

South Sudanese Civil War (Analytical Paper of the Conflict)

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Introduction

South Sudan is the youngest country in the world, leading up only to its 7th birthday in July, though this country is not so old on the paper, the civil war lasts from late 2013 until current day. This analytical paper uncovers all the aspects of this dispute. The paper starts with the historical background and all the important steps, mis-treatments and fails that led up to the current war. The second section is describing the main geographical characteristics of the state. It focuses on any features that are important in the current war. The third part is analyzing the main internal contenders and their motives in the war. Section four is discussing main external influencers and their own vision in the current civil war. After that there will be the actual development of the conflict. The last section is dedicated to the possible outcomes of the South Sudanese civil war and ideologies. This paper is meant to analyze the conflict from various standing points.

Historical background of the conflict:

South Sudan had a long history of conflicts with former country unity Sudan as well as ethnic conflicts within its borders. To understand the modern conflict this paper needs to include the civil wars between the northern and the southern region. One of the primal reasons for these conflicts was a feeling of inequality between the two regions. The cultural and religious divisions of Sudan are crucial: The northern part is mainly Muslim Arab, and religiously Islamic. On the other hand the southern region follows Christian or traditional religion and speaks English or Nilotic languages, though the divisions and inequalities leading up to the conflict go way back to the British/Egyptian colonial rule. It is important to note the spread of Islam into the country and Islamisation and the customs that came with it. This form of policy strongly stratified the country to a centre/core and the periphery, which was used as a source for gaining slaves for raiding, trade and armies. Also this rule focused mainly on Khartoum and the core region around, the idea behind this rule was not to make the whole Sudan prosperous but to make the centre prosperous on the expense of the periphery – southern regions (Currey, 2003, pg.147-149).

After Sudan gained independence from British/Egyptian rule on the 1st of January 1956 main institutions were all gathered in the northern part of the country (www.globalsecurity.org, 2011) which was mainly the result of failed divisions of power by the Brits. This made the political influence very unequal for the southerners. South Sudan's motives to gain independence goes back to the first Sudanese civil war already. This war was seven years long, mainly ignited by the southerners that felt oppressed. A rebel group called Anya Nya was formed and was considered to be the leading group fighting for independence (Holte, 2013, pg.28). This war was ended with the Addis Ababa peace agreement in 1972, which provided the southern region a type of self-government and semi-independence. This document above all issued sensitive topics like religious and cultural self-determination and freedom over mining natural resources without any interference from the government of Sudan, even if those resources would be discovered in the future (*Addis Ababa Peace Agreement*, 1972, pg.3/art.11). After this, there was a ten years long lasting peace, but things started to take a bad turn once President Nimeiri in 1982 imposed the Sharia law over the whole country. With this move he violated the peace agreement and ignited tension between south-north/Islamic and non-Islamic citizens and also the second civil war, starting in 1983. Oil was also discovered in Bentiu (southern region) this happened around 1978 (peaceinsight.org, 2011?) which made the conflict more brutal. In the midst of this tension, before the outbreak of the civil war an important movement was founded, led by John Garang - Sudan Peoples Liberation - SPLM (www.ucdp.uu.se). It was this movement that started the rebellion, it is also important to note that the motive of this group under John Garang was not secession but rather a strong united reformed Sudan two main political figures joined this group in 1983, Salva Kiir Mayardit (Dinka ethnicity) and in 1984 Riek Machar (Nuer ethnicity). Kiir was the future leader of SPLM after 2005 and John Garang's death and also the future president of South Sudan since 2010. After joining SPLM they evolved Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). On the other hand Machar, pushed for secession from northern Sudan, he was a separatist. This dissension led to factionism of SPLA, by establishing South Sudan Independence Movement/Army, SSIM/A (SPLM-Nasir) led by him. In 2002 he merged back with Garang and Kiir (Mebratu, 2015, pg. 49-50). This bad

