POLITICAL BREAKDOWN IN SOUTH SUDAN: UNITED NATIONS AND A NEW CHALLENGE TO HUMAN SECURITY (2014 - 2018)

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Introduction

Located in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Sudan gained independence from Sudan on July 9, 2011, following a conflict that lasted more than five decades resulting in more than two million deaths and thousands of internally displaced persons. Independence was the climax of a long negotiation process, intermediated by the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) since 2005, between the Government of Khartoum and the South People Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), group that captained the yearnings of the people of the South region of the then Sudan. The dimension of the conflict made possible the conditions for the preparation of a referendum, which was held in January 2011, when the inhabitants of the South decided to separate from the rest of the country (Maru 2014).

After independence, South Sudan officially covered an area of 658 thousand square kilometers, with the capital settled in the city of Juba, and experienced a rapid but chaotic process in an attempt to shape its institutions and its legal status. In this scenario, the SPLM became the basis of the young government, facing innumerable challenges to consolidate its legitimacy and provide the long-awaited welfare to the population that currently is around 11 million inhabitants (Olowu 2011; Ensor 2013).

Within this period, Sudan sought a cooperative policy towards the young republic of South Sudan. However, friction points generated by the demarcation of borders, the use of hydrographic networks, the negotiation

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of external debt and the economic exploitation of oil worsened the relations between the countries (Freitas 2013).

In the light of the political and economic fragility of South Sudan, soon after independence, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution No. 96 (2011), activating the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), in order to promote security and conditions for the development of the young nation. In this effort, the mission established a multidisciplinary structure, based on interagency action, integrating its civil, military and police components, with priority being the protection of civilians (United Nations 2011).

Pari passu, South Sudan, as well as suffering from post-independence friction with Sudan and a chronic underdevelopment scenario, has been volatilized by a spiral of internal conflicts from power disputes. In December 2013, the clash between President Salva Kiir and Vice-President Riek Machar led to the breakdown of government and the division of the armed forces into two opposing factions. Then, the crisis overflowed into a conflict, intensified by inter-tribal violence, lack of infrastructure and corruption (Olowu 2011; Maru 2014).

Immersed in this new challenge, UNMISS directs its efforts to make the contenders negotiate peace and, above all, to protect civilians. Thus, the use of force was modeled in the light of a Civil Protection Strategy, in the political, physical and social dimensions.

This article aims to examine the context of the political breakdown in South Sudan, highlighting its effects on human security in the country, and to analyze the response of the United Nations, with a focus on civilian protection, in the period 2014-2018. In this light, the theoretical hypothesis was that "within the framework of a United Nations peace mission, the implementation of a strategy for the protection of civilians corroborates human security in the region of crisis and/or conflict."

In this effort, after this introduction, the methodological considerations about the investigation are presented, followed by a theoretical and conceptual frame that fits the analysis. Subsequently, is the political breakdown in South Sudan, highlighting its effects on human security and, following the central question, the United Nations response focused on the protection of civilians. Finally, we present the conclusive aspects, illuminated by the theoretical hypothesis.

Methodological Considerations

In order to fulfill the objective of this investigation, a research program was developed based on a qualitative perspective and operationalized through a hypothetical-deductive method. In this effort, two sets of procedure techniques were adopted.

At first, the techniques of documentary and bibliographic research were used, and a literature review was implemented. In this sense, primary and secondary sources were explored, using electronic research based on the following descriptors: southern sudan; political breakdown; United Nations; human security; protection of civilians; and use of force. As inclusion criteria, the sources published in English, Spanish and Portuguese were considered in the period from 2011 to the present, taking the year of 2011 as the basis for marking the independence of South Sudan (reference to the flow of official information about Republic of South Sudan). In addition, open questionnaires submitted to Experts at the United Nations Mission in South Sudan were applied, covering eleven participants – Brazilian and international.

In a second moment, a case study was implemented, considering that in the dynamics of the political rupture in South Sudan "[...] the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly defined" (Yin 2001, 31). Thus, it has been used *process tracing* (Bennett e Checkel 2015, 06), in order to illuminate the historical explanation, not only as a description of facts, but to support the explanation of events that degraded human security and generated a UN response.

Based on this methodological basis, the investigation proceeded using the scope of human security and civilian protection, outlined in section 3. In a chain-linked manner, the status of human security and the protection of civilians were analyzed, identifying critical events, deteriorations and contributions from 2014 to 2018

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The post-Cold War world scenario has been impacted by increasingly volatile threats, fueled by a multiplicity of domestic frictions and implying a permanent sense of insecurity. In this context, the human being and his protection have become increasingly vulnerable, instigating the discussion about safety and its nuances (Williams 2008).

