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## Tribal Violence in South Sudan: its Determinants, Pathways, and Repercussions

### Introduction

In Africa, the tribe enjoys an advanced historical position in political, economic, social, and cultural circles. It has served as the continent's geographical, cultural, social, and political borders for decades before the Berlin Conference partition of the African countries, including South Sudan. In this light, the report brings to light the problems of tribal violence in South Sudan. It analyzes and monitors the determinants of tribal violence in South Sudan in its political, security, economic, demographic, and cultural scopes. The report also monitored the growing violence in the period between 2020 and 2021, stressed its repercussions on the reality of South Sudan.

### First: Determinants of Tribal Violence in South Sudan:

The tribal dimension and its developments in South Sudan are based on internal and external determinants and drivers, which are presented as follows:

#### 1. Political determinants

**Organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 2016**



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The developments of the tribal dimension and its conflict and violent interactions appeared in South Sudan as an inevitable consequence of the colonial policies and its political, geographical, and seasonal divisions. These conflicts were fueled by the attitudes of competitive tribes and their struggles for power, influence, and wealth, especially in light of the elevation of the "Dinka" tribe, the most powerful tribe distinguished by political, social, and economic growth. These conflicts have also increased due to the faltering and fragility of the imported nation-state building processes, as well as the trends of its politicization and employment by the political, religious, and military elites.

Tensions and clashes have intensified between tribes, especially the "Nuer" tribe, with the aim of achieving dominance and power. Tensions developed into civil wars, similar to the first (1956) and second (1983) civil wars before secession, and the civil war (2013), as an updated version of the power struggles led by President "Salva Kiir" and his "Dinka" tribe and between his deputy "Riek Machar" and his tribe of "Nuer over wealth, livestock, and oil starting from February (2020).

## 2. Security determinants

The traditional and nontraditional security threat in South Sudan includes all levels of political, cultural, economic, and tribal attacks on livestock and crops. It imposes the conflictual and violent nature of tribal interactions as one of the aspects of their protection from the weakness of the legislative, executive, and judicial structures. The fragile state has lost its prestige in face of tribal leaders, and its lack of a regular national army has



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diminished its capacity to impose security and law enforcement.

### 3. Economic determinants

The scramble for water resources, wealth, oil, and gold is the main feature of the economic reality in South Sudan. The economic reality includes development challenges and the lack of infrastructure for industry, agriculture, trade, mining, services, oil, pastoral and agricultural activities. That stimulates the possibility of violent conflicts and development between tribes, which express the development of tribal violence in the Jonglei region in 2009 and their renewal in February 2020. That happened against the background of the policies of division and organization of local states and the wealth and resources they specify for each state. Among the factors behind the tribal conflict in Jonglei in February 2020 was the process of separating the oil and gold-rich region "Pure" from Jonglei<sup>1</sup>.

### 4. Demographic determinants

The Berlin Conference in November (1882) introduced Western ideas about the nation-state and its incompatibility with the African reality. That resulted in political, engineering, and astronomical boundaries that Africa inherited many conflicts and problems that affected the mother Sudan or South Sudan. South Sudan includes a complex and divergent Athenian demographic with extensions in neighboring countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda. South Sudan includes (59) tribes or (597) groups. It's

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<sup>1</sup> International crisis Africa group, south Sudan: other war resolving the insecurity in equatorial, 25 February 2021.



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foremost of which are the "Dinka" and Nuer "and" Shilluk "tribes as Nilotic groups, and the " Murle," Denga "and Puli" tribes, as Nile garrison groups, and Zandi tribes. Those Sudanese tribes represented a time bomb that exploded when faced with successive governments. Also, made South Sudan go through tribal crises and conflicts with its north at times and between them at other times considering the erroneous policies towards them and their failure to absorb, contain and manage them.

## 5. Cultural determinants

Cultural determinants are present in the tribal conflicts in South Sudan by the state's demographic composition, its multiplicity: cultural, ideological, and linguistic, the state's political and social developments, and its inheritance from tribal conflicts. Where the state has formed a set of cultural principles that courage, pride, and social pride are associated with the number of stolen cattle, and that they are considered dowry for brides. In addition to the prevailing belief about the curse of infertility in the "Murle" tribe, and the low fertility rates resulting from the spread of syphilis in the 1950s, which drives them to steal and kidnap children to preserve their offspring and race, and constitute a catalyst for the raids of vengeful tribes.

