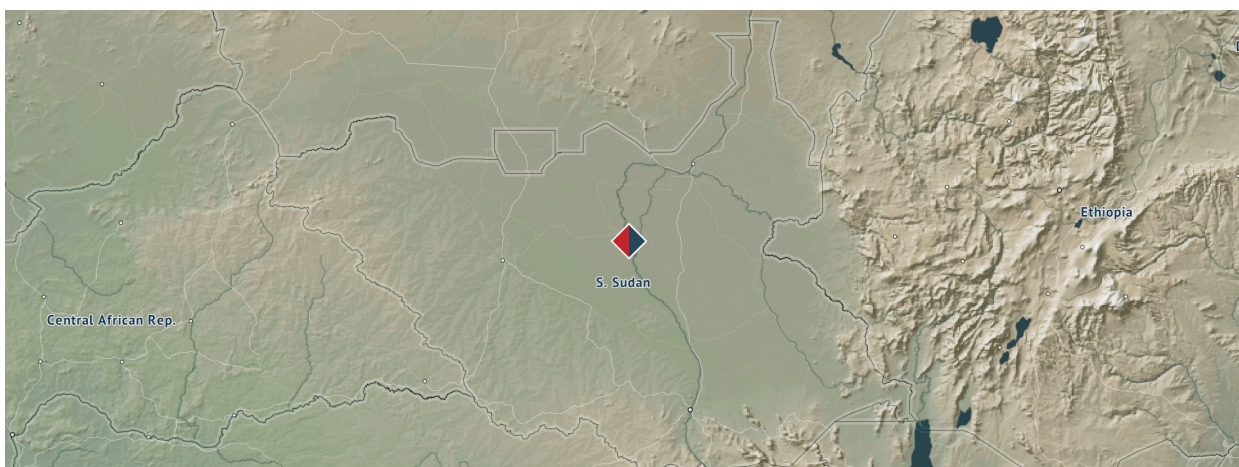




Conflict Factsheet

## Conflict between Dinka and Nuer in South Sudan

Type of conflict Sub	Intensity 4
Conflict Locality Southern Africa	Time 1944 –ongoing
Countries S. Sudan	Resources Agricultural / Pastoral Land, Water



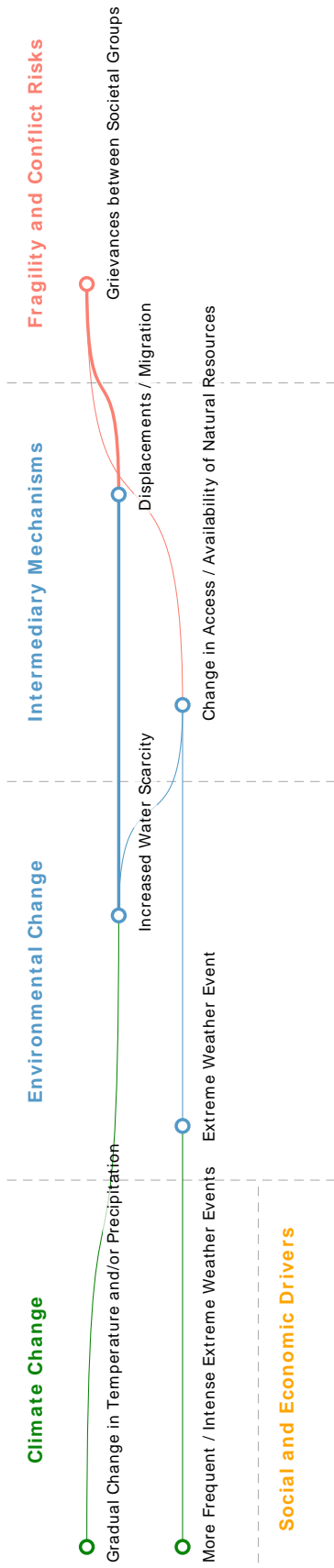
Local resource competition

### Conflict Summary

The Dinka and Nuer, two rival pastoralist groups, have competed over grazing land and water for their cattle in the past. These clashes have usually taken place in a local context without causing massive amounts of fatalities. However, in 2013, the dismissal of the former vice president Riek Machar, a Nuer, by the South Sudanese president Salva Kiir, a Dinka, functioned as a catalyst for mass violence, claiming more than thousand victims.



