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South Sudan: The Perils of Security Governance and the Treacherous Path to Democratic Transition

Luka Biong Deng Kuol
Africa Center for Strategic Studies, Washington, USA
The Sudd Institute, Juba, South Sudan
University of Juba, Juba, South Sudan

There is a growing recognition of the critical role of security governance in advancing democratic transition in the post-conflict environment. Despite such a recognition, the security sector reform concept has overshadowed the importance of the overarching strategic role of security governance in transition to democracy, particularly in Africa. This paper assesses the status and challenges facing security governance and how they thwarted the efforts to furthering the democratic transition in South Sudan. The paper shows a deterioration in security, safety and security governance outcomes since the independence of South Sudan in 2011 with such a trend unlikely to be abated in the near future without strategic interventions. Some of the challenges facing security governance in South Sudan include the legacies of some historical events including the "Big Tent Policy", absence of strategic leadership, lack of overarching policy framework, impractical and tenuous security arrangements in the 2018 peace agreement, persistent postponement of the first elections, and dysfunctional justice sector. The paper provides some strategic and operational recommendations to improve security governance and advance democratic transition in South Sudan. These recommendations include formulation of an inclusive and people-centered national security policy, rigorous judicial reform, and early political agreement on new political infrastructure if conditions for holding the first national elections are not met in 2026.

Keywords: Security, Governance, South Sudan, Peace Agreement, Policy, Justice, Reform, Democratic Transition

Introduction

The security agencies and particularly the army have been playing a critical role in shaping the political marketplace and thwarting transition to democracy in Africa. There is increasing trend of militarization of politics and surge in coups in recent years in Africa (Ouédraogo, 2014). The growing governance deficit, the regression in democracy, and surge in autocracies in Africa have largely contributed to this trend of militarization of politics. Despite the recognition of the critical role of security governance in demilitarization of politics, the agenda of Security Sector Reform (SSR) has taken the prominence without progress in advancing military professionalism and transition to democratic governance in Africa. This has been exacerbated further by the dominant regime

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Luka Biong Deng Kuol, PhD, Distinguished Adjunct Professor, Africa Center for Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Washington, USA; Senior Research Fellow, The Sudd Institute, Juba, South Sudan; Adjunct Professor, Institute of Peace, Development and Security Studies, University of Juba, Juba, South Sudan.

security focus, culture of secrecy in the security sector, and the prevalent attitude that security is a no-zone area for the civilians.

In particular, recent review and evaluation of the 2014 African Union Security Sector Reform Framework Policy after 10 years of its adoption showed that the Policy has failed to deliver on its promises including advancing transition to democratic governance (AU, 2023). Its operationalization faces enormous challenges in terms of bridging the gap between policy and practice and translating its ambitious principles into effective programs in terms of advancing military professionalism, improved security governance, and democratic transition.

Despite these shortcomings, the SSR concept remains critical for advancing security governance not only in the post-conflict context but also in stable countries in light of the rapidly changing security environment. This has necessitated the SSR intervention to move beyond the traditional approach of "train-and-equip" to people-focused and governance-centered approach. Although there is a dearth of successful SSR cases, the few exceptional successful cases underscored the centrality of political will, ability to address politically sensitive issues such as good governance, accountability, and civilian oversight (Ball, 2014).

However, the concept of SSR has overshadowed the importance of the overarching strategic role of security governance in transition to democracy, as depicted by the growing governance deficit and mistrust of civilians in the security institutions. This has limited the efforts to assess the state of security governance and its role in the democratic transition. While the SSR is an important element of the security governance, it cannot provide the larger state of security governance, but it should instead be guided by the foundations of security governance. The security and safety are provided in most African countries in an environment that is characterized by frail governance systems, authoritarian regimes, and prioritization of regime security rather than security of state and citizens. The assessment of the state of governance in security sector in the countries of the West Africa shows a web of formidable challenges that face attempts to improve security governance and emphasizes the importance of understanding how the security sector is governed as an essential pre-condition for effective and sustainable SSR (Bryden, N'Diaye, & Olonisakin, 2008).

Since the signing of the 2005 Sudan Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), South Sudan has undergone a series of security sector reform programs. However, such programs contributed paradoxically among other factors to recurrent violent conflict, instability, and feeble security governance systems. In less than three years of its independence in 2011, the first civil war erupted in 2013 and then followed by another one in 2016. Also, despite that the security sector continues to receive disproportionate allocation of resources, there is no improvement in security and safety outcomes but instead the law enforcement agencies have become in some instances the source of insecurity to the citizens. As a result, there has been a growing mistrust of citizens in the security agencies and institutions. Understanding the developments and challenges in the way security is managed and governed is critical not only for designing appropriate policies, strategies, and legislations for improving security governance but also for security agencies to play a positive role in the democratic transition in South Sudan.

Given its history and sensitive nature, the state of security sector governance in South Sudan is largely under-researched and with limited knowledge of its critical role in advancing successful SSR and democratic transition agenda. This paper is an attempt to improve knowledge and understanding of the state of security governance in South Sudan by analyzing historical events and trends impacting security sector reforms and

identifying the challenges faced by the security governance with the aim of providing some actionable recommendations for future directions in improving security governance and furthering democratic transition.

This paper is organized into this introduction section and the key concepts and definitions are provided in Section 2. In Section 3, the research methodology is presented. The overview of security governance in terms of security, safety, and security governance outcomes is discussed in Section 4, while the security core historical events and trends impacting security sector governance are analyzed in Section 5. The major challenges impacting security governance are presented in Section 6 and the last section on the conclusion summarizes some of the key future directions in improving security governance and enhancing democratic transition in South Sudan.

Definitions of Key Security Concepts and Terms

The concept of security is a complex phenomenon as it means different things to different people. Understanding the security governance in terms of how it is perceived, planned, managed, delivered, and overseen requires clarity of some of the terms related to security. Some of these terms include security, security sector, good governance, good security sector governance, and security sector reform. On the basis of various sources, particularly from the Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS, 2020), the National War College (Heffington, Oler, & Tretler, 2019), the African Union (AU, 2004), and the United Nations (UN, 2012), here are some definitions of security and other related terms:

"Security" is generally defined as "freedom from fear and freedom from want" and it is an environment in which individuals can thrive and access education, healthcare, democracy, human rights, and economic development. It encompasses both "state security" and "human security" that constitute "national security" as "people-centered approach". Both are different from regime security that prioritizes the protection and survival of regime.

"Security Sector" is composed of all the structures, institutions, and personnel responsible for security planning, provision, management, and oversight at national and local levels, including both uniformed security services and non-uniformed security institutions including judiciary and traditional authorities and state and non-state security actors including civil society and media.

"Governance" is better defined in terms of principles of good governance: accountability, transparency, rule of law, effectiveness, efficiency, responsiveness, participation, and inclusivity. These principles provide standards of security planning, provision, management, and oversight against which actual practices can be measured.

"Good Security Sector Governance" means applying the principles of good governance to a state's security sector and it is a normative standard for how a state should provide state and human security in a democracy.

"Security Sector Reform (SSR)" is the political and technical process of improving state and human security by making security and justice provision, management, and oversight more effective and more accountable, within a framework of democratic civilian control, rule of law, and respect for human rights with the aim of promoting good security sector governance. SSR can include a wide range of different reform activities including among others legislative initiatives; policymaking; awareness-raising and public information campaigns; management and administrative capacity building; infrastructure development; and improved training and equipment.

The Research Methodology and Design

The study that informed this paper relied on the desk-based secondary data collected from credible sources as well as the primary data collected from 35 targeted key informants and senior policymakers in the security sector. These key informants include former ministers of defense and interior, former chiefs of defense forces, former inspectors general of police, former senior officers in the army, police and intelligence, some members from civil society organizations, legal professions, some members of the parliamentary specialized committees on defense and veteran affairs, public accounts, national security and public orders and some members from the Joint Defense Board, the highest command of the national army. The primary data from the key informants were collected through online short questionnaire survey by using the KoboCollect mobile application.

In terms of the distribution of the respondents, majority of respondents (57%) were from other security sector stakeholders that include civil society organizations, academia, media, and members of the parliament, followed by the respondents from the national army (29%), then judiciary and legal profession (11%) and police (3%). This shows the diversity of the respondents who are knowledgeable of the security sector in South Sudan. Also the respondents are from different and diverse background in terms of regions, gender, and education. The respondents sufficiently represent the former three regions[1] of South Sudan with more from Equatoria (37%) followed by Bahr el Ghazal region (34%) and then Upper Nile (29%). In terms of gender, most respondents are male (77%) with sizeable female respondents (23%) in a sector dominated by male.

In terms of educational background, almost two-thirds of the respondents (66%) are university postgraduate and only one third (34%) of respondents are university graduate. In other words, all the respondents are university graduate and well informed not only about the security sector but also about the general situation in the country. Although this survey has a limited coverage and might reflect the views of the elites rather than the perspectives of the normal citizens, the diverse background and knowledge of the respondents representing the key stakeholders of security sector provide a relatively objective and candid assessment of the status and trends of the security governance in South Sudan.

Overview of Security Governance

Security and Safety Outcomes

South Sudan has a prolonged history of persistent violence since the colonial era in the 1800s and post-independent Sudan, 1956. Even in its post-independence period, South Sudan has been marred by persistent cycle of violent conflict with its first civil war erupted in 2013 in less than three years of its independence in 2011 and then followed in 2016 by the second civil war. Despite two peace agreements have been signed in 2015 and 2018, the lack of political will to implement these agreements has created a security vacuum that provides a conducive environment of lawlessness and emergence and increase in number of armed groups (Small Arms Survey). These groups include militias, foreign armed groups, self-defense units, pastoralist cattle raiding parties, heavily armed civilians, nomadic communities, private armies, disgruntled (former) Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) or militia members, and "criminal" gangs. These non-state armed groups have consistently contested the state's

[1] South Sudan is administratively divided into 10 states and three administrative areas but its previous three regions (Bahr el Ghazal, Upper Nile, and Equatoria) continue to represent geopolitical affiliations.

control over the use of force, and it is being challenged as well by various smaller armed groups, including militias and self-defense groups affiliated with clans or villages.

