South Sudan

Conflict Risk Assessment Report 2018

NPSIA

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Executive Summary		
This diagnostic report examines trends in structural factors in South Sudan since 2m013 based on risk assessment indicators, global trends, and key stakeholder interactions. Based on this assessment the conflict in South Sudan is likely to deteriorate due to high food insecurity, a collapsing economy, ongoing neglect of the 2015 peace agreement, fragmented rebel groups, a lack of control of government and opposition forces, as well as upcoming elections. The trends and events outlined below indicate that violence is predicted to continue and that humanitarian needs will also continue to escalate in the country, with aid workers challenged to safely access and provide for these needs. The danger of an escalating humanitarian crisis further threatens the tenuous state of 'peace' in South Sudan.		

Background		
In 2005 Africa's longest running war came to an end with the signing of Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/ Army (SPLA/M).[i] South Sudan gained independence from Sudan on 9 July 2011.[ii] Independence did not bring an end to conflict in South Sudan.[iii] South Sudan is one of the most diverse countries in Africa, with over 60 different major ethnic groups represented.[iv] When violence erupted in December 2013 between presidential guard soldiers as a result of a political struggle between President Salva Kiir and Vice President Riek Machar, the friction became ethnic in nature.[v] Soldiers from the Dinka ethnic group supported President Kiir and soldiers of the Nuer ethnic group aligned with Machar. The Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) broke into two groups and conflict erupted between the government and opposition forces.[vi] President Kiir announced that Machar had attempted a coup d'état, and violence quickly spread throughout the country.[vii] The conflict resulted in a humanitarian crisis. Reports vary, but it is estimated that the civil war has killed 50,000 people and displaced anywhere from 750,000 to 1.8 million people.[viii] An internationally mediated peace agreement was signed on August 2015, and in April 2016 the Transitional Government of National Unity (TGNU) was established with Machar and Kiir. Machar was sworn in as Vice President with Salva Kiir as the President of South Sudan. However, on July 8, 2016, the conflict was reignited by fighting in the capital between the two SPLM factions.[ix] The fighting was not confined to the capital. In fact, widespread violence affected the greater Upper Nile region, Western Bahr el-Ghazal and Equatoria. Civilians were intentionally targeted in these attacks by combatants on all fronts.[x]		

Stakeholders		
Internal Stakeholders		
Actor	**Effect**	
Sudan People's Liberation Movement/ Army (SPLM/A) Effect: Destabilizing	Following the 2005 peace agreement between SPLA, SPLM, and the Government of Sudan, the SPLM gained representation in the government. The SPLM has since split into factions, with the SPLM-Juba led by Salva Kiir, the current President, and the SPLM-IO led by Riek Machar. Tensions within the group and the creation of factions has caused an escalation in the conflict.[xi] Since the beginning of the conflict, the SPLM/A has been discriminately attacking its own citizens and has been accused of ethnic cleansing by the United Nations.[xii] The SPLM/A is made up of the Dinka ethnic group. Soldiers from the SPLA have murdered and raped people on the basis of their ethnic origin and have attacked aid workers and diplomats.[xiii]	
Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition (SPLM-IO) Effect: Destabilizing	The SPLM-IO is the opposition movement to the Government of Salva Kiir formed by Riek Machar, who called upon the Nuer ethnic group to mobilize. They formed in December 2013 and split from the Sudan People's Liberation Movement due to political tensions between Salva Kiir and Riek Machar.[xiv] Sudan has provided a limited supply of weapons, training and rear bases to the SPLM-IO, which has increased tensions and made a resolution more difficult. The SPLM-IO has a weak institutional base, little political control over its leadership and no agreed upon objectives.[xv] Nuer IO supporters are motivated by anger and strongly oppose international efforts to reconcile the actions through IGAD or the Arusha process.[xvi]	
South Sudan Democratic Movement (SSDM) and Cobra Faction Effect: Destabilizing	SSDM is an insurgent militia group that was created by General George Athor from SPLA. The group's official position has been in opposition to the state government in Jonglei but declaring loyalty to the national government in Juba.[xvii] The Cobra faction, led by David Yau, was created in 2013; in April of that year the faction released a manifesto stating their main objective was "the establishment of a free, just, democratic and decentralized system of governance." [xviii]	
South Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SSLM/A) Effect: Destabilizing	SSLM/A is an armed group that operates in the Upper Nile Region of South Sudan. On 11 April 2011, they published a document called the Mayom Declaration, which sparked violence. On April 26, 2013, the South Sudanese government granted amnesty to SSLA fighters and 3000 men took up the offer and joined the South Sudanese army.[xix] The leader, Peter Gadet, is a volatile figure and the group is responsible for many destabilizing offences, especially in Mayom county.[xx]	
Salva Kiir Effect: Mixed	Salva Kiir has been President of the country since South Sudan's independence in 2011. President Kiir's political tension with former Vice-President Riek Machar ignited a civil war between SPLM/A and SPLM-IO.[xxi] Kiir has also been accused of complicity in ethnic cleansing, causing large numbers of refugees to flee to Uganda.[xxii] While Kiir has engaged in peace talks, he continues to engage in actions that undermine peace agreements and escalate the conflict.[xxiii]	

