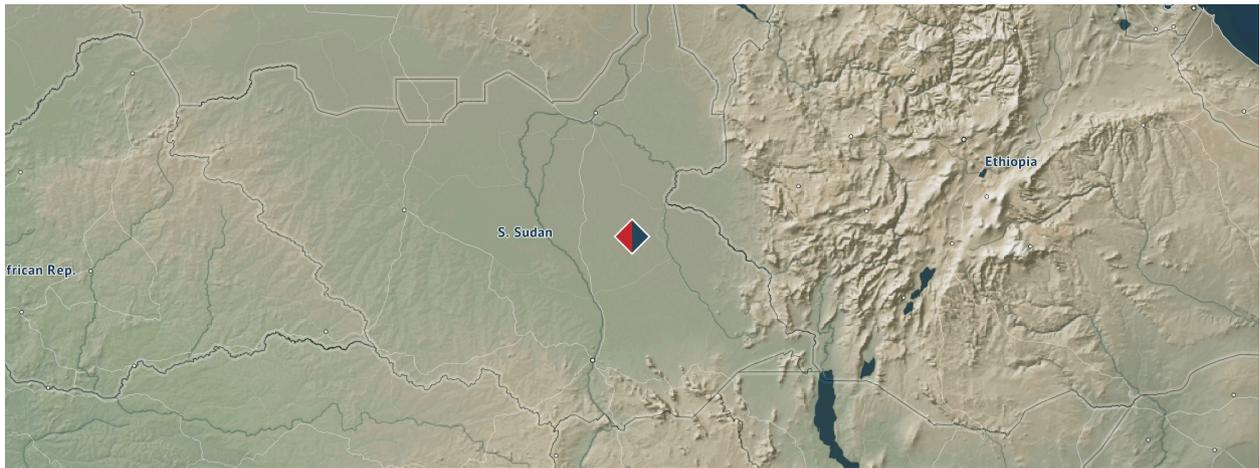




Conflict Factsheet

Conflict between Lou Nuer and Murle in South Sudan

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



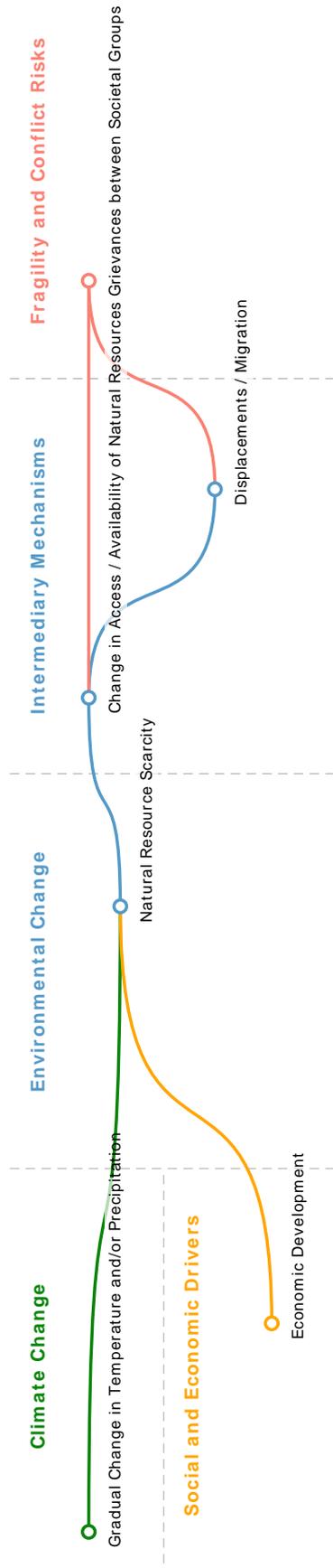
Local resource competition

Conflict Summary

The rivalry between the Lou Nuer and the Murle remains one of the most violent communal conflicts in the world despite numerous resolution attempts by the government, the international community, various Christian churches and national authorities. Both groups share a long history of resource conflicts and livestock raiding, compounded by rising temperatures and increasing variability of rainfall in South Sudan, but also by the wider political and military dynamics of the South Sudanese state building process.



Conceptual Model



Context Factors



Agricultural / Pastoral Land, Water

Dysfunctional Resource Management
Water-stressed Area

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



Conflict History

Historically, cattle raids have been common between the Lou Nuer and Murle in Jonglei State, South Sudan, as cattle raiding is central to the nomadic people's way of life, not only as a drought coping strategy, but also as a social and cultural practice (see [Communal conflicts in South Sudan](#)). However, the nature of cattle raiding has changed drastically in recent decades as the South Sudanese civil war brought large quantities of heavy weapons to the area and contributed to an increased commercialisation of cattle raiding. Both factors have exacerbated traditional conflicts between the Lou Nuer and Murle. Violence between both groups reached its peak from 2009 to 2012, claiming more than 3000 lives during that period (UCDP, 2015). It displaced about 50,000 people during Christmas 2011 alone (Knaup, 2012). Fighting between the two communities continued in the following years with little or no decrease in intensity and despite resolution attempts by various actors (McCallum and Okech, 2013; UCDP, 2015).

Progressive warming and land use conflicts

Access to water and pastures is central for local communities in Jonglei State, and the Lou Nuer are at a geographical disadvantage. Living in a water poor area, they are forced to move into the territories of other groups during the dry season, which can give both pretext and opportunity for conflicts over shared resources and cattle raiding. Over the past 30 years, this dynamic has been amplified by progressive warming and prolonged dry seasons in South Sudan, which have frequently brought the Lou Nuer in close proximity to the Murle (Richardson, 2011).