Evans e Sahnoun (2002) point out that the failures of UN-led operations – in Somalia (1992), Rwanda (1994) and Bosnia (1995) – have intensified the discussion about humanitarian intervention, particularly in regard to the principle of non-intervention and possible limits to the sovereignty of a State in the face of violence perpetrated against its population. On these occasions, missions were unable to protect civilians from imminent physical violence, leading to the deaths of thousands of innocent people (Holt, Taylor e Kelly 2010).

Historically, the perspective of the *Protection of Civilians (PoC)* was born out of the horrors of the wars of the 19th and 20th centuries, understood as the principle that non-combatants should be preserved to the fullest extent from the violence of war. This concept, known as Narrow PoC, can be found in International Humanitarian Law, both in the Geneva Conventions (1949) and in its additional protocols (1977). In addition, in Bosnia (1995), apart from the military forces, new actors started to take action in favor of PoC, in the case of the humanitarian agencies that operated in response to the lack of food and infrastructure in the region, developing a second perspective, *Broad PoC* (Breakey et al. 2012).

Because of the genocides in Rwanda (1994) and Srebrenica (1995), the international community deepened the debate on the protection of civilians, instigating multinational actions to develop responses , which could mitigate the recurrence of those scenarios. In the preamble to this debate, in 1994 the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) presented the concept of Human Security, conceived as an integral and multidisciplinary approach to individual security, integrating seven dimensions: economic, food, health, environmental, community and political (United Nations 1994).

Subsequently, in 1998, the theme gained strength in the report of the UN Secretary-General entitled "*The causes of conflicts and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa*", in which Kofi Annan highlighted the PoC perspective as a humanitarian imperative. In particular, the dividends of the debate focused on the scope of two documents: *Secretary-General's first report to the Security Council on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (1999)*; and *Report of the Panel on UN Peace Operations/Brahimi Report (2000)* (Breakey et al 2012).

In 1999, the UN Security Council, for the first time in history, inserted the task of "protecting civilians against imminent threat of physical violence" in a mandate – the peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone. Since then, the organization has evoked Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations to establish mandates for the protection of civilians (Lilly 2012).

In 2005, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee established a mechanism called the Cluster Approach to harmonize the interagency effort. In addition, the Global Protection Cluster has been set up, chaired by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, considering that the influx of internally displaced people, refugees and humanitarian crises can be triggered in the context of complex emergencies in which the State is unable or unwilling to protect civilians (Francis, Popovski e Sampford 2012).

Moving forward, in 2008, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Field Support (DFS) released a document entitled UN DPKO and DFS Principles and Guidelines, identifying the protection of civilians as a central task for peacekeeping. Subsequently, the operationalization of PoC came in 2009 after a consolidated study in the form of a Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The document welcomed five priorities for PoC: ensuring compliance with obligations under international law; reinforce compliance with these obligations by non-state armed groups; strengthening the role of peace missions; optimize humanitarian access; and increase accountability for humanitarian violations (Williams 2013).

In 2010, furthering its operationalization, the DPKO/DFS launched the PoC Operational Concept, introducing the approach called Three-tier Approach. In this light, peace missions should formulate their strategies for civilian protection, synergistically, at three levels – protection through dialogue and/or political engagement; physical protection *per se*; and protection through the establishment of a stable environment – noting that:

> The link between the protection of civilians and peacekeeping mandates is central. First, the safety and security of civilians is critical to the legitimacy and credibility of peacekeeping missions. Second, the protection of civilians is critical component for a sustainable political peace (Holt, Taylor e Kelly 2010).

In addition, one observed the continuous implementation of the Civilian Protection Policy, which was instrumental in twelve peace missions that, as early as 2012, were required to protect civilians in their mandates. In this scope, missions were undertaken: in Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Ivory Coast, Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Lebanon, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan and South Sudan (Lilly 2012).

Finally, in 2015, the DPKO/DFS Policy on Civil Protection was issued, bringing the first revision of the PoC Operational Concept (2010). The policy also indicated to the various missions the need to customize their own strate-

gies, using the Three-tier Approach, in light of the peculiarities of each conflicting factors: socioeconomic, political and cultural. In this sense, Copeland (2012) emphasizes that the military approach to PoC involves kinetic actions and the use of military apparatus to impose security and establish a peaceful environment. For their part, Macdermott e Hanssen (2010) indicate that the approach of humanitarian actors to PoC offers a set of actions related to the dimensions of human security. Therefore, in order to align such approaches, civilian protection must have an integral strategy, connecting the components of the mission. In short, the protection of civilians is a multidisciplinary effort, considering that the conflict areasare full of threats to human security, ranging from non-observance of Human Rights to the lack of government and culminating in physical violence.

Political Break and its Effects on Human Security (2014-2018)

By the end of 2013, in South Sudan, a civil war erupted when President Salva Kiir accused Vice-President Riek Machar of conspiring to overthrow him. At that moment, SPLM rebel factions, loyal to Machar, took control of several cities of the country, causing clashes with SPLM troops, loyal to Kiir (BBC News 2018).

