Full Length Research

The Cause and Consequence of Conflict in South Sudan

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South Sudan became independent in 2011 after an exercise of referendum, demonstrating to the whole world the conclusion of one of the longest conflicts in recent horn of African history. Globally welcomed as the world's newest state, the hopes and wishes of the international community for South Sudan were far from what we are now witnessing. In fact many South Sudanese welcomed the newest nation in the world with the hopes of a more peaceful and prosperous future for its citizens. However, this optimism was punctured by the onset of internal conflict in December 2013. Since then the country has been struggling, with complete absence of law and order. The South Sudanese people have gone through a worsening humanitarian crisis, and there are concerns that it could enter a vicious cycle of increasing instability, politically and economically. The effects of the general anarchy in South Sudan have not only affected the population of South Sudan, they have also had a spillover effect on the horn of Africa region and the international community. Consequently, this article addresses the causes and consequences of South Sudan conflict so as to draw a lesson for many countries of Africa.

Key Words: South Sudan, Power Struggle, Oil, Corruption, and Ethnicity

INTRODUCTION

Conflict is expected incidence in the very existence of mankind starting from individual's interaction with their environment to their interaction at the international level. More often than not a good number conflict shares a similar feature and dynamics in a sense that that most conflicts are fought for the reason of fulfilling the unmet interest and values of two opposing sides over specific matter (Yagcioglu, 1996).

   More often than not, various communities have been contending for the ownership of various types of resources and dominance. These struggles for ownership of resource and dominance inevitably lead individuals as well as economic, social, political, and religious groups to conflict. In fact many violent conflicts of one type or another have afflicted Africa and exerted a heavy toll on the continents societies, polities and economies, robbing them of their development potential and democratic possibilities. (Zeleza, 2008). Off course one cannot deny the fact that some conflict can have a productive contribution in bringing about positive changes in prevention of past and future victimization. Nevertheless, Africa has had experienced many violent conflict that has devastating effects to the wellbeing of many Africans in every aspect subtle and embedded in

political and social dynamics, which have adversely affected the development potential of the content. Moreover, many of African conflicts had diverted the resources that could have otherwise been used productively (Alexander, 2005). What's more, violent conflicts in Africa have witnessed that conflict can and possibly transcend national boundaries with adverse impacts on regional stability (Marino, 1999). In this sense consequently violent conflicts can certainly pose fundamental challenges to regional and international peace and development.

The causes of the conflicts are as complex as the challenges of resolving them are difficult. But their costs cannot be in doubt. Millions of people has been killed, injured and was forced to migrate due to the devastating impact of conflict in Africa. A case in point on this regard is the horn of Africa. Indeed lately the peace and security outlook for the horn of Africa remains bleak. The conflict appraisal includes protracted state collapse in Somalia, deep hostility between Ethiopia-Eretria, a fragile peace agreement between North and South Sudan, continuing instability in South Sudan (David, 2008). Indeed, South Sudan is currently engulfed by internal instability. A confluence of factors including economic, political and the intensification of armed opposition contributed to the augmentation of war in South Sudan on December 15, 2013. South Sudan has been struggling, since then, with complete absence of law and order. The South Sudanese people have gone through all kinds of misery in the past three and half years. The anarchy, violence and poverty forced many South Sudanese to be displaced, become refugees, and thousands lost their lives. The effects of the general anarchy in South Sudan have not only affected the population of South Sudan, they have also had a spillover effect on the horn of Africa region and the international community. The problem of refugees, the smuggling of small arms and the light weapons and the spreading terrorism are all threats emerging from South Sudan, mainly affecting the horn of Africa and international community in general (Ibrahim, 2013). Therefore, it would be paramount to investigate what caused the conflict and what significant consequence has been registered as a result of the war so as to draw a lesson for Africa and share the burden of our South Sudanese brothers and sisters. It is with this intention that this paper would opt to look into the cause and consequence of conflict. The paper has four sections. The first section is a brief summary on the context of South Sudanese conflict. Section two discusses causes of conflict in South Sudan while section three deals with the cost of war in South Sudan. The last section contains the conclusion of this paper.