The status and trends of security, safety, and rule of law have been deteriorating in South Sudan since its independence in 2011, particularly after the eruption of the first and second civil wars in 2013 and 2016 respectively (see Figure 1). While the security and safety scores of South Sudan were higher in 2012 than the average scores for the East African Community (EAC), its scores started declining since 2013 and dropped to less than half since 2015 and almost to half of the average scores of the EAC. Since the signing of the 2018 peace agreement, the security and safety scores started increasing with slight improvement, but the trend started declining since 2019. The scores related to security and rule of law and rule of law and justice are low and have been declining generally with slight improvement after the signing of the 2018 peace agreement.

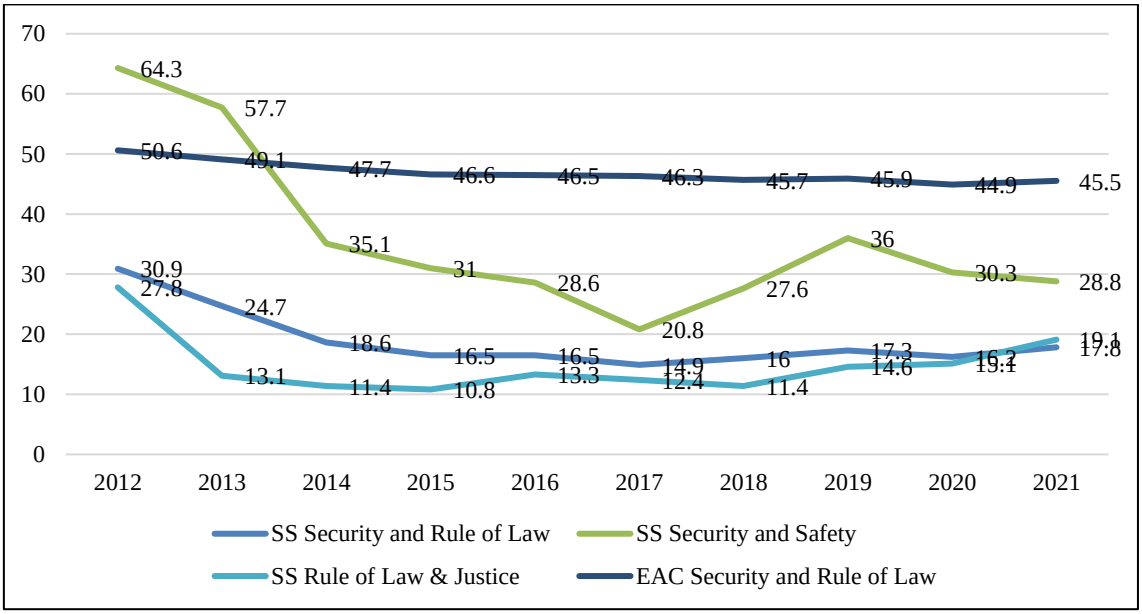

Figure 1. Security, safety, and rule of law scores, 2012-2021.
Source: Ibrahim Index of African Governance (Mo Ibrahim Foundation).

This decline in the level of security and safety since the independence in 2011 has been confirmed by the online survey results. The overwhelming majority of the respondents (80%) considered the level of security and safety has worsened since 2011 with female respondents reported no improvement and with the overwhelming majority (88%) of them indicated the deterioration in the level of security and safety compared to male respondents (78%). This is understandable as women are more susceptible to violence and human right abuses during violent conflict. When considering regional perspectives, all respondents (100%) from Equatoria region said the level of security and safety has worsened followed by Upper Nile (90%) and then Bahr el Ghazal (50%). Interestingly, the respondents from Bahr el Ghazal reported the level of security and safety as the same (25%) or improved (25%). This regional variation reflects the persistence of violent conflicts in Equatoria and Upper Nile regions.

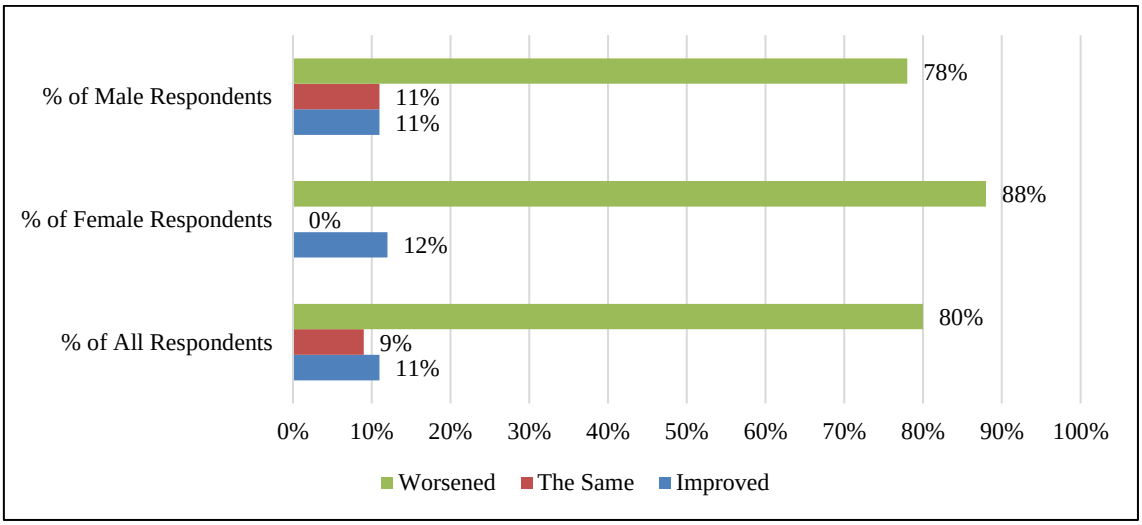

Figure 2. Level of security and safety since 2011.

Security Governance Outcomes

In terms of governance outcomes, South Sudan has been consistently ranked among the countries perceived as the most corrupt. The 2022 Corruption Perception Index shows South Sudan to remain at the bottom of the Index (Transparency International, 2023). The 2023 Ibrahim Index for African Governance (IIAG) (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2023) puts South Sudan at the bottom of the African countries in terms of the overall governance outcomes. This overall lowly governance performance exhibited by South Sudan since its independence is manifested in the deteriorating security sector governance. One of the best measures of the security governance outcomes is the Government Defense Integrity Index (GDII) (Transparency International, 2022) that is calculated from the overall average of scores out of 100 scores across the five corruption risk areas in the defense institutions. The last GDII report in 2020 puts South Sudan (11 out of 100) among the bottom countries of the Index. This shows that South Sudan faces critical corruption risk across its defense institutions, particularly in military operations (0 out of 100), financial management (9 out of 100), and procurement (12 out of 100) where corruption risk is extremely high (see Figure 3).

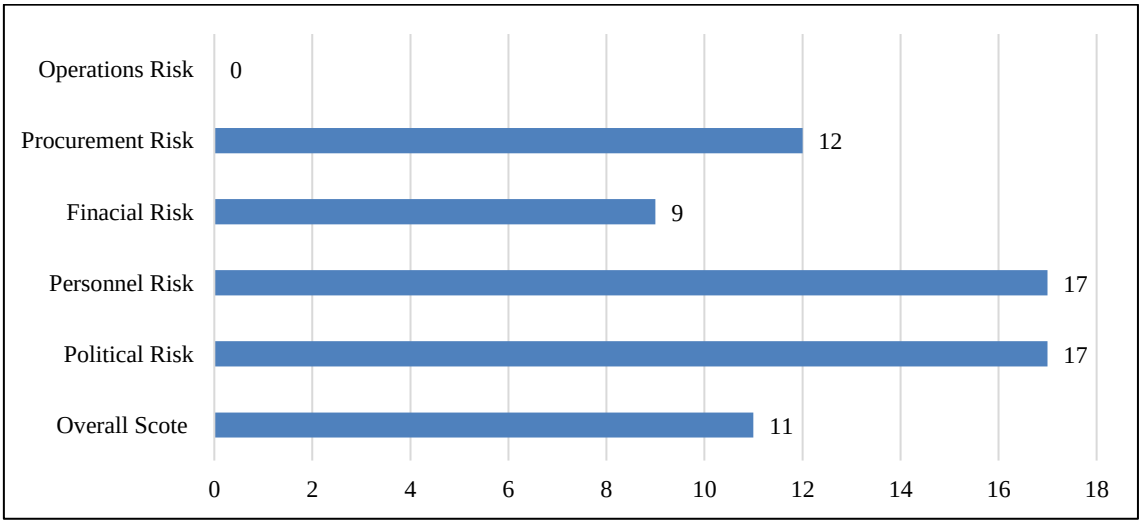

Figure 3. Government Defense Integrity Index, 2019-2020. Source: Transparency International, 2020.

The prevalence of high level of corruption in security sector was echoed by the respondents with all respondents (100%) regardless of their background in terms of gender, region, and level of education confirmed that corruption has very high negative impact on the performance of the security sector in South Sudan. This has resulted in the erosion of citizen's trust in the security sector with overwhelming majority of respondents (71%) considered the level of trust in the security sector very low with female respondents (75%) showing higher mistrust in security sector than male respondents (70%) (see Figure 4).