In this scenario, Rolandsen et al. (2015) report that the fighting broke out in Juba and spread throughout the country, forcing the population to seek protection in the various UNMISS bases. In the face of violence, thousands of civilians were killed or fled from conflict areas. In particular, two soldiers and several civilians were killed during an attack by a faction against the UN base in the Akobo region of the Upper Nile state near the Ethiopian border (image 1). In this dynamic, the armed forces of Uganda intervened in support of the Government of Salva Kiir.

Image 1 - Internally displaced persons and refugees (March 2014).
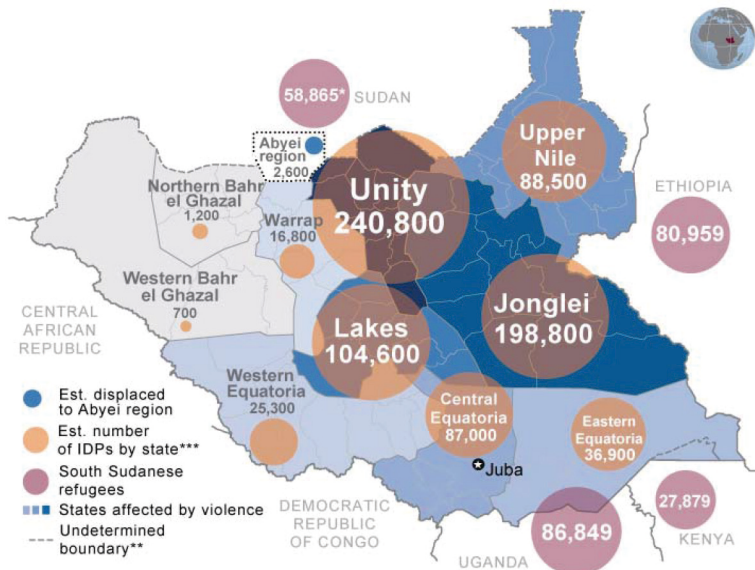
The boundaries and names shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. **Final boundary between the Republic of South Sudan and Republic of Sudan has not yet been determined. Final status of the Abyei area is not yet determined. *New arrivals from South Sudan (NOT REFUGEES). ***Verification of the IDP figures is a work in progress.
Data Sources: OCHA, UNMISS, IOM, UNHCR, RRC and partners.   OCHA South Sudan, 27 Mar 2014.

Source: UN (2014a).

By applying the *process tracing*, it was observed that the month of December of 2013 represented a breaking point in the conditions of human security. Since then, **physical security** has been deeply affected and the population has been victimized by the perverse effects of violence perpetrated by the parties to the conflict. As a result, both the number of internally displaced people and the number of refugees from South Sudan increased sharply (United Nations 2017b).

In the meantime, at the end of 2013, the faction called *SPLM in Opposition* (SPLM-IO), led by Riek Machar, was created as an instrument of contestation to the Government of Salva Kiir.. The movement was composed of a number of political and ethinical groups, including the political elite Nuer (in exile) and an armed force, located in the heartlands of the ethnical groups in the states of Jonglei, Upper Nile and Unity (image 1).

Particularly, James (2015) reports that one of the strongholds supporting Machar was located near the Thar Jath oil field, Unity state (image 2), the scene of the initial fighting in December 2013, when the 4th SPLM rebeled, led by General James Koang . As a result, the oilfield operator, Greater Pioneer Operating Company, was forced to shut down production (resumed in early 2013, after the cessation of trade with Sudan).

Image 2 – Conflict outbreaks and oilfields (2013-2015).

Map 3 **Major zones of conflict around oilfields, 2013–15**
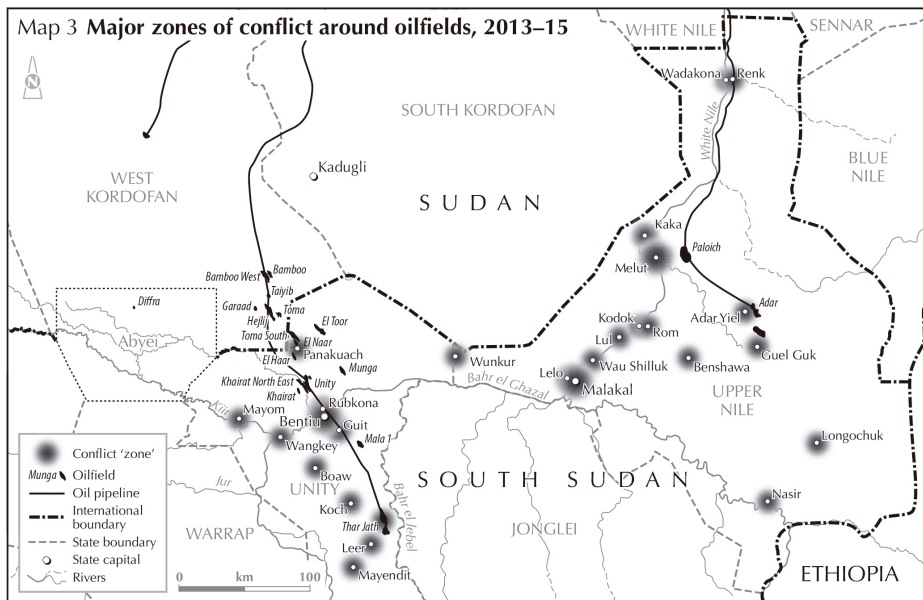
Source: James (2015, 39).