THE CONTEXT OF CONFLICT IN SOUTH SUDAN

On January 9th 2011, South Sudan participated in a referendum exercise with the closest inquiry by the Pan-African community, together with relevant regional and international actors, that determined South Sudanese independence and the country was thus declared a new republic separate from North Sudan. Globally welcomed as the world's newest state, the hopes and aspirations of the international community for South Sudan were far from what we are now witnessing. In fact many South Sudanese welcomed the newest nation in the world with so much roaring cheer and enthusiasm. A sea of people waved flags in a blur of color as the South's flag was hoisted high into the air. Many embraced each other and cried as the new national anthem was sung for the very first time ever. Nevertheless, this incident was short lived, as it was not long before many people across the world got shocked as gloomy report of near a genocidal massacres and destruction of villages and towns in South Sudan dominate the international media (Awolowich, 2015 and Lunn, 2016).

Thus sadly, on December 15, 2013 South Sudan once again slides back to conflict and fight between the South Sudan Presidential guards triggered what later become labeled a "Civil war" (International Crisis Group, 2014). Members of the presidential Tiger Battalion fought for reasons that are yet to be fully disclosed, sparking off shooting and violence in various residential neighborhoods in Juba.

The main protagonists of this armed conflict were President Salva Kiir and his former Vice President Rick Machar. In fact, the South Sudanese President Salva Kiir Mayardit appeared on national television in full military uniform—something he had not worn since the end of the war—and accused his former vice-president Riek Machar and several others of plotting a military coup (Awolowich, 2015 and Lunn, 2016). Machar however, denied having anything to do with the initial fighting. Despite the fact that, he quickly declared himself the commander of the SPLM/A in Opposition, an armed opposition group. In the week that followed, eleven members of the SPLM/A elite, including its secretary general Pagan Amum, former ministers, and the former SPLA chief of staff were detained under charges of the attempted coup. Several SPLA commanders defected from the army to join a rebellion that had been born (De Waal, 2014). The fighting which followed forced tens of thousands of people to be killed and hundreds of thousands to flee their homes and take refuge in neighboring countries or remain as Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) inside South Sudan (Mehari and Abel,2013). Human rights violations were an everyday reality and committed on a daily basis. A catastrophic humanitarian situation has made more than five million South Sudanese food

insecure and intemperate spending on conflict has left the nation virtually bankrupt (Human Rights Watch,2016 and Tewodros,2015). The author of this article argue that the immediate cause of the conflict in South Sudan lies on Internal Power Struggle between the political elite but there are other number of factor that has contributed as a root cause to the conflict in South Sudan.

THE DIFFERENT CAUSES OF THE CRISIS

The Immediate Trigger

Power struggle

The SPLM had been the signatory party to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ended the 22 years long war in 2005. John Garang, who had led the movement since its establishment in 1983, died in a helicopter crash three weeks after his inauguration as the president of the GoSS. His long-time deputy Salva Kiir took over the position of the president and led the south towards independence in 2011. However prior to the outbreak of violence on December 15, 2013, there were indications as early as 2008 that all was not well, and that differences within the party portended violence (De Waal, 2014). At the time, differences between the President and Pagan Amum, the then Secretary General of the SPLM had threatened to derail progress towards elections. The differences were eventually resolved, with many urging for unity of purpose as the elections and the eventual referendum approached (International Crisis Group, 2014). In addition to this the relationship between the President and his Vice President was at edge. In fact the two leaders were already strained, and that these differences were overlooked for the sake of unity within the party during the Interim Period (2005-2011). The SPLM split in 1991 and the reordering of the SPLM leadership to accommodate Riek Machar on his return were partly to blame for the frosty relationship that carried on into government after independence. In 2010, the two leaders are said to have supported rival candidates in a number of key electoral positions, particularly the governorships of several states. The tensions within the political class exploded when Vice President Dr. Riek Machar, SPLM Secretary General Pagan Amun, and Madam Rebecca Garang, the widow of the late Dr. John Garang, publicly announced their intention to run for the post of Chair of the SPLM, and thus President of the country. Taking this as a crucial concern, President Kiir removed executive powers from Dr. Riek in April. In July, he dissolved the government, removing Riek and others from any government office (International Crisis Group, 2014).

