SUDAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION

2017 BULLETIN

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Editor's Note

Dear readers of the SSA Bulletin,

With this issue we are pleased to present Volume 35, 2017 of the Bulletin of the Sudan Studies Association, now in its 37th year. This issue contains more book reviews than articles, thanks to the excellent work of our Book Review Editor, Marcus Jaeger. Christopher Zambakari continues as Assistant Editor and helpful contributor, and we are happy to welcome back Tarnjeet King who has completed her doctorate and has agreed to return as a second Assistant Editor. We look forward to her supportive role as we move toward this year’s events and our 37th annual conference of the SSA. The conference will be held at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, May 11-13, 2018, to be held in conjunction with the 70th anniversary of the Program of African Studies, the oldest in the United States, founded by pioneer in African and African American Studies, Melville Herskovits. Several SSA members have received their degrees at Northwestern.
The theme of the conference of the

37th ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SUDANS STUDIES ASSOCIATION
AND
THE 70th ANNIVERSARY OF THE PROGRAM OF AFRICAN STUDIES AT NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY
"The Conflicts in the Sudans: Regional Contexts and Beyond"
May 10-13, 2018
Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University
CALL FOR PAPERS
https://www.sudansstudies.org/

Contacts for the 37th Program are current SSA President Souad T. Ali (taj_1234@msn.com) and President-elect Lako Tongun (lako_tongun@pitzer.edu).

The SSA is grateful to Dr. Bakry Elmedni, our host for two years at Long Island University in Brooklyn, NY, for his generosity and signal contribution to the SSA.

I would like to remind readers that Sudan Studies is published twice a year by the Society for the Study of the Sudans (SSKUK).

Thank you for your continuing support of the SSA Bulletin.
Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban
(cfluehr@ric.edu)

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Who We Are

The Sudan Studies Association (SSA) is an independent professional society founded in the United States in 1981. Membership is open to scholars, teachers, students, and others with interest in the Sudan. The Association exists primarily to promote Sudanese studies and scholarship. It maintains a cooperative relationship with the Institute of African and Asian Studies, University of Khartoum and works collaboratively with the Sudan Studies Society of the UK. The SSA works to foster closer ties among scholars in the Sudan, North America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and other places. Normal activities of the SSA include the publication of this Bulletin, organizing meetings for the exchange of ideas, and recommending research candidates for affiliation with appropriate institutions of higher education in the Sudan.

The Association also sponsors panels and programs during the meetings of other academic organizations. It occasionally publishes the proceedings of its annual meetings in book form.
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The Disintegration of South Sudan: Political violence from 2011 to 2016
by
*Kyle Anderson  
**Richard Rivera
The Zambakari Advisory

Abstract:

South Sudan has been characterized by instability due to violence that has exacerbated political, economic, and social issues within the country. We found that within the five years since South Sudan's independence in 2011, the most common violent actors in political incidents were government and rebel forces, who often fought with each other. Government forces were involved in two-thirds of battles and one-third of violent events against civilians, whereas rebel forces were involved a little over half of battles. Limiting the number of violent incidents will help the economy recover and make it easier to provide external and internal aid to South Sudanese citizens suffering due to the violence and famine that have resulted from the initial conflict between President Kiir and rebel leader Machar. Addressing not only the violence, but also the underlying political, economic and social issues, will contribute to prospects of sustainable peace for South Sudan.

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The Disintegration of South Sudan: Violence from 2011 to 2016

Throughout its history of colonization under British rule, Sudan, including what is now known as the new country of South Sudan, was characterized by conflict and political violence. This ultimately resulted in a lack of rights for South Sudanese citizens, and abuses of power by those in the government. (Metelits, 2016) which continue today. Based on a 2017 annual report that rates 178 countries along political, social and economic indicators, South Sudan has been ranked as the most vulnerable, deteriorating into a conflict-torn failed state (The Fund for Peace, 2017a; The Fund for Peace, 2017b; The Fund for Peace, 2017).

When the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed on January 9th, 2005, it resulted in an end to the two civil wars that initially began in 1955, with the hope that it would help bring stability, and solve political problems related to state legitimacy (Zambakari, 2013). Following a popular referendum, South Sudan finally gained its independence from Sudan on July 9th, 2011 (“South Sudan profile - timeline,” 2016). However, peace in South Sudan was short-lived, as civil war broke out in December 2013, when President Salva Kiir announced suspicions that the then Vice President, Riek Machar, had been planning a coup (“South Sudan profile - timeline,” 2016).