## Second: The trajectories of the evolution of tribal violence in South Sudan

Maat monitors the political, social, and security developments in South Sudan and the interactions between conflicts between tribes, starting from



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the civil wars before independence to their developments. It also monitors its extensions in February (2020) in all its provinces, especially (Jonglei, Al-Wahda, Sharab, Upper Nile, and Al-Tiger). That happened against the background of limited attacks by the "Murle" tribe on the districts of the "Dinka" and "Nuer" tribes, followed by multiple attacks by "Dinka" and "Nuer" (Lekwangel, Maynopol, Gorumaki, Meroe Hills, and Lou Nuer). The attacks resulted in the occupation of (51) villages and settlements of the "Morley" tribe, and their partial and complete destruction during the period (February, March).

Then, the country entered tribal clashes again. As the clashes escalated against the backdrop of the reprisals of the "Moral" tribe on the morning of (16) May (2016) in the area of "Berry." To hit (28) scattered villages inhabited by the "Lou Nuer" tribe, and inflict heavy moral and material losses. violent and intermittent clashes occurred until (20) May 2020. In the background of those clashes, President "Salva Kiir" issued an order to establish a high-level committee led by his deputy, Wani Mega "It is composed of 13 members; To address the root causes of violence<sup>2</sup>.

In June 2020, the Dinka militia from (Duk and Twic East) and the militia of Gawaar Nuer from (Fangak, Ayod and Pieggi) mobilized and converged in the "Anyidi" region. A large number of Dinka Bor armed elements joined this attack as well. The Dinka militia and the vicinity of the Lou Nuer headed towards (Arkas, Jomaro, and Manyapol) and forced the "Murle" militia to retreat towards "Pibor" on (11) June (2020), then retreated

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<sup>2</sup> UNMISS, Armed violence involving community , Based militias in greater Jonglei Jan-Aug, March, 2020., pp54-45.



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towards (Verthet and Nnam), along with Lou Nuer” tribe’s attacks on (Nanaam, Likuangole)<sup>3</sup>, where women and children were kidnapped and cattle and property was raided.

And that, before it stops in early August 2020, in response to political pressure from the government, international organizations, torrential rains, and floods. To begin the process of de-escalation, with the “high-level board” holding the “Peace Jonglei-Pibor” conference in Juba under the auspices of the “Wani Igga Committee” on January 25–26, 2021. The conference issued decisions and recommendations regarding the abduction of women and children, revenge, deliberate and arbitrary killing and looting of livestock Justice, accountability, and law enforcement. It reappeared in February 2021 in (Maban, Warwab, Tunk, Jonglei, Akobo) in February 2021 considering attempts by political, military, and religious figures to invest it politically<sup>4</sup>.

### Third, implications of tribal violence in South Sudan:

The repercussions of tribal violence in South Sudan can be monitored in its developments since the beginning of its renewal in February 2020. and from its extensions to April 2021, as follows:

#### 1. Repercussions of political violence:

The reality of the tribe and its conflictual interactions in South Sudan contributed to fueling trends of stampede and competition over wealth,

<sup>3</sup> Sudan south Sudan regional, report, Jan-June, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> United nations, South Sudan, transition from conflict to recovery inching forward un envoy, 3 March 2021, <https://bit.ly/3ca8dal>



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power, influence, livestock, and social empowerment. In addition, it led to its violent developments historically until the conflicts in 2020; to undermine political stability in South Sudan and impede its national integration trends. That happened because of its improper management. The tribe's reality also prevented political participation and rivalries, and peaceful transfer of power in their national and local contexts .As the presidency extended to Salva Kiir more than once, the point of skepticism about holding potential elections in 2022, and sharing it between the presidency and opposition in all its forms: legislative, executive, and judicial. So that political participation deviates from the paths of democratic transformation and good governance and impedes peace paths and the implementation of its benefits. Where the ability prevented the implementation of the cease-fire decision, and the integration of military militias into a unified national army. It also prevented the activation of the state's role in performing its functions, and the return of its prestige to all regions vis-à-vis the tribe. In addition, it impeded the acceleration of the transitional phase paths and infrastructure and oil rehabilitation operations.

