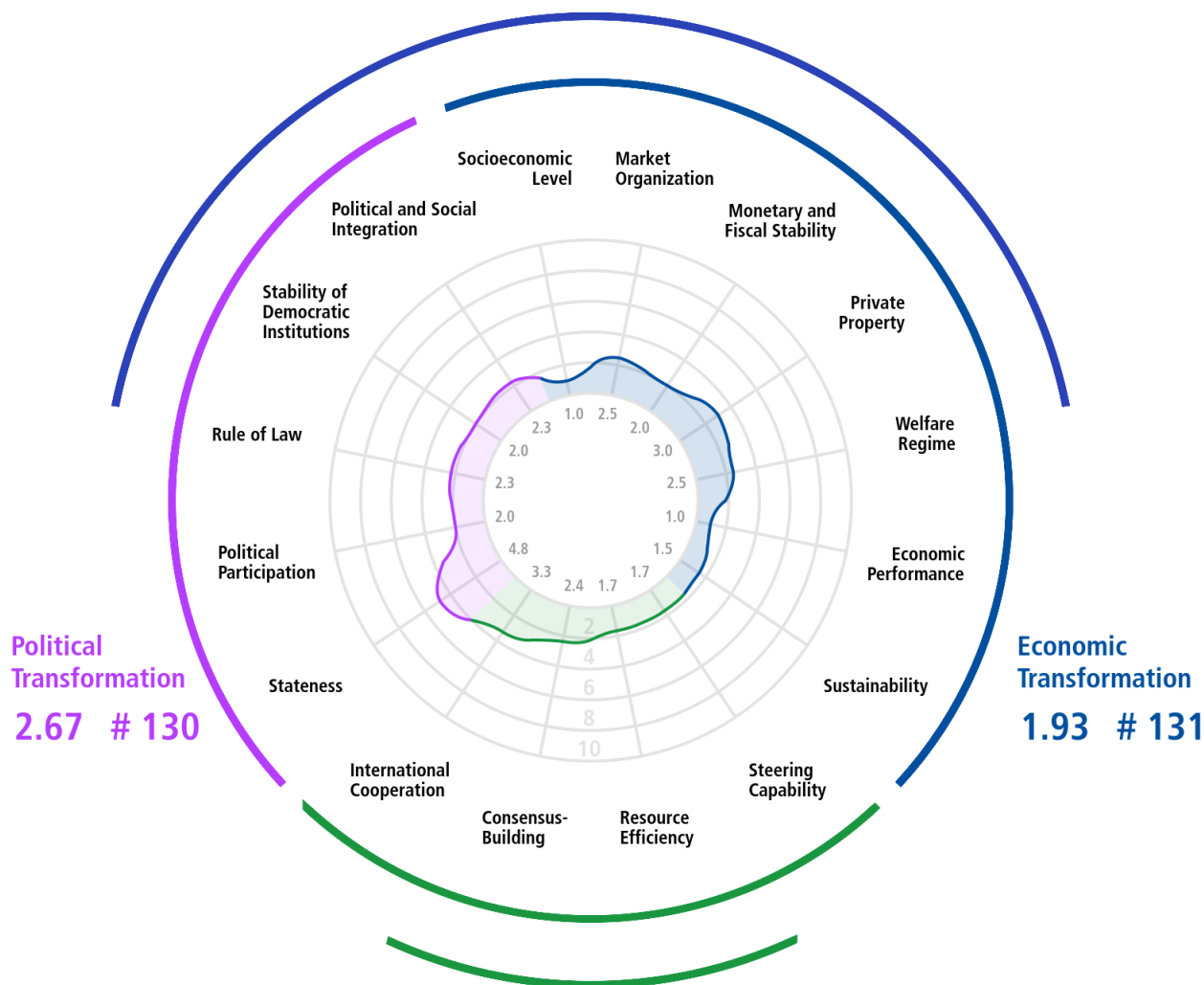


South Sudan

Status Index

2.30 # 132

on 1-10 scale out of 137



Political Transformation
2.67 # 130

Economic Transformation
1.93 # 131

Governance Index

2.15 # 131

on 1-10 scale out of 137

This report is part of the **Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) 2022**. It covers the period from February 1, 2019 to January 31, 2021. 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	11.2	HDI	0.433	GDP p.c., PPP \$	-
Pop. growth ¹	% p.a.	1.2	HDI rank of 189	185	Gini Index	44.1
Life expectancy	years	57.8	UN Education Index	0.307	Poverty ³	% 91.6
Urban population	%	20.2	Gender inequality ²	-	Aid per capita \$	170.4

Sources (as of December 2021): The World Bank, World Development Indicators 2021 | UNDP, Human Development Report 2020. Footnotes: (1) Average annual growth rate. (2) Gender Inequality Index (GII). (3) Percentage of population living on less than \$3.20 a day at 2011 international prices.

Executive Summary

South Sudan is in a fragile state between war and peace. In February 2020, after a two-year process, the conflict parties of President Salva Kiir Mayardit and former First Vice President Riek Machar finally agreed on implementing 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 seven years of civil war violence. The stalemate on the national level is relatively stable, but violence can erupt at any time. The UN reports that local violence between different armed groups and fractions is on the rise. As part of the peace agreement, South Sudan returned to an administrative structure featuring 10 subnational states, replacing the 32 that had been established by President Kiir. Governors were sworn in and some minor improvements in terms of administrative capacity seem to have taken place. Multiple benchmarks of the peace agreement have not been reached. Given the lack of stability and the COVID-19 situation, national elections scheduled for 2021 are unlikely to be held on time.

The South Sudanese conflict is rife with back-and-forth movements. The former ruler of Sudan, Omar al-Bashir, actively supported the Kiir-side of the conflict beginning in 2015. The 2019 revolution in Sudan changed this dynamic, but relations between the two countries nonetheless improved. The complex regional dynamics in Sudan, Ethiopia and the tensions in the larger region affect South Sudan's development.

The government has for years demonstrated its distrust in the international community and has eschewed political interference. Prior to the 2020 agreement, some international partners came close to discontinuing all support for South Sudan, claiming that no lasting peace could be built with the current generation of political leaders.

The UN estimates that by the end of 2020, the seven years of civil war (2013-2020) will have generated 1.62 million internally displaced persons, driven 2.19 million refugees to neighboring countries and rendered 7.5 million in need of humanitarian assistance. An estimated 383,000 people died in the conflict. In 2019 and 2020, South Sudan was hit by severe floods that affected

more than one million people. The level of socioeconomic development is extremely low and among the lowest in the world. The UN Development Program ranks South Sudan 185th of 189 states in its Human Development Index. The rule of law is not guaranteed. The blurred lines between political, economic and military power make it nearly impossible to investigate corruption and prosecute powerful actors. Prospects for peace are uncertain.

Two months after the new government was formed, the COVID-19 pandemic reached South Sudan, having a profoundly negative impact on all potential improvements associated with the end of the conflict. The UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) stated in September 2020 that while COVID-19 has clearly slowed the implementation of the peace agreement, the lack of will among the conflict's parties to commit to peace is the most crucial problem. COVID-19 is a serious threat to a society in which only an estimated 25% of the population have access to primary health care. The International Monetary Fund approved \$52.3 million to address the impact of COVID-19 and the government seems to cooperate with some international agencies.

History and Characteristics of Transformation

South Sudan's independence was an outcome of the referendum held in January 2011, in which the people of South Sudan voted overwhelmingly (98.83%) in favor of becoming an independent state. The referendum's high voter turnout and overwhelming vote in favor of independence were rooted in the bitter relations between northern and southern Sudan, which have been framed by regionalism (north versus south), race (Arabs versus Africans) and religion (Muslim versus Christian). As a result of this, state-building in South Sudan has tended to focus on addressing the causes of the broader north-south civil wars, while ignoring historic tensions within South Sudan. Violence between various factional groups within South Sudan following the 1991 split in the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) resulted in higher numbers of displacement and deaths than that generated by the outbreak of war for independence in 1983 that involved the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF). Former SPLA commander Riek Machar, who is the current leader of the rebel faction SPLM-IO, became the country's first vice president in 2016. The failure to address historic grievances within South Sudan led to intensified violence and factionalism within the SPLA following the outbreak of civil war in 2013.

Since its creation as the political wing of SPLA in 1983, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) claimed to be a transformative movement that aimed to promote democratic principles and the rule of law, and the formation of a non-discriminatory "New Sudan." However, it became evident early on in the interim period (2005-2011) that the wartime calls for democracy were merely a strategy to win the war. At the beginning of the interim period, for example, SPLM claimed to have left behind its identity as a rebel movement to have become a political party underpinned by democratic principles. However, generals from the national army (SPLA) continued to dominate SPLM's leadership. At the same time, the executive branch of the government (cabinet ministers, state governors and county commissioner) also remained dominated by the military, which itself has been led by members of the executive branch who are

appointed by the president – who himself was also SPLM party chairman. On the other hand, members of the National Legislative Assembly consisted of SPLM members appointed by the president at the start of the interim period. Because of the ethnic attacks waged against civilians as violence broke out in December 2013 and again in July 2016, many members of parliament 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, the president filled these empty seats by appointing new members of parliament from the Dinka ethnic group, a group loyal to the government. The blurred lines between the executive, legislative and military have made it increasingly difficult to distinguish their institutional roles. SPLA generals regularly use their military positions to advance SPLM's interests and intimidate the opposition in the National Legislative Assembly. As the executive is also dominated by the military, leaders within the executive have used their military positions to push for a constitution that gives the executive the power to dismiss elected officials. This has also given the executive (the president, state governors and county commissioners) the power to rule by decree and thereby bypass elected legislatures.

Shortly after independence in 2011, the government passed several controversial bills that made it difficult for new political parties to emerge. The Political Party Act, for example, introduced several conditions to be met that are exceedingly difficult for an emerging political party to achieve. 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, which is 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

The South Sudanese state's monopoly on the use of force is still contested in multiple ways and government control is unchallenged only in relatively small areas of the country.