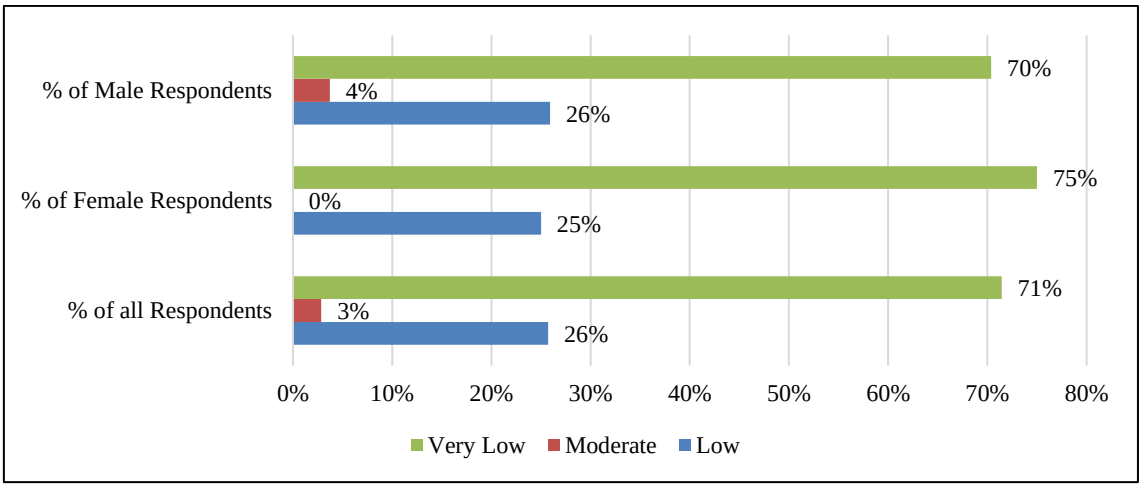

Figure 4. Level of trust in security sector.

As discussed earlier, this high level of mistrust by female respondents shows that women are more susceptible to abuses and violations by the security agencies than men. One key informant lamented that the security forces have become a source of insecurity instead of providing peace and safety to the citizens of South Sudan. When the key informants were asked about the least performing security instructions, majority of respondents (63%) indicated all security institutions have not been discharging well their duties of maintaining law and order and safety with female respondents show a higher level of dissatisfaction (75%) than male respondents (63%). Intelligence and judiciary have been identified as the least performing security institutions with 14% and 11% respectively (see Figure 5).

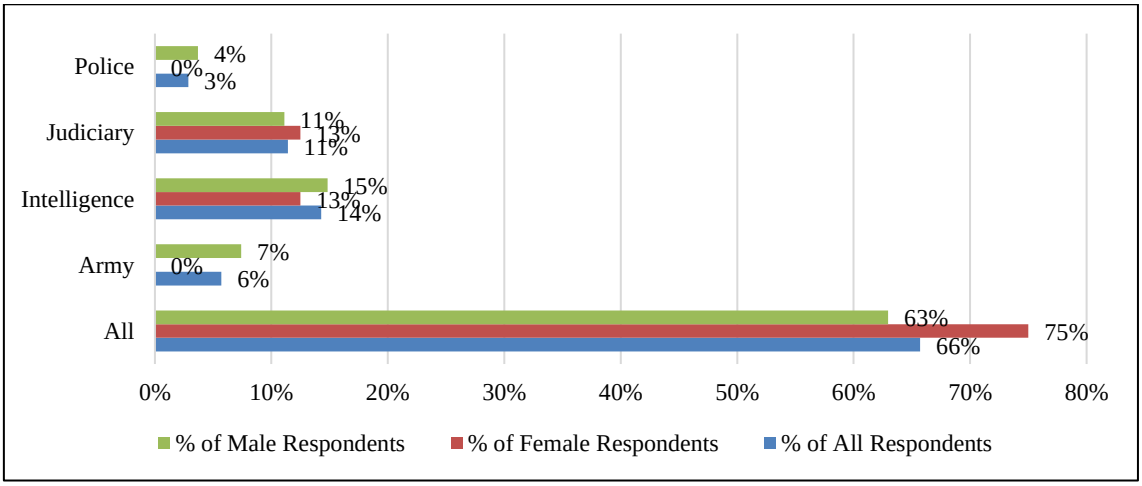

Figure 5. The least performing security institutions.

Other major security governance outcome measure is the level of professionalism and competence of the security sector. The public investment in the security sector is to produce a sector that is professional and competent to provide security and safety to the citizens within the overriding principles of subordination of the military to democratic civilian authority, allegiance to the state, a commitment to political neutrality, and an ethical institutional culture (Ouédraogo, 2014) that entails values such as merit-based promotion, accountability of military leaders and soldiers for their actions, as well as demonstrating competent, impartial, and humane security enforcement.

When the key informants were asked about their assessment of the level of professionalism in the security sector, the overwhelming majority (94%) rated the level of professionalism as poor and very poor with almost two-thirds (63%) of the respondents rated the level of professionalism as very poor (see Figure 6). This clearly shows that the efforts of security sector reforms have not been successful in developing a professional and a competent security sector but has instead politicized and ethnicized the security sector that is more loyal to political elites than to the nation, political partisan and not adherent to ethical institutional culture.

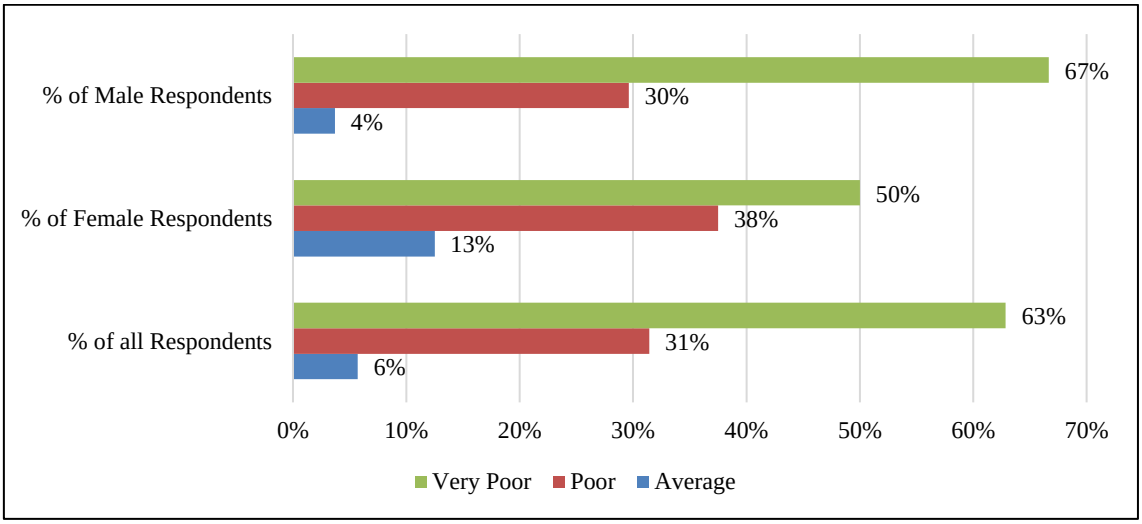

Figure 6. Level of professionalism and competence in the security sector.

Key Historical Events and Trends Impacting Security Governance

The status of the current security governance in South Sudan is largely shaped and influenced by a number of key historical events (see Annex 1 that provides a comprehensive timeline of significant events related to security governance). Historical accounts show that the failure of building professional and inclusive security institutions has been one of the factors contributing to the recurrent violent conflict in South Sudan. When the key informants were asked about the key historical events impacting negatively on the security sector reform efforts, a sizable number of respondents (43%) prioritized the political leadership, then followed by unrealistic security arrangements in the 2018 Peace Agreement (Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan, R-ARCSS) (23%) and the legacy of the security arrangements in the 2005 Sudan Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) (20%) (see Figure 7).

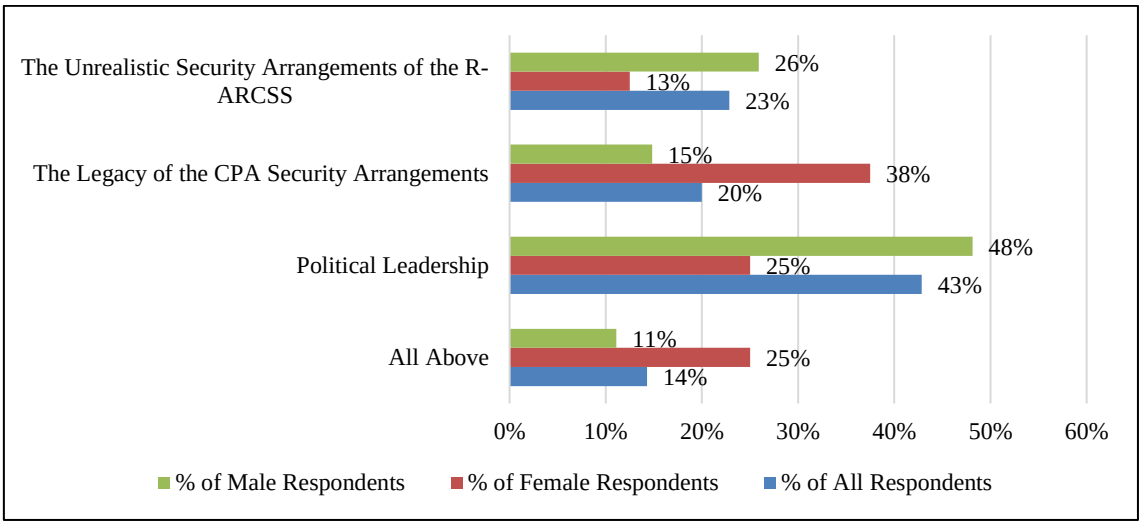

Figure 7. Key historical events impacting security sector reforms.