THE ROOT CAUSES OF THE CONFLICT IN SOUTH SUDAN

Corruption, Patronage and Impunity

Since South Sudan's independence, the government has largely squandered its economic potential and political goodwill, becoming a kleptocracy where political power is leveraged to secure wealth. The signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005 between Sudan and SPLA was followed by large increase in government fund. Plus South Sudan has been dominated by rotating set of elites who move seamlessly between positions in government and the frontlines of the rebellion, as political situations change (De Waal, 2014). In July 2013, President Kiir reshuffled his entire cabinet, removing prominent elites, such as former Vice President Rick Machar and firing a group of ethnically diverse cabinet Ministers and high-level officials accusing them of corruption (De Waal, 2014 and Lunn, 2016). Most of these individuals had played leading roles in the country's economic and political decisions in the post-independence government, and after being pushed out of the government, many joined apolitical opposition bloc that soon developed into an armed opposition. Meanwhile, the conflicting parties have sought to consolidate power around their loyalists, particularly those from their particular ethnic group. Besides this South Sudan has been crushed down by corruption patronage and impunity in fact a case in point in this regard is what happened in the year 2012 whereby President Salva Kiir accused 75 ministers and officials of having stolen $4 billion in state funds and demand the money to be returned, but according to news reports, only 1.5% of this sum was actually recovered (Aljazeera, 2014). Only a fraction of the recovered wealth was actually reinvested into the country and revenues from the oil sector are rarely reinvested in critical sectors of the economy. Meanwhile, elites on both sides have killed tens of thousands of people, displaced over millions, and has left another millions, or around 40 percent of the population, food insecure but no instrument has not yet been established to hold them accountable till today (International Crisis Group,2014).

MILITARIZATION AND ARM PROLIFERATION

The linkage between conflicts and militarization is an established process in South Sudan current conflict. Since the eruption of conflict in South Sudan there has been a steady rise in military expenditure and thus easily outstripping social spending. This has created resentments and grievances by the local community because the government is using it large amount of revenue to strengthen itself and fight back the opposition

which is at the expense of livelihood improvement of South Sudanese. There is also support to increasing and persistence of guerrilla movements related to the very few employment opportunity available to young men. In fact the guerrilla organization presents opportunities for survival, rewards, recognition and advancement not available to most civilians in South Sudan. In addition to this, in fulfilling its functions of the guardian of authority and legitimacy, the South Sudan government attempts to accumulate and imports a bulk of modern weapons systems (Brieidlid and Arensen, 2014). What is more the existence of plentiful weapons as a consequence of post war should not be omitted from the analysis of potential causes of conflict. The second civil war in Sudan lasted more than two decades and resulted in high militarization and arm proliferation among civilians (Small Arm Survey, 2014).

WEAK INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

The crisis in South Sudan is also associated with the inability of relevant institution to manage and mediate conflict which splits out into the army, and subsequently the general population (Lunn, 2016). Additionally South Sudan beyond the political conflict, the country encounters a challenge of weakness or absence of institutions and lack of institutional capacity within the state appears to be a case in point. On the top of the establishment of institutions was based on ethnic aggregation and personality cults (De Waal, 2014).

INSTRUMENTALIZATION OF ETHNIC IDENTITIES

The concept of ethnicity in Africa in general and South Sudan in particular is a commonality at the present time. It can be invoked to defend political, social and cultural positions because it carries authority, beyond rationality, preference or choice. In fact ethnicity can be an instrument of socio-political mobilization and can also inspire organized violence and political instability. Disorder of political structures relating to ethnic ground has been a significant contributor to the power struggle among the South Sudanese communities. While much of the conflict is political, there are also ethnic drivers to the escalating violence and the two are often difficult to distinguish. Dinka and Nuer ethnic identities were deliberately politicized during the second civil war, and militarized structures within communities, such as the Gelweng, Titweng and White Army Bunam(International Crisis Group, 2014). The polarization and arming of communities along ethnic lines in this conflict, and the manipulation by the powerful elites are a key factor that risks a rapidly deep and wide war with serious of regional humanitarian and political consequences (South Sudan

Protection Cluster, 2014).

LACK OF INCLUSIVENESS AND PARTICIPATORY STATE APPARATUS

Inclusive governance is significant to the realization of democracy and peace dividends in states emerging from conflict. However in South Sudan, the exercise of inclusivity has been marred with contradictions between constitutional provision and existence practices (Radon and Logan, 2014). Political parties in South Sudan are found to be the foci for rewarding the warlord's dubbed as freedom fighters at the expense of participatory civilian structures, the nerves of ethnic factionalism over nationalism, exercise of centralized nomination system, all of which breed disaffection and tensions among the citizenry. Moreover the observed militarization of public service, perception of ethnic favoritism in public employment and appointments, marginalization of regions outside urban centers and unequal share of national resources comprise practices that violate the foundations of inclusive governance and push the country to the margin of conflict (De Waal, 2014).