In this scenario, oil became a crucial aspect of the conflict, both for Kiir, who relied on oil revenues to maintain the support of the army and government, and Machar, who sought to strengthen his political-military role by challenging the Government of Salva Kiir.

In January 2014, a ceasefire between the Government and the SPL-M-IO was signed in an attempt of reconciliation. However, the compromise was broken several times in the following weeks, leading to a new round of negotiations in February 2014. Despite the new attempt, the talks were unsuccessful and the clashes resumed, causing more than 1 million civilians to come to situation of internally displaced people by April 2014 (BBC News 2018).

Worried with the oil revenues, as early as March 2014, SPLM troops retook the Unity and Toma South oil fields (image 2). However, the limitations of security and access to the region, coupled with the damage caused to the export infrastructure by the December 2013 shutdown, prevented a resumption of oil production (James 2015). Also in the Unity region in April 2014, UN reports revealed that pro-Machar armed groups sacked the city of Bentiu (image 2), spreading violence in the region.

As a result of this scenario, in May 2014, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2155 and renewed UNMISS's mandate for another year. The resolution demanded the re-establishment of negotiations between the government and the opposition, in addition to compliance with the agreements signed in January 2014. Furthermore, it expressed the readiness of the UN to employ the necessary measures against those that could threaten peace and stability (United Nations 2014b).

At the same time, in the international arena, there was pressure from the Security Council, which was demanding a definitive solution to the conflict. Thus, in August 2014, in a further attempt to reach an agreement, the peace talks were resumed through mediation by the Government of Ethiopia in Addis Ababa. However, rounds of negotiations dragged on for months as the civil war continued, impacting thousands of civilians (Center for Civilians in Conflict 2015).

Pursuing oil revenue, in April 2015, SPLM troops began a new offensive to retake the Bentiu City of SPLM-IO. At the time, Salva Kiir evidenced the government's plans to restart oil production, but there was no progress (James 2015).

Finally, in August 2015, after 20 months of violence, the Government and the SPLM-IO signed a peace agreement, intermediated by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). However, despite the dialogue between the parties, James (2015) points out that the agreement was fragile and the aspirations it included to improve the management of oil lacked more robust control mechanisms. Consequently, the oil regions would continue to be a central point of friction, whether political or military (Rolandsen et al. 2015).

In April 2016, as a result of the IGAD-mediated agreement, Machar returned to Juba and was installed as the first Vice-President under a coalition government. However, as early as July 2016, Machar was dismissed after the resurgence of the conflicts and the suspicion by Kiir of Machar involvement in this situation. As a consequence, Machar left South Sudan and returned to exile, destroying the prospect of ongoing peace (BBC News 2018).

In the wake of this impasse, in July 2016, there was an intense wave of clashes in Juba, including attacks on civilians, as well as against UN personnel and material. The situation led to an investigation by the Secretary-General and, as a result, in November 2016, the UN dismissed UNMISS Force Commander General Johnson Mogoa, from Kenya, for the mission's inability to protect civilians during wave of violence. In response, the Government of Kenya withdrew its troops from UNMISS.

As early as December 2016, monitoring the escalation of conflict, a UN Human Rights Commission reported that a process of ethnic cleansing has taken place in various regions of the country, a claim denied by the Government. On January 12, 2017, the number of displaced persons in search of refuge, along with the bases of the mission, was more than 224,000 civilians (UN 2017a).

Then, in February 2017, worsening the scenario, there was a food crisis caused by the lack of basic items, covering several regions and spreading the hunger across the country. The UN pointed to such a situation as a humanitarian catastrophe provoked by civil war and economic collapse, weakening the population and slowing the expected development (United Nations 2016).

Applying *process tracing*, with regard to **food security**, domestic conflict posed a challenge to maintaining the flow of food and basic items. The African Development Bank (2018) indicated a significant decline in the import of goods and services in the period 2014-2016 and a trend of resumption of imports from 2016, already leveraged by attempts of agreement between the countries. This situation led to food crises, as well as an increase in the number of food smuggling activities, whose prices have risen sharply. As a consequence, the population, especially the displaced, came to depend on the support offered by Protection Cluster.