Riek Machar Effect: Destabilizing	Machar was Vice President of South Sudan but has since been succeeded by Taban Deng Gai. After a power struggle for control over the Sudan People's Liberation Movement Party with current president Salva Kiir, Machar led a rebellion faction SPLM-IO.[xxiv] Briefly reinstated as vice president in 2016, he went into exile after conflict arose from a failed peace agreement.[xxv] While he now resides in South Africa, where he is excluded from ongoing peace negotiations, rebel factions loyal to Machar continue to participate in violence.[xxvi]

External Stakeholders	
Actor	**Effect**
United States Effect: Mixed	The US government is the leading international donor to South Sudan, and they are supporting the IGAD's mediation efforts between the parties.[xxvii] However, the US government's backing of Kiir and oil interests in the country have had mixed implications. In September 2017 the US imposed sanctions on South Sudanese leaders.[xxviii] The United States also imposed an arms embargo on South Sudan on February 2, 2018. [xxix]
United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) Effect: Mixed	Established in 2011, the mandate of the UNMISS is to support long-term peace, state building and economic progress in the region. The mission has facilitated peace negotiations and provided peacekeepers.[xxx] In August of 2017, the UN Security Council authorized a new Regional Protection Force of 4,000 troops to supplement 13,000 UNMISS peacekeepers; it was a full year before any troops were deployed.[xxxi] UNMISS failed to help international aid workers attacked by national soldiers. When an independent inquiry determined that the UNMISS failed to protect civilians, top peacekeeping officials established a task force to carry out the inquiry's recommendations.[xxxii]
Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Effect: Stabilizing	The IGAD Monitoring and Verification Mechanism for South Sudan was set up after the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement in 2014. Its mission is to support the mediation process by monitoring, investigating and reporting compliance with the Agreement.[xxxiii] Peace talks collapsed on March 5, 2015, in Addis Ababa, when the parties failed to meet a deadline for an agreement on power sharing and security issues.[xxxiv]
Sudan Effect: Destabilizing	The complex history of conflict in Sudan before South Sudan's independence is a source of tension and has created a number of obstacles to the successful establishment of the South Sudanese state. The border with Sudan has not been demarcated since South Sudan gained independence and regions such as Abyei remain contested. Oil regions along the border are also a source of conflict.[xxxv]
China Effect: Mixed	China has a stake in the conflict due to investments in oil in South Sudan. China has also sold arms and ammunition to South Sudan.[xxxvi] However, they have also played a peacemaker role in South Sudan and have contributed aid. [xxxvii]
African Union (AU) Effect: Stabilizing	The AU has been involved in trying to create peace in South Sudan. The Union has also been applying pressure on other countries to impose sanctions on South Sudan, which the government has not responded favourably to.[xxxviii] However, the AU has been limited in its concrete impact, due, largely, to capacity limitations.[xxxix]

