

US-Funded Report Illuminates Enormous South Sudan Death Toll But Leaves America's Role in the Dark

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The recently published, U.S.-financed report on South Sudan's brutal conflict is just another dramatic illustration of how the U.S. publicly laments violence it has helped to create and perpetuate while obfuscating the sordid legacy of its foreign interventions.

A [new report](#) financed by the U.S. government on the state of South Sudan's civil war has found that the conflict has resulted in the deaths of nearly 400,000 people since it began five years ago, indicating that past statistics had severely underestimated the death toll.

Yet, while the U.S.-funded report bemoans the situation in Africa's youngest country, it fails to acknowledge the U.S.' role in igniting the conflict, which largely resulted from the [U.S.' 2011 intervention in Sudan](#) that led to the country's partition and later to the current chaos that has now claimed hundreds of thousands of lives.

The [report](#), published by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and funded by the [U.S. Institute of Peace](#), revealed on Wednesday that at least 382,900 people in South Sudan have died as a result of the conflict in the country. About half of the deaths resulted from ethnic violence while the remaining deaths were caused by the increased risk of disease and reduced access to health care — underscoring the drastic effect the fighting has had on the country's infrastructure.

The statistics provided in the report are astronomical compared to past estimates of the death toll resulting from the conflict, as past estimates claimed that the death toll stood [at around 50,000](#). Yet, as the new report reveals, the actual death toll is more than seven times higher than past estimates.

Illuminating but leaving much in the dark

While the U.S.-funded report seems to be the first of its kind to more accurately record the massive toll the war has taken on the people of South Sudan, it unsurprisingly fails to acknowledge the U.S.' role in perpetuating as well as creating the conflict.



This is likely a result of the U.S. Institute of Peace having funded the project, as that organization — much like the related organization, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) — [promotes](#) the role of the U.S. as benevolent global hegemon in “managing international conflicts.” In other words, the USIP — [currently headed by](#) former National Security Adviser under George W. Bush and Raytheon board member **Stephen Hadley** (image on the right)— [sees](#) American foreign interventions, including military interventions, as not only positive but necessary.

Yet, the conflict of South Sudan, which is undeniably the result of U.S. policy, has hardly had positive results. As *The New York Times* [noted in 2014](#), South Sudan - as well as its brutal civil war - “is in many ways an American creation, carved out of war-torn Sudan in a referendum largely orchestrated by the United States, its fragile institutions nurtured with billions of dollars in American aid.”

Indeed, the creation of South Sudan at America’s behest was [the ultimate result](#) of long-standing U.S. efforts to exploit the decades-old conflict between Sudan’s northern and southern elites in a bid to weaken the Sudanese government, whose growing ties to China and the Soviet Union threatened American access to Sudan’s oil fields as well as [American hegemony](#) in Africa.

Soon after the state’s creation, civil war broke out, officially the result of a straightforward power struggle between U.S.-backed **President Salva Kiir** and his former deputy, **Riek Machar**, with the violence subsequently taking on an ethnic component.

Yet, a major reason for the perpetuation of the ethnic violence and high death toll of the conflict is the policies of President Kiir, whose government utilized [a “scorched earth” campaign](#) and has sought to use “population engineering” to forcibly relocate ethnic minorities. Kiir, and officials in his government have also directly ordered mass killings and property seizures against civilians.

In addition, Kiir’s rival, Machar, also has a [long history](#) of ethnic massacres and mass murder under his belt. The U.S., having thrown its support behind Kiir and Machar after elections in 2011, was well aware of the fact that it had effectively backed mass murderers taking control of the country after helping to create it. Many analysts have pointed out that Machar apparently instigated the country’s civil war at Washington’s behest after the Kiir

government [began to work closely](#) with China, particularly in South Sudan's oil sector.

Furthermore, the U.S. has continued to exacerbate the situation in South Sudan, as it wages a [barbaric proxy war](#) between the U.S. and China over the new nation's considerable oil reserves. While a recent "[peace deal](#)" between the two factions supporting Kiir and Machar in the conflict has given some hope, the reality of the conflict as a battle between powerful U.S. and Chinese oil interests instead suggests that such peace efforts are likely doomed to fail.

Thus, in a sense, the recently published, U.S.-financed report detailing the jarring death toll of South Sudan's "civil war" is just another dramatic illustration of how the U.S. publicly laments violence it has helped to create and perpetuate, while obfuscating the sordid legacy of its foreign interventions.

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