Advancing in the *process tracing*, it was verified that food security was associated with **health security**, which did not improve until 2015, and only 6.7% of the country's population had access to sewage and latrine networks, according to African Development Bank (2018). The sanitation situation was aggravated by the overburdening of the already incipient health structure of the country due to the large influx of wounded and dead from the conflict. Thus, UNMISS and the Protection Cluster were essential to mitigate the weakness of health security by activating rapid impact projects that met medical and sanitation demands.

Then, in May 2017, as a result of international pressure and dialogue promoted by UNMISS, Salva Kiir declared a unilateral ceasefire, instigating

a national reconciliation with the aim of ending a conflict that had already lasted three years. In this context, applying the *process tracing* on the **community security** perspective, it is verified that the will to unify the country was already in force since July 9, 2011, under the aegis of the Nationality Law, granting the automatic right of citizenship to all individuals with one of the progenitors, grandparents or great-grandparents born within the territory of South Sudan. However, Ensor (2015) points out that the young nation is only slightly more than a geographic expression as it contains more than 60 cultural and linguistic groups, each having a stronger sense of citizenship in its tribes than in the nation. Yet, the tense relationship between youth and government has become a cause for concern, because of frustration over government responses to the needs of young people. In this context, women have played a key role in community security, increasing their social and political participation, reaching 28.5% of seats in parliament as of 2015, according to data from the African Development Bank (2018).
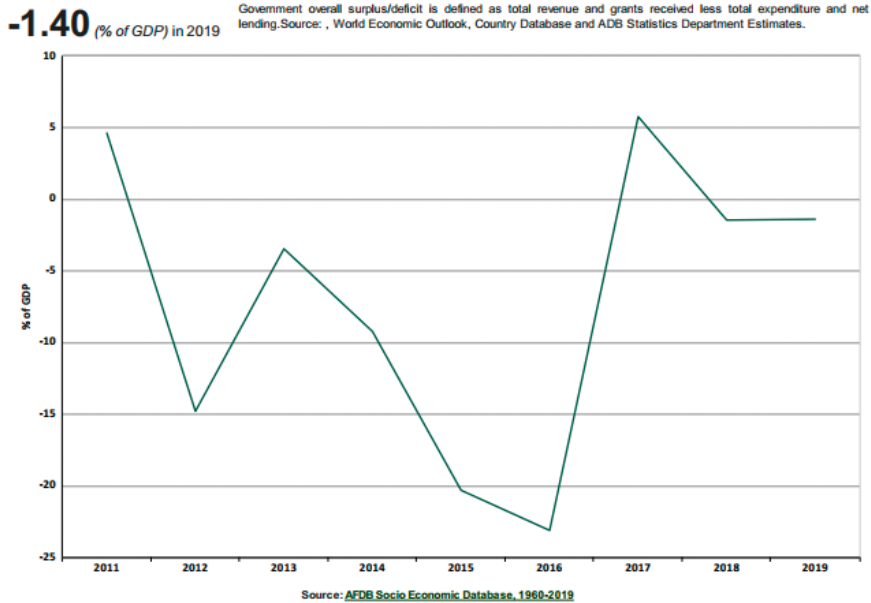
Pressing for reconciliation in early 2018, the international community scrutinized the South African oil sector for its alleged lack of transparency in the use of state revenues. In particular, the US government has imposed economic sanctions on oil sector actors in order to contain both official agent corruption and the use of oil revenue to finance the conflict (Al Jazeera News 2018).

Finally, in August 2018, Kiir signed a power-sharing agreement with Machar and other opposition groups in an attempt to end the civil war. The agreement predicted Machar's return to government by forming a coalition cabinet as one of five planned vice presidents. Notably, the agreement was mediated by Sudan, which was interested in oil production, since that after the independence of the South, Sudan would be entitled to more than $ 3 billion in oil revenues, of which $ 1.2 billion were part of the debt (BBC News 2018).

Next, South Sudan announced the resumption of production in the state of Unity (image 2), one of the country's five strategic oil regions. In addition, the government sought to increase Upper Nile oil production (image 2) to 200,000 barrels per day. The purpose was to raise national production from 130,000 to 300,000 barrels per day, increasing revenues by $ 5 billion and thus compensating for the more than $ 4 billion lost since December 2013.

Image 3 - Fiscal Balance of the Government of South Sudan.

South Sudan - Central government, Fiscal Balance (% of GDP)

-1.40 *(% of GDP)* in 2019   Government overall surplus/deficit is defined as total revenue and grants received less total expenditure and net lending.Source: , World Economic Outlook, Country Database and ADB Statistics Department Estimates.

Source: AFDB Socio Economic Database, 1960-2019

Source: African Development Bank (2018).

Applying the *process tracing*, it was observed that the **economic security** in South Sudan in the period 2014-2018 was impacted by another interruption in the oil production, in view of the spiral of violence that has taken control of the country. Thus, even with oil production partially resumed in March 2014, the country's economic security was weakened, as several companies opted to close their operations. As a consequence, the African Development Bank (2018) identified a fiscal deficit in the period 2014-2016 (figure 3), preventing the establishment of a state budget, and in 2016 the situation began to indicate an improvement, as a result of the agreement signed in August 2015.