Risk Indicators			
High Risk		Medium Risk	Low Risk
Deteriorating	Stable	Improving	Unknown

History of Armed Conflict: High Risk, Deteriorating

Stabilizing Factors: In 2014, the conflict in South Sudan was classified as an active war, as there were over 1000 battle-related deaths.[xl] However, since 2014, the conflict intensity de-escalated from war to an "international armed conflict", with less than 1000 battle deaths per year since 2015.[xli]

Destabilizing Factors: While deaths since 2014 have remained below 1000 per year, the annual death toll remains high and appears to be increasing.[xlii] In 2016, the number of battle-deaths was at 733, increasing from 493 in 2015.[xliii] This could indicate a potential future risk of escalation in the conflict intensity level. Additionally, the number of refugees has dramatically increased since 2012, from 87,009 refugees to over 1.4 million refugees in 2016.[xliv] The number of internally displaced people (IDPs) has also increased dramatically, from 345,670 IDPs in 2012 to over 1.8 million IDPs in 2016.[xlv] This high number of displaced people could lead to further destabilization of the country.

Assessment: Despite the figures of this indicator focusing on South Sudan's civil war since 2013, the impact of 40 years of conflict before independence cannot be dismissed. By the time South Sudan gained independence, the narrative of conflict was a strong factor and has most likely played a part in the quick escalation of conflict in 2013. This factor will need to be addressed if South Sudan hopes to achieve sustained peace. Overall, the trend for this indicator suggests deterioration due to the increase in battle-deaths, refugees, and IDPs. Furthermore, the conflict in South Sudan has spilt over to encompass more than just a civil war between government and rebel forces. The conflict now includes smaller-scale inter-communal conflicts that are likely to continue in the presence of high food insecurity and ineffective government.

Governance and Political Instability: High Risk, Deteriorating

Stabilizing Factors: South Sudan's Press Freedom is categorized from the Freedom House as "Not Free."[xlvi] The ongoing conflict in the capital of Juba has caused a "brain drain" of journalists, who have also been victims of murder and rape as the crisis has continued.[xlvii]

Further, throughout 2017, economic hardship caused many independent news organizations to go bankrupt.[xlviii] However, since 2015, South Sudan's Press Freedom score rose from 66/100 to 70/100, displaying improvement on legal, political, and economic press environments.[xlix] Other stabilizing factors are the sanctions and embargos against South Sudan. In 2015, the United Nations Security Council imposed sanctions, that include travel bans and freezing assets, on six South Sudanese generals – three against government forces and three against the opposition.[l] More recently, in February 2018, the U.S. imposed an arms embargo, banning the exports of weapons and defence services to South Sudan.[li]

Destabilizing Factors: South Sudan is formally classified as a "failed/occupied" state by Polity IV.[lii] This stand-alone categorization excludes it from the numerical scoring system, reflecting the level of extreme and continuous warfare within the region. Additionally, South Sudan's regime is highly volatile and fragile due to ongoing conflict and rapid changes in power. South Sudan also scores a 7/7 for both Political Rights and Civil Liberties, indicating little freedom[liii]. Late 2017 developments including failed UN peacekeeping efforts, ongoing ethnic cleansing, and deteriorating peace agreements have contributed to ongoing instability.[liv]

Assessment: The trend for this indicator suggests deterioration. Although the 2017 ceasefire demonstrates some movement towards peace, violent political turmoil, ethnic cleansing, and an ongoing refugee crisis all contribute to instability and lack of governance. Accusations in early 2018 by the UN that both sides have broken the ceasefire indicate that the agreement is fragile and may not be sustainable. South Sudan will not be able to improve civil and political rights, democratic institutions, or press freedom without first establishing a sustained and consistent peace between the rebel forces and the government.