LACK OF COMMITMENT TOWARDS NATION BUILDING

The SPLM/A independence struggle ended through a negotiated Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in January 2005, which aimed to achieve democratic transformation as well as self-determination for the people of South Sudan (Debay, 2012). However the post independence period was more concerned with state formation-establishing power structure and authority, as opposed to nation building which would require addressing the underlying drivers of conflict so as to establish a united South Sudan with a common idea of national identity (Sorbo, 2014). This has also contributed to the current conflict in South Sudan.

OIL AS CAUSES OF CONFLICT

Long before atrocious conflict erupted in December 2013, South Sudan was already demonstrating all the indicators of the resource curse. Ninety-eight percent of the government annual operating budget and 80 percent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is derived from oil, making South Sudan the most oil reliant country in the world (Nyathon et al, 2006). But rather than use of this revenue to invest in public service and infrastructure to improve livelihoods, the government financed a military and security apparatus. On the top of this SPLA government officials had embezzled much of the

revenues from this sector and deposited the money in foreign countries (Tiitmamer and Awolich, 2015). Plus Juba was benefiting a lot from oil money at the expense of other states in South Sudan.

PAST RIFT

Even though the Dinka and the Nuer fought side by side against the government in Khartoum for decades, their affiliation has been ambivalent. In fact in 1991 internal leadership struggles between late SPLM leader John Garang (Dinka) on the one side and his deputy, Riek Machar (Nuer) on the other led to a crack within the SPLM. Machar created the SPLM-Nasir faction (Gil, 2014). The most important blowback for the SPLM (Dinka) was not only that large faction of its troops broke away in a critical phase of the war, the SPLM-Nasir faction switched sides to ally with the central government in Khartoum (Ottaway and El-Sadany, 2011)

After becoming Khartoum's new proxy in the civil war, the SPLM-Nasir, consisting mainly of Nuer fighters, killed at least 2,000 Dinka civilians in the town of Bor, in what was known as the Bor massacre, on 15 November 1991(Ottaway & El- Sadany, 2011 and Koos & Gutschke, 2014). Even though this happened almost a quarter of a century ago, the event remains present in the collective memory of the Dinka and the Nuer and has the potential to fuel resentment in the current struggle.

CONSEQUENCE OF SOUTH SUDANESE CONFLICT

The South Sudan conflict is one of the most severe humanitarian crises at the moment, which has immensely caused myriad misery and devastation on innocent citizens. As successive report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNMISS, the AU and international organizations have documented, there have been numerous, repeated incident and patterns of serious and systematic violence against civilians, in many cases in circumstances in which people were targeted due to their ethnic origin (Human Rights Watch,2016 and Tewodros,2015). Many civilians have been attacked and killed by both sides of armed group in their homes, as well as in places of shelter, including churches, mosques, hospitals, and in government facilities. Tens of thousands have been displaced from their homes, more than 1.5 million of them within the country. Serious violations of international humanitarian law, gross violations of international human rights law and human rights abuses have been perpetuated by all parties to the conflict including attacks against civilians, rape and other crimes of sexual violence, arbitrary arrest and detention, abduction, deprivation of liberty and enforced disappearance (Tewodros,2015). Besides these human

costs, the food security situation deteriorated drastically taking thousands of lives. Although it is difficult to quantify the decline in South Sudan's output that has resulted from conflict, sever economic effects have become increasingly apparent, and the country's fiscal position has deteriorated as government revenues have decreased. This has resulted in budgetary constraints and the abandonment of government plans to increase investment (WFP, 2015 and King, 2015). In addition to this, economic consequences, the violent conflict caused enormous destruction of infrastructure related to health, education, transportation and communications along with the loss of private assets and flight of financial capital abroad. These economic impacts may be even greater when indirect costs are added, including lost investment, productivity declines, diminished employment opportunities and increased crimes. Besides human costs and economic impact of violent conflict in South Sudan, the people of South Sudan experienced, decay in social capital, loss of trust among and between member of households communities and ethnic group and intensification of inter and intra-community conflicts (King,2015).