Still in the economic dimension, degradation was amplified by poverty, lack of basic infrastructure, intertribal violence and corruption. In this context, in the seven years before the start of the civil war (considering production from 2006 to 2013), oil brought more than $ 13 billion in revenue. However, it is estimated that more than 4 billion dollars have been stolen since independence. As an example, still in May 2012, Salva Kiir had to write

to 75 high-ranking government officials demanding payment of stolen oil receipts, offering amnesty in return (Cust e Harding 2013).

Thus, corruption is perceived as the major impediment to development, and it is essential that South Sudan incorporates civil society and the media in activating anticorruption strategies. It is necessary to be alert to the damage that corruption can cause and even how it can block a solution to the conflict. Otherwise, its effects could prolong instability, national frustration and violence, since the corruption process has the potential to degrade the institutions legitimacy (Riak 2013).

As a consequence, applying *process tracing* in the field of **political security**, the period 2014-2018 focused institutional challenges in the face of constraints to the construction of governance structures. Institutions were created from scratch, while new laws and policies are still being discussed. In particular, the country continues the revision of its constitution of transition with the objective of obtaining a permanent constitution. One of the impasses has been whether the constitution should contain devices that contemplate power sharing, and whether they should be formal or informal. On the other hand, there is the perception that the constitution must focus on decentralization, despite the concern that federalism may erode national unity (Villiers 2014).

New Challenge for Civilian Protection (2014-2018)

Since its activation in 2011, UNMISS's mandate has established the possibility of using force to stop threats and protect civilians under imminent risk of physical violence. In the operationalization of this effort, a Protection of Civilians Strategy (United Nations 2012) was implemented. However, as a result of the political disruption, the mandate of the mission, which involved supporting the Government of South Sudan for human security and national development, came to deal with the contingency of providing shelter for civilians encapsulated by conflict. Thus, the *modus operandi* hitherto adopted by UNMISS was challenged by the resurgence of the degree of violence in the country, starting in 2014, causing the remodeling of the performance of its components.

As a result of the conflict, tens of thousands of civilians converged on UN bases to seek refuge. Since then, UNMISS has faced a different situation from those faced in any other peacekeeping mission (United Nations 2015). The difficulty of coordination has been accentuated, especially in view of the

multiple contingencies, with the *modus operandi* being refurbished, prioritizing the reception of civilians in the mission bases – PoC Sites[2].

In particular, with regard to the interaction of the components of the mission, the chaotic situation resulting from the crisis intensified divergences between the civilian and military components, mainly at the tactical level. A weakness of command and control was evident to deal with contingencies, aggravated by the difficulty of keeping up with ongoing threats and by the imprecision of indicators about the responsive actions implemented. Thus, mission components were challenged to manage protection, both within and outside the UNMISS bases, in a scenario of massive violence[3].

Violence, although of political origin, was often fought along ethnic lines, and outside Juba, concentrating on rural areas of the Upper Nile state (image 2). On many occasions, civilians have been deliberately targeted, in addition to being subjected to sexual violence, forced displacement, destruction of property and theft of livestock. Because of this threat, the remodeling of PoC Strategy contemplated actions, responsive and preventive, in the political, physical and social dimensions[4].

In the **political dimension**, protection was conducted through high-level negotiation, involving IGAD actors, established by the international community. In addition, the US and Chinese Governments, separately and through UN, have played a significant role in easing the conflict. *Pari passu*, since 2014, the Security Council has extended UNMISS's mandate successively, with the last extension valid until March 15, 2019. It also demanded that the parties end the hostilities and agree to use all appropriate measures, including the military embargo, against those who oppose peace (United Nations 2014b).

Additionally, the Security Council maintained UNMISS human resources in the 18,983-member ceiling, including the regional protection force of up to 4,000 troops. Likewise, the Council has requested the Secretary General to work to accelerate the generation of assets and resources to sustain and optimize UNMISS, in the light of a budget of US $ 1,081,788,400.00.

Nowadays, under the aegis of Chapter VII of the UN Charter, Mr. David Shearer, from New Zealand, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and General Frank Mushyo, from Rwanda, Force Commander, have advanced in order to make the management of the protection of civilians and

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2 Information provided by Experts at UNMISS (september 2018).

3 Information provided by Experts at UNMISS (september 2018).

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the easing of conflict. Furthermore, the preparation of a regional protection force, authorized to use robust protection measures, is in progress to enable the movement in Juba.

In the **physical dimension**, in the face of the spiral of domestic violence, protection was obtained, mostly through reactive and preemptive actions, aiming at the establishment of safe environments, based on the configuration of PoC Sites and the reception of civilians in the bases of the mission. Consequently, the conduct of kinetic, preventive and dissuasive actions began to be observed on a smaller scale, as an effort outside the bases of the mission (United Nations 2015).