Tribal interactions undermine the environment conducive to political and social stability. It also hinders political participation in choosing and managing the country's affairs, as stated in Article (12) of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

#### 1. The economic repercussions of violence



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In South Sudan, developments in tribal violence contributed to pushing the economic reality into further collapse and abyss in a way that threatens human rights in economic development by Article (16, 22) of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Where developments in tribal violence have combined with climate changes, especially droughts, floods, and the "Covid 19" pandemic, during their waves in 2020; to affect the economy in all: it's industrial, commercial, oil, mining, agricultural, pastoral and animal sectors. As a continuation of developments, annoyed the severity of the economic crisis, the decline of development indicators, and the reduction of oil production and revenues. It also decreased the value of the national currency by (500%) against the US dollar, and dwindling of foreign exchange reserves.

In addition to threatening the pastoral and agricultural economy by hindering the farming process, pastoral movements, destroying and stealing crops and markets, similar to the situation in the " Likuangole " district.

In addition to the theft of livestock, which was estimated at (86,000) at a value of (30) million US dollars, and the resulting loss of many sources of income, the increase in extreme poverty, and the deterioration of purchasing and service power.

Humanitarian needs increased by 8.3 million people in 2021, an increase of 800,000 compared to 2020. The value of foodstuffs increased by (30%), and the import of 90% of consumer goods. 66% of the population of





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South Sudan lived on less than \$ 2 a day. That makes the incomes of the South Sudan among the fragile and failed states, according to international reports and development indicators.

## 2. Social repercussions of violence:

The developments of tribal violence in South Sudan over its historical decades have resulted in severe repercussions that have undermined his human reality, his social system, and his health, education, and security structure. And it damaged his social peace and stability, especially in the absence of justice, accountability, and real confrontation by the official authority.

In terms of developments in tribal violence in the context of (2020), tribal clashes have caused human rights violations under human rights charters in their international and African contexts. In particular, his rights to life, survival, security, physical, sexual and health integrity, and decent living standards.

## 3. Reflections on the right to life and safety

South Sudan witnessed indiscriminate and deliberate mass killings of all small, light, primitive and white weapons. That is a blatant violation of international human rights law and the African Charter, especially the rights to health, life, and security, articles 23, 15, and 14. It resulted in the killing of (2,400) civilians, including (9) humanitarian aid workers, the killing of (593) armed men during the period (February and August), and



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the abductions of (686) civilians, which included among them (children, pregnant breastfeeding women, and girls). And that was (93%) by the “Dinka” and Nuer tribes, compared to (7%) in favor of the “Murle” tribe. There were also (39) women from the “Murle” tribe and (6) thousand cases of violence, sexual and physical slavery, and marriage. Enforced during the period (February, August)<sup>5</sup>.

#### 4. Reflections of violence on the right to shelter and livelihood

Conflict and violent tribal interactions led to forced displacement and displacement, by their reliance on scorched earth strategies. Also, the destruction and burning of villages, homes, humanitarian facilities, and shops led to the displacement and displacement of approximately (89,000) “Murle” and (79,000) “Dinka” and “Nuer” tribes between (February and August). (255,000) civilians during the year (2020), bringing the number of internally displaced people in South Sudan to about (1.5) million as a result of violence, floods, and conflicts, according to the joint report between the United Nations Mission and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. <sup>6</sup>.

#### 5. Reflections of food violence

The developments in tribal violence plunged South Sudan into the highest levels of food insecurity and severity. South Sudan is located next to Yemen, northern Nigeria, and Burkina Faso in the forefront of countries

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<sup>5</sup> according to a report by the United Nations Reproductive Health Fund

UNMISS, Armed violence involving community-based militias in greater Jonglei, pp 56-63.

<sup>6</sup> UNMISS, Armed violence involving community-based militias in greater Jonglei, pp 56-69.



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most vulnerable to drought, food insecurity, and increasing humanitarian needs. Where (60%) of the population of South Sudan suffers from chronic and acute food insecurity at a rate of 5.8 million acute and is expected to increase to (7.2) million during periods of drought, the third level (acute food shortage and malnutrition). Humanitarian needs, especially food, increase by 8.3 million people in (2021), an increase of about (800,000) compared to (2020). Food insecurity is intensifying in the sites of clashes and fighting in (6) provinces that fall within the catastrophic fifth stage of the classification levels, with (105,000) people, led by Jonglei State and the Tiger by (30) thousand people, Europe, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Unity State, and Lakes<sup>7</sup>.