Large parts of the country cannot be accessed by government forces or officials due to a lack of infrastructure. This is especially true in the rainy season (May - October). The logistical challenges of the rainy season meant that even before the South Sudanese civil war, which started in December 2013, the establishment monopoly on the use of force in every part of the country could be severely questioned.

As a result of the civil war, the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SPLA), which was the dominant armed actor in the country, split. The years that followed the formal end of the civil war saw continued infighting amongst former SPLA army units. In some cases, other armed groups were also involved. In South Sudan, political and military power are interlinked, and many political parties maintain links to an armed group or indeed have a formal armed wing. There has been little progress on much-needed reform of the security sector and the reintegration of fighters.

Despite a cease-fire at the national level, the state's monopoly on the use of force is contested by multiple smaller armed groups such as militias and self-defense groups connected to clans or villages. These groups tended not to have participated in the civil war at the national level.

The continuing presence of the 12,500 strong United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), there ostensibly to support the state and help to restore peace and security in South Sudan, is testament to the fact the South Sudanese state does not have a clear monopoly on the use of force.

The splintering of several opposition forces in the aftermath of the September 2018, Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS), further undermined the state's monopoly on the use of force. The UN reported that a permanent cease-fire, initiated in February 2020, continues to hold in most parts of

Question
Score

Monopoly on the
use of force

3

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1

the country, but the state is still unable to protect the civilian population. The national police, government forces, as well as other armed actors linked with the government, have perpetrated large-scale human rights violations.

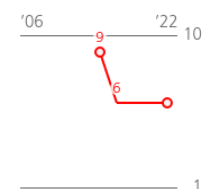
An overwhelming majority (98.3%) of the people of South Sudan voted for an independent state in 2010. Thus, the concept of a nation-state and the creation of South Sudan enjoyed high levels of support after the successful war for independence against the Sudanese regime. However, the new South Sudanese state was unable to meet the wishes and needs of its new citizenry, and as a result, the state began to lose legitimacy among large segments of the population. For decades prior to the war of independence, the common fight against the enemy in northern Sudan masked the majority of internal cleavages and tensions between different ethnic groups in South Sudan. However, since independence, the role of this unifying external enemy has diminished. Consequently, South Sudanese society is faced with the challenge of developing a new sense of national identity. There are two key political adversaries in South Sudan, of different ethnic origins, Kiir (Dinka) and Macher (Nuer). The politicization of ethnicity by the two politicians is driven by personal rivalry, but it has led to social disintegration in the fledgling country.

South Sudan requires a long-term political process to address not only the dominant conflict within the newly formed government, but also the numerous intergroup conflicts occurring at the local level. These multiple conflicts may have undermined the legitimacy of the state, but there is little information on contemporary public sentiment in the country. As of January 2021, there is no sign that key political actors have the ability or the will to address these challenges. However, there is no sign of any desire for policies or political stances that would threaten the concept of the nation-state as such.

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 percentage of South Sudanese practice traditional religions. The separation of religion and state is a legacy from the war of independence with Sudan, of which one contributory factor was the imposition of Islam and Islamic law on non-Muslims. The separation of religion and state has prevented religion from becoming a contentious political issue, at least for the moment. The churches and faith-based organizations played an important role during the war. They not only provided emergency relief, education and health services to (displaced) people, but also facilitated reconciliation processes between local communities and at the national level. Religious leaders today play important roles at the local level. It is unlikely that religion will become a divisive political issue, as it did during the north-south civil war.

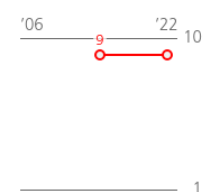
State identity

6



No interference of religious dogmas

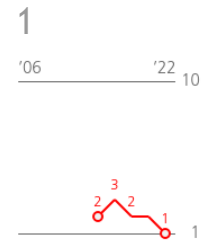
9



The constitution of South Sudan establishes an administrative structure based on a decentralized system of governance. The country inherited 10 states from Sudan following the war of independence, which were subdivided into counties, payams and bomas (bomas are the smallest administrative unit). In October 2015, President Salva Kiir increased the number of states to 28 and then to 32 in January 2017. These changes were initially proposed in standard legislation, but after provoking protests, they were introduced as presidential orders. Therefore, there are serious doubts as to the legality of these fundamental changes to the administrative structure in South Sudan. The president claimed that increasing the number of states was an act to enhance inclusion and service provision for rural communities. However, it was widely seen as a political strategy to establish and extend the state's control over these territories. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) called the creation of the new states a violation of the 2015 peace deal. Kiir agreed to reverse his decision, opening the door to compromise. On February 14, 2020, Kiir announced South Sudan would return to its original 10 states, in addition to three administrative areas of Abyei, Pibor, and Ruweng. Eight days later a new government of unity was formed. The territorial administration of South Sudan lacks resources and skilled personnel. Local administrations are rarely able to implement government decisions and provide services to the population. Similarly, the administration is unable to regularly collect taxes and dues in rural areas, forgoing income that could finance public goods. Most South Sudanese have no regular access to the state-based legal system, as courts are only present in major cities, meaning there are barriers of transportation and cost to those living outside of these areas. This explains why traditional forms of conflict resolution persist. Since December 2018, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan has offered a mobile court that seeks to address this lack of provision. However, it is clearly not a sustainable solution to act in place of South Sudanese institutions.

Due to the seven years of civil war and the poor security situation, several international aid providers have downscaled their activities or have withdrawn entirely from South Sudan, leaving gaps in the provision of services. In addition, the lack of government transparency regarding the implementation of projects funded by international donors has resulted in those donors reducing project funds granted directly to the South Sudanese government. Collectively, this has led to a near-to-complete breakdown in basic administration and service delivery across many parts of South Sudan, especially rural areas and those directly affected by the civil war. As a result, as many as 75% of the population suffer from famine and malnutrition. In 2015 (the last year of available data), the World Bank found that 59% of the population had access to an improved water source and only 5% had access to sanitation. Approximately 28% of the population had access to electricity in 2018. It is very likely that these numbers did not improve after the civil war. The official end of the civil war coincided with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, meaning the administrative infrastructure was already in a weak condition.

Basic administration

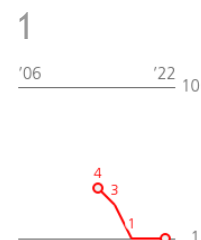


2 | Political Participation

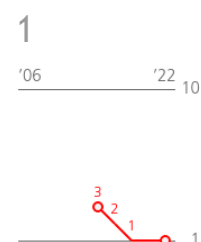
Since the formation of South Sudan as an independent state, it has never held any elections, with the government claiming legitimacy based on the election results of 2010, held before the referendum which led to the war of independence. The first national elections in South Sudan were scheduled to be held in 2015. As part of the peace deals of 2015 and 2018/2020, elections have been postponed multiple times. These developments have cemented the dominant position of President Kiir and frozen the power relations between the SPLM and Vice President Riek Machar's SPLM-IO. The South Sudan parliament voted in April 2015 to amend the transitional constitution of 2011 to extend the presidential and parliamentary term until July 9, 2018, supported by the large SPLM majority. In July 2018, elections were again postponed to August 2021. Due to the significant security challenges and the COVID-19 pandemic, elections in 2021 are already in doubt. As the SPLM is the dominant political power and relevant opposition is composed of SPLM splinter groups, which tend to be a mixture of political and armed groups, it seems unlikely that a new civilian political party unrelated to any armed actor could have a realistic chance in future elections.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) which led to South Sudan's independence established a state structured around a mixture of political and military power. This was only intensified by the civil war which began in 2013. Nearly all important political actors in South Sudan have a military background and many of them share a common history which creates strong political networks as well as rivalry. In principle, the constitution of South Sudan creates a democratic and relatively balanced system of governance. However, the country has never escaped a "transition period" under which the president enjoys vast political power and is able to flout basic principles such as the separation of powers. These powers, combined with full SPLM control of the parliament, and loyalty toward the president or Riek Machar and their forces, undermine the effective power of democratically elected political representatives. President Kiir has used his power multiple times to replace governors and even members of parliament at the national as well as state level. The biggest reshuffle of state representatives by the president occurred in line with the creation of the new states in 2015 and 2017 and again in 2020. Despite its formal dominance, the government lacks control over many parts of the country due to the ongoing conflict. Outside of Juba there are a number of regions where several factors undermine policymaking and implementation of government decisions.

Free and fair elections



Effective power to govern



The constitution of South Sudan guarantees freedom of association and assembly in Article 25. However, due to the unstable security situation in large parts of the country the exercise of such liberties is threatened by both state and non-state actors. The government introduced the National Security Bill (NSB) in 2015. In contradiction of the constitutional rights, the bill considers the association of citizens, which includes private meetings, without prior approval from national security services as illegal and punishable by the state. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other NGOs criticized these regulations as a violation of the constitution and international law. Insufficient oversight of the security forces by the judiciary and the high likelihood of abuse of power was particularly singled out for criticism. The NSB has presented a further obstacle to political parties and civil society groups critical of the government. It therefore consolidated the national security forces' well-established practices of intimidation of political opponents and critics.

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) will revise the National Security Service Act as well as other relevant laws and draft new legislation in accordance with the 2020 revitalized peace agreement. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the government implemented a lockdown in spring 2020, and later introduced a night curfew and regional travel restrictions. On December 30, 2020, the government banned all forms of public and religious gatherings until further notice.