Militarization | High Risk, Stable

Stabilizing Factors: While the number of armed forces personnel has increased since 2010, this measure of forces has stabilized since 2013.[lv] In 2016, military expenditures were estimated to be 3.7% of GDP. However, this was noted as highly uncertain data. In dollar amounts, this represents a 54% decrease in spending from 2015-2016, which can be partially attributed to budget cuts from the fall in oil prices.[lvi] Since 2006, South Sudan's military spending relative to total regional military spending has significantly decreased. The fraction of regional military spending has gone from 0.16 in 2016 to 0.02 in 2016.[lvii]

Destabilizing Factors: Despite the downward sloping trend of military expenditures, the flow of arms in South Sudan is still very high. It is estimated that civilians own 232,000–601,000 firearms, and there is a reason to believe that the higher figure is more accurate.[lviii] While military expenditures appear to have decreased, reports consistently note the ongoing proliferation of small arms in South Sudan. This discrepancy can largely be attributed to the illicit small arms trade within South Sudan and among neighbouring states.[lix]

Assessment: While the trend lines of military expenditures and armed forces personnel indicate a decrease in militarization, these data do not necessarily indicate that South Sudan is not at risk of conflict. The decrease in self-reported expenditures can be, in part, attributed to budget constraints caused by changing oil prices. This decrease can also be explained by the significant illicit arms trade economy in South Sudan; where old weapons have been circulating in the region for decades, and small arms are difficult to trace in the region.

Population Heterogeneity | High Risk, Deteriorating

Stabilizing Factors: Most of the population is Christian or animist; a very small percentage is Muslim.[lx] Many of the conflicting ethnic groups are part of the Christian majority, suggesting tensions do not rest on religious affiliations. Moreover, there appears to be little discrimination based on religious beliefs and practices.[lxi]

Destabilizing Factors: There are over 60 ethnic groups in South Sudan.[lxii] The literature highlights the likelihood of civil war is strongest when a society is polarized or if one group dominates the other.[lxiii] In South Sudan the Dinka ethnic group have held power and influence since independence, making up the majority of government leaders, military, and security services. In other words, the Dinka control the majority of wealth and power in South Sudan. Consequently, they are also the largest ethnic group in South Sudan, making up 35.8% of the total population.[lxiv] Freedom House notes that for political pluralism and participation, South Sudan ranks the lowest at 1/16[lxv] due to the Dinka's high intolerance of political competition -- a trait witnessed in the political tension between Machar and Kiir, and the fact that the TGNU is now almost exclusively made up of officials loyal to Kiir.[lxvi] Echoing this, a panel of experts for the UN Security Council observed that the civil war in South Sudan "had become a contest between elements of Kiir's Dinka ethnic group and other ethnicities".[lxvii] The experts noted specifically that a council of Dinka elders had met regularly with the president, and had mobilized to oppose the peace deal.[lxviii] As such, the exclusion and limited power of other ethnic groups present a barrier to national cohesion in South Sudan. Another significant barrier is the violence that continues to target other ethnic groups. Both government and opposition forces have been accused of committing wide atrocities towards other ethnic groups.[lxix] More specifically, government forces have repeatedly been accused of ethnic cleansing.[lxx] The high amount of group grievances and state fragmentation is reflected in South Sudan low ranking in the cohesion indicators for the Fragile State Index, where South Sudan was ranked the most fragile of 178 countries assessed.[lxxi]

Assessment: As a result of high exclusion and escalating attacks by government forces towards minority ethnic groups, the trend for this indicator suggests that the conflict will continue to deteriorate as long as the barriers to national cohesion are not addressed. Otherwise, ethnically based grievances and ethnically based narratives of fear will become further entrenched, meaning that ethnic groups in South Sudan will continue to become increasing fractionalized and localized. The impact of this is the increasing normalization of resorting to ethnic fault lines for security when a crisis hits, which can already be witnessed in areas where food insecurity is acute. As a result, South Sudan faces the significant challenge of addressing ethnic grievances and making the changes that have perpetuated it. Equally, South Sudan faces the burden of creating a national identity that will ideally minimize the intensity of ethnic fraternity to bring the population together in a way that has yet to exist in South Sudan.

