling party and securing peace. However, these lasted only a few months. In July 2016, three months after the agreement took effect, violence broke out again. After two additional years of war, both sides agreed to a new peace deal in September 2018, but it took another two years to form a new government of unity in February 2020. It remains uncertain whether the agreement will last this time, or if violence will instead erupt again if national elections finally take place in 2023. Apart from power struggles between political elites, South Sudan deals continuously with dozens of splinter groups that are not under the direct command of rebel and military leaders and therefore have the potential to disrupt the current peace process. Governance by President Kiir's ruling faction appears to be focused on the short term and primarily determined by immediate utility and the maintenance of political, economic and military dominance.

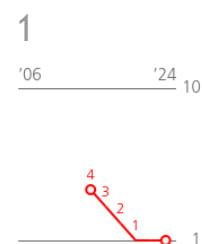
Since the start of the civil war, the government's priorities have been to contain the rebellion as much as possible. It has tried to maintain strict control over the areas under its influence and prevent others from joining the opposition. Tactics used to contain criticism include intimidating and jailing journalists and NGO and church workers. Another method of maintaining a certain status quo in areas without fighting between the government and opposition forces has been to threaten to dismiss the local elected parliament and governors. The government has also canceled elections multiple times. Consequently, the government has extended its mandate to 2023, a move seen by most opponents as illegal. Even the peace agreement signed in August 2015 was a government strategy aimed at containing the rebellion. Subsequent events demonstrated that the government was not serious about reaching a peaceful resolution to the violence. The new peace deal of September 2018 is viewed as a "copy-and-paste" version of the 2015 agreement, solidifying current power relations. Given the failure of the previous agreement and the lack of significant change in the overall situation, the likelihood of yet another collapse is relatively high. The government's strategy to contain the civil war in states affected by the war has proven unsuccessful. The scale of the war and the level of harm inflicted on various communities suggest that implementing the new agreement will not be easy. None of the priorities set by the government before December 2013 have recently received meaningful attention. However, at the subnational level, some states have attempted to continue working toward service delivery, tax harmonization and local security. Nevertheless, these efforts are likely to be hampered by the destruction of the constitutional state system resulting from the increase in the number of states from 10 to 28 in 2015 and then to 32 in 2020. It remains to be seen whether regional administrations will reach a point where they can pursue targeted policies without having to deal with acute crisis situations, power struggles and violence.

Implementation



After years of urgent crises, both the government and international agencies have largely narrowed their focus to immediate issues, and learning from past policy implementation is very limited. The international community used to play a substantial role in providing policy frameworks, implementation models, monitoring and evaluation capacities. In most national governments, external technical assistants produced the budgets, annual reports and development plans. Efforts to institutionalize frameworks for policy design, implementation and evaluation are still ongoing. During the civil war, many donors put their support for the government of South Sudan on hold, redirecting many of the funds toward humanitarian needs. It is likely that some of the initial progress in this field is in decline due to the new priorities of both the government and the international donor community.

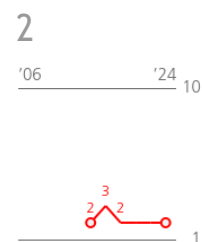
Policy learning



15 | Resource Efficiency

Due to its oil revenues, the government of South Sudan has had more financial resources available than many of its more stable neighbors for years. For example, South Sudan's small population has resulted in a much higher GDP per capita than in Uganda or Ethiopia. However, despite significant differences in data from the IMF, the World Bank and the United Nations, all indicators suggest that South Sudan is now one of the most problematic states in the world due to the seven years of civil war. The country remains severely underdeveloped, and the funds available are only moderately invested in public goods such as education (3%) or health care (1%). The majority of the official budget is allocated to the security sector (38%) and has been dedicated to financing the war for years.

Efficient use of assets

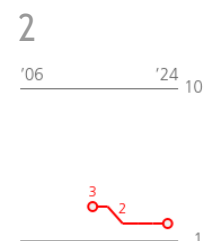


Due to the weak state structures and seven years of civil war, it is difficult to assess government efficiency. The overall administrative capacity is low, and data is often either unavailable or of dubious quality. The Open Budget Survey 2021 gives South Sudan a transparency score of 15 out of 100 (a slight increase from 7 in 2019) and ranks the country 107th out of 120 in terms of budget transparency.