Increased militarisation and mutual suspicions

Yet, Lou Nuer and Murle do not only fight over cattle and access to water, but also as a result of political discriminations. Both the Murle and the Lou Nuer in Jonglei State feel economically and politically marginalised by the politically powerful Bor Dinka; especially the Murle feel threatened as they have little representation in the local government. Although both communities have supported counter-insurgency movements against a common enemy - the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) - during the north-south civil war, and then again during the 2010 elections in South Sudan, the increased militarisation of both communities in the course of the war has strained their relations and given rise to mutual fears and suspicions (McCallum and Okech, 2013; Richardson, 2011).

Weak presence of the state

However, the most important reason for communal violence in Jonglei State is the weak presence of the South Sudanese State and its inability to provide security to local populations. In 2005, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the SPLA and the Government of Sudan unintentionally created a "power vacuum". The SPLA, which had partly acted as a provider of security in controlled territories during the war, entered in a phase of internal consolidation and accommodation of rival army factions, but civilian policing did not replace its deterrence role at the local level. Meanwhile, decades of civil war and the proliferation of weapons across Jonglei State has undermined traditional authorities and conflict mitigation institutions, with military commanders fighting on behalf of their community and traditional authority figures losing influence over armed young men (Richardson, 2011; Ferrie, 2012).



Resolution Efforts

Disarmament

The SPLA has responded to communal violence in Jonglei State with several disarmament campaigns, most of which were unsuccessful and sometimes even worsened the violence, since the troops in charge of the disarmament were to a large extent Nuer, who used the opportunity to take revenge for earlier attacks by the Murle. Rape and torture were reported, which further discouraged Murle youths to turn in their weapons.

In addition, some disarmament attempts have been unequal, leaving disarmed groups more vulnerable to attacks. Organizations voicing concerns over human rights violations were intimidated by the government and pressured to not report on the subject. On the other hand, inadequate capacities have prevented the SPLA from building buffer zones between the warring groups (McCallum and Okech, 2013; Ferrie, 2012).

Church-led initiatives

The South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) initiated the Jonglei Peace Process in 2012 to promote dialogue and reconciliation between local communities and military leaders. Although it succeeded in temporarily halting violence, it has failed to stimulate reconciliation and peacebuilding between the involved communities and is met with skepticism by many Murle. Several other peace processes have been assisted by local and international groups, including AECOM, Pact South Sudan, and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) (McCallum and Okech, 2013).

Humanitarian action

The UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) is providing logistic support to governmental and humanitarian organisations. However, the international community has not put adequate pressure on the GoSS to protect local populations (McCallum and Okech, 2013). Humanitarian action is hampered by low capacities and persistent insecurity, which lead to high staff turnover and only sporadic presence in crisis areas. In some cases, assistance to the Murle has provoked resentment by other communities. Furthermore, too little development work has been done by the government and international donors. This is partly due to the fact that most of the financial resources have been invested in short term crisis support, rather than in long term infrastructural development and in the provision of formal education and job opportunities (Ferrie, 2012; McCallum and Okech, 2013).

Remaining challenges

Some progress has been realized in bringing institutions closer to the local people, but important logistical and security challenges remain. Weak police presence as well as negative experiences with past disarmament strategies have left communities skeptical about the government's ability and willingness to ensure their security (Ferrie, 2012; McCallum & Okech, 2013). Considering that security, development, state-community and inter-community relations in Jonglei State are deeply intertwined; a lasting solution to its local conflicts will largely depend on the effectiveness and accountability of the SPLA and governmental agencies.



Intensities & Influences



INTENSITIES

International / Geopolitical Intensity



Human Suffering



INFLUENCES

Environmental Influences



Societal Influences



Violent Conflict

Yes



Salience with nation

Regional



Resolution Success

Reduction in Violence

There was no reduction in violence.

-

Resolve of displacement problems

Displacement continues to cause discontent and/or other problems.

-

Reduction in geographical scope

There has been no reduction in geographical scope.

-

Increased capacity to address grievance in the future

There is no increased capacity to address grievances in the future.

-

Grievance Resolution

Grievances have been partially addressed.



Causal Attribution of Decrease in Conflict Intensity

There has been no reduction in intensity

-



Entry Points for Resilience and Peace Building

Disarmament, demobilisation & reintegration

The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) has conducted several unsuccessful disarmament campaigns in Jonglei State.

1

Dialogue

The South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) has initiated the Jonglei Peace Process in 2012 to promote dialogue and reconciliation between local communities and military leaders.

2

Humanitarian & Development aid

The UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) is providing logistic support to governmental and humanitarian organisations.

1

Resources and Materials

Conflict References

[Climatic Changes and Communal Conflicts in South Sudan](#)

References with URL

[Uppsala Conflict Data Program \(Date of retrieval: 2015/05/18\) UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia: www.ucdp.uu.se/database, Uppsala University](#)

[Knaup, H. \(2012\). Südsudan: Die blutige Rache der Lou Nuer. Nairobi: Spiegel Online](#)

[McCallum, J. & Okech, A. \(2013\). Drivers of conflict in Jonglei State. Humanitarian Exchange Magazine Issue 57 May 2013](#)

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

Further information

<https://factbook.ecc-platform.org/conflicts/lou-nuer-murle-south-sudan>