Demographic Stress: High Risk, Deteriorating

Stabilizing Factors: As of July 2017, the total population of South Sudan was 13,026,129.[lxxii] The population growth rate has been decreasing steadily since 2011 (3.72% in 2011 to 2.89% in 2016).[lxxiii] The literature primarily identifies that countries with large populations are more likely to have a civil war.[lxxiv] It is arguable that South Sudan does not fit that trend as it a small population compared to other similarly sized countries: South Sudan is roughly the same size as France, but France's population is 66.9 million while South Sudan's is only at 13 million.[lxxv]

Destabilizing Factors: South Sudan's urban population makes up 19% of the total population.[lxxvi] The urban population has only decreased 0.06%, suggesting that the growth is not decreasing at a rate to counteract urban stress. Since independence, South Sudan's infrastructure has been in a state of disarray and was unable to keep up with its cities growing rapidly from 2003 until 2012.[lxxvii] This trend continues, as urban infrastructure is either poorly maintained or virtually non-existent.[lxxviii] A significant portion of South Sudan's population is rural – currently, 81% of the total population[lxxix] lives in rural areas, and the rural population has not decreased enough to mitigate that stress (3.5% in 2011 to 2.6% in 2016).[lxxx] The large rural population is likely attributable to the connection to the land that is important to a lot of ethnic groups.[lxxxi] A significantly high rural population means that the majority of the population is living in areas with poor infrastructure that are far from governance and the rule of law, creating situations where conflict can thrive. Additionally, despite the agricultural potential, the rural population has been severely affected by food insecurity, a trend that is likely to worsen as the conflict continues.[lxxxii] The demographic stress in both the rural and urban areas is magnified by the high rates of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs): the number of refugees is currently at 1.4 million, increasing from 87 thousand in 2012[lxxxiii], while the number of IDPs is currently at 1.8 million, increasing by over 150 thousand since 2011.[lxxxiv] The government is ineffective and unequipped to meet these increases in pressure. As a result, thousands of displaced people are left without clean water, or food, and are living in camps with poor sanitation facilities. Health epidemics, like cholera, are spreading, and conflict is breaking out areas where displaced peoples are densely populated.[lxxxv] Another demographic pressure is the youth bulge. Since 2011, the youth bulge has only decreased by 1%, from 43% to 42%.[lxxxvi] This means that close to half of the population is 14 and under.[lxxxvii] A large youth bulge is strongly correlated with conflict as it provides recruitment opportunities to rebel groups.[lxxxviii]

Assessment: As a result of poor infrastructure, increasing demographic pressure, and a significant youth bulge, the trend for this indicator suggests that the conflict will deteriorate further and continue to spread. There is no indication that the government will be stable enough to address the poor living conditions of its citizens. More urgently, it is unequipped to deal with the humanitarian emergency needs of its population: 40% of the population is starving, and health epidemics are spreading.[lxxxix] Additionally, the high youth bulge means that a significant portion of the population will enter the workforce in a depressed economy, and thus be unable to secure jobs. These types of frustrations can influence rebel recruitment and conflict over scarce resources. This is already a reality in South Sudan as inter-communal fighting among youth has resulted in the displacement of thousands of peoples.[xc]

Economic Performance: High Risk, Deteriorating

Stabilizing Factors: There are no stabilizing economic factors.

Destabilizing Factors: Despite being a resource-rich country, South Sudan's GDP growth rate has been in the negatives since independence and has decreased significantly since 2011.[xci] Low economic performance means that South Sudan is unable to invest in infrastructure and provide for its citizens and would have to rely of on inconsistent foreign aid to keep the country functioning. This factor is a barrier to sustained peace as resources are unlikely to reach those in need, resulting in escalated tensions. South Sudan's GDP per capita has decreased by $1553 since 2011, currently sitting at a low of $1929.[xcii] Compounding these factors is South Sudan's period of hyperinflation (inflation rate is currently at 381%).[xciii] Hyperinflation has increased the level of poverty and has raised food prices, contributing to the ongoing food insecurity.[xciv] In only a year, poverty in urban areas has increased from 49% in 2015 to 70% in 2016, increasing the gap between food prices and income levels.[xcv] Additionally, South Sudan's overvalued exchange rate, which currently is at 49%,[xcvi] has meant that their foreign exchange reserves have rapidly depleted, meaning that the government has been unable to pay external debt.[xcvii] As a result, this has caused "payment delays on international obligations, on civil servant salaries, and other government obligations."[xcviii]