Review of Literature

Political issues are at the heart of the civil war in South Sudan. When the CPA was signed in 2005, it was viewed as having the potential to bring peace to Sudan, and would allow equality and democracy for marginalized South Sudanese citizens (Zambakari, 2013). South Sudanese scholar Jok Madut Jok (2015) notes that the agreement was ironically not comprehensive, as only the "top elites" were included in the process of its creation, which led some groups to feel left out and perceive the agreement as a ploy to perpetuate the existing power systems.
Three possible reasons have been suggested as precipitating the outbreak of conflict in 2013: the elite that supported the former President of Sudan, have taken over control of the South Sudanese government (Natsios, 2015), both Kiir and Machar were incompetent leaders (de Waal, 2014; Mamdani, 2016; Natsios, 2015), and South Sudan did not economically progress as a nation fast enough in the interim period to become stable following independence (Natsios, 2015). Economic issues in South Sudan have necessitated outside aid, generally coming from intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Although peacekeeping efforts remain important, they are hindered by South Sudan’s economic issues, related to the dependence on oil for revenue to support its national budget, as well as instability which prevents citizens from engaging with their livelihoods. As of 2011, 98% of revenue for South Sudan’s national budget was based on crude oil exports (Shankleman, 2011). After the civil war broke out in December 2013, fighting soon concentrated in oil fields located in the Greater Upper Nile States of Unity, Jonglei, and Upper Nile, which effectively crippled the economy of South Sudan. This was exacerbated by the fact that South Sudan and Sudan were in disagreement on how oil revenues would be distributed. The fighting between the rebels and government forces in the oil fields of South Sudan is arguably a result of the initial political conflict between Salva Kiir and Riek Machar, which we turn to next.

Mamdani (2016) sees the current conflict primarily as the result of political issues, mainly between Kiir (an ethnic Dinka) and Machar (an ethnic Nuer) over the distribution of political and economic power which ultimately resulted in violence along ethnic lines across the country (Natsios, 2015). Sustained peace seems questionable in the country’s future, as de Waal (2014) concluded South Sudan was formed as a kleptocracy. Kiir valued loyalty over competence, resulting in, at the very minimum, four billion dollars that went missing from government funds (de Waal, 2014). It is unlikely that the current government will be seen as legitimate, which in turn threatens the stability of South Sudan. To date, general elections have been delayed while the leaders of the country try to resolve the political crisis.

The main strength of the literature on South Sudan, in general, is it provides a good overview of the current human and societal cost of conflict in South Sudan. However, many of the publications focus on a single aspect of the issues facing South Sudan, such as political corruption, rather than pursuing a comprehensive understanding of the situation. Additionally, sources that take a bigger scope often do not have the most current data.
Purpose of this Study

The current literature on events and government, rebel, and other forces within South Sudan has yet to be looked at for the five-year period following the independence of the country. There is currently a gap in the literature, in that no one has quantitatively determined the most common types of actors (groups such as government forces, rebel forces, political and ethnic militias) and the types of events (for example, battles or violence against civilians) that have occurred in South Sudan. The aim of this report is to examine the conflict in South Sudan by investigating the prevalence of actor types and event types, as well as the inter-relationship of these variables. An assessment of events and actors in South Sudan can potentially be used to shape policies and peace strategies, with the goal of reducing political violence and instability in South Sudan.

Method

We set out to investigate political events in South Sudan for the five-year period from the country’s secession on July 9th, 2011 to July 8th, 2016. The Armed Conflict and Location Event Database (ACLED) was selected because it provides data on real-time political events and actors.

An event is defined in the ACLED codebook according to several different components: location, actor type, event type, event date, and several other variables (Raleigh & Dowd, 2016). ACLED obtains their data from African media sources and non-governmental organization reports for events that are difficult to confirm or obtain specific details (Raleigh & Dowd, 2016). The analysis was conducted on data for all ten states within South Sudan. The operationalization for event types is described in Table 1. For the purposes of analysis, we collated three subtypes from ACLED’s database into one category of nonviolent events. See Table 1 for further details on the event types we investigated.
In ACLED, actors are defined in general terms on which general group they are a part of, such as government or rebel forces (Raleigh & Dowd, 2016). Actor types are not mutually exclusive. Even though ACLED is useful in that it provided us with data on the actors in South Sudan it has some limitations. Firstly, due to the security situation in South Sudan it is possible that some events remain unreported. Secondly, we can claim no direct relationship between any of the variables in question, because the study was not an experiment. Furthermore, ACLED’s data collection protocols may indicate an overemphasis on media sources (which may be biased). Lastly, ACLED does not always give all of the details regarding events (Eck, 2012).