While male respondents (48%) identified the political leadership as most important factor contributing negatively to the efforts of the security sector reform, the female respondents (38%) identified the legacy of the CPA security arrangement as the major cause for the failure of the efforts of the security sector reform. This variation in views shows that these historical events are interconnected, and they have contributed individually and collectively to creating security sector that is inept not only to deliver security to the citizens but also unable to ensure the state's monopoly of the legitimate means of violence. It is argued that these historical events have contributed to the formation of a "gun class" that instrumentalized violence and dominated the political marketplace in South Sudan (D'Agoôt, 2018). These events are organized and discussed in the context of the major peace agreements and how these peace agreements addressed the reforms in the security sector.

The Addis Ababa Peace Agreement, 1972-1983

Here are some of the key historical events before and during the Addis Ababa Peace Agreement that have bearing on the current security governance in South Sudan:

The Turco-Egyptian regime (1821-1881): The Turco-Egyptian regime invaded Sudan in 1821 with the aim of mobilizing slaves and ivory. It adopted ruthless militaristic system that instrumentalized violence as the effective way of mobilizing slaves and ivory in South Sudan. During this period, the Turco-Egyptian authorities and private traders undertook slave raids on a considerable scale into South Sudan. This had incentivized violence as the order of life in South Sudan and laid the early seeds of the formation of the "gun class" in South Sudan.

The Torit Mutiny in 1955: In the process of transition to the independence of Sudan in 1956, the Anglo-Egyptian regime (1898-1956) entrusted the post-independence government to northern elites and marginalized Southerners in the process. Besides the denial of the demand of Southerners for federalism, the Anglo-Egyptian regime only gave South four posts out of 900 posts during the handing over power to Sudanese through Sudanization of senior posts in the administration, police, military, and prisons (Oduho & Deng, 1963). The Torit Mutiny in 1955 occurred as a result of the defiance of some South Sudanese soldiers in the national army of the orders of northern Sudanese officers to transfer them from Torit in Southern Sudan to Khartoum in northern Sudan without their arms. This marked the first armed uprising and the beginning of armed resistance in Southern Sudan. This mutiny was a manifestation of the dissatisfaction of Southerners with the way the Anglo-Egyptian

regime marginalized Southern Sudanese in the process of handing over power to the northern elites (Poggo, 2009). This mutiny culminated into the first armed struggle that took about 17 years (1955-1972) in South Sudan and contributed to the early formation of the "gun class".

The Addis Ababa Peace Agreement (AAPA), 1972: This Agreement ended the 17 years of civil war in Sudan and granted the people of South Sudan a self-rule. However, it ended with the eruption of the second civil war (1982-2005) in South Sudan. Although there are number of factors that contributed to its failure, the difficulty in implementing security arrangements in the 1972 peace agreement such as disarming, demobilizing, and reintegrating the members of the rebel movement (Anya-Nya) was one of the key factors. Despite the AAPA made some provisions for security reforms including the formation of "the People's Armed Forces in the Southern Region", the recruitment and integration of former Anya Nya soldiers, and the absorption of Anya Nya into the regular army and police forces, the Government of Sudan (GoS) consistently violated these security provisions (Kafir, 1977). With the growing mistrust, the process of reintegration of ex-combatants of Anya-Nya became an arduous task under the provision of AAPA. As in the case of the Torit Mutiny, the decision by Southern military officers and the GoS to transfer the Southern soldiers from the South to the North as part of reintegration of the forces was overwhelming rejected. The failure to implement the security reforms provided for in the AAPA contributed to the eruption of the second civil war (1982-2005) of Sudan (Shinn, 2004).

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), 2005-2011

Here are some of the key historical events before and during the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that have bearing on the state of current security governance in South Sudan:

The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), 1983-2005: The armed struggle during this period of the SPLA provided the basis for the current security institutions. The SPLA as the military wing of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) dominated the administration of the areas under the control of the SPLM. As the armed struggle was adopted by the SPLM to fight the Government of Sudan, the instrumentalization of violence and militarization of communities became necessary to support the war efforts of the SPLA and for the communities to defend themselves against the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and their allied militias. The military emerged as the ruling class with special status that gradually became superior to traditional authorities or even supplanted them. Even when the SPLM decided to separate civilian administration from military administration by establishing civilian administration known as the Civil Authority of New Sudan (CANS) in its liberated areas, the staffing of the CANS was mainly the SPLA military officers. During this period, the SPLM adopted some legislations for security sector such as the SPLA Act, 1984, the SPLA Act, 2003, the Judiciary Act, 2003, the Police Act, 2003 and the Prisons Act, 2003. It is argued that this militarization of the administration and social life and the political economy of military aristocracy (Craze, 2020) that prevailed during the armed struggle in the South had paved the way for the gun class to flourish (D'Agoôt, 2018) and that would come to dominate the post-CPA political order and even the post-independence South Sudan.

The CPA Security Arrangements, 2005-2011: The CPA Security Arrangements were largely informed by the lessons learned from the failure of the Addis Ababa Peace Agreement (AAPA). The SPLA was recognized as a national army to be in control of the South except in some few locations controlled jointly with the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF). While the CPA power-sharing provided for the SPLM to have 75% of the Southern Sudan transitional government with the remaining 25% for the National Congress Party (NCP), the then the ruling political party in Sudan, and other Southern political parties, it gave the SPLM the upper hand to manage the

entire security sector including judiciary with the exception of intelligence service that was under the national government in Khartoum. The result was that the SPLM besides being in full control of the SPLA staffed the other security organs such as police, prisons, wildlife, fire brigade, and judiciary with the SPLA officers. This resulted in the militarization of the security governance during the CPA period. Besides the militarization of the security governance, the security sector became dominated by the two major ethnic groups, Dinka and Nuer, that controlled the SPLA during the armed struggle. This made the security sector not inclusive and not representative of the diversity of the people of the South. With poorly trained and inexperienced SPLA officers coupled with weak institutions, abundance of oil revenues in the post-CPA, and death of its visionary leader, Dr. John Garang, the SPLM became inept to govern well and suffered from what is called the curse of liberation syndrome (Deng, 2013). However, during this period the laws of the New Sudan related to security were adopted and amended such as the SPLA Act, 2009, the Judiciary Act, 2008, the Police Act, 2008, the Prisons Act, 2008, and the Wildlife Act, 2008. Also, the Ministry of the SPLA Affairs developed the SPLA White Paper on Defense that was approved by the parliament in 2008.

The 2006 Juba Declaration: One of the major challenges that confronted the implementation of the CPA was the issue of the "Other Armed Groups", as they were not parties to the CPA but agreed to be affiliated with either the SAF or the SPLA. The majority of these groups were Southern militia forces used by the SAF to fight the SPLA in the South. These groups could easily undermine the much-awaited right of self-determination referendum, as the GoS could easily mobilize them to cause insecurity (Craze, 2020). Indeed, during the early years of the CPA, these groups with the support from the SAF defied the SPLA and started causing insecurity in different parts of South Sudan. As part of his initiative to strengthen the unity of Southern Sudanese through the South-South Dialogue and to ensure smooth and successful implementation of the CPA and timely conduct of the referendum, President Salva adopted the "Big Tent Policy" (PaanLuel W ël, 2018). This policy culminated in the 2006 Juba Declaration that allowed the absorption of all the other armed groups by effectively buying up them with ranks and wages, absorbing them into the SPLA, much as SAF had absorbed Anyanya I in 1972 (Craze, 2020). This declaration created new dynamics in the security sector as the absorption of the other armed groups caused drastic increase of the size of the SPLA. Besides the increase in their numbers in the SPLA, most of the absorbed officers were untrained and in most cases illiterate and with high-ranks deliberately promoted earlier by the SAF to discourage them to join SPLA (Warner, 2018). This process diluted the positions of the SPLA officers within the military hierarchy and created sentiment among SPLA officers as their adversaries were rewarded with equal or higher ranks. As a result, the security sector institutions became not only dominated by the two major ethnic groups (Dinka and Nuer) but also more fragile by creating new dynamics and renewing power struggle and rivalry between the former adversaries; SPLA and other armed groups on the one hand and indirectly between Dinka and Nuer on the other hand (Kuol, 2019a). This process had allowed corruption to thrive in the security sector, as politics of numbers allowed military commanders to increase the number of their troops and the ranks with most of them "ghosts" with salaries commandeered by their commanders (Craze, 2020). Edward Lino, one of prominent commanders of the SPLA, lamented that with the Juba Declaration, the SPLA became "divided and shredded into tribal formations adhering to individual commanders, based on localized tribal understanding" (de Waal, 2014, p. 357). In summary, the CPA was not successful in advancing security sector reform and had instead created security sector that is unprofessional, exclusive, susceptible to corruption, politicized, ethnicized, and not reflective of the diversity of the people of South Sudan and that would come to dominate the post-independence political order in South Sudan.

The Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS), 2018-2024

Here are some of the key events in the post-independence and before and during the R-ARCSS that have bearing on the current security governance in South Sudan:

The Transitional Constitution of South Sudan (TCSS), 2011: The 2005 Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan (ICSS) provided a solid foundation for good governance in terms of checks and balances, separation of powers, supremacy of rule of law, independence of judiciary, decentralized security services such as police, prisons, and fire brigade and collegial presidency. It also provided for the process for the promulgation of the new constitution for an independent South Sudan if the results of the referendum favored separation. However, the process of promulgating the TCSS was exclusive and non-participatory (Akol, 2011). The result of this non-inclusive process for laying a constitutional foundation for new state of South Sudan was an autocratic unitary system with President of the Republic granted excessive and absolute powers (Kuol, 2019a). Unlike the ICSS 2005, the president is given a power in the TCSS to dismiss elected state governor and state legislature without due process of law as well as dismissing justices and judges without recommendation from Judicial Service Commission and unlimited tenure of office. These new constitutional powers undermine the separation of powers, the supremacy of the rule of law, independence of judiciary, and decentralized system of government including police, prisons, and fire brigade as well as collegial leadership. The TCSS has negatively affected not only the overall governance in the newly independent country but also the security governance as manifested in the high-level of corruption perception expressed by the respondents and low-level of Government Defense Integrity Index (GDII).

The Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS), 2015-2016: In less than three years of its hard-won independence in 2011, South Sudan slid in 2013 into violent conflict that marks its first civil war. The eruption of this civil war and the brutal way it was fought were a manifestation of the feeble security sector that was created during the CPA. In particular, the post-Juba Declaration security sector was a recipe for violent conflict, particularly the SPLA that became divisive along ethnic lines and with more allegiance to political elites rather than to the nation. With such security sector, it was natural that the first civil war was fought along ethnic lines and that accentuated the ethnic and patronage politics in South Sudan. With the pressure from the region and the international community, the ARCSS was concluded in 2015 but it did not survive a year as the second civil erupted in 2016. The failure of the ARCSS largely rested with its security arrangements. The security arrangements of the ARCSS were unrealistically based on the model of the CPA, which addressed different conflict and with different actors and different political outcomes. By the time the SPLA-In Opposition (SPLA-IO) was getting weaker with high defection of its commanders to the government, the ARCSS was unrealistically concluded as a bilateral agreement and equated the main SPLA and SPLA-IO, despite the massive military asymmetries (Craze, 2020). This raised the expectations of the SPLA-IO to assume the "South Sudan Armed opposition" referred to in the ARCSS, despite the presence of other armed opposition groups. This created a similar situation as in the CPA that isolated the other armed groups and became a source of insecurity. The fallacy of power-sharing and bilateral fiction in the security arrangements of the ARCSS exacerbated violent conflict rather building peace and eventually resulted in its failure and the eruption of the second civil war in 2016.

The R-ARCSS, 2018-2024*:* Unlike ARCSS, the R-ARCSS that was signed in 2018 was coercively mediated by Sudan and Ugandan that put South Sudan almost under the condominium (Kuol, 2019b). Like the CPA and

ARCSS, the R-ARCSS was framed around the fallacy of power-sharing arrangements (Knopf, 2024), particularly the security arrangements, formula that has become a source of instability rather than peace in South Sudan. With the second civil war and towards the renegotiation of the ARCSS, this power-sharing formula had incentivized the proliferation of the brief-case armed groups to ensure their participation in the new power-sharing arrangements. Like the ARCSS, the security arrangements of the R-ARCSS provide for the politically shared security sector and with many political actors. In particular, the security sector reform arrangements process is not aligned to the reality of the context and the political economy of South Sudan, and the implementation matrix of the process is unrealistic and is ambiguous in its definition of the final form of the armed forces (Craze, 2020). This process has incentivized the belligerent parties to the R-ARCSS to scaleup recruiting more members to their armies making the process unmanageable and inept to produce a professional and a single national army. The result was unimplementable SSR with the presence of many armies with many commanders-in-chief, fragmented security sector, untenable reform in the security sector, politicized security sector, and accentuation of the ethnicization of security sector that is a recipe for the next violent conflict. The recent escalation of violent conflict in March 2025 in Nasir town in the Upper Nile state between the South Sudan People's Defense Forces (SSPDF) and the White Army, Nuer community youth defense forces, was a manifestation of the failure of security arrangements. This violent conflict claimed so many innocent lives and will escalate further as the SSPDF would attempt to regain control of Nasir from the While Army. Given its association with the White Army, there is a risk that Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) in Opposition, one of the principal signatories to the R-ARCSS, might be expelled from the R-ARCSS and this will mark the end of the R-ARCSS and renewed nationwide violent conflict.

Major Challenges Faced by the Security Sector Governance

Besides the aforementioned major historical events that created structural challenges for the security sector governance, there are a web of interwoven challenges faced by the security sector governance and exacerbating the effects of the structural challenges. Some of the major challenges prioritized by the key informants include political leadership (31%), impractical security arrangements of the R-ARCSS (17%), absence of the national security policy and strategy (14%), and lack of resources (6%) (see Figure 8).

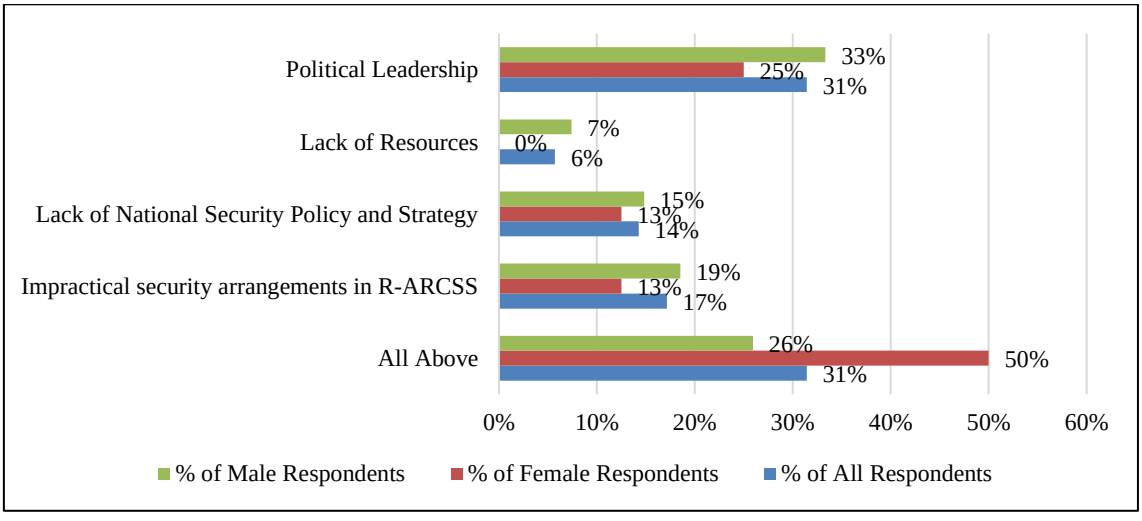

Figure 8. Major challenges faced by the security sector.

Although there is no major difference in the responses of the key informants in terms of their background, about half of the female respondents consider all four challenges as the major challenges faced by the security sector compared to 31% of the male respondents. Regionally, while the respondents from Upper Nile (60%) prioritize all the four challenges, the respondents from Equatoria (54%) consider political leadership as the major challenge and the respondents from Bahr el Ghazal (25%) consider all four challenges and political leadership as the major challenges faced by the security sector.

Besides these four challenges, there are other challenges including the weak judicial system and the persistent postponement of holding the first national elections as they do pose real challenges to security governance and democratic transition. These are challenges are briefly expounded and discussed below:

Political leadership: The security and safety outcomes of any nation are largely shaped by the political leadership as the manifestation of the quality of governance in the country. As discussed before, the power-sharing arrangements formula in the ARCSS and R-ARCSS has created a fractured and divided leadership rather than creating a collegial leadership not only at the presidency level but also at the ministerial and security agencies levels. This non-collegial leadership is further exacerbated by the longstanding personal grudges and mistrust between the President and his Vice President, the leader of the opposition. In particular, the leadership of the security related ministries such as defense, interior, and justice is shared by the belligerent parties and makes these ministries a battlefield for political rivalry and competition. Such political rivalry is even more acrimonious in the security agencies such as the army, intelligence, and police as they have become increasingly politicized with appointment and promotion in these agencies based on political affiliation, patronage, and favor rather than merits. The current political leadership created by the R-ARCSS is the major challenge faced by the security sector governance and poses a real threat to the delivery of security, justice, and safety to the people of South Sudan.

National security strategy: Besides political leadership, the complex, multifaceted, and interconnected security threats and risks faced by South Sudan necessitate the development of national security strategy to strengthen security governance and proactively manage such threats and risks. It has been shown that a country with a national security strategy (ACSS, 2020) is likely to produce a better security, safety, and security governance outcomes if it is people-centered and developed through inclusive and participatory process (Cancian, 2017). Although South Sudan does not have a national security strategy, there were concerted efforts to produce one before the eruption of the first civil war in 2013, yet the process was inclusive and participatory (Kuol, 2018). It is estimated that more than 4,000 persons at national and state levels had been involved in this process of consultation. The final draft of National Security Policy was presented by the Drafting Committee to the then Minister of National Security in October 2013. With eruption of violent conflict in Juba in December 2013, the drafting committee was unable to submit the final draft to the Council of Ministers for approval and then to the national parliament for adoption. So, South Sudan has good experience in the development of the national security policy. If such a policy is developed, it will help in rationalizing the strategic choices related to the security sector reform arrangements of the R-ARCSS such as the size of national army and other forces, Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), the appropriate structure for the security sector governance as well coordination and civilian oversight mechanisms.

The security arrangements of the R-ARCSS: As discussed earlier, the security sector reform arrangements in the R-ARCSS are unrealistic and unimplementable. This will continue to haunt the implementation of the R-ARCSS. One key informant and former senior commander in the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA)

expressed deep concern about the security arrangements of the R-ARCSS that paralyzed almost the security sector governance, particularly the South Sudan People's Defense Forces (SSPDF). Another key informant and former senior commander of the SPLA argued that it is a paradox to continue having many commanders-in-chief since all the chiefs of the armies of the opposition groups have been commissioned into SSPDF and are members of the Joint Defense Board (JDB) which is in charge of all forces including the armies of the opposition groups. One key informant explained that this arrangement of having more than one commander-in-chief during the CPA period was possible as the bulk of the SPLA including its chiefs of general staff and senior officers were not unified with the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) except the Joint Integrated Units forces (SAF and SPLA) were under the commander-in-chief of the SAF but overseen by the Presidency. This shows that the security arrangements of the CPA were quixotically adopted to the R-ARCSS. Another key informant argued that the idea of the Necessary Unified Forces is not any longer valid as the leaders of the belligerent opposition parties have been sufficiently protected for the last six years despite no deployment of the necessary unified forces for their protection. This powerful account of the seasoned security experts indicates that the implementation of the security arrangements of the R-ARCSS is pervasively stuck with what is known as the "Big Stuck" (Andews, Pritchett, & Woolcock, 2016). Any attempt to continue pushing for the implementation of these security arrangements will exacerbate the crisis in the security sector. This big stuck in the implementation of security sector reform is well reflected by almost three-quarters (74%) of the respondentias regardless of their background which did not see any progress in the security sector reform provided for in the R-ARCSS (see Figure 9).

