

Enough Project: Spoils of War, Spoilers of Peace: Changing the Calculus of South Sudan's Deadly Conflict Justine Fleischner 24 September 2014

South Sudan's civil war, which has exacted a terrible toll on its civilian population, has its origins in a power struggle between factions aligned with President Salva Kiir and those who have joined former Vice President Riek Machar. Despite repeated pledges to put down their weapons, both sides have demonstrated a clear commitment to a military “solution” instead of a negotiated settlement. The country’s competing privileged elites are sacrificing their own peoples’ lives to secure the political and economic benefits—including massive state-corroding corruption—derived from control of the state. In his opening remarks at the latest round of peace talks underway in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, chief negotiator Seyoum Mesfin told the parties, “If you are committed to peace, you will not find it through the barrel of the gun, but around this table.”

(...)

In the absence of regionally- and internationally-enforced targeted sanctions, the warring parties appear to see no reason to adjust their behavior. Alongside a renewed push for regionally-led sanctions, deeper diplomatic engagement and stronger support for South Sudanese civil society are necessary in order to prevent a backroom deal brokered by regional heads of state that may temporarily freeze the conflict, but will not address the root causes of war in the world’s newest and perhaps most fragile state.

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