Results

There were a total of 2842 events that occurred in a five-year period (from July 9th, 2011 to July 8th, 2016, as documented in ACLED. According to Table 2, the most common event types were battles (46.6 percent, n=1324) and violence against civilians (32.8 percent, n=932), contributing to a combined 79 percent of the events in South Sudan. The most common actor type was government forces, who were involved in about half (n=1420) of the total events in South Sudan. Approximately one third (n=944) of the events involved rebel forces and a third (n=1022) involved violence against civilians.

The events government forces were involved were largely battles, (66 percent, n=880) and to a lesser degree violent events against civilians (34 percent, n =319). The event type that rebel forces were mostly involved with was also battles (53 percent, n =707); however, they only accounted for 10 percent (n=97) of violent events against civilians. Conversely, political militias accounted for 34 percent (n=321) of violence against civilians, but only 11 percent of the events with battles.
Discussion

Not surprisingly, data analyses suggested that the conflict is primarily political in nature, as the most common actor types were government and rebel forces, who were primarily involved in battles with each other. This fighting between government and rebel forces comprised a little over a quarter of the events in South Sudan.

Rebel and government forces were more likely to be involved in battles with other armed forces than in violence against civilians. Conversely, the analysis suggests that political militias were more likely to be involved in events producing violence against civilians, rather than battles or other events.

Data from this study supports previous literature (Natsios, 2015) stating that violent incidents involved the government forces of South Sudan, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) fighting against Machar's rebel forces, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition (SPLM-IO). The control over natural resources, as well as ethnic conflict, are a factor in this conflict. The oil fields are a pivotal battleground in South Sudan, as those that control this land control the monetary resources and power within South Sudan.

The fighting in the oil fields has crippled the economy and made it more difficult for citizens to resume their lives. The fact that 98% of the economy of South Sudan is based on the oil industry (Shankleman, 2011), fighting within the Greater Upper Nile region will destabilize the economy, and not allow citizens to resume work (Caruso et al, 2017). The civil war impacts public services and infrastructure development because it's what funds the national budget. Conflicts also prevent people from engaging in their livelihoods (such as subsistence agriculture) when they are displaced frequently. It also prevents humanitarian aid from reaching the region, and prevents long-term development from taking place. Furthermore, destabilizing the economy likely results in services being interrupted, such as healthcare or professional training that would eventually improve the economy (Adeba, 2015).
It might appear on the surface that the ability to stop the violence might start with how it began: solving the political conflict between Kiir and Machar (Mamdani, 2016). However, due to their documented corruption (de Waal, 2014; Gladstone, 2016), it may be necessary for new leadership outside of Kiir and Machar to be put in charge of South Sudan (Knopf, 2016). Both men's desire for power has led to an unwillingness to end the current conflict, contributing to the recently declared famine (Allison, 2017). In addition to the fighting between the SPLA and rebel forces in the Upper Nile region, violence against civilians was also a prominent occurrence across South Sudan and is hindering the ability of the country to repair itself from the bottom-up, which has been argued by Spears & Wight (2015). Previous research documents that bottom-up, rather than top-down reform, generally works better in African countries (de Waal, 2014). The current leadership might not align with a bottom-up approach, due to documented corruption (de Waal, 2014; Natsios, 2015; Gladstone, 2016) and centralization of political and economic powers. Although President Kiir declared a ceasefire in May 2017 (“South Sudan's Kiir...”, 2017), it has not been entirely implemented, as since then, violence has continued in regions of South Sudan (“UN: Fighting rages...”, 2017).

Dr. John Garang de Mabior, a historical and influential South Sudanese leader, had a vision he called "New Sudan", which focused on building a society based on the tenets of democracy where individuals participate in an inclusive government (Bankie & Mchombu, 2008; Zambakari, 2014). The concept of a "New Sudan" had great support in the area that is now South Sudan while Garang was alive, but has diminished in the political consciousness since his death in 2005 (Nasr, 2012). The fact that Kiir and Machar "own multimillion-dollar properties, drive luxury cars, and stay at expensive hotels", while many citizens are unable to meet their basic needs (Gladstone, 2016), highlights the importance of having safeguards against corruption to allow South Sudan to move towards the "New Sudan" model. It seems that if lasting change is to come to South Sudan, it will also needs to come from its citizens that actively participate in the formation of laws and government policies, as a complement to a reformed government (Spears & Wight, 2015).
For a "New Sudan" model to be implemented in South Sudan, it is likely that, as argued by Garang, external humanitarian and developmental aid needs to be given while South Sudan is rebuilding into a more stable state (Bankie & Mchombu, 2008). Lessons from the past need to be learned, as the CPA failed due to its lack of comprehensiveness, inclusivity by the leaders that created it, which prevented a strong national identity from becoming developed for many South Sudanese citizens (Jok, 2011; 2015).