### Conceptual Model



### Context Factors



Agricultural / Pastoral Land, Water

Water-stressed Area

History of Conflict  
Low Level of Economic Development  
Political Transition  
Weak Institutions



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## Conflict History

Cattle raids and conflicts over pastures and wells between the Dinka and Nuer, South Sudan's two largest ethnic groups, have a long history, although, at times, relations between both communities have been marked by intermarriage and cooperation. Traditionally, cattle raids are a livelihood sustaining practice, which allows restocking herds after droughts. It has also an important cultural function, as it provides the means for young men to get married. Furthermore, access to water and pastures is central for local communities in South Sudan. During the dry season, different sections of the Dinka and Nuer have to migrate in search for wetter places, often infringing on land claimed by other communities, which gives both pretext and opportunity for resource conflicts and cattle raiding. Over the past 30 years this dynamic has been amplified by progressive warming and more frequent droughts in South Sudan ([Richardson, 2011](#)).

### Civil war as an exacerbating factor

Traditional conflicts between Dinka and Nuer have also been exacerbated by the civil war opposing South Sudanese separatists and the government of Sudan. First, the war brought large quantities of heavy weapons to the area, which has made traditional conflicts more lethal. Second, the Sudanese government used the hostility between different South Sudanese groups as a counter-insurgency strategy against the rebels of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), with the result that much of the killing during the civil war took place between the Dinka and Nuer.

### Struggle over political influence

After the signing of the CPA (Comprehensive Peace Agreement) with Sudan in 2005, South Sudan became semi-autonomous and competition between the Dinka and Nuer took place over political influence ([UCDP, 2015](#)). Due to the fact that the Nuer supported the Sudanese government in the civil war, they were seen as not supportive enough of the new South Sudanese government. In 2013 the situation escalated after Salva Kiir, the South Sudanese president and a Dinka dismissed his vice president Riek Machar, a Nuer, on allegations of organizing a coup against him. Initially limited to fighting between loyal and mutinous soldiers, the conflict soon developed into a civilian massacre. Following his dismissal Riek Machar threw his support behind an armed opposition of Nuer rebels and became their leader. This sparked bloodshed between the Dinka and Nuer, which is considered by some to be the next civil war in South Sudan ([Howden, 2013](#)). The South Sudanese army played a central role in this conflict as it is responsible for the majority of civilian deaths.

The exact amount of fatalities remains unclear but the official number of 500 was dismissed by experts. Eye witnesses stated that the real number was in the tens of thousands. Additionally, around 200.000 people were displaced and are looking for shelter in camps set up by the UN and NGO's such as Doctors Without Borders ([Scheen, 2013](#); [Howden, 2013](#); [Thielke, 2014](#); [Rémy, 2014](#)).

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## Resolution Efforts

### Wunlit Peace and Reconciliation Conference



The New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC) has played a central part in facilitating reconciliation meetings between the Dinka and Nuer. In 1998, it held its first people-to-people event between Dinka and Nuer officials in Lokichokio, Kenya, which helped pacifying Dinka and Nuer relations in the eastern part of South Sudan, while fighting continued in the western part of the country. It was followed in 1999 by the NSCC sponsored “Wunlit Peace and Reconciliation Conference” gathering Dinka and Nuer representatives with the support of the SPLM/A and various South Sudanese intellectuals. Following the conference, inter-group violence between Dinka and Nuer ceased. Women and children who were abducted in earlier periods of fighting were returned to their families. Contested grazing and fishing areas as well as trading routes were reopened. In addition, border courts were established and violations of the covenant, which was signed by all parties at the conference, were punished. Furthermore, a guarantee of security was issued to allow people, who had been displaced during the conflict, to return to their homes ([Bradbury et al., 2006](#)).