While the 2011 Transitional Constitution of South Sudan guarantees the right to freedom of expression in Article 24, de facto both the legal framework as well as government practice inhibits the exercising of these rights. The Penal Code Act (2008), the Media Authority Act (2013), the National Security Service Act (2014) and the National Security Bill (2015) are not aligned with the constitution's protection of the freedoms of expression and a free media. As the civil war intensified, the government restricted various media outlets including newspapers. According to a Human Rights Watch review of cases, freedom of the press and media was violated predominantly by various government security forces (66% of cases), but also by civilian authorities, including governors, ministers and the media (33% of cases). Not all incidents were reported or identified, and other armed actors are also able to threaten and hinder the work of journalists. These developments foster a growing self-censorship amongst all news providers. Reporters Without Borders recorded no killings of journalists in South Sudan in 2019 and 2018, and described slight improvements on this issue since the end of the civil war in February 2020, raising South Sudan's ranking to 138 in 2020 (2019: 139; 2018: 144). Since the last report, authorities harassed, arrested, and detained at least 16 journalists between January and September 2019, according to Human Rights Watch. As freedom of press is already limited, the COVID-19 pandemic did not mark a significant change in the role and freedom of the media.

Association / assembly rights

3

'06 '22 10



1

Freedom of expression

3

'06 '22 10



1

3 | Rule of Law

The constitution of South Sudan established a presidential system with a separation of powers, which is coded in Article 48. South Sudan has de jure a fairly strong separation of powers (for example, a ban on ministers holding a parliamentary mandate). However, on the legal side, far-reaching transitional provisions of the constitution grant exceptionally strong powers to the president while the government is still “in transition” which contradicts constitutional principles. For instance, the power of a president to appoint members of parliament under the transitional constitution is a clear violation of the principle of separation of powers. In practice the previously mentioned mélange of political and military power undermines the separation of powers. Even before the start of the civil war, it was often unclear in which capacity state officials act, in their military/security forces function or in their civil function (e.g., local public servant or member of parliament). During the civil war (2013 - 2020), these dynamics accelerated. The COVID-19 pandemic has had no discernible effect on the separation of powers. Due to the combination of political and military powers in the SPLM/A, the armed forces can use their power for political purposes. In addition, military personnel cannot be judged in civilian courts. In conclusion, South Sudan does not have a functional separation of powers.

Formally, Article 122 of the 2011 transitional constitution establishes an independent judiciary. The South Sudanese judicial system is organized in a centralized manner, with a national body of appeals and no separate jurisdiction at the state level (Articles 122 - 134, in conjunction with Annex A No. 8). There is a single appeal court, without functional division into civil, criminal or administrative courts.

Despite the right to 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 and end criminal investigations. 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 are guilty of committing 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 local chiefs in the judicial system, their role as independent voices and representatives of ordinary people came under pressure.

Separation of powers

2

'06 '22 10



Independent judiciary

3

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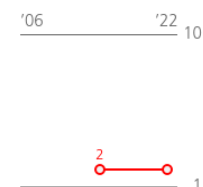
Despite South Sudan's official anti-corruption policy of zero tolerance, political and economic corruption is endemic. De jure the abuse of powers by public officeholders is countered by several safeguards, first and foremost the separation of powers, the judiciary and oversight from several independent bodies. These oversight bodies are 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). In addition to these institutions, freedom of expression for journalists and other non-governmental actors should in theory act as further checks and balances on the South Sudanese political system. However, the separation of powers is de facto negligible and genuinely independent oversight is rare. South Sudan's mixture of political, economic and military power renders the investigation of corruption and the prosecution of powerful actors near impossible. Both the constitution and the Local Government Act provide senior government officials (the executive and the legislative) and local chiefs with immunity from prosecution. This immunity also applies to the armed forces.

The constitution (Articles 9-34) provides for civil rights based on international standards. Yet, in practice, civil rights are almost nonexistent, especially since 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), was far from guaranteed in South Sudan during this period. Both the government and the opposition forces have been accused of killing civilians, sexual violence and ethnic targeting, particularly during the civil war (2013 - 2020). Approximately 3.81 million people (1.62 million internally displaced persons, 2.19 million refugees) were forced to leave their homes as a result of the violence.

Security forces control movement, gatherings, public venues and other sites where dissident voices could potentially be heard. Arbitrary arrests and the disappearance of people have increased during the period under review, usually justified by vague accusations of links with the former opposition forces. Reports suggest that the involvement of government forces in robberies, looting of civilian properties, rapes, and murder is increasing. Apart from human rights violations in the context of the war, in the absence of the rule of law various violent actors commit human rights violations. Ordinary citizens increasingly seem to fear the authorities and the security forces. There is insufficient data available to evaluate if the official end of the civil war has had a positive effect on the human rights situation in South Sudan. Even if the hybrid court system, established in collaboration with the African Union, is effective in prosecuting war crimes and genocide, it is unlikely that important office holders or members of the elite will be held accountable any time soon. This is even more true for crimes such as corruption.

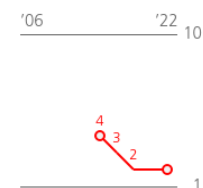
Prosecution of office abuse

2



Civil rights

2



4 | Stability of Democratic Institutions

The principles of democracy and the rule of law are enshrined in the constitution. However, some necessary democratic institutions are nonexistent, while those that do exist do not perform effectively. The constitution grants absolute powers to the executive and particularly to the president. The president has, for example, 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 civil war) and assume decision-making responsibilities that would normally have fallen under the jurisdiction of the assembly. Article 101 gives the president the right to dismiss elected governors.

Since elections are 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 to replace state governors with new appointees. On October 2, 2015, the last of the governors elected in 2010, the governor of Eastern Equatoria State, was relieved from his position by President Kiir. In 2017, the president increased the number of states in South Sudan to 32. These changes, initially introduced as presidential orders, sparked protests, and were subsequently passed as regular laws. There are serious doubts as to whether these fundamental changes were legal. President Kiir eventually agreed to reverse his decision as part of the 2018 peace deal, opening the door to political compromise. On February 14, 2020, Kiir announced South Sudan would return to 10 states, with an additional three administrative areas of Abyei, Pibor, and Ruweng. In the new system the Transitional National Legislative Assembly works with newly appointed state representatives.

The Local Government Act of 2009 recommended that chiefs should be directly elected by local communities. The act also recommended that all counties should have an elected legislative council, with members representing each payam. However, there is no evidence that any county has conducted elections for its council legislative assemblies. Some commissioners, in consultation with head chiefs, were able to appoint council members in their counties. Likewise, the election of chiefs has not materialized, with most chiefs appointed by the SPLM/A during the war or in the period after the CPA was signed. Chiefs are the local representatives of SPLM in their jurisdictions. State institutions often lack the financial resources to provide public services. In summary, democratic institutions in South Sudan fail to perform their duties effectively.

Performance of
democratic
institutions

2

'06 '22 10



Political actors in South Sudan are aware of the international value of democratic government and tend to act accordingly. All political actors claim to be democratic and claim to protect democracy and democratic institutions. However, they do act correspondingly if they are in power. Using a tactic similar to accusing political opponents of corruption, charges of authoritarianism are also leveled as part of a political game (even though the charges may have some basis). President Kiir and his allies clearly use their powers to undermine the democratic system as well as checks and balances enshrined in the constitution. Several new laws as well as government practice are purposely designed to silence political opposition (e.g., political party regulations) and government critics such as the press. In terms of the political opposition side, there is no evidence to suggest that armed opposition groups are more likely than the regime to promote democratic institutions. Riek Machar and his allies have participated in government themselves, and other relevant opposition groups are predominantly groups that have split from the ruling SPLM, meaning they tend to have a similar mindset and have little interest in alternatives to the status quo.

5 | Political and Social Integration

On paper, South Sudan has a multiparty political system. However, due to seven years of civil war and no history of democratic this is more of a façade. The former rebel movement Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) remains by far the dominant political party in the country. In order to consolidate its political monopoly, collaboration between the three branches of government, including the army (all of which are dominated by SPLM), has resulted in regulations that make it difficult for new political parties to emerge. Political, social and military power are interlinked in South Sudan, as a result of the civil war and a treacherous security situation. Political parties are intertwined with armed movements. Most new political parties are splinter groups of the SPLM, in opposition (SPLM-IO) to the SPLM leadership. As these opposition groups are a result of personal power struggles, they fail to offer alternative political programs. For instance, the most serious opposition party besides the SPLM-IO is the SPLM-Democratic Change (SPLM-DC, now Democratic Change), headed by Lam Akol, which attempted to challenge the SPLM during the 2010 election. While officially there are ten political parties in South Sudan, they cannot be considered political parties in the sense of having a support base, institutional capacities or political programs. The South Sudan Opposition Alliance (SSOA) of seven parties and armed groups headed by Thomas Cirillo Swaka are all signatories to the 2018 peace agreement. The South Sudan National Democratic Alliance (SSNDA) consists of four armed groups, of which three are splinter groups from SSOA groups. These groups are not part of the peace agreement. Other political parties without military power include the South Sudan Communist Party and the South Sudan Liberal Party. These parties do not have any meaningful influence or political relevance. Clientelism and ethnic polarization are widespread structural problems.

Commitment to democratic institutions

2

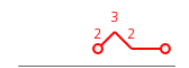
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Party system

2

'06 '22 10



As a consequence of the SPLM's dominance of the National Legislative Assembly, legislation has been passed that hampers new parties, reduces their relevance and ultimately their prospects of success. The Political Parties Act, for instance, stipulates that to register a political party, the party must have at least 500 members in each of the 10 states of South Sudan, and must prove that it has not received external funding, including from international NGOs working in South Sudan. The internationally criticized National Security Bill of 2015 defines public gatherings (including those of political parties) that have not been approved by an SPLM-controlled security body as illegal. It remains to be seen if these circumstances change with the potential implementation of the 2018 peace agreement and a normalization of political affairs.

During the CPA period from 2005 to 2011 and in the years following South Sudan's independence, a lively civil society emerged with the support of international donors. This included human rights activists, unions, business clubs, and women's and youth associations. Many of these groups are small and operate in very specific localities, but some organizations have managed to gain some national influence. Although international funding and support of civil society groups has been substantive, their political influence on the government and the SPLM remains fairly limited.