What's more in addition to its consequence on South Sudanese citizen's the current conflict of South Sudan has a far reaching external consequence to the peoples and states of the region. This is compounded by the fact that the region constitutes interlinked regional security complexes. Plus due to the approximately near location to South Sudan each neighboring state like Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya and others would eventually be forced either implicitly or explicitly to shoulder the political and socio-economic consequences of the South Sudanese current conflict (Mehari and Abel,2013). Therefore the following sub sections has given paramount importance to the analysis of a number of actual and potential political, economical and social consequences of the current conflict of South Sudan upon the mere existence of the Horn of African countries.

Uganda is highly affected by the contiguity of instability in South Sudan to its territory. In particular, Uganda has been challenged by its concern that unstable South Sudan would become a safe haven to the Lord of Resistance Army (LRA), which has operated in Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of Congo (International Crisis Group Group, 2014). Economic interests of Uganda, however, have been crushed due to conflict in South Sudan. In fact Uganda is the largest trading partner of South Sudan, exporting coffee, shoes, vehicles, steels and other agricultural products, amounting to millions of dollars annually (Awolich, 2014). In addition, South Sudan employs thousands of Ugandan citizens, especially in the service sector, generating a significant amount of revenue yet this has been challenged by the conflict in South Sudan (Lunn, 2016).

Likewise Sudan significant potential of importing

uninterrupted flow of oil from South Sudanese fields was considerably challenged. Although it has lost 75% of the oil reserve together with the secession of South Sudan, South Sudan oil is still an important source of revenue to Sudan (IRIN, 2014). Yet Sudan was irritated by Uganda's intervention into the conflict since both were supporting rebels of each other (Mehari and Abel, 2013). Plus the influx of refugees from South Sudan into the neighboring states of Kenya, Sudan, Ethiopia and Uganda is a major consequence which countries of the horn of Africa have to grapple with. Unfortunately, if the current civil war in South Sudan continues the probability of refugee influx creating pressure in host countries of Horn of Africa is expected to worsen (United Nation Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2015).

In fact Ethiopia has suffered notably due to Nuer refugee flow influx around Gambela region. The increase in number the Nuer's has been a significant problem since Ethiopia is currently suffering from the politics of number. Number matters the most in politics of Ethiopia's federal system, since power is allocated in direct proportion to the population of the country's ethno-cultural communities. In this regard Gambella is suffering from one of the most contentious issues which is the politics of numbers that has locked two of the region's major ethnic groups, the Anuak and the Nuer, into conflict (Dereje, 2014).Until the mid-1980s the Anuak constituted the majority of Gambella's population. However, the massive influx of refugees since the outbreak of the second Sudanese civil war in 1983 and the current South Sudanese war has dramatically changed the region's demography. Ethiopian economic interest in South Sudan is also at stake due to the conflict. Like Kenya and Uganda, Ethiopia has a large contingent of citizens working in South Sudan. Plus the Ethiopian Airline and the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia used to have strong hold. However since the outbreak of the conflict a number of Ethiopians and Ethiopian institutions has left the country putting a strain on the countries potential of earning foreign currency and employment for its citizens (Mehari and Abel, 2013).

Kenya on the other hand has been affected considerably given that South Sudan has been a destination to Kenyan citizens and banks for employment, investment and business. A crisis in South Sudan has risked all these economic benefits that Kenya enjoys from South Sudan. In addition violence in South Sudan also disrupted Kenya's plan to provide an alternative trade route to South Sudan to transport its oil, via the port of Lamu. Added to all this, Kenya is also presently suffering from instability in Somalia and does not want to see another failed state that can serve as a safe haven to terrorists (International Crisis Group, 2014).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper shed light on the political crisis that affects South Sudan since December 2013 and its regional consequences. The ongoing civil war in South Sudan has interrelated causal factors that includes power struggle, corruption, patronage and impunity, militarization and arm proliferation, weak institutional capacity, instrumentalization of ethnic identities, lack of inclusiveness and participatory state apparatus, lack of commitment towards nation building, oil and past rift. Unfortunately the implication of conflict in South Sudan is not limited to the country rather have regional diminution and consequence. The regional consequences of the South Sudan conflict are by far unimaginable. Among the many factors, three major ones like the political, economic and humanitarian consequences are the very important ones. It will not be very hard to guess the extent to which the country is affected from these major factors.

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