The Wunlit conference is considered by many as an exemplary case of local peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan, as it succeeded in pacifying Dinka Nuer relations for more than ten years. Yet, waning support by South Sudan’s political elites made the peace process highly vulnerable and massive violence between the Dinka and Nuer erupted again in 2010 ([Bradbury et al., 2006](#); [Africa News Service, 1999](#)).

#### **The Bor Reconciliation and Healing Dialogue**

In August 2014 women of the Nuer and Dinka communities met for the “Bor Reconciliation and Healing Dialogue”. This was the first time since the outbreak of violent conflict in 2010 that a peace conference took place. The conference was spearheaded by local pastors, supported by the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) and hosted by United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). The meeting was described by a participant as an “amazing breakthrough [...] at the people’s level, at the community level, and amongst communities” ([Radio Tamazuj, 2014](#)).

Since the conference there have been no reports of fighting between the two groups. However, it is unlikely that the conflict will be completely resolved in the near future, as several thousand Nuer are still looking for shelter in UN camps in fear of being killed by Dinka troops once they leave the camps.



### Intensities & Influences



#### INTENSITIES

International / Geopolitical Intensity

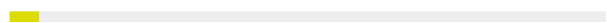


Human Suffering



#### INFLUENCES

Environmental Influences



Societal Influences



Violent Conflict

Yes



Salience with nation

Regional



Mass displacement

More than 100.000 or more than 10% of the country's population are displaced within the country.



Cross Border Mass Displacement

No



### Resolution Success

Reduction in Violence

Violence reduced significantly, but did not cede.



Resolve of displacement problems

There is some success in accommodating the displaced.



Reduction in geographical scope

There has been no reduction in geographical scope.



Increased capacity to address grievance in the future

The capacity to address grievances in the future has increased.



Grievance Resolution

Grievances have been mostly addressed.



Causal Attribution of Decrease in Conflict Intensity

Decrease in conflict intensity at least partially the result of conflict resolution strategies.





## Entry Points for Resilience and Peace Building

### Peacekeeping

2

In 2011 the UN established the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) with a broad mandate that includes the prevention of inter-communal violence and the protection of civilians.

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### Dialogue

3

The Wunlit Peace and Reconciliation Conference as well as the Bor Reconciliation and Healing Dialogue were important steps in reaching a lasting peace in South Sudan.

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## Resources and Materials

### References with URL

[Richardson, T. \(2011\). Pastoral Violence in Jonglei.](#)

[Uppsala Conflict Data Program \(Date of retrieval: 2015/05/18\) UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia, Uppsala University](#)

[Howden, D. \(2013\). South Sudan: the state that fell apart in a week. Juba: The Guardian](#)

[Thielke, T. \(2014\). Krieg um den Südsudan: Bruderkampf im jüngsten Staat der Erde. Juba: Spiegel Online](#)

[Scheen, T. \(2013\). Salva Kiir gegen Riek Machar: Putschversuch in Südsudan. Johannesburg: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung](#)

[Rémy, J.-P. \(2014\). Bloodshed continues in South Sudan as warring groups remain deadlocked. Guardian Weekly](#)

[Bradbury, M., Ryle, J., Medley, M. & Sansculotte-Greenidge, K. \(2006\). Local Peace Processes in Sudan: A Baseline Study](#)

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[Radio Tamazuj \(2014\). Dinka and Nuer women meet for peace in Bor. Bor, South Sudan: Radio Tamazuj](#)

[Kulish, N. \(2014\). New Estimate Sharply Raises Death Toll in South Sudan. New York Times](#)

Further information

<https://factbook.ecc-platform.org/conflicts/natural-ressource-conflict-south-sudan-dinka-vs-nuer>