During the civil war (2013 - 2020) the space for civil society and the work of both national and international NGOs has diminished significantly. International actors reduced their funding and their international personnel in South Sudan. The National Security Bill of 2015 has affected civil society fundamentally. Activities that are perceived to be directed against the government or have received funding from international NGOs are accused of working for "regime change" in South Sudan. There has been a tendency amongst some civil society organizations to take sides in the conflict. Changes in the political positions of civil society organizations with respect to the government or opposition forces are partly a result of the infiltration of these organizations by the respective political parties.

In general, however, influential civil society groups are only active in the urban centers. The churches represent a major social force that extends into all corners of South Sudan. In particular, the Anglican and the Catholic Church have organizational structures that connect the local parishes with those at the state and national levels. For years, the church had an active role in mediating conflicts, and since the start of the civil war it has also become extremely vocal in its criticism of the warring parties. At the local level and in particular in rural areas, churches are the most important institutions in managing social life, as well as moderating and mobilizing people's interests.

Interest groups

3

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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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As a new state forged through a war of independence, South Sudan's society has had little opportunity to develop social capital throughout the country. Decades of war have left deep marks on the society, and there have been no serious efforts to reconcile the people of South Sudan with their violent past. Despite the relatively peaceful years between 2005 and 2013, nearly all citizens have been affected by different forms of conflict or violence throughout their life. In addition, the ongoing civil war between multiple armed groups and complex alliances has a great impact on people's trust in each other and the government. Besides the fighting at the national level, due to the low or nonexistent presence of the rule of law and security in many areas of the country, people tend to rely on a self-help system in which interethnic tensions, cattle raids and disputes of land can lead to violence. Intra-communal bonds and trust are relatively high but remain limited to the extended family and ethnic group. The extension of social trust to other groups and the state has been weakened by the conflict. South Sudan has an overwhelmingly young population: approximately 51% of the population is under the age of 18, and 72% is under the age of 30 years. 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. Few people have returned to where their families originate. Instead, many try to build a life in rapidly growing urban centers such as Juba and the state capitals, resulting in tensions between host communities and those who they perceive as outsiders or newcomers. There is no evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the sense of solidarity and trust and the self-organizational capacities of civil society.

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n/a

Social capital

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II. Economic Transformation

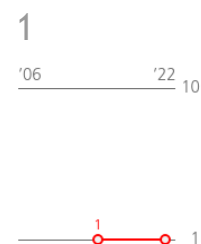
6 | Level of Socioeconomic Development

The level of socioeconomic development in South Sudan is extremely low. It is amongst the lowest in the world. There are few internationally comparable indices of socioeconomic development available for South Sudan due to the lack of statistical data. The UN Development Program ranked South Sudan 185 out of 189 states in its Human Development Index (0.433) in 2019, a minor improvement from 2017. Other poverty or inequality assessments are out-of-date, using data from the period prior to independence. Drawing on data from 2009, the World Bank estimates that 50.6% of the population live below the poverty line. According to the 2020 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) report, 7.1 million people are in need of international support. 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. The World Food Program estimates that over 40% of households spend more than 65% of their income on food. As of December 2020, about 2.3 million people from South Sudan were refugees or asylum-seekers in neighboring countries, primarily in Sudan and Uganda (according to UNHCR). In addition, 1.62 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 example, women in South Sudan have the highest maternal mortality rate in the world according to UNDP. In addition, women are the target of sexual abuse and are discriminated against in most aspects of social life.

Although little data is available, it is clear that the seven years of armed conflict were a major setback for the country's socioeconomic development. The COVID-19 pandemic hit South Sudan just as the end of the conflict may have presented opportunities for progress.

Question
Score

Socioeconomic
barriers



Economic indicators		2017	2018	2019	2020
GDP	\$ M	-	-	-	-
GDP growth	%	-	-	-	-
Inflation (CPI)	%	187.9	83.5	87.2	29.7
Unemployment	%	12.2	12.1	12.0	12.7
Foreign direct investment	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Export growth	%	-	-	-	-
Import growth	%	-	-	-	-
Current account balance	\$ M	281.7	-315.6	256.9	-
Public debt	% of GDP	60.7	46.3	31.3	35.8
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	0.7	0.7	-	-
R&D expenditure	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Military expenditure	% of GDP	2.4	3.6	3.6	-

Sources (as of December 2021): 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 operates under various constraints, such as the weak rule of law, widespread corruption and an unstable security situation. Furthermore, poor infrastructure, the lack of reliable transport routes, poor access to electricity, internet connectivity and extremely low levels of education and skills among the population present further challenges. Nevertheless, after the CPA, traders and businessmen from neighboring countries flocked to South Sudan to start retail and wholesale businesses, construction firms, hotel and restaurant businesses and telecommunication companies. People from the diaspora and educated South Sudanese have also started companies, often in close connection with people in the government or the military. It is estimated that more than 80% of South Sudanese work in the informal sector. After the CPA, traders and businesspeople from neighboring countries moved to South Sudan to start various enterprises. But the war forced a lot of business owners to leave the country, particularly in 2016. South Sudan is an emerging market and the government aims to create a conducive environment for investors (internal and external). The World Bank's Doing Business 2020 report ranked South Sudan 185 out of 190 assessed states on the ease of doing business. The relative costs associated with opening a business in 2019 are among the highest in the world according to the World Bank. The 2013 - 2020 civil war reached areas of the country that were previously relatively peaceful, disturbing and in some cases destroying numerous businesses. The fragility of the political and security situation in South Sudan undermines investor confidence.

The economic objectives of the transitional constitution are that all levels of government should encourage free markets and the prohibition of monopoly (Article 37 (2a)). The Investment Promotion Act, together with 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 and are frequently local partners of international investors. There is a tendency for large businesses to allocate specific market sectors amongst themselves, resulting in some degree of monopoly. As a consequence of the strategy to control trade, the petroleum industry is controlled by Somali traders, the hospitality sector by Ugandans and Kenyans, construction by Ugandans and Sudanese, and the water supply by Eritreans. Companies that operate in fields like telecommunications, infrastructure development and government procurement are much more dependent on connections, bribes, and corrupt practices for commercial success. The government and the military are both important contractors, and therefore good relations with people in the government and the army are indispensable.

Market
organization

2

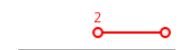
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Competition policy

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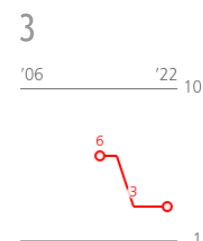
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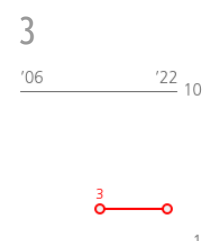
Trade is liberalized in South Sudan. The country produces little besides oil and does not have an industry that would potentially need protectionism. Landlocked South Sudan depends on its neighboring states for its supplies of food, construction materials and various consumer goods. The northern part of the country is supplied predominantly from Sudan. In previous years, the government of Sudan has frequently closed its borders with South Sudan whenever tensions between the governments intensify, resulting in a scarcity of oil and other goods in South Sudan. As the political situation in Sudan remains unstable, the relationship between Sudan and South Sudan is hard to predict. The southern part of the country is supplied from Uganda and Kenya. Food items are brought in from Uganda, while the Mombasa port in Kenya supplies South Sudan with shipped consumer goods. Land-grabbing by foreign investors is a problem. According to the Land Matrix database, prior to the civil war, investors from the United Arab Emirates, Sudan and other Arab and Western countries owned approximately 10% (2.5 million hectares) of the country's land, primarily for the purpose of extracting resources, oil mining, and agricultural production. South Sudan joined the IMF in April 2012 but is not yet a member of the WTO. The country became a member of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) in 2011 and, in April 2016, joined the East African Community (EAC). However, due to the conflict, South Sudan plays a passive role in the EAC, failing to send delegates to EAC meetings and failing to pay its membership fees. Before the civil war, the government had been attempting to strengthen its relationships with other East African countries, especially in the area of trade. There were plans to construct an oil pipeline to Lamu in Kenya to reduce South Sudan's dependency on Sudan's pipelines, which has been unpredictable and expensive. With the civil war, oil production was substantially reduced, a situation further exacerbated by the fall in world oil prices. In addition to the new oil pipeline, there are plans to build a highway from South Sudan to Mombasa in order to facilitate regional transport and trade. However, neither project has guaranteed funding to date.

The banking sector is seriously underdeveloped in South Sudan. By the end of 2020, 30 commercial banks were registered in South Sudan, but few operate throughout the country. Most banks have offices only in a few urban areas such as Juba, Yei and the capitals of the 10 states. Recent data is unavailable but it can be assumed that few people have bank accounts. According to the IMF, many domestic banks are heavily undercapitalized and face rising non-performing loans. The government and the army have announced plans to pay salaries via bank accounts, but this has not yet been implemented. It remains complicated to make an international bank transfer from or to a South Sudanese bank. As a consequence, most foreign companies, NGOs and others have accounts with one of the regionally operating banks, such as Kenya Commercial Bank. Access to loans remains a major problem, so most businesses also use international banks. In addition to the formal banking system, an informal system of money transfer operates, with small companies transferring money between towns in South Sudan. There is a significant shortage of foreign currency (primarily U.S.

Liberalization of foreign trade



Banking system



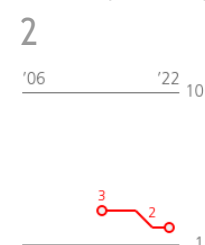
dollars), which results in a parallel black market. International withdrawals are not yet possible. As in other economic areas, banks are heavily influenced by political actors. A 2018 study found that 14 of the 26 banks are partially owned or controlled by political elites which use these banks for money-laundering and financing the arms trade. On July 17, 2019, the African Development Bank approved \$6.6 million funding to finance South Sudan's payment and settlement systems integration project. During the COVID-19 pandemic the central bank lowered interest rates from 13% to 10% and lowered the cash reserve ratio from 15% to 10% to reduce economic pressure on individuals and businesses.