Due to the long wars, many South Sudanese people have been living and studying abroad, either in the region or in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada or Australia, all of which have large South Sudanese diaspora communities. Over the past few years, many of these individuals have been returning home, bringing with them the skills and knowledge gained during their time abroad. However, due to the lack of transparency in recruitment procedures and the need to accommodate certain individuals in the government or military, returnees may encounter difficulties in effectively utilizing their abilities for the betterment of the country and its public administration.

In general terms, the quality of policy coordination is poor. This is partly due to low levels of institutional capacity and economic development, as well as persistent insecurity – particularly since the start of the current civil war. The lack of policy coordination sometimes represents a deliberate attempt by the ruling elite to undermine the authority of some institutions, particularly the subnational institutions of states, payams and other lower levels of governance. With the shift from 10 states to 32, and then back to 10 again with the peace deal in 2020, policy coordination among these new and ill-equipped structures is very difficult.

Policy
coordination



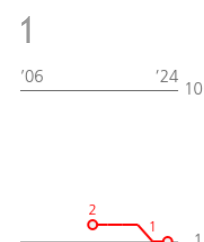
Despite the presence of numerous policies and guidelines defining the distribution of roles in various sectors, the central government is often accused of interfering in affairs that should fall under the jurisdictions of lower levels of governance, such as community land leases. The lack of policy coordination can also be seen in the security and land sectors. In addition, patronage and corruption undermine the state structure and the coherency of policy implementation.

Generally speaking, the executive tends to be the dominant branch of government. Additionally, national-level policies take precedence over state-level policies. While some states are attempting to make advancements in specific areas, they are frequently hindered by confusion over roles and responsibilities, inadequate funding and the overpowering influence of the national level. Officials at the state and county levels often express frustration regarding interference from the national government, which often comes without prior notification. A lack of coordination particularly hampers the lower levels of government in the collection of tax and revenue.

Lastly, the executive's apparent control of the judiciary and legislature also undermines policy coordination. At the national level, the president has often governed the country through presidential decree, greatly undermining the legislature's efforts. When policies are brought before the National Legislative Assembly for consideration, the president tends to dictate which ones should or should not be adopted. Echoing these practices, state governors and county commissioners have also governed through decrees, even when this contradicts established laws.

Despite pronouncements about accountability and measures against the abuse of office, a widespread and endemic lack of transparency has hampered the fight against corruption. Many senior government officials have a sense of entitlement with respect to their positions due to their contribution to the fight against the north or their position within patronage hierarchies. Corrupt practices, patrimonial politics, unclear deals and the abuse of office are all part of the prevailing political practice. The financial resources that became available during the first years after the signing of the CPA, both in terms of oil revenues and development aid, were unprecedented for the semi-autonomous government. There was no system in place to monitor the use of these funds, and billions of dollars were reported stolen from the government.

Anti-corruption
policy



The Anti-Corruption Committee, established during the interim period, has its functions laid down in the transitional constitution (Articles 143/44). The constitution gives the Anti-Corruption Commission the powers to investigate and prosecute. According to the independent Sudd Institute, however, the problem is that the “Anti-Corruption Commission Act, 2009 has not been amended to include the prosecutorial powers for the Commission.” None of the officials investigated by the Commission have been subject to prosecution. Moreover, as courts are controlled by the executive, it is challenging to implement and enforce the anti-corruption policies that do exist. NGOs have been critical, arguing that the September 2018 to 2020 peace deal once again fails to address corruption effectively.

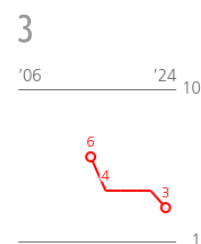
16 | Consensus-Building

At the time of independence, the people of South Sudan and many of its leaders agreed on the urgent need for public safety, democracy and inclusive development. However, many in the political and military elite seem only to pay lip service to these values, while in fact being more concerned about their resources and power bases than peace and democracy. Driven in part by the personal ambitions of some of the protagonists in the war, South Sudan is more divided today than it has ever been since its independence in 2011. Recent years have also exposed elite figures’ deep divisions as to whether to prioritize peace and democracy or instead continue fighting over power. The violence of December 2013 and the seven years of civil war were caused by these divisions. As the civil war continued, more factions emerged, with splinter groups breaking away from the SPLM. The fact that the SPLM continues to narrow the political space makes it difficult for new political actors to emerge. By contrast, rural areas are mostly under the authority of chiefs and local military units – often directly under the command of regional military and political structures. In short, there is no question of consensus-building, at least for now.