It should be noted that South Sudan is a country the size of France, with only 320 kilometers of paved roads and 83% of the population settled in rural areas. Thus, inevitably, much of UNMISS's actions were done by air, particularly during the rainy season which made the few existing roads impassable. However, the military component emphasized that air assets were not sufficient to meet the demand for protection. Soon, the mission faced obstacles to project force in the areas affected by the conflicts, implying in the influx of civilians to PoC Sites (Center for Civilians in Conflict 2015).

Apart from that, the number of displaced people has grown much more than the worse scenario visualized. In the state of Bentiu (image 2), initial planning for 2015 was to accommodate up to 75,000 people, however, by August the camp had already received more than 110,000 people and already planned the contingency to handle 150,000 people in October . Already in the Malakal state (image 2), the PoC Site should receive up to 20 thousand people, but received about 50 thousand displaced persons. However, even in the face of recurrent contingencies and incipient infrastructure, both the Protection Cluster and UNMISS were able to house a significant number of civilians (United Nations 2015).

On the other hand, the mission was criticized for its speed of response, partly because of the limited and overburdened resources, demanding greater participation by the humanitarian community. In addition to the demands for external protection, the internal security of PoC Sites has proved to be a unique challenge. In this effort, the military component of the mission was responsible for securing external perimeters, while the police component administered internal security, with the exception of incidents requiring more incisive use of force[5].

In this context, it is worth noting the episode in the PoC Site of the City of Malakal (image 2), which occurred on February 17, 2016, when

5   Information provided by Experts at UNMISS (september 2018).

violence erupted among displaced persons of different ethnic groups and continued until the following afternoon. Result of violence and a fire in the PoC Site – 35% of the shelters were destroyed, about 65 people were killed, 108 were injured and more than 29,000 displaced people were at risk. Also, there were indications that external military forces acted in the eruption of the violence. The mission did not respond to the crisis effectively, since on the night of the incident and the following morning, it was not part of the humanitarian response, acting only on physical security. The rigid structure of UNMISS prevented an efficient response, as its humanitarian actors depended on the security apparatus (Medecins Sans Frontieres 2016).

Next, following the preventive action, from April to June 2015, the mission launched Operation Unity II, with the purpose of establishing regular long-term patrols, air patrols and occupation of temporary operation bases in the Unity state (image 2). The operation highlighted new options for protecting civilians in their areas of origin, facilitating humanitarian access and thus reducing the influx to PoC Sites. However, the logistical limitations have hampered the accomplishment of this type of action (Center for Civilians in Conflict 2015).

In general, in the physical dimension, because of the conflict, violence became tolerated, leading to cases of rape and assault not being considered serious. As a result, human security has degraded, making the modus operandi of civilians in PoC Sites the main response of the mission, which increasingly lacked a more robust protection capability[6].

Finally, in the **social dimension**, in the face of the chaotic scenario, the protection was built through a humanitarian effort, not always continuous, but that sought the integration of civil agencies in favor of human security. In this sense, the leaders of society, as well as the civilians hosted at PoC Sites, have recognized the importance of mission actions. In particular, they stressed that the scale of the crimes committed during the conflict would have been much worse if the mission had not accommodated civilians on the bases. Likewise, outside the PoC Sites, successes in the social dimension have also been achieved: reintegration of child soldiers; removal of soldiers from schools; and community engagement[7].

On the other hand, there were numerous difficulties to model the social dimension in PoC Sites. The proliferation of guns and contraband has led to the emergence of gangs and violent crime. As an example, in Bentiu's PoC Site (image 2), there were 12 different gangs, including one with about

6 Information provided by Experts at UNMISS (september 2018).

7 Information provided by Experts at UNMISS (september 2018).

400 members. In addition, in September 2015, as a result of the UNMISS decision to close one of the PoC Sites in the City of Juba, there was dissatisfaction among some members of the humanitarian community due to the way the mission managed the action. Particularly, the place was a unique case, in which the relocated population consisted of foreigners. Therefore, there was a frustration on the part of humanitarian actors that they did not participate in the decision-making process about the closure of the installation and the management of its population (Center for Civilians in Conflict 2015).

As a result of the analysis, UNMISS was exposed to a contingency that challenged its modus operandi. In this scenario, PoC Strategy initially embraced a reactive stance and, *pari passu*, advanced to a proactive stance, seeking proactive conduct of civilian protection along with Protection Cluster and other humanitarian actors.

In short, the challenges for proactive protection are numerous: lack of air assets; high risk of action; inability to ensure evacuation of casualties; divergences between the components of the mission, etc. However, despite all the odds, the mission saved lives and in many respects performed remarkably well (Center for Civilians in Conflict 2015). Therefore, despite the delay, the mission has been able to restructure its role in the face of changing scenarios in South Sudan, building valuable lessons for human security.