8 | Monetary and fiscal stability

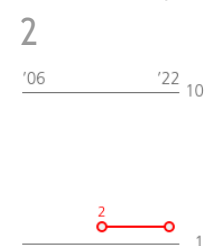
The central bank of South Sudan and a domestic currency, the South Sudanese pound (SSP), was established after independence in 2011. According to the constitution and the Bank of South Sudan Act the bank is de jure independent. Since 2016, South Sudan has made a degree of progress in its attempts to stabilize the rate of inflation, from hyperinflation in 2016 (379.8%), to 187.9% in 2017, 83.5% in 2018 and 51.9% in 2019. Inflation is still driven by South Sudan's high dependency on oil exports. The IMF estimates inflation in South Sudan for 2020 to be 27.1%. The rate of inflation in recent years encouraged currency trading on the black market. In late November 2014, the central bank issued an order banning black market currency transactions. At the 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 130 to \$1 by the end of January 2018 (and up to 150 SSP to \$1 at its highest point). The rate for the U.S. dollar on the black market remains significantly higher than the formal one. The difference between the official exchange rate and black-market exchange rate creates significant distortions in the economy. President Kiir has replaced the governor of the central bank and also the deputy governor on a regular basis (in January 2017, May 2018, January 2020, November 2020), which seriously hampered the central bank's ability to take regulative action. These interventions by the president also call into question the degree to which the central bank is de facto independent.

The collapse in oil production in 2012 exposed the vulnerability of the South Sudanese economy due to its reliance on one single source of revenue. There was a rapid drop in GDP from \$17,827 million in 2011 to \$10,369 million in 2012. This forced the government to consider austerity measures to reduce the national budget by 40%. The revival in oil production in April 2013 resulted in an increase in GDP to \$13,796 million. Since the start of the civil war, the economy went into free fall, with GDP recorded at \$2,904 million in 2016, the last available data. The seven years of civil war have significantly affected the South Sudanese economy. This is

Monetary stability



Fiscal stability



primarily because of the collapse in oil production in areas affected by the war. For comparison, South Sudan produced about 500,000 barrels per day before 2012, which has fallen to about 65,000 barrels per day in 2020. A combination of the lower oil production, the rapid decrease in world oil prices and a change in government expenditure priorities to fund the civil war resulted in the total collapse of the economy. The government's focus on war resulted in extra-budgetary spending, which, in turn, led to increased public debt. In 2019, the public debt was 65.4% of GDP (more recent data is not available). In general, economic data from South Sudan is of poor quality. Projections for 2021 remain uncertain, primarily because of a lack of reliable data and the uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to the conflict and the fall in oil production, the low worldwide oil prices are a real cause for concern and pose an additional barrier to much-needed macroeconomic stability.

9 | Private Property

Despite the fact that the transitional constitution guarantees the right to own property (Article 28), including for women (Article 16.5), there are numerous problems related to property rights and ownership in South Sudan. The problems usually revolve around issues of land. The Land Act of 2009 created a framework in which the land belongs to the people of South Sudan but is regulated by the government. Land is divided into public, community and private land. The conversion of community land into government land is 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, and the control over land for defense purposes (Section 73 (5)). The boundaries between the various types of land use and property are not entirely clear and, as the chair of the South Sudan Land Commission admitted during a meeting, the act is open to interpretation. The everyday reality is arguably more complicated than the Land Act implies. Firstly, property rights are easily and routinely ignored by people with political power or the armed forces. Conflicts may also arise when local elites engage in discussions with (foreign) companies about concessions, without prior consultations with the local community. Secondly, some cultural practices in South Sudan do not acknowledge land ownership by women, which contradicts the right of property ownership in the constitution. Due to the ongoing conflict, the lack of the rule of law, and the unstable security situation, the protection of transportable properties is not guaranteed. For example, intellectual property rights are violated on a regular basis. The unclear nature of property rights in South Sudan and the contest interpretations of the law may be a source of future problems.

Property rights

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Before the civil war, the government took steps to stabilize inflation, implementing austerity measures and creating an environment to attract investors to develop businesses in South Sudan. This was seen as necessary to increase employment, diversify the economy and develop the country. In the seven years of civil war, those efforts have been put on hold. However, a few national and international companies continue to operate in the country. These international corporations are involved in infrastructure projects, telecommunications, transportation and other areas of logistics. As the war continued, companies operating in South Sudan withdrew or downscaled their activities. A stable security environment after the end of the civil war will be essential to improving the business environment and attracting companies to invest again in South Sudan. The COVID-19 pandemic makes this even more complicated. In South Sudan the success of private investment is determined by the relations between investors and the government, and between investors and the military. This has generated problematic conflicts of interest and has resulted in a lack of clarity regarding the proper process for establishing a private business in the country. Some foreign investors who were not well connected to the government or the army have been expelled from South Sudan. To increase foreign and domestic investment in the country, there is a pressing need for a structural reform of the private sector.

Private enterprise

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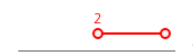
10 | Welfare Regime

South Sudan does not have a formalized welfare system. During the CPA, limited progress was made on implementing the public service bill and a civil pension fund, but the extent to which they are functioning is unclear. With more than 80% of its population living in rural areas, the majority of people in South Sudan depend on land for their livelihoods and most social safety nets reflect this dependency. The situation in urban centers is challenging. The complete lack of (or extremely limited) safety nets leaves many civilians economically vulnerable to shocks such as illness (especially during pandemics), droughts, floods and economic and political insecurity.

Social safety nets

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The social welfare structure, which is based on various traditional practices in South Sudan, plays a fundamental role in the provision of safety nets, but has its shortcomings. In most urban centers, the working class often shoulder the burden of assisting their relatives through the provision of medical assistance, and hosting children from rural areas to attend schools in towns, as these services are not available in rural areas. The South Sudanese diaspora continues to play a large role in social assistance through remittances.

In general, there is a sharp divide between social assistance in rural areas and urban centers. During the period of relative peace before 2013, rural communities seemed to be better off than urban communities. However, the civil war has altered the social

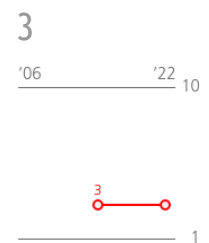
balance, as large populations in rural areas are forced to move to urban centers or flee to neighboring countries. The urbanization resulting from the war has also increased the strain on urban communities. In addition, international aid failed to reach all rural areas. How this situation will develop post civil war (and potentially post-pandemic) remains very hard to predict.

Despite the lack of organized social safety networks, some indicators suggest a positive trend in livelihoods. Between 2011 and 2018, for example, life expectancy increased from 55.3 to 57.6 years, according to the World Bank. As in other post-conflict zones, the quality of data is questionable.

Despite articles in the transitional constitution guaranteeing the right to equal opportunities regardless of gender, ethnic or religious affiliation, there is little evidence of this being happening in practice. The government has acknowledged a concerning lack of representation of women in the public and private sectors. In 2013, the government developed a six-year affirmative action plan to increase the participation of women in education and the economy. At the political level, the representation of women in the government was institutionalized by the introduction of a 25% quota, which was increased to 35% in March 2013. To help achieve this goal, various international and national NGOs are involved in supporting women's secure employment opportunities through various affirmative action programs. However, in practice, the number of women in various sectors, including the public sector, is far less than the target of 25%. Significantly fewer girls are enrolled in school than boys. According to the official education statistics of 2015, only 16% of women over the age of 15 are literate, compared with 40% of men. An Oxfam study identified early marriage as the main reason for girls not attending school.

Most commonly, the notion of “equal opportunity” has referred to the lack of transparency in South Sudanese society, with high levels of patronage and clientelism. Patronage and clientelism are often associated with whether someone participated in the north-south civil war. For example, employment opportunities are often given to people who participated in the civil war or are perceived to be sympathetic to the SPLM. Alternatively, positions are granted based on so-called “accommodation,” in order to keep people happy who might otherwise (violently) oppose the government. Although there are no hard data on the privileges of specific ethnic groups over others, the fact that this perception is widely shared amongst the South Sudanese is an impediment to governance in the country. The involvement of the Dinka and Nuer in the SPLA side of the war of independence resulted in better employment opportunities for Dinka and Nuer people, particularly in government institutions. During the civil war (2013 - 2020), a large percentage of Nuer people lost their government positions because they were dismissed or had fled. The ethnic dimension of employment has led to the widespread perception of “Dinka dominance” in government institutions and it remains to be seen if this changes after the peace deal is implemented.

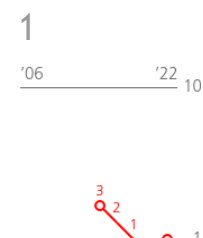
Equal opportunity



11 | Economic Performance

Due to the political and security situation in South Sudan, it is evident that the country's economy is not performing as it should be in order to generate sustainable, inclusive economic growth. However, the availability of quantitative data on South Sudan is limited and its quality questionable. Figures may be inaccurate, given the immense size of the informal sector, the lack of data on trade, and poor data collecting capacity of domestic authorities. According to the World Bank, South Sudan's GDP fell from \$17,826.9 million in 2011 to \$2,904.1 million in 2016 due to the civil war and the collapse of oil production. Approximately 98% of the government's annual budget and 80% of its GDP is derived from oil production and exports. In terms of infrastructure, the civil war conflict has not only resulted in the abandonment of development projects that were underway before the start of the civil war but has also contributed to the destruction of existing infrastructure. The forced displacement of large numbers of civilians by the war and their subsequent inability to contribute to economic production is another negative economic impact of the conflict. As of December 2020, the civil war had resulted in the displacement of approximately 1.76 million IDPs. Approximately 2.3 million people sought refuge in neighboring countries according to the UNHCR. A total of 7.1 million people are classified as being in need of assistance. In summary, more than 90% of the people of South Sudan were not officially contributing to the economy due to the civil war (which ended in 2020), and the COVID-19 pandemic has inhibited a rapid economic recovery.

