

Dr. Cheryl Duckworth
Editor in Chief
Peace and Conflict Studies Journal
Nova South Eastern University
3301 College Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, Fl 33314-7796

The Failures of Power-Sharing Agreements and the Necessity for Trust Building: The Case of the South Sudan Peace Process

Although power-sharing agreements avail the opportunity for warring parties to end violent conflicts, form a unity government and transition to democracy, there is still a challenge of effectively implementing the agreements mainly due to existing distrust among the parties. It is therefore crucial that trust-building approaches form part of the power-sharing matrix to address the estranged political relationships the parties carry to the agreement.

To date, two power-sharing agreements have been signed since civil war broke out in South Sudan in December 2013. The first agreement collapsed just after one year when renewed fighting broke out in July 2016. The second agreement, signed in September 2018 continues to experience implementation challenges and ceasefire violations, while some of the parties declined to sign it. To understand this problem, I conducted a semi-structured in-depth interview with twenty-nine key stakeholders, including the conflict parties, mediators, eminent South Sudanese personalities, scholars and civil society leaders. Five major themes emerged: historical conflicts, estranged political relationships, power struggles, resource control and ethnic violence. The results suggest the conflict is sustained by a trust deficit among the parties arising from unresolved historical conflicts to estranged political relationships and power struggles.

In my proposed presentation, I will explore the role of distrust in stagnating the power-sharing agreements, and how trust-building could be a game-changer. I will discuss institutional trust mechanisms that are suitable for building impersonal and interpersonal trust in the process of power-sharing and will address the possibility of transitional justice approaches for trust-building and sustainable agreements.