Assessment: South Sudan's economic performance is deteriorating. The trend in South Sudan's economy suggests that is on the brink of complete collapse with no indication of improvement. Currently, plummeting oil prices, ineffective government, and the conflict all have a part to play in the economic decline of South Sudan.[xcix] The economic crisis has meant that food prices are twice as high as they were in 2016.[c] As a result, stagnant wage levels and the extreme slowdown of economic activity will mean that households will experience a decline in purchasing power and an increase in food insecurity. Also, as the economic crisis worsens, the opportunity cost for rebellion will decrease. This can already be witnessed in areas where resilience to the economic crisis has decreased, pushing many into criminal behaviour.[ci]

Human Development: High Risk, Deteriorating

Stabilizing Factors: There are no stabilizing factors for Human Development.

Destabilizing Factors: While the percentage of the population with access to improved water sources remains stable (58% from 2011-2015), this percentage is one of the lowest in the world (with the lowest percentage at 40%).[cii] Similarly, levels of access to sanitation have been consistent since 2011. However, the percentage of the population with access is roughly 6.7%.[ciii] This rate of access to sanitation is the lowest in the world.[civ] Such a low level of sanitation and limited access to improved water sources resulted in cholera outbreaks in 2016/2017, and are significant risk factors for health outcomes and potential conflict.[cv] South Sudan also has extremely high infant mortality (59.2 deaths per 1000 births) and maternal mortality rates (789 deaths per 100,000 births) compared with the rest of the world.[cvi]

Assessment: South Sudan has consistently ranked among the lowest globally on key human development indicators, including access to improved water sources, access to sanitation and infant mortality rates. These human development indicators pose a significant risk to stability in the country.

Environmental Stress: Medium Risk, Deteriorating

Stabilizing Factors: While the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reports that the forested area in South Sudan has been consistent at 7157 (1000 ha) from 1990-2015[cvii] this is inconsistent with environmental reports that highlight the issue of deforestation in South Sudan. Natural forests in Southern Sudan have benefited from closed sawmills and reduced commercial harvesting that has resulted from the conflict.[cviii] However, UNEP's Country Manager reported that the rate of deforestation was between 1.2-1.5% per year.[cix] The discrepancy in these data may be due, in part, to the illegal logging practices that have become commonplace.[cx] It appears

that deforestation does not pose an imminent threat to South Sudan's stability, but based on UNEP's predictions it could pose a threat in the future.

Destabilizing Factors: It is estimated that 80% of Southern Sudan's land cover, estimated at 640,000 square kilometres, is arable and suitable for crop production.[cxi] There are 23.87 people/per square hectare of arable land, which is quite high relative to other countries. Additionally, only 4% of the total land area is currently being cultivated despite acute food insecurity.[cxii] The limited arable land available relative to the population, combined with the lack of cultivation of the land poses a significant threat to the growing food insecurity crisis in the country. The integrity of freshwater in South Sudan is also under threat, since rivers that flow along the border of Central African Republic are drying up. The decrease of water flow in these rivers is most likely due to land use (forest clearing) and climate change. These changes have significant impacts on livelihoods and have also coincided with a significant deterioration in water quality and increasing water pollution.[cxiii] Data from 2012 and 2014 show that natural renewable freshwater resources were declining.[cxiv]