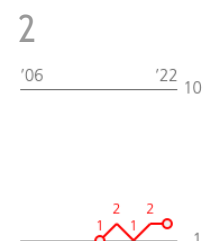
Output strength



12 | Sustainability

The legal framework of South Sudan places a strong emphasis on environmental protection, which originates from Article 41 of the constitution. From the start of the CPA in 2005, environmental affairs were coordinated by a directorate under the Ministry of Wildlife and Tourism. In 2016, a separate Ministry for Environment and Forestry was instituted as part of the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ACRISS). In the same 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) of September 2018 endorses the ACRISS agreements and sets a six month deadline for the creation of a new Environmental Management Authority (EMA). Since the forming of the new government of unity in February 2020, the EMA has not yet been established (as of January 2021).

Environmental policy



Due to the recent civil war and the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, environmental protection has ranked very low on the national agenda. Environment programs have little funding, and there has been a failure to implement new regulations that aim to protect the environment. The future and function of the new EMA remains unclear.

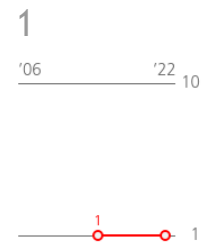
Making progress in improving the quality of education is crucial not only for economic development but also for peace and security in South Sudan. A large percentage of young people are unemployed, with few job prospects. This has led to a massive increase in the recruitment of young people into the armed forces of the various conflict parties, as well as a rise in criminal activities. In general, South Sudan lacks institutions to educate and train the professional workforce it needs to function as a state. As in other areas, however, the lack of data makes it difficult to form a clear picture of the state of education in South Sudan. According to the World Bank, South Sudan was spending approximately 1.8% of its GDP on education in 2016 (the most recent data available), which is very low. Consequently, South Sudan performed low on the UN Education index (0.307) in 2019. There is no data available on research and development expenditure.

Adult literacy is estimated at 24.5% (2018), falling to 16% for women. However, the World Bank estimates the gross enrollment rate at 85.7% for primary education. Due to COVID-19 pandemic safety measures, all schools have been closed since March 2020, reopening in October 2020 for graduating cohorts only. Many people depend on international NGOs and churches for the provision of basic public goods, in particular, 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 without the threat of armed violence.

In general, South Sudan is yet to make progress in building educational institutions. Efforts by various international NGOs have contributed to the development of primary and secondary education, which has resulted in a general increase in enrollment in education. Yet, the quality of teaching and school infrastructure remains very low. Existing figures suggest that approximately 40% of primary school teachers attained only a primary or secondary level education. Moreover, most schools are concentrated in urban centers. In rural areas, there is a shortage of schools, which has led to overcrowding and a lack of teachers. Because of the poor quality of primary and secondary education, wealthier families send their children to east African countries, such as Kenya and Uganda, to be educated.

Because of the support 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 before 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. Since independence, South Sudan has opened three more universities: Rumbek University, (Yambio University (private) and the University of Northern Bahr el Ghazal. President Kiir serves as chancellor of all public universities, which is yet another way of demonstrating his influence in all aspects of life in South Sudan. In addition to the

Education policy /
R&D



state universities, there are several private universities in South Sudan, including the Catholic university of St. Mary University and the Bridge University. The effect of the civil war on universities is difficult to evaluate, however at least some of them were still operating during the conflict and were able to award degrees in 2019 and 2020.

Like the primary and secondary education sector, universities in South Sudan face numerous challenges, including lack of funding and shortages of qualified staff. In principle, all government universities are funded by the government. However, the government's financial cuts as well as the ongoing conflict within the country have resulted in a financial shortfall in the education system. Furthermore, prior to independence, most lecturers in government universities were from northern Sudan. After secession, almost all northern Sudanese lecturers abandoned their teaching positions to join universities in Sudan. This resulted in an acute shortage of teaching staff in South Sudan. South Sudan adopted English as the official language of the country after independence. This presented another challenge to some lecturers who had received their education in Sudan where Arabic was the language of instruction in universities. As in many other countries, due to anti-Covid-19 measures, all schools have been closed since March 2020, with only graduating classes opening in October 2020. This will pose an additional setback for the education of young people and the long-term development of the country.

Governance

I. Level of Difficulty

The leadership of South Sudan is based on the hierarchy formed during the decades-long fight against the government in Khartoum. These old cadres dominated leadership positions, especially in the initial years following the CPA. Since then, younger and better-educated people have been slowly allowed to take part in governing the country. However, the structural constraints on governance and development remain extremely high compared to other conflict-ridden African countries.

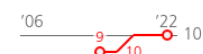
Among these structural restrictions is the absence of infrastructure, such as a reliable road network. During the rainy season, vast areas of the country become inaccessible. Some places are entirely flooded, while in other areas bridges are swept away, meaning it is impossible to cross rivers. With some notable exceptions (e.g., the towns of Yei and Maridi) there are no power and electricity facilities; the entire country uses energy from diesel generators.

In addition to the lack of physical infrastructure, the service sector is also struggling. Like the education sector, other public service sectors (e.g., health care, sanitation and the provision of drinking water) to local people were mainly financed by the donor community and delivered by NGOs. Because of the civil war, some of these NGOs have left the country, while others have shifted their funding strategies to focus on relief for people displaced by the civil war.

However, the largest structural problem of the country is its persistent insecurity. According to the OCHA's situational reports, the civil war caused 1.62 million people to be internally displaced, resulted in 2.19 million refugees fleeing to neighboring countries and 7.5 million being classified as in need of external assistance. Only about 200,000 have returned to their former homes. However, insecurity was a significant factor in people's lives even before the outbreak of civil war in December 2013, due to the lack of the rule of law. The pervasive insecurity creeps into all other aspects of life; it undermines trust between communities, leads to poor harvests, interrupts education and seriously impedes people's faith in the government. The seven years of civil war and the COVID-19 pandemic have only exacerbated a situation that was already worrisome. As the testing for and reporting of COVID-19 is minimal, no representative data is available. However, as the population of South Sudan is very young and the other threats outlined above to the population are so severe, COVID-19 seems, in comparison, to be an additional - rather than dominant - governance challenge.

Structural
constraints

10



1

The traditions of civil society in South Sudan have been mostly confined to the various churches. Many faith-based structures have a long history in South Sudan and are active in all aspects of life. The church has also played a role in mediating the various conflicts in South Sudan during the interim period and since independence. The church continued to play a role during the civil war, though with increasing difficulty.

Since independence there has 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 is hoped by the donors. In many villages and towns, a rather small local elite participates in local politics, in local associative life, and in the church.

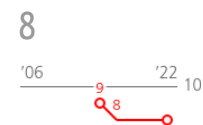
With the end of the civil war, the need for a civil society to play a constructive role is increasingly important and will be even more so during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Civil society organizations will be expected to play a role in promoting national healing and reconciliation among the various groups. As tensions have grown between the government and NGOs, the government has become increasingly suspicious of civil society groups, as demonstrated by the 2015 National Security Bill. The withdrawal of some NGOs or the downscaling of their activities because of the civil war has had repercussions for the performance of civil society groups dependent on the donor community.

Civil society is especially weak in remote, rural areas, which defines 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 the risk that chiefs are used by the government to achieve its own objectives, rather than acting to the benefit of society as a check and balance to excessive government action.

Conflict between communities in South Sudan has been a major issue from the beginning of the CPA's implementation in 2005 and has increased in intensity ever since. As South Sudan gained independence, the level of conflict intensified. Small-scale conflicts escalated into wider conflicts, and conflicts that were rooted in power struggles between members of the political elites quickly evolved into conflicts between communities and ethnic groups. In addition to the persistent conflicts between various cattle herding groups, between farmers and pastoralists, new forms of conflict have emerged, sometimes between communities with no history of ethnic violence. The causes of these conflicts are often multifaceted and intertwined, but land plays a central role and is often the initial trigger for conflict.

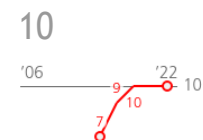
The start of the civil war in 2013 was a clear manifestation of the dynamic and multifaceted conflicts in South Sudan. The conflict began as a power struggle between SPLM elites, especially between President Kiir and Vice President Riek

Civil society traditions



1

Conflict intensity



1

Machar. Yet, in less than 24 hours, the violence had assumed an ethnic dimension, and became a war between Dinka and Nuer groups. The targeting and killing of people from other ethnic groups demonstrated how quickly a political crisis can spiral out of control. The civil war that ensued will leave deep traces, even if the new government of unity of 2020 succeeds in lasting longer than its predecessor. The violence has severely polarized and divided South Sudanese society.

The intensity of conflicts in South Sudan is also caused by contradictions in the legal framework of the country and the failure to resolve the root causes of lasting conflict. The resolution of disputes through the courts is extremely complicated and expensive, and therefore beyond the means of many people. As a result, many people do not pursue their disputes through the legal system, but instead take the law into their hands and resort to violence.

II. Governance Performance

14 | Steering Capability

When the civil war broke out in 2013, it became abundantly clear that the government and its adversaries were prioritizing the settling of their differences by violent means. Economic plans and priorities were put on hold for almost seven years. Both sides and the remaining institutional structures were focused more on financing the war than formulating a strategy for boosting the economy or improving 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 factor used to explain the alleged coup of December 15, 2013, was the leadership challenge posed by Riek Machar and his group to the president. Riek Machar's disaffected group did not initially challenge the president because his government had failed or had developed dictatorial tendencies until after they were dismissed by the president in July 2013.

After two years of fighting, hopes that the signing of the agreement in August 2015 would reunify the divided ruling party and secure peace lasted just 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. Apart from power struggles between political elites, South Sudan also faces the threat of dozens of splinter groups that are not under the direct command of rebel and military leaders and thereby have the potential to undermine the current peace process.