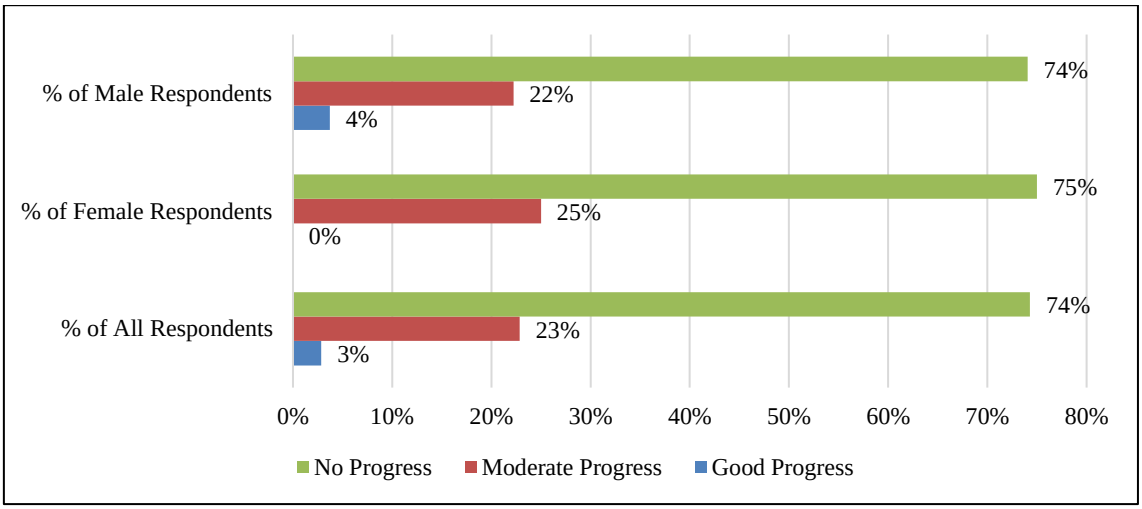

Figure 9. Level of progress in security sector reform.

Lack of resources: It is interesting that the majority of the respondents did not prioritize the lack of resources as the major challenge facing security sector with no single female respondents (0%) considers the lack of resources as a challenge. The security sector is disproportionally allocated more resources in South Sudan with unconstrained increase in its spending. In 2023, South Sudan had the second highest increase in military spending in the world with a 108% increase in 2022 that was followed by another increase of 78% in 2023, reaching US$1.1 billion (Tian, 2024). So, the lack of resources is not a problem in the security sector, but the real challenge is how security resources are managed. Despite this increasing level of security spending, the security, governance, and safety outcomes have not been improving but worsening instead. It has been shown that more defense investment seems to correlate with insecurity with an additional 1% spent on security translates to at

least 60 deaths (Tian, 2024). This underscores the need for more scrutiny of the management of security resources to ensure the value for money in security spending, adherence to budgetary principles, civilian oversight, transparency and accountability. As the civil war in Sudan has disrupted the export of oil from South Sudan, the security sector will face lack of resources as manifested by its inability to pay salaries of the uniformed forces and other civilian staff for months. This will certainly increase the level of criminality, lawlessness, and the communal tensions.

The justice sector governance: The justice sector has been recognized as an integral part of the overall definition of the security sector, as it plays a critical role in the delivery of security and safety as well as advancing justice and rule of law in the security sector. It is recognized that justice and rule of law strengthen not only the development but also governance that is critical to realizing security for all (Kelly, 2021). The justice sector is rated in the security sector by key informants as the least performing institution (11%) after intelligence (14%). When respondents were asked about the level of human rights integration into the operations of various security agencies and institutions, overwhelming majority (83%) of respondents consider human rights are poor integrated into security sector with female respondents (38%) who do not see human rights integrated at all in the security sector governance (see Figure 10). This is consistent with the human rights reports that show persistent violation of human rights, particularly against women and children, by actors in the security sector.

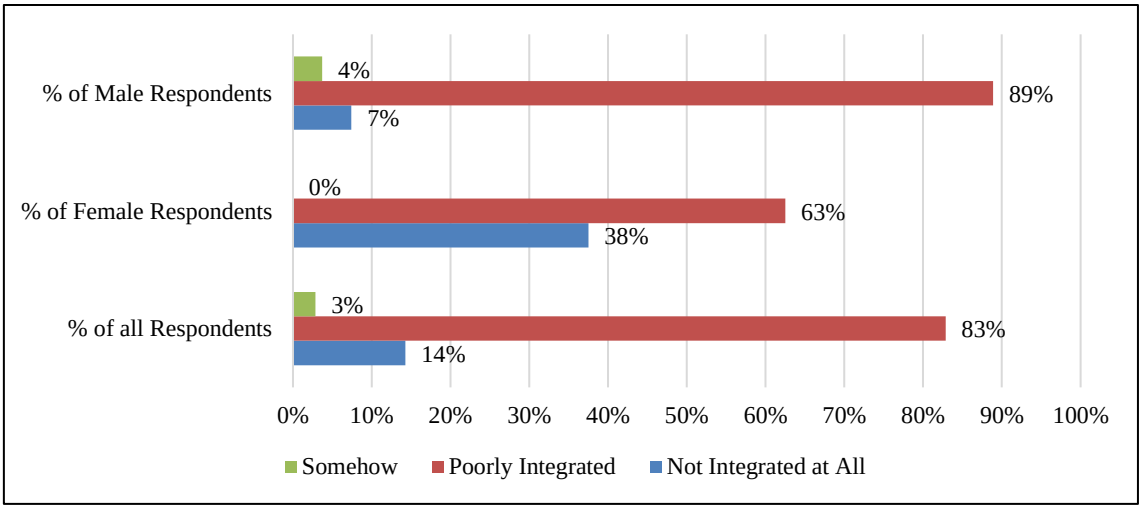

Figure 10. Level of integration of human rights into security sector.

Like other security agencies and institutions, the justice sector suffers from institutional, strategic, and operational challenges as highlighted by various judicial review reports (Judicial Reform Committee, 2024; International Commission of Jurists, 2013). In terms of institutional arrangements, the judicial independence is largely compromised by undue pressures on and widespread illegitimate interference by the executive, intelligence, and the army with the exercise of judicial functions. This is exacerbated by lack of institutional and financial independence. Operationally, there is insufficient staffing of judicial personnel with only 104 judges currently in the judiciary compared with the 293 judges as the required total number of judges necessary to deliver justice in South Sudan. This has largely undermined the effectiveness and efficiency of the judicial service and resulted in overstretching of judicial capacity causing delays and unprecedented build-up case backlogs that undermine public confidence in justice sector (International Commission of Jurists, 2013, p. 4). One former judge

lamented that the judiciary of South Sudan has plunged into an abyss of dysfunction that creates conducive conditions for lawlessness, criminality, and violence as people resort to take laws into their hands. This dysfunctional judiciary has resulted not only in the lack of public confidence and trust in the judiciary making it irrelevant as dispute resolution mechanism including elections disputes but also it has become inept to uphold the principles of good governance and rule of law.

Persistent postponement of the first elections: Since its independence in 2011, the new State of South Sudan has failed to conduct its first elections. The last time that the people of South Sudan voted to choose their representatives to the government at national, regional, and state levels was in 2010 when South Sudan was a region in the united Sudan. The conduct of the 2010 elections was among the commitments in the 2005 Sudan Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) for democratic transition in Sudan and to create conducive democratic environment for the conduct of the right of self-determination referendum for the people of South Sudan. However, the 2010 elections in South Sudan were marred by high level of intimidation and manipulation and rigging of elections results largely by security forces in favor of the candidates of the ruling party, the SPLM (Carter Center, 2010, p. 45). Since its independence the conduct of the first elections has been postponed for several times with the latest postponement in August 2022 as the fourth in the past decade. These repeated deferrals of elections run contrary to what the overwhelming majority (71%) of South Sudanese want: elections to be conducted even with the risk of election violence. The drivers of these postponements are largely attributed to the unwillingness of the ruling gun class elites to lose the power they have gained in the power-sharing agreement through the ballot box (Deng, 2024). In addition, the deliberate intention by the ruling elites not to implement the unrealistic security arrangements in the 2018 peace agreement is used to justify these postponements. It is almost impossible to conduct elections with such impractical security arrangements that are used as scapegoat by the ruling elites to thwart democratic transition in South Sudan.

Conclusion: Future Directions in Improving Security Governance

Despite the bleak picture and the appalling conditions of the security sector, there are opportunities of positively reversing such trend to put the security sector on a new pathway for improving security governance in South Sudan. The key informants made a set of recommendations for improving the security sector governance. Based on these recommendations from the key informants and the analysis of the major challenges faced by the security sector, the recommendations for future directions in improving security governance could be grouped into strategic and operational recommendations.