In addition to the cases of death and starvation in the upper Nile regions of Jonglei, Bahr El Ghazal, and Al-Bor. In Lacogol village, "13 children died between (February and November). The local government also announced (17) starvation deaths during the period from (September, December), and the theft of food and humanitarian aid amounted to (430) tons sufficient to feed (72,000). In Pibor Jonglei during the year (2020).

## 6. Reflections on the right to education and health

The developments in tribal violence have led to displacement, forced displacement, and the destruction of villages and regions, including schools and educational facilities. That is in addition to the poverty and deterioration of the economy in South Sudan. The Corona pandemic has caused more than (2.2) million children to drop out of school (75) and

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<sup>7</sup> Act Alliance Alert com[;ex humanitarian crisis, south Sudan, 2 March ,2021, <https://www.actalliance.org>



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deprived them of their enjoyment of the right to education in its various stages by international human rights conventions in general and children's rights in particular. In addition to the high rates of illiteracy among South women<sup>8</sup>.

Regarding the right to health, the same thing is repeated, as tribal violence trends lead to displacement, displacement, and displacement of civilians in remote areas, where access is impeded, the provision of humanitarian aid, and the provision of necessary medical, health and treatment materials. This increased in severity in light of the outbreak of the Corona pandemic in South Sudan and its spread without an effective response by the official authority. To put the South Sudanese human rights in health and physical safety in a dilemma and a reality rife with diseases and epidemics, especially COVID-19, malaria, tuberculosis, Ebola, and malnutrition. Where nearly (352) women and (1.4) children suffer from malnutrition, an increase of (113,000) children during the year (2021), and (13) children died of starvation in the “**Lacon and Jalal** village” in Upper Nile during the period from (February, November) for 2020<sup>9</sup>.

## 7. Reflections on child recruitment

South Sudan, as its historical habit, and under its tribal and political conflicts, is a strong model in the field of violations of children's rights and dignity and the dispossession of their childhood. This occurs through the recruitment of children in conflicts and armed conflicts to increase the size

<sup>8</sup> Educational cannot wait, textbook distributed to schools in south Sudan, 24 March 2021, <https://bit.ly/3sapet6>

<sup>9</sup> الأمم المتحدة، وكالتين أمنيّتان تدعوان لاتخاذ إجراءات عاجلة لتجنب خطر المجاعات في 20 بؤرة، 23 مارس 2021 <https://bit.ly/2qil5ya>



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and number of their forces. Then they deprive children of the rights to education, health, and decent and stable living, and turn them into recruits in battles and conflicts.

As the civil war conflicts between (2015-2013) included the recruitment of (16,000) children, including fighters, porters, and cooks. (19,000) children were recruited by armed groups and the government in South Sudan as of 2019, according to UNICEF. During the tribal violence in 2020, children were recruited in the conflict areas of Jonglei, Pibor, and Upper Nile, especially within the "Murle" militia. These militias divide their forces according to age groups so that each group has a recognized clan and a leader. To Chloroquine (15,20) years, Lango (30,21) years, and nationally (31,140) years, two-thirds (50,41) years, officials (51,-) years, and others. This can be embodied in the statement of "Yasmine Sokka" - Chairman of the United Nations Human Rights Committee in South Sudan, "All children have guns in the Pibor area"<sup>10</sup>

#### Fourth, recommendations:

The report presents a set of After extrapolating the report to the determinants of tribal violence in South Sudan, and monitoring its paths and repercussions. It can be displayed as follows:

1. The government should coordinate effective measures and steps to limit the development of tribal violence and stop tribal clashes. Aid

<sup>10</sup> الأمم المتحدة، بعد 10 سنوات على استقلال جنوب السودان: كل الأطفال يحملون أسلحة، 19 فبراير 2021، <https://bit.ly/3weyepe>



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workers should also be helped reach and secure remote and affected areas.

2. The state party should bring together all the parties to tribal conflicts. Conferences should be held to promote the peace process, stop violence, and release abducted children and women
3. UPR mechanism should provide much technical support to curb tribal fights and reduce their repercussions. An attempt should also be made to increase its preventive capabilities to reduce the spread of diseases, malnutrition, and food insecurity. It should also provide moral and psychological support to cases subjected to sexual violence because of the violence.
4. The government should develop its capabilities to disarm armed militias. It should also be retrained and integrated into the framework of a regular national army, to fulfill peace obligations. An attempt should be made to address the root causes of economic, social, cultural, and political violence. It should enhance the capabilities of humanitarian partners to conduct their activities related to the protection of human rights.