Question
Score

Prioritization

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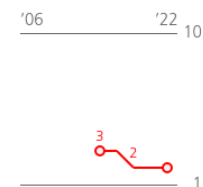


During the civil war, the government's priorities were to contain the rebellion as much as possible. It tried to maintain strict control over the areas under its influence and prevent other areas from joining the opposition. The government used the intimidation and jailing of journalists, NGO and church workers as tactics to contain criticism. The elected parliament and governors were threatened with dismissal, another method used by the government to try to maintain the certain status quo in areas that had not yet been touched by fighting. The government canceled elections multiple times during this period. Consequently, the government's mandate was extended to 2021 in a manner most opponents viewed as illegal. Elections in 2021 seem to be highly unlikely. Even the peace agreement signed in August 2015 could be considered a government strategy to contain the rebellion. Later events demonstrated that the government was not serious in finding a peaceful resolution to the violence. The new peace deal of September 2018 is seen as a "copy-and-paste" version of the 2015 agreement, cementing existing power relations. As the last agreement failed and the general situation has not changed significantly, the likelihood of another lapse into open conflict is relatively high. The government's strategy to contain the civil war in war-affected states has failed. The scale of the war and the level of harm inflicted on various communities suggests that it will not be easy to implement the new agreement. None of the priorities that were set by the government prior to December 2013 have received meaningful attention. At the subnational level, however, some states have tried to continue working toward service delivery, tax harmonization and local security. However, the substantial alterations to the constitutional state system which saw the number of states increase from 10 to 32 between 2015 and 2020, may well compromise these efforts.

South Sudan is a new country and therefore the time to learn from past policy implementation is extremely limited. The role of the international community in providing policy frameworks, implementation models, monitoring and evaluation capacities, has been substantial. The majority of national governments relied on external technical assistants to produce budgets, annual reports and development plans. Institutionalizing frameworks for policy design, implementation, and evaluation is ongoing. During the civil war, many donors put their support to the government of South Sudan on hold. Many of the funds were redirected 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.

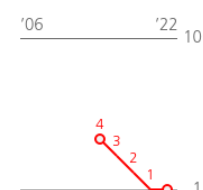
Implementation

2



Policy learning

1



15 | Resource Efficiency

Prior to the civil war, oil revenues meant that the government of South Sudan had more financial resources than many of its more politically stable neighbors. Due to its small population, this meant it has a considerably higher GDP per capita than the neighboring countries of Uganda and Ethiopia. However, data from IMF, World Bank and the UN - although differing significantly - all indicate that due to the seven years of civil war South Sudan's situation has deteriorated dramatically. The country remains severely underdeveloped, and the available funds are only modestly invested in public goods such as education (3%) and health (1%). The bulk of the official budget had been allocated to the security sector (38%) and financing the civil war.

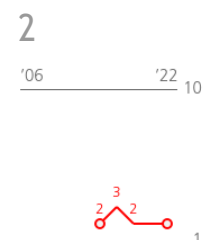
Due to weak state structures and seven years of civil war, government efficiency is hard to evaluate. Overall administrative capacity is low and data on performance is frequently not available or of doubtful quality. The Open Budget Survey 2019 gave South Sudan a transparency score of 7 out of 100 and placed the country 106 out of 117 countries in terms of budget transparency.

Due to the protracted wars of independence and the subsequent civil war, many South Sudanese have been living and studying abroad, either in the region or in countries like the United States, the UK, Canada or Australia, which all have large South Sudanese diaspora communities. Many of these people have been returning home over the past few years, bringing with them the capabilities and knowledge they acquired during their time abroad. Due to the lack of transparency in recruitment procedures and the need to accommodate certain individuals in the government or military, returnees may experience difficulties in effectively using their newfound capabilities to the benefit of the public administration and the country.

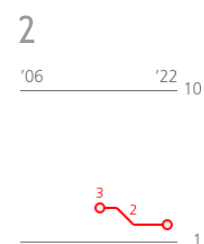
Policy coordination is generally poor. This is partly attributable to the lack of institutional capacity, economic development and persistent insecurity, particularly since the start of the civil war in 2013. The lack of policy coordination is sometimes a deliberate attempt by the ruling elite to undermine the authority of some institutions, particularly the subnational institutions of states, payams and lower levels of government. The administrative changes that saw the number of states in South Sudan increase from 10 to 32, and then revert to 10 under the 2020 peace deal, has been particularly difficult for policy coordination between these new and ill-equipped structures.

Despite numerous policies and guidelines defining the distribution of roles in various sectors, the central government is often accused of interfering in affairs that fall under the jurisdictions of lower levels of governance, such as community land leases. The lack of policy coordination is also visible in the security and land sector. Patronage and corruption further undermine the state structure and coherent policy implementation.

Efficient use of assets



Policy coordination



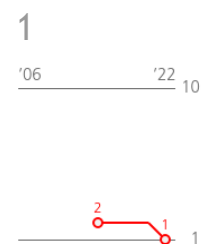
Generally speaking, the executive tends to dominate other pillars of the government, and politics at the national level tends to dominate those at state level. Some states are trying to make progress in certain domains, but are often hindered by a lack of clarity over roles and responsibilities, lack of funds, and being overruled at the national level. Officials at state and county levels often complain about interference from the national government without prior notification. Tax and revenue collection is, for instance, one of the fields where a lack of coordination impedes the work of lower levels of government.

The executive's apparent control of the judiciary and legislative means this is another area that experiences a lack of policy coordination. At the national level, the president has tended to rule the country by presidential decree, which significantly undermines the work of the legislature. When policies are presented to the National Legislative Assembly for deliberation, the president tends to dictate what should and should not be adopted. Mirroring practices at the national level, state governors and county commissioners have also tended to rule by decree, despite this being in contradiction to all existing laws.

Despite the government rhetoric on accountability and measures against the abuse of office, a widespread lack of transparency hampers the fight against corruption. Many people in the government have a sense of entitlement toward their positions because of their contribution to the fight against the north during the war of independence. Corrupt practices, patronage, murky deals and the abuse of office are seen as simply a part of politics in South Sudan. The financial resources that became available during the years immediately following 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 available to monitor the use of the funds, and billions of dollars were reportedly stolen or embezzled from the government of Southern Sudan.

The Anti-Corruption Committee, established during the interim period, has its functions set out in the transitional constitution (Articles 143/44). The constitution gives the Anti-Corruption Commission the powers to investigate and prosecute cases of corruption. However, according to the independent Sudd Institute, the "Anti-Corruption Commission Act, 2009 has not been amended to include the prosecutorial powers for the Commission." No official investigated by the commission has ever been subject to prosecution. Moreover, courts are controlled by the executive. Therefore, while anti-corruption policies exist, they are simply not implemented or enforced. NGOs have criticized that the September 2018/2020 peace deal fails to address corruption in any significant way.

Anti-corruption
policy



16 | Consensus-Building

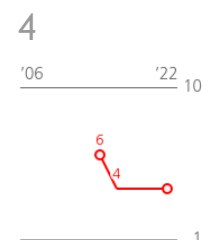
At the time of independence, the people of South Sudan and the majority of its leaders agreed on the urgent need to pursue safety, democracy and inclusive development. However, many people in the political and military elite seem to only pay lip service to these values and appear to be more concerned with their resources and power base than peace and democracy. Perhaps as a result of 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 shown how deeply divided the leadership is about whether or not to prioritize peace and democracy or, instead, to continue fighting over power. The violence of December 2013 and the seven years of civil war that ensued were sparked by these divisions. As the civil war continued, more factions emerged, with splinter groups breaking away from SPLM. The fact that SPLM continues to dominate the political space makes it difficult for new political actors to emerge. Rural areas, on the other hand, are under the authority of chiefs, who are often SPLM members and representatives. Politically, the role of a chief is to convey and oversee the implementation of SPLM's policies. In summary, there are no short-term prospects of consensus-building between disparate groups.

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

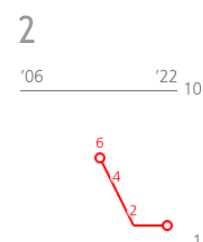
Despite the factionalism, violence and seven years of civil war, all parties involved in the conflict claim to protect democratic rights. This was also the case in the conflicts that predated South Sudan's independence. Even those fighting against the government claim to be fighting for the restoration of democratic principles and values in the country.

However, in practice various actors have used violence to remain in power, to gain it or regain lost government positions. The repressive policies developed by the government (e.g., the restriction of freedom of assembly and expression, and the intimidation of emerging political parties) are primarily strategies to retain power. The rebellion of Riek Machar and the other groups was in part a reaction to the repressive policies of the government but was primarily motivated by their dismissal from powerful positions. Political actors in South Sudan are aware of the international value of ostensibly espousing 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.

Consensus on goals



Anti-democratic actors

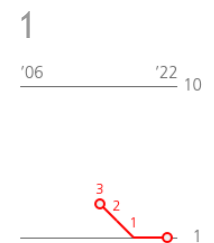


In addition to ethnic divides, there are numerous social cleavages in South Sudanese society. Conflicts in rural areas are often related to access to resources, such as grazing land for cattle. The conflict over resources has been central to disputes in areas where a large proportion of the population depend on cattle for their livelihoods. After the CPA, disputes over land have become central to conflicts between communities, which have often assumed an ethnic dimension. Though labeled as “ethnic” or “land” conflicts, the root causes of these conflicts are broader. However, ethnicity or land are often used as a strategy by political elites to mobilize support for their specific interest, whether political or economic. An additional cleavage is the competition within the public sector workforce. Those who fought for the SPLA feel that they have the right to public employment opportunities, despite their lack of experience or skills. Those educated in Sudan during the war are regarded with suspicion and are often marginalized. Citizens who returned from the diaspora face similar hostility and suspicion. Primary language, age, and gender are other sources of fractures in South Sudanese society.