Assessment: Overall, the trend suggests that environmental stress is increasing. There are a number of significant threats to the environment in South Sudan that have severe implications for the population, including deforestation, resulting in soil degradation, and water pollution. These issues, along with further constraints caused by the conflict have resulted in an increase in pollution-related diseases.[cxv] Further constraints such as high labour costs and poor infrastructure have limited the use and productivity of arable land, leading to issues of food insecurity. The Humanitarian Crisis Report cites that 45% of the population of South Sudan is in crisis as a result of food insecurity.[cxvi]

International Linkages: Medium Risk, Improving

Stabilizing Factors: South Sudan continues to be involved with organizations such as the African Union and the United Nations. Both organizations aim to mediate the ongoing civil war, while also providing guidance, aid, as well as external pressure.[cxvii]

Destabilizing Factors: In February 2018, the African Union Chairperson Mousa Faki Mahama threatened sanctions against the South Sudanese leaders for violation of the ceasefire, expressing that ongoing peace talks are South Sudan's last chance before sanctions are imposed[cxviii]

Assessment: South Sudan is not a member of as many international organizations as surrounding states, including Sudan, which holds memberships in organizations like the WTO.[cxix] However, South Sudan's continued involvement with the UN, and UNMISS's aid is a positive and an overall stabilizing factor and source of aid for the state, especially in providing aid relief to vulnerable citizens.[cxx]

Possible Scenarios

Best Case

In the short term, Kiir and Machar will uphold the 2015 peace agreement, putting their support behind the demobilization of their respected forces. The UNMISS will intervene in cases of violence to ensure a smooth and durable transition to peace. The US arms embargo and international sanctions will create international pressure that will allow for a shift in power. The international community will intervene to ensure that violence is contained during the 2018 elections. Mediation will be used to open up dialogue among the Dinka and Nuer ethnic groups and support a transition of power that increases the political inclusion of all ethnic groups. While this transition may not be entirely peaceful, support from the international community and the creation of an international tribunal would allow for grievances to be addressed and for the Dinka ethnic group to relinquish some power to the other ethnic groups. In addition to the political transition, immediate humanitarian concerns will be addressed by the international community. Given the scale of IDPs and poor infrastructure, there will be challenges in delivering humanitarian assistance to those most in need, but basic aid like vaccines, food supplies and sanitation will be prioritized. Sustained peace will require long-term economic development and growth in South Sudan. Such economic growth would support a reduction in food insecurity. Additionally, a decrease in the conflict would mean that harvest supplies would no longer be disrupted, which would increase food production. Economic growth will also create opportunities for gainful employment for the youth bulge and will likely result in diminishing grievances on the part of ethnic groups. Based on these predictions, establishing sustained peace in South Sudan will be a long-term process that will require the international community to monitor and support the development of South Sudan closely.

Worst Case/Most Likely

Kiir and Machar will continue to neglect the terms of the 2015 peace agreement. Without their commitment to the peace agreement, food insecurity and the economic depression will persist, and these factors will continue to exacerbate the conflict. Humanitarian assistance will not reach the population, leaving millions in crisis. As a result of this acute insecurity, destabilizing events like the upcoming elections will result in further upheaval. Kiir will use the election as an opportunity to maintain his power and suppress the population, and armed rebel groups will respond with violence. This has the potential to draw in more ethnic groups into the fighting and for the conflict to spread further throughout South Sudan. The fighting between government and rebel forces will continue and escalate, with Kiir and Machar continuing to have little control over their forces. The UNMISS will continue to be ill-equipped to intervene in the violence against civilians. The US arms embargo and international sanctions will result in Kiir fighting to preserve his power through SPLA-led violence against civilians. The predicted increase in violence will continue to suppress the economy and worsen human development. Food insecurity, in particular, is a significant risk factor with about one-fifth of the population measured as being in a crisis of food insecurity in February 2015.[cxxi] Poor human development is likely to spur further inter-communal violence. These predictions present a tenuous future for South Sudan and a need for increased external interventions to prevent this worst-case scenario.

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[v] CFR

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[xv] http://www.smallarmssurveysudan.org/fileadmin/docs/working-papers/HSBA-WP39-SPLM-IO.pdf

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