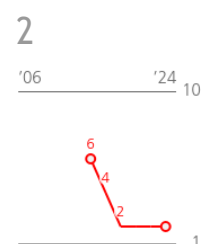
Although there is a proclaimed general consensus regarding the desirability of market economic principles, the ongoing conflict and power struggles within the ruling party are a major impediment to promoting a functioning market economy.

Democratic actors and support for democracy in South Sudan can be evaluated from two perspectives. On the one hand, despite the prevalence of factionalism and violence, and the seven years of civil war, all parties involved in the conflict claim to be protecting democratic rights. This was also the case in the conflicts that predated South Sudan’s independence. Both the government and those fighting against it have claimed to be fighting for the restoration of democratic principles and values in the country.

Consensus on goals



Anti-democratic actors

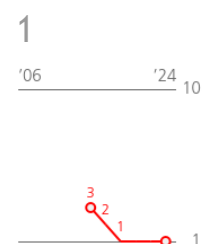


On the other hand, in practice, various actors have used violence to gain or stay in power, or to regain previously held government positions. The government has developed repressive policies – such as restrictions on the freedoms of assembly and expression and the intimidation of emerging political parties – as strategies to retain power. The rebellion led by Riek Machar and other groups was in part a reaction to the government’s repressive policies but was in fact primarily motivated by these groups’ dismissal from powerful positions. Political actors in South Sudan are aware of the international value attributed to democratic government and act accordingly. In conclusion, various groups have claimed to be working toward the consolidation of democratic rights as a means of justifying a power struggle. Generally, there are no relevant political forces that are committed to democracy.

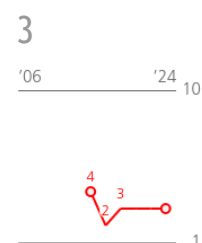
In addition to ethnic divides, there are numerous social cleavages in South Sudanese society. Conflicts in rural areas often revolve around access to resources, such as grazing land for cattle. The conflict over resources has been central to disputes in areas where a significant proportion of the population depends on cattle for their livelihoods. After the CPA period, disputes over land increasingly became the focal point of conflicts between communities, often taking on an ethnic dimension. Although labeled as “ethnic” or “land” conflicts, the root causes of these conflicts are more far-reaching. However, ethnicity or land is frequently used as a strategy by political elites to mobilize support for their specific interests, whether political or economic. Another cleavage involves competition within the public sector workforce. Those who fought for the SPLA believe they have the right to public employment opportunities, even if they lack the necessary experience or skills. Individuals educated in Sudan during the war are viewed with suspicion and are often marginalized. Citizens returning from the diaspora face similar doubts. Language, age and gender are other fractures in society that require attention.

Civil society plays an important role in South Sudan. The South Sudan Civil Society Forum (SSCSF) claims to organize over 200 civil society organizations. A few key organizations, such as the Sudd Institute and the Community Empowerment for Progress Organization (CEPO), as well as various churches, bridge the gap between the state and society. Despite efforts to contribute positively to state-building in South Sudan, the ongoing civil war has negatively influenced some civil society groups, with some organizations taking sides in the conflicts. Additionally, some civil society groups have become internally divided in their support for either the government or opposition forces. Consequently, many civil society groups have increasingly become partisan. As previously mentioned in this report, the public space allowed for free expression, policy and law deliberations, and investigative journalism has steadily decreased in recent years. Therefore, ending the unresolved political conflict and restoring the rule of law will be crucial factors in enabling civil society groups to fulfill their duties and benefit both society and the country.

Cleavage / conflict management



Public consultation



Conflict mediation and reconciliation play a crucial role within many communities in South Sudan. Despite the significant number of casualties resulting from violence since the 1991 split within the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), churches and traditional leaders have been able to reconcile the involved communities with minimal intervention. However, since the start of the interim period in 2005, political elites have increasingly politicized conflicts and exploited ethnic divisions, which has made it challenging to resolve local conflicts, especially those involving communities from different ethnic groups.