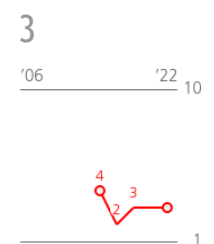
Civil society plays an important role in South Sudan. The South Sudan Civil Society Forum (SSCSF) claims to represent more than 200 civil society organizations. Key organizations such as the Sudd Institute and the Community Empowerment for Progress Organization (CEPO), as well as various churches, play instrumental roles in bridging the gap between the state and society. Despite continued efforts to contribute positively to state-building in South Sudan, the continuation of the civil war has negatively affected some civil society groups, primarily by leading some organizations to take sides during the conflicts. Some civil society groups have also been internally divided in their support for the government or opposition forces. The end result is that many civil society groups have become increasingly politically partisan. The public space for the freedom of expression, deliberations over policies and laws, and investigative journalism has been steadily eroded in recent years. Thus, ending the still unsolved political conflict and restoring the rule of law across the entirety of South Sudan is key to ensuring that civil society groups can perform their duties, and benefit society and the country.

Conflict mediation and reconciliation are central to many communities in South Sudan. Despite the high number of casualties of violence since the 1991 split within SPLM, churches and traditional leaders have been able to reconcile communities involved in the conflicts with minimum assistance. However, from the beginning of the interim period in 2005, political elites have increasingly politicized conflicts and exploited ethnic cleavages, making it difficult to resolve local conflicts, particularly those involving communities from different ethnic groups. In December 2012, the parliament approved a reconciliation campaign to be led by the then vice president. Although the importance of reconciliation became an important topic of conversation in South Sudan, many distrusted the vice president’s intentions. President Kiir interpreted the creation of this campaign as a political strategy by Vice President Riek Machar to win political support. This led President Kiir to cancel the reconciliation

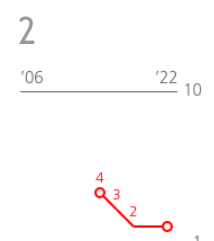
Cleavage / conflict management



Civil society participation



Reconciliation



campaign. In December 2016, Kiir issued a decree for the formation of a National Dialogue Steering Committee. The civil war has added yet another layer of grievance and divisiveness that must be overcome by any efforts to promote reconciliation. The real need for reconciliation remains central to South Sudan's development, but it will not be an easy process. On December 17, 2020, the National Dialogue Steering Committee issued its final report, concluding that with the current leadership of Kiir and Machar, a reconciliation process appeared unlikely.

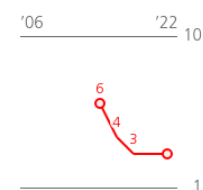
17 | International Cooperation

The international community and development partners have been supportive of state-building in South Sudan since independence, particularly the World Bank, the EU, Norway, the United States and the United Kingdom. The major donors have focused on infrastructure projects, the diversification of the economy, security sector reform and policing capacities. To provide technical assistance, numerous professionals from other countries have been deployed in various capacities within the government of South Sudan. The civil war has however affected relations between the government, the donor community, and international and national NGOs that receive external support. Partly in reaction to the growing tensions between the government and the international community, the government passed a bill in 2015 that introduced restrictions on the work of NGOs within the country. In January 2017, for example, the government banned relief agencies from operating in the rebel-controlled areas. In 2011, South Sudan published its first National Development Strategy (NDS) covering a three year period, as well as South Sudan Vision 2040. During the civil war, no new NDS was prepared. In September 2018, a new NDS for July 2018 – June 2021 was published. Bilateral relations between South Sudan and some neighboring countries have stabilized in the last two years, but the region still faces several challenges. With the outbreak of the civil war, donors shifted the focus of their development aid to humanitarian assistance. Donor countries have now halted their direct and indirect support of the South Sudanese government. Members of the international community, nevertheless, are seeking ways to continue assisting the South Sudanese people. The new government of unity has appeared to cooperate with international agencies on emergency measures prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The relationship between the government of South Sudan and the international community has deteriorated since initially high expectations in 2011. This has been the result of the civil war, human rights violations and the flouting of peace agreements. As a result, the government and various other parties to the conflicts have increasingly lost credibility. One reason is that it became increasingly apparent that the focus of South Sudan's political elites was their power struggle rather than working toward a better future for the country and its population. Neighboring countries such as Sudan and Uganda clearly favored the Kiir government as a vehicle

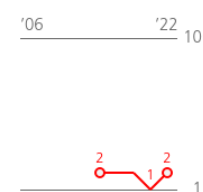
Effective use of support

3



Credibility

2



to protect their own interests. As the dynamics have changed in Sudan after the revolution in that country, there is – in principle – a window of opportunity for better and closer relations between the three states. During the civil war the international community remained neutral and encouraged mediation between the conflict parties. The Kiir government interpreted this as support for the armed opposition and accordingly tried to reduce the international community's influence in the country. Prior to the 2018/2020 peace agreement, some international partners came close to canceling all support for South Sudan after numerous broken peace deals. Others have judged that there will be no lasting peace while the current generation of political leaders remain in place. Whether the new government of unity will come together and develop more constructive relationships with its neighbors and the international community remains to be seen.

According to chapter five of the Revitalized Peace Agreement of 2018 (which came into force in 2020), the new Transitional Government of National Unity of South Sudan is obliged to create the Hybrid Court for South Sudan (HCSS) as an institution of transitional justice to investigate and prosecute war crimes during the civil war. The HCSS is to be created in close cooperation with the African Union (AU) and will apply both international as well as South Sudanese law. This court could, due to international involvement, potentially retain its independence and therefore be in the position to be able to prosecute military commanders. However, it remains unlikely that the primary adversaries of the civil war will be held accountable. In fact, South Sudanese authorities have blocked the establishment of the HCSS for some time. After international pressure, the necessary Memorandum of Understanding between the AU and South Sudan was signed on January 30, 2021. Relations with the international community and neighboring countries were 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 any conflict in the country. With multiple political conflicts occurring within and between the countries of the region, combined with political change in the last few years, it remains open to debate whether the new government of unity can gain momentum and cooperate with its neighbors on future challenges.

At the start of the civil war in 2013, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) initiated a mediation process. However, the neutrality of IGAD's efforts was compromised by the presence of the Ugandan army on South Sudanese soil. There was also a disconnection between the objectives of the regional body IGAD (responsible for the peace talks and a monitoring and observation mission to observe the earlier signed cease-fires) and those of the individual member states (with their own interests). After the outbreak of violence in 2016, Ethiopia was the first to lead IGAD's mediator efforts. Due to the political change in Ethiopia, the negotiations were subsequently led by Sudan, which put heavy pressure on the opposition to agree to a peace deal. Khartoum found common ground with Kiir and supported a peace deal similar to 2015 which favored the Kiir-side. This delicate situation changed once

Regional
cooperation

5

'06 _____ '22 10



1

again after the revolution in Sudan (although Sudan still retains an interest in better relations with South Sudan). Therefore, a window of opportunity exists for better and closer relations and cooperation in the region.

South Sudan is an important trading partner, especially for Uganda, but also for Kenya. Each neighbor pursues their own interests while pushing the regional body IGAD for a permanent solution. For the moment, instability in the country inhibits South Sudan's potential economic role in the region. The country became a member of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) in 2011 and in April 2016 became a member of the East African Community (EAC). Within EAC, there are discussions about options to unlock the landlocked state via new highways and oil pipelines, but these have been delayed for years by the civil war. South Sudanese delegates frequently fail to attend EAC meetings and the country has failed to pay its membership fees to these organizations. Since the peace deal was signed and forced by necessity to cooperate on cross-border issues during the COVID-19 pandemic, South Sudan seems to be more willing to cooperate with regional partners than before.

Strategic Outlook

South Sudan is facing enormous political, social and economic challenges. The official end of the civil war was marked by the formation of a new Government of Unity in February 2020, but violence can erupt again at any time. The substantial problems of the country can only be addressed by the warring parties demonstrating a will to work together for the good of the population. As in many parts of the world, the COVID-19 pandemic poses an additional burden, both directly and indirectly (e.g., impact on demand for and price of oil). 383,000 people died in South Sudan's civil war. The 2015 peace agreement did not last long and the peace agreement of 2018 (R-ARCSS) required two years of negotiation before a fragile stalemate could be reached. Against this background, observers remain skeptical regarding the short-term future of South Sudan.

In a best-case scenario, the international community could facilitate cooperation among the conflict parties and support an inclusive peace process. Both sides would implement the agreement and work together in order to establish a new constitution (as agreed in the treaty), as well as refraining from new acts of violence. Apart from a stronger financial engagement by the international community (especially for the reintegration or disarmament of forces), a stronger UN mission with credible, better staffed and better equipped UNMISS force could help to manage a disarmament process and restore security. However, this is highly unlikely as Western states in particular show no sign of serious engagement in the conflict, appearing to be occupied by the COVID-19 pandemic 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 as quickly as the previous one.

The 2018 agreement is to a large extent a copy of the failed 2015 accord, which does not bode well for its longevity. The power-relations in and around South Sudan have altered in the past few years. The revolution in Sudan has removed Kiir's supporter since 2015, Omar al-Bashir, from power. The current government of Sudan appears interested in good relations with South Sudan. While the cease-fire agreement on the national level remains relatively intact, UNMISS documented 575 incidents of subnational conflicts in the first half of 2020, which is an increase of 300% compared to the first half of 2019. Intercommunal disputes could foster new violent clashes at a larger scale.

According to the UN, by the end of 2020, the civil war had caused 1.62 million people to be internally displaced, 2.19 million to be refugees and 7.5 million to be in need of humanitarian assistance. In order to stabilize the state structures and prevent a collapse, the South Sudanese government needs support from the international community. However, a litany of broken peace agreements and failed promises means donors are skeptical and reluctant to invest political and economic capital in South Sudan. Besides resolving the conflict between the primary adversaries in South Sudan, all actors need to address the basic needs of the population and foster a reconciliation process to stop a further social fragmentation of South Sudanese society. This will not be an easy process.