Strategic Recommendations

The 2011 Transitional Constitution (TCSS) (amended): The quality of security governance is largely shaped by the national constitution that upholds the rule of law, checks and balances, separation of powers between executive, legislature and judiciary, and depoliticized, and deethnicized professional security service. The 2011 TCSS has created unfavorable constitutional environment that undermines the cardinal principles of good governance. While working on the permanent constitution, the belligerent parties to the R-ARCSS may need to be encouraged by the civil society organizations, the friends of South Sudan and international community to recommit themselves to uphold the rule of law, checks and balances, separation of powers between executive, legislature and judiciary, and professional security sector as critical for advancing good governance in the security sector.

National security policy: The challenges facing the implementation of the R-ARCSS are largely related to the lack of a people-centered and inclusive national security policy (Kuol and Amegboh), that would provide a shared national security vision and strategic security objectives within the overarching South Sudan Vision 2040 and to be informed by strategic national values and interests. The SSR is pursed in the R-ARCSS as a technical exercise without a national security vision and that makes it a transactional exercise with the belligerent parties to the R-ARCSS prioritizing their narrow political interests rather than working towards achieving the shared national security vision. Although a draft national defense and security policy has been prepared by the Revitalized Strategic Defense and Security Review Board (RSDSRB), the process of drafting this document is more important than the document itself as that will determine whether it would be implementable. Having a national security policy is definitely better than not having one but having a national security policy that is people-centered and developed through an inclusive and participatory way which will deliver better security and safety to the citizens. South Sudan has one of the best-case studies in the formulation of national security policy through an inclusive and participatory process (Kuol & Biar, 2020).

Sectoral security policies: Besides the national security policy, the experience on the continent shows the need to have sectoral security policies such as the national defense policy and homeland or internal security policy. These sectoral policies will be guided by the national security policy and they will be mechanisms for implementing the national security policy. These policies may need to be people-centered as well and developed through inclusive and participatory process. Unlike the sectoral policies and given the need for secrecy and confidentiality, the sectoral security strategies such as national defense strategy and internal security strategy are to be drafted internally without public consultation. Although the RSDSRB has reviewed the SPLA White Paper on the Defense and prepared National Defense Policy, it would have been ideal that the national security policy is to be adopted first rather than producing the national defense policy concurrently with the national security policy. Definitely producing the national defense policy is a big step but the process of producing such a policy is more important than the document itself. The development of other sectoral security policies besides the national defense policy will be equally important to provide the necessary security policies infrastructure for security sector governance and effective delivery of security and safety to the citizens.

Review of the security arrangements of the R-ARCSS: As discussed earlier, the implementation of the security arrangements of the R-ARCS is stuck and will derail the efforts to build an effective security sector governance and democratic transition and will likely lead to the build-up of new civil war. Rather than continuing extending the lifespan of the R-ARCSS with the same security arrangements that are not working, the belligerent parties to the R-ARCSS, particularly the RSDSRB, may consider commissioning an independent review committee to critically evaluate the practicality of the security arrangements of the R-ARCSS and come with some practical recommendations for unlocking the bottlenecks facing the implementation of these arrangements.

Conduct of the first elections: The cycle of persistent postponement of first elections and the fallacy of the power-sharing formula that allows the unelected ruling gun class to dominate the political marketplace could only be ended by the conduct of free and credible elections. Although the belligerent parties to the R-ARCSS have agreed to conduct elections by December 2026 and not to extend again the transitional period of the R-ARCSS, there is likelihood that the conditions for the conduct of elections in 2026 will not met a need. With the current political and security developments in the Upper Nile, Western Equatoria, and Western Bahr el Ghazal

states, it is even most likely that the R-ARCSS may not hold until 2026. Despite such uncertainties, there is a compelling need for the parties to the R-ARCSS, regional guarantors, international partners and friends of South Sudan to agree now not to extend the tenure of the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (RTGoNU) and to agree on a new political infrastructure to manage new transitional period and conduct of fair and credible elections if the conditions for the conduct of elections in 2026 are not met. This new political infrastructure could take the form of dissolving the RTGoNU to be replaced with a technocratic government under the incumbent president and to consist of the most senior civil servants such as undersecretaries, secretaries general, and directors general at national, state, and administrative area levels. This will be the only way of escaping the "Big Stuck" (Andrews et al., 2016).

The judicial reform: Advancing good governance in the security sector requires an effective and functioning justice sector governance. In order to revamp and resuscitate the current justice sector, the Judicial Review Committee has identified the independence of judiciary as well as institutional, financial, and administrative independence of the judiciary as urgent strategic reform agenda in the judiciary (Judicial Reform Committee, 2024, p. 27). In particular, the Committee recommended the establishment of an independent Judicial Service Council as an important institution to be vested with powers of recruitment, appointment, and dismissal of judges of high courts and other lower courts as well as the recruitment of chief justice, deputy chief justice and justices of the constitutional court, supreme court, and courts of appeal. In order to enhance the institutional, financial, and administrative independence of the judiciary, the Committee also recommended the funds of the judiciary to be managed by the judiciary rather than ministry of finance as much as the judiciary is a self-accounting institution (Judicial Reform Committee, 2024, pp. 27-28).

Operational Recommendations

Security Public Expenditure Review: Given the security sector in South Sudan is disproportionally allocated more and increasing resources without credible security and safety outcomes, there is a need to subject this sector to the World Bank Public Expenditure Review (PER) (Harborne, Dorotinsky, & Bisca, 2017). This review will assess the equity, efficiency, and effectiveness of the government resource allocations within and across the security sector agencies in the context of a country's macroeconomic framework and sectoral priorities. This will help with security institutional mapping with focus on the security sector management structure, the key actors and their functions, and the way in which the political economy of the sector affects the quantity and quality of resource allocation. The PER can make explicit the resource allocation trade-offs underlying different policy options; in particular, it can help address the tendency of security sector resourcing to absorb a huge share of scarce public resources and crowd out other activities required to rebuild the nation politically, socially, and economically. This review will help to understand better the security sector through the public finance lens and to provide a solid knowledge-base to inform the formulation and implementation of the national security policy and sectoral security policies as well as the SSR arrangements in the R-ARCSS. The RSDSRB may consider requesting the World Bank to conduct the PER for the security sector.

The civilian oversight capacity: As the security sector is the sector that is allocated with most of the public resources, the civilian stakeholders may need to take keen interest in scrutinizing this sector in terms of how security is perceived, articulated, planned, managed, delivered, and overseen. Given the gaps in terms of knowledge, experience, trust, and attitude between the civilian and security actors, particularly the civilian oversight institutions and coupled with the culture of secrecy in the security sector, the civil society organizations,

UN agencies, international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the donors may need to prioritize the institutional strengthening and capacity enhancement training on hybrid security governance, the civil-military relations, and the capacity of the civilian oversight institutions such as the specialized committees of the parliament, auditor chamber, anti-corruption commission, media, and civil society organizations (Bagayoko, Hutchful, & Luckham, 2016).

Citizen security governance monitoring: Besides building the capacity of the civilian oversight institutions, the citizens, the primary targets, and beneficiaries of the security have been kept away from the management of security as a public good, particularly women. In some countries such as Sudan, women established a network called "Women Advancing Security in Sudan (WASS)" to create awareness about security among its members and to build their capacity to participate in the negotiation of security arrangements including ceasefire agreement as well as monitoring the implementation of the security arrangements in the future peace agreement in Sudan. Although there is a growing interest of some civil society organizations (CSOs) in the security issues in South Sudan, there is a need for these CSOs to be encouraged and supported by UN agencies, NGOS, and donors to establish a network to advance and monitor citizen security governance, particularly the implementation of the SSR arrangements in the R-ARCSS.

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Annex 1

The Significant Events Related to Security Governance in South Sudan, 1899-2025[2]

Towards Independence of Sudan

1899-1955: South Sudan is part of Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, under joint British-Egyptian rule.
1922: Some Dinka sections in Bahr el Ghazal region in southern Sudan rebel against excessive taxes imposed by the British colonial administration.
1922: A "Closed District Policy" is enacted by the British colonial administration, effectively barring access to southern Sudan from northerners and foreigners with the aim of preventing the spread of Islamic culture and maintain the South as a distinct, buffer zone against northern influence.
1953: The Cairo Agreement signs and leads to the Sudan Self-Government Statute that paved way for the election and independence of Sudan.
1954: Sudanization Committee of public service is appointed without the participation of South.
1954: A leading Southern Sudanese Liberal Party organizes a conference in Juba to demand federal status for the south after independence.
1955: The Sudanese parliament votes unanimously to complete the evacuation of foreign troops and consecrate its full independence with demand of south for self-rule to be considered after independence.
1955: Torit Mutiny by southern Sudanese officers in the military barracks of Equatoria Corps of the Sudanese national army in Torit, Southern Sudan against British Administration.
1956: Sudan gains independence.

First Civil War

1962: Civil war led by the southern separatist Anya Nya movement begins.
1969: Group of socialist and communist Sudanese military officers led by Col Jaafar Muhammad Numeiri seizes power and he outlines his policy of autonomy for south.
1972: Government concedes a measure of autonomy for southern Sudan in a peace agreement signed in Addis Ababa.
1978: Oil is discovered in Unity State in southern Sudan.