In December 2012, the parliament approved a reconciliation campaign to be led by the then vice president, Riek Machar. Although reconciliation became a prominent topic of conversation in South Sudan, many people distrusted Machar's intentions. Additionally, President Kiir perceived this as a political strategy by Machar to gain political support, leading Kiir to cancel the reconciliation process. Subsequently, in December 2016, Kiir issued a decree for the formation of a National Dialogue Steering Committee.

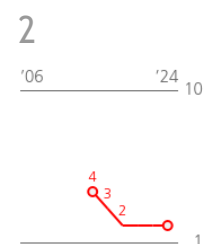
The civil war added yet another layer of grievance to the burdens that the people of South Sudan must confront. This conflict has undoubtedly made any reconciliation process potentially more divisive. Reconciliation remains central to South Sudan's development; however, it will not be a straightforward or easy process.

On December 17, 2020, the National Dialogue Steering Committee issued its final report, which concluded that a reconciliation process seems unlikely under the current leadership of Kiir and Machar.

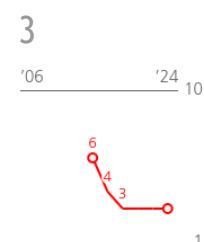
17 | International Cooperation

The international community and development partners, particularly the World Bank, the European Union, Norway, the United States and the United Kingdom, have been supportive of state-building in South Sudan since independence. The major donors have focused on infrastructural projects, economic diversification, security sector reform and police capacities. Numerous professionals from other countries have been deployed in various capacities within the government of South Sudan to provide technical assistance. However, the civil war has affected relations between the government and the donor community, as well as between international NGOs and national NGOs that receive external support. The NGO bill of 2015 was partly a reaction to growing tensions between the government and the international community, leading to the government's imposition of restrictions on the work of NGOs within the country. For example, in January 2017, the government banned relief agencies from operating in areas then controlled by rebels. In 2011, South Sudan published its first National Development Strategy (NDS), covering a three-year period, as well as its "South Sudan Vision 2040" document. During the civil war, no new NDS was prepared. After the peace deal of 2018, an NDS for the period

Reconciliation



Effective use of support



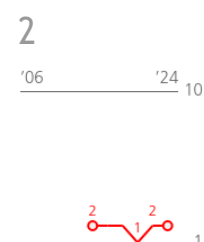
from 2018 to 2021 and a Revised National Development Strategy (R-NDS) for 2021 to 2024 were published. Bilateral relations between South Sudan and various other countries have stabilized over the last two years, but the region is facing several challenges. With the start of the civil war, donors shifted the focus of their development aid to humanitarian assistance. Donor countries have stopped providing direct and indirect support to the South Sudanese government. However, members of the international community are still seeking ways to continue assisting the South Sudanese people.

The relationship between the government of South Sudan and the international community has deteriorated over the last decade. The government initially drew high expectations in 2011, but due to the civil war, human rights violations and the widespread defiance of peace agreements, the government and various conflicting parties have lost credibility. This loss of credibility is partly because it has become increasingly apparent that South Sudan's political elites prioritize power struggles over working toward a better future for the country and its people. Over the years, neighboring countries such as Sudan and Uganda have shown clear favoritism toward the Kiir government in order to protect their own interests. However, with the changing dynamics in Sudan following the revolution, there is now a potential opportunity for improved and closer relations among the three states. While the international community has remained neutral and attempted to mediate between the conflicting parties, the Kiir government has interpreted this as support for the armed opposition and has consequently sought to diminish international organizations' influence in the country. Prior to the 2018/2020 agreement, due to the repeated failure of peace deals, some international partners were on the verge of withdrawing all support for South Sudan. Others believe that there will be no lasting peace as long as the current generation of political leaders remains in power.