Although it appears outside help is necessary to end the conflict in South Sudan, past failures suggest that a careful mediation is necessary. Imposing Western values, and exclusively negotiating with Kiir and Machar, when attempting to resolve these conflicts will likely alienate South Sudanese citizens and make such interventions ineffective, as has been demonstrated in the past (Spears & Wight, 2015).

While this article describes who the major actors are in the conflict in South Sudan, this study has several limitations, mostly due to parameters of the data available, which limits what we can conclude about possibilities that might resolve the conflict. First, our data does not address the direct effect that political leaders have had in the conflict. Secondly, we did not analyze the effect the current conflict has had on the economy of South Sudan. Lastly, the number of casualties involved in the current civil war, the number of South Sudanese refugees in other countries and IDPs in South Sudan, as well as the psychological impact of the current conflict on the citizens of South Sudan and the motivations underlying military and other actions taken against civilians, are not addressed in the data we investigated.

Resolving not only the current political conflict, but local conflicts as well, is needed in order to bring sustainable peace and build political and governmental legitimacy to South Sudan. Ultimately, the violence is delaying the possibility of creating a "New Sudan," by limiting the ability to build infrastructure that increases the likelihood of a stable South Sudan that benefits everyone, and not just those in positions of power.
References


Table 1

*Types of Events in South Sudan*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Type</th>
<th>Subtype*</th>
<th>Description*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Violent</td>
<td>Remote violence</td>
<td>IEDs, long range weapons (e.g., missiles), bombs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Violence against civilians</td>
<td>Looting, pillaging, burning down villages/home, raping, killing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Battles involving overtaking territory</td>
<td>No change in territory; government regains territory; non-state actor overtake territory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riots/Protests</td>
<td></td>
<td>A protest is a nonviolent event, with citizens airing their grievances against the government. A riot is a protest that has turned violent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-violent</td>
<td>Non-violent transfer of territory</td>
<td>when land is acquired through nonviolent (possibly diplomatic) means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Headquarters or Base Established</td>
<td>an event when a headquarters or base of operations is created by actors not affiliated with the state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic Development</td>
<td>an event where either rebels, militia, or government groups take actions with a political strategy in mind</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. The information was derived from Raleigh & Dowd (2016).*
Table 2.

The Number and % of Actor Type Reported by Event Type in South Sudan from July 9th, 2011 to July 8th, 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor Type</th>
<th>Violent against civilians (n=932)</th>
<th>Battle (n=1324)</th>
<th>Remote violence (n=163)</th>
<th>Riots or Protests (n=184)</th>
<th>Nonviolent (n=239)</th>
<th>Total (N=2842)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>319 34.23</td>
<td>880 66.47</td>
<td>86 52.76</td>
<td>20 10.87</td>
<td>115 48.12</td>
<td>1420 49.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebel forces</td>
<td>97 10.41</td>
<td>707 53.40</td>
<td>67 41.10</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
<td>73 30.54</td>
<td>944 33.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Militia</td>
<td>321 34.44</td>
<td>141 10.65</td>
<td>12 7.36</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
<td>26 10.88</td>
<td>500 17.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Militia</td>
<td>167 17.92</td>
<td>279 21.07</td>
<td>1 0.61</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
<td>23 9.62</td>
<td>470 16.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutiny</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
<td>187 14.12</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
<td>8 3.35</td>
<td>195 6.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside or External Force</td>
<td>20 2.15</td>
<td>62 4.68</td>
<td>74 45.40</td>
<td>5 2.72</td>
<td>33 13.81</td>
<td>194 6.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protests</td>
<td>5 0.54</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
<td>137 74.46</td>
<td>142 5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riots</td>
<td>8 0.86</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
<td>0 0.00</td>
<td>47 25.54</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>55 1.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Unit of analysis is events
*Actor type is not mutually exclusive