Second Civil War

1981: The Beginning of rebellion led by the Anya-Nya 2 in Upper Nile Province in southern Sudan.
1982: The Numeiri regime redraws the border and carves out the oil-reach areas of Unity State of southern Sudan to be part of northern Sudan.
1982: The Beginning of Anya-Nya 2 rebellion in Bahr el Ghazal Province in southern Sudan and Abyei Area.
1983: The Numeriri regime adopts Islamic Sharia laws and abolishes the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement and south Sudan's autonomy.
1983: On May 16, 1983, southern Sudanese soldiers of Battalion 105 of national army in Bor, stationed in South Sudan, rebel against the Sudanese army under the leadership of Major Kerubino Kuanyin Bol. This is followed by a number of mutinies in the southern Sudan including those at Ayod, Pochalla, and Pibor.
1983: These mutinies contribute to the formation of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) are under the leadership of Dr. John Garang.
1983: In July 1983, the Manifesto of the SPLM is passed.
1984: In August, the Revolutionary Law of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) is passed.
1985: Senior military officers led by General Abdel Rahman Swar al-Dahab mounts a coup against Numeri regime and retains Islamic Sharia laws.
1989: Military officers under Col. Omar Hassan al-Bashir seize power with National Islamic Front (NIF) instigation and support.
1991: Bashir regime introduces harsh Islamic sharia laws, but southern states exempted but with a possible future application of Islamic Sharia law in the south.
1991: The SPLM splits with Dr. Riek Machar, Dr. Lam Akol, and Gordon Kong forming their own splinter faction, the SPLA-Nasir.
1991: Machar's SPLA-Nasir alongside the Nuer White Army carried out the Bor massacre, killing an estimated 2,000 Dinka civilians.
1992: William Nyuon Bany, the deputy chief of staff of the SPLA forms a second rebel faction.
1993: Kerubino Kuanyin Bol, the first deputy chief of staff of the SPLA forms a third rebel faction.
1993: The three dissident rebel factions, Riek, Lam, and Bany, announce a coalition of their groups called SPLA United at a press conference in Nairobi, Kenya, later joined by Bol to become deputy commander in chief.
1993: Pockets of famine occur in Jonglei state.
1994: The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) promulgates the Declaration of Principles (DOP) that aimed to identify the essential elements necessary to a just and comprehensive peace settlement in Sudan.

[2] The chronology of these historical events is based on information provided by BBC (https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14019202), and Wikipedia (https://www.wikipedia.org/ and my personal knowledge).

1994: SPLA-United changes its name to South Sudan Independence Movement/Army (SSIM/A).
1994: SPLM-Torit organizes its first convention to be known as "Chukudum Convention" to replace military administration with the civilian administration in the areas under its control.
1997: Seven Southern groups in the Sudan government camp, led by Dr. Riek Machar, sign the Khartoum Peace Agreement with the National Islamic Front (NIF)-led national government, thereby forming the largely symbolic South Sudan Defence Forces (SSDF) umbrella.
1997: The Sudanese Government signs the IGAD DOP after major battlefield losses to the SPLA.
1998: Famine is declared in the areas under control of the SPLM in Bahr el Ghazal region in southern Sudan and claims excess mortality of about 70,000 lives.
2002: Garang and Riek reconcile and Riek is brought back within the SPLA.
2002: Talks mediated by IGAD in Kenya lead to signing of a breakthrough Machakos Protocol agreement between the SPLM and Sudanese government on ending the civil war and provides for the south to seek self-determination after six years.
2003: New Sudan Judiciary Act is promulgated.
2003: SPLA Act is promulgated.
2003: New Sudan Police Act is promulgated.
2003: New Sudan Prisons Act is promulgated.
2003: New Sudan Wildlife Act is promulgated.

Sudan Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)

2005: Sudanese Government and SPLM sign the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ends civil war and provides for a permanent ceasefire, autonomy for the south, power-sharing, wealth sharing, security arrangements, resolution of conflicts in three areas of Abyei, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile and a south Sudanese referendum on independence and people of Abyei area to decide to be part of south or north in six years' time.
2005: A new Sudanese constitution which gives the south a large degree of autonomy and right of self-determination is signed.
2005: Former southern rebel leader John Garang is sworn in as first vice-president and president of the Government of Southern Sudan. Transitional National Government is formed.
2005: Interim Transitional Constitution of Southern Sudan is signed.
2005: South Sudanese leader John Garang is killed in a plane crash and is succeeded by Salva Kiir Mayardiit.
2005: Autonomous government is formed in South Sudan, in line with the January 2005 peace deal. The administration is dominated by the SPLM, former rebels.
2008: New Sudan Police Act, 2003 is amended to Southern Sudan Police Act.
2008: New Sudan Prisons Act, 2003 is amended to Southern Sudan Police Act.
2008: New Sudan Wildlife Act, 2003 is amended.
2008: New Sudan Judiciary Act, 2003 is amended.
2008: The SPLA White Paper on Defense is passed by the parliament.
2009: SPLA Act, 2003 is amended.

Fragile Peace

2006: Hundreds die in fighting centred on the southern town of Malakal—the heaviest between northern Sudanese forces including the other armed groups (OAGs) and SPLA, former rebels, since the 2005 peace deal.
2006: Juba Declaration on Unity and Integration between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the South Sudan Defence Forces (SSDF) is signed.
2008: In May, the Sudan Armed Forces supported by the Arab nomad militias attach and occupy the disputed oil-rich Abyei area on the north-south divide—a key sticking point in the 2005 peace accord.
2008: The SPLM Second National Convention convenes but marks by a divisive competition for the leadership of the party, particularly between President Salva Kiir and his vice president Dr. Riek Machar.
2010: General elections are held with President Salva and his party the SPLM overwhelmingly winning elections at all levels of government in Southern Sudan. His vice president Dr. Riek Machar was his running mate.

Independence Referendum

2009: Leaders of North and South in national parliament pass two referendum acts that define the terms of referendum for people of South Sudan and people of Abyei area.
2011: The people of South Sudan vote overwhelmingly (98%) in favor of full independence from Sudan and the referendum of the people of Abyei is denied by the Sudanese government.
2011: Sudanese government occupies the disputed border region of Abyei.
2011: Governments of north and south sign accord to demilitarize the disputed Abyei region and let in an Ethiopian peacekeeping force.

New State of South Sudan

2011: 9 July Independence Day and South Sudan becomes the 193rd member of the United Nations (UN) and the 54th member of the African Union.

2011: UN says at least 600 people are killed in ethnic clashes in Jonglei state.
2012: South Sudan declares a disaster in Jonglei State after some 100,000 flee clashes between rival ethnic groups.
2012: After weeks of border fighting, South Sudan troops temporarily occupy the oil field and border town of Heglig before being repulsed.
2012: Some 200,000 refugees flee into South Sudan to escape fighting between Sudanese army and rebels in Sudan's southern border states of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile.
2012: The presidents of Sudan and South Sudan agree on trade, oil and security deals after days of talks in Ethiopia.
2013: May, the paramount chief of the Ngok Dinka of Abyei, Kuol Deng Kuol (Adol) is killed by the Arab nomad militias.
2013: Sudan and South Sudan agree to resume pumping oil after a bitter dispute over fees that saw production shut down more than a year earlier. They also agreed to withdraw troops from their border area to create a demilitarised zone.
2013: The SPLM convenes its national liberation council meeting to pass the basic documents of the party including the draft constitution but sharp differences prevail on the way of voting (secret vs. raising hands), 5% seats of the Council to be appointed by the elected chairperson of the party and tenure of office of the chairperson of the party.
2013: Senior leaders of the SPLM led by Dr. Riek Machar hold a press conference to announce their pulling out from the meeting of the National Liberation Council (NLC), accusing South Sudan's president and party chairman, Salva Kiir Mayardit, of deviating from the spirit of dialogue.
2013: President Kiir dismisses entire cabinet and Vice-President Riek Machar in a power struggle within the governing Sudan People's Liberation Movement.

First Civil War

2013: Civil war erupts in Juba as President Salva Kiir accuses his former vice-president, Riek Machar, of plotting to overthrow him. Vice-President Riek Machar led a rebellion against President Salva Kiir after he was sacked.
2013: The African Union Peace and Security Council mandates the establishment of the Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan (AUCISS).
2014: A ceasefire is signed but broken several times over subsequent weeks, and further talks in February fail to end the violence that displaces more than a million people by April.
2015: The final report of the AUCISS is released and has found evidence of widespread human rights violations, committed by both the government and rebels.
2015: President Salva Kiir and his former vice president and leader of the SPLM-In Opposition (SPLM-IO) Dr. Riek Machar sign peace agreement.
2016: Riek Machar finally returns to Juba and is sworn in as first vice-president in a new unity government.

Second Civil War

2016: Violent conflict erupts during the meeting between President Salva Kiir and his vice president Dr. Riek Machar in Juba and that forced Dr. Riek Machar to flee the country to the Democratic Republic of Congo.
2016: A UN commission on human rights says a process of ethnic cleansing is underway in several parts of the country.
2017: A famine is declared in parts of South Sudan in what the UN describes as a man-made catastrophe caused by civil war and economic collapse.
2017: President Kiir declares unilateral ceasefire, launches national dialogue.
2017: The number of refugees fleeing violence in South Sudan to Uganda passes the one million mark.
2018: President Kiir signs power-sharing agreement with Riek Machar and other opposition groups in a bid to end the civil war. The deal provides for Dr. Riek Machar return to government as one of five vice-presidents.
2020: Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity is formed and headed by President Salva Kiir and five vice presidents with Dr. Riek Machar as the First Vice President.
2022: The 2018 Peace Agreement is extended by the parties to the peace agreement for extra 24 months and to hold general elections by December 2024.
2023: The 2012 National Elections Act is amended to pave the way for the conduct of elections in 2024.
2024: The 2018 Peace Agreement is extended by the parties to the peace agreement for extra 24 months and to hold general elections by December 2026.
2024: The National Defense Policy is prepared and ready for approval by the Cabinet and adoption by the parliament.
2024: The SPLA White Paper on Defense and Security is revised and ready for approval by the Cabinet and adoption by the parliament.
2024: The National Defense and Security Policy document is prepared and ready for approval by the Cabinet and adoption by the parliament.
2025: Dr. Riek Machar, the first vice president, is put under house arrest amid escalating political tensions over the implementation of the 2018 peace agreement and fighting between the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF) and the White Army, Nuer ethnic militias in Upper Nile state, raising fears of a return to civil war.