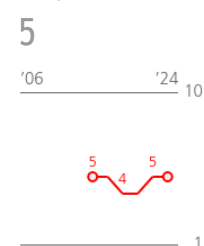
Relations with the international community and neighboring countries have been strained during the civil war. All neighboring countries have economic, political and strategic stakes in South Sudan and are, for this reason, directly or indirectly affected by the conflict. With multiple political conflicts within and among the states of the region, as well as recent political changes, it remains to be seen whether the new government of unity will be able to gain momentum and cooperate with its neighbors on the challenges ahead.

After the start of the civil war in 2013, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) initiated and oversaw a mediation process. However, the neutrality of the IGAD's efforts was compromised by the presence of the Ugandan army on South Sudanese soil. More broadly, a disconnection existed between the objectives of the regional IGAD body (which was responsible for the peace talks, as well as a monitoring and observation mission observing the earlier cease-fires) and those of the individual member states (each with their own interests). Following the new outbreak of violence in 2016, Ethiopia took the lead in IGAD's mediation efforts.

Credibility



Regional cooperation



As a result of political changes in Ethiopia, the negotiations were handed over to Sudan, which exerted significant pressure on the opposition to agree to the peace deal. Khartoum found common ground with Kiir and supported a peace deal similar to the one in 2015, which favored the Kiir side. However, this changed once again after the revolution in Sudan, although Sudan has an interest in improving relations with South Sudan. Therefore, a window of opportunity exists for enhanced relations and cooperation in the region.

South Sudan is an important trading partner, particularly for Uganda, but also for Kenya. Each of the neighbors has sought to further its own interests while pushing the regional body IGAD to find a permanent solution. At the moment, the instability in the country inhibits South Sudan's potential economic role in the region. The country became a member of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in 2011, but IGAD suspended South Sudan's membership due to the country's failure to pay its membership fee. In 2016, South Sudan joined the East African Community (EAC), but it did not send delegates to EAC meetings for several years. The first delegates to the EAC were elected in September 2022. Within the EAC, there are discussions about ways to revitalize the landlocked state through new highways and oil pipelines, but these plans have been delayed for years due to the civil war. South Sudanese delegates often missed EAC meetings and did not pay fees to this organization either. However, since the conclusion of the peace deal and further driven by the necessity to cooperate on cross-border issues during the COVID-19 pandemic, South Sudan has appeared to be more willing to cooperate regionally than before.

Strategic Outlook

Under a best-case scenario, the international community could facilitate cooperation among the conflict parties in South Sudan and contribute to an inclusive peace process. Both sides would implement the agreement and work together to establish a new constitution (as agreed upon in the treaty), while avoiding new national or local conflicts. Along with stronger financial engagement by the international community (focused especially on the reintegration or disarmament of forces and support for civil society organizing), a stronger U.N. mission with a credible, better staffed and better equipped UNMISS force could help control the disarmament process and restore security. However, all of this is highly unlikely, as Western states in particular show no sign of serious engagement in the conflict, as they are occupied with the Russian war of aggression on Ukraine and the management of several other foreign policy issues. The African Union will continue to delegate the primary responsibility for South Sudan to IGAD. In a worst-case scenario, the new peace deal will collapse, and fighting will continue.

To a large extent, the 2018 agreement is a copy of the failed 2015 accord, which is not a good sign. The power relations within and around South Sudan have changed in the past few years. The revolution in Sudan has removed Omar al-Bashir, a supporter of Kiir since 2015, from power. The current government is interested in establishing good relations with South Sudan. While the cease-fire agreement seemed to be relatively intact on the national level as of the close of the review period, there is little sign that the underlying power and violence dynamics in South Sudan are changing. UNMISS documented 3,414 incidents of subnational conflicts in 2021 – a 42% reduction compared with 2020 – but the importance of this decline should not be overrated. Intercommunal disputes and local conflicts contribute to new violent clashes. Serious human rights violations are regularly committed, especially against women.

According to the United Nations, by the end of 2022, the civil war had caused 2.2 million people to be internally displaced, 2.26 million to become refugees, and 8.9 million to be in need of humanitarian assistance. In order to stabilize the state structures and prevent a complete collapse, the state needs support from the international community. However, since the last agreements were broken, donors are skeptical and reluctant to invest political and economic capital in South Sudan. While the conflict between the primary adversaries needs to be resolved, all actors also need to address the population's basic needs and foster a reconciliation process that will prevent further social fragmentation within South Sudanese society. This will not be an easy process.