Conclusive Aspects

This article examined the political breakdown in South Sudan (2013), highlighting its effects on human security, and analyzing the UN response in the period from 2014 to 2018. In summary, the period 2014-2018 characterized the occurrence of a civil war, based on a domestic dispute for power that, in turn, implied in the interruption in oil production, which was only partially resumed in March 2014. Since the peace agreement of August 2015, there have been rounds of dialogue to ease the conflict, both IGAD-intermediated, resulting in the unilateral cease-fire promoted by Salva Kiir in May 2017 and by the Government of Sudan, resulting in Power-sharing agreement of August 2018, which is ongoing.

In this conflictive spectrum, UNMISS was challenged by a contingency framework, and its responsibility was severely impacted. Consequently, the mission had to reshape its PoC Strategy to mitigate the multiple threats within the political, physical and social dimensions. Initially, through PoC Sites, the mission adopted a defensive stance in conducting civilian pro-

tection. Progressively, following the expansion of its human resources and material resources, the strategy contemplated actions to project force and protect civilians, fostering a preventive posture and integrating actions of Protection Cluster and other humanitarian agencies.

Even so, in the period 2014-2018, internal violence killed thousands of people, devastated the country's economy and generated thousands of internally displaced persons, leading up to August 31, 2018, about 2.5 million civilians to seek refuge in neighboring countries (image 4).

Image 4 - Refugees from South Sudan (Dec 2013 - Aug 2018).
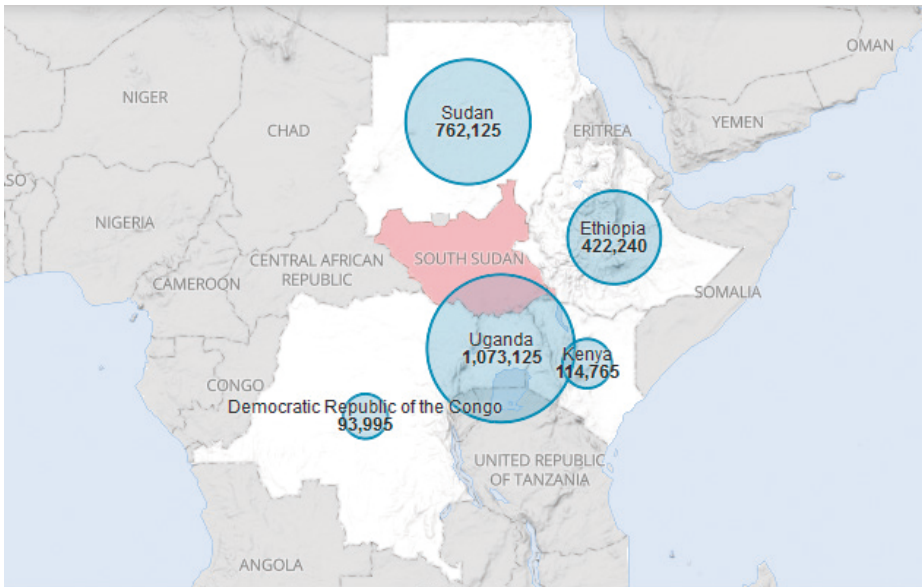
Source: UN (2018).

From the point of view of human security, as a result of the mission's response, it was found that both physical and community security, even with limitations, were restored through the application of PoC Strategy, preventing the occurrence of even more serious situations (massacres and genocide). In addition, the strategy modeled emergency actions to minimize the degradation of food and sanitary security, avoiding the widening of the framework of hunger and endemics. However, regarding economic security and political security, UNMISS actions were not significant, because of successive interruptions in oil production and due to the numerous political conflicts in

the relationship between Salva Kiir and Riek Machar. Thus, the investigation indicated the partial confirmation of the theoretical hypothesis that "within the framework of a United Nations peace mission, the implementation of a strategy for the protection of civilians corroborates human security in the region of crisis and/or conflict ".

In conclusion, seeing the geopolitics of conflict, despite its independence, oil and insecurity remain "two sides of the same coin" in South Sudan. In this context, in international, national and community specter it is well known that the dynamics influenced the country's insecurity, both directly and indirectly. South Sudan may therefore need to consider modeling a transitional arrangement, such as that carried out in South Africa, with a Government of National Unity, or as carried out in Nigeria, with a constitutional requirement for the composition of the executive to reflect the diversity of the country. Ultimately, power sharing, whether formal, informal or combined, will become crucial for the support of peace.

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Abstract

This is a case study examining the context of the political breakdown in South Sudan (2013), highlighting its effects on human security, and addressing the United Nations (UN) response with a focus on protecting civilians in the period 2014-2018. The study adopts a research design based on a qualitative perspective, operationalized by means of a hypothetical-deductive method. As results, conditions are indicated to be observed in the pursuit of policies and strategies to mitigate processes of violence and mass atrocities.