move of taking the political rivalry out into the streets was the main building block for the modern civil war of South Sudan. The second Sudanese war lasted 22 years and was much more international. After discovering oil and understanding the southern regions' strategic values many international agents took action and started supporting the warring sides militarily or financially. Uganda supported the south fearing the spread of Islam (ucdp.uu.se), Egypt the north, US gave aid to the Government of Sudan (Holte, 2013). The outcome of the war was the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 which helped the southern region achieve semi-autonomy over its region. Moreover it granted that after 6 compulsory years it could vote in a referendum for independence from Sudan. The post CPA time till independence is important for one reason: Those six compulsory years were meant to creating a united Sudan. In that time the governments of both sides were supposed to reconcile the land question, work together hard and solve the citizenship issues and create a peaceful boundary between the two regions. Unfortunately there were several mistakes made in that era which led to further conflicts and separation. The main reason for an unsuccessful thus unfulfilled CPA requirements was that the main reconciliation points of the agreement, that were meant to help, were over-looked or were not given that much importance as other economic issues (Jok, 2015). The CPA was heavily pushing for absorptions of any non-state militia groups that were contenders in the civil wars of Sudan. Unfortunately the government took a bad approach in fulfilling this requirement. The main outcome of their approach was to offer amnesties and payed positions in public services in exchange of voluntarily disarmament and absorption of military groups into the national army. This was a problematic solution because it created a very unprofessional and ethnically-diverse group of militants that were supposed to fight in any case of war together, even though their own wrecked ethnic relations were not reconciled (Jok, 2015). Further this led to over 70% of state money went for the financing of these people and military overall which could be better used on solving issues like bad infrastructure. The stratification of the SPLM had its own share in wrecking inter-state relations, to the question that what united then the people of southern Sudan, that are so ethnically diverse, and what made them a united movement was their common history of exploitation and bad treatment from the north and their need to get independent from that mistreatment (Arnold, LeRichie, 2012, pg. 3). Though when the fighting was over, and the CPA paved the way for an independent South Sudan, the enemy figure slowly faded and then all those ethnic disputes that were not focused on within the state arose. This led to many ethnic clashes on the borders of the states within South Sudan, farmers conflicts between different ethnic groups often armed up by weapons that were left off after the civil wars (Jok, 2015), and fighting over grazing lands, stealing cattle, abducting children and raising up as their own. One of a crucial mis-step was also the power-sharing and non-inclusion of other political parties or civil society. The government of Juba, led by the biggest ethnic group Dinka, realized that the oil revenues pay a lot of money. They led a corrupt nepotistic sharing of official jobs in the government, which was unequal itself, leaving the rest out in the cold (Jok, 2015, pg.10). This resulted an expected restlessness from other political and civil groups and was one of the main arguments of Machar later on in the political scene with which he blamed Kiir for not being truly democratic and leading a bureaucratic way of government. Overall this era was also referred to as the *fragile peace era*, because the armed conflicts continued with Sudan. These conflicts were focused on bordering, oil-rich regions such as Abyei region. In 2010 Salva Kiir was elected president and in January 2011 the referendum over separating from Sudan was held. Around 98% voted for separation (Myers, 2017). On the 9th of July South Sudan became an independent state, with Kiir as president and Machar as vice president. As the newly established state everyone expected security, democracy, freedom and prosperity though the reality was different, ethnic as well as political elite disputes further deepened. In the summer of 2013 president Kiir sacked the whole cabinet of Machar, after the tension between these two political figures grew. Shortly after that, in December, the civil war broke out in Juba.

Geographical description

South Sudan borders with Sudan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia. It has a federal form of government. Which had 10 states based on three historical provinces: Bahr El Ghazal, Equatoria, Great Upper Nile. The States in these provinces changed from 10 to 28 by the president in October 2015. Which had a negative impact on the population and ignited more conflicts within the state because of border definitions (Grenna, 2015, pg.2) The capital of South Sudan is Juba which can be found in Central Equatoria State. The most affected countries by the war are located in the north eastern part of the country and the middle as well as the bordering states including: Unity, Lakes, Jonglei, Warrap State, Upper Nile (Jok, 2015, pg. 9). Important is to note that South Sudan is heavily influenced by drought and wet seasons as the outcome of the climate that it is located in – this can negatively influence the vegetation though the potential for farming is very much there. Nile is also key player, it is one of the main routes of transportation in the area. As the terrible infrastructure is prevailing this makes selling of grown goods very hard to transport. In short a lot of farming potential is locked away from the region because of bad infrastructure, unstable weather and war. The **Population** was 12, 3 million estimatedly in 2015 (www.iom.int). Ethnicity is one of the main

reasons for conflict in modern South Sudan. The population is very diverse. Around 50-60 different ethnic groups that have their own language, own religion, customs and a way of life. The main ethno-linguistic group is the Nilotic (among others it includes the Dinka and Nuer tribe). But there are several more including: Hamitic, Semitic, Bantu and others. Main languages that are recognized are the Dinka, Nuer and English. (Arnold, LeRichie, 2012, pg. 4-5). This is the reason why the history of the conflict as well as the present conflict was not only about North vs. South and Muslim vs. Christian. Conflicts were also enhanced by inter-factional and inter-ethnic fighting. These conflicts are a lot of time results of cattle economic problems. Where one tribe attack the other, stealing cattle or ruining grazing land of farmers with cattle grazing off the crops. Cattle are considered to be the main source of wealth. Many times it is considered to be the currency, man need cattle in order to buy a wife and start a family. Many times these herds are stolen; tribes are armed and attack their neighbors (Marshall, 2012). The conflict of the two main ethnic groups the Nuer and the Dinka may be tracked backwards into the second Sudanese civil war which this paper covered earlier. Key **Natural resource** in the country is oil. Discovered during the second Sudanese civil war, it enhanced many disputes with Sudan even in the post CPA era, but many regional investors fled in and are currently militarily involved in the war exactly in order to secure the situation and not letting the oil production drop. Even though the war has affected the oil production and has pushed the country into a very deep pit of inflation at one point oil production even stopped (Copnall, 2013). Most importantly South Sudan is very heavy dependent from its oil revenues. Over 98% of the income comes from it (Copnall, 2013).

Main internal contenders:

Salva Kiir is the president of the country and SPLM is the leading political party of the country with the letter *a* standing for the Army wing. This is the main governmental force. Their motive is to secure the situation economically, meaning the oil producing states. Kiir is an ethnical Dinka. Even though the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) is fighting the rebels his forces have been accused of attacking civilians based on their ethnicity. Many international organizations have also stated that the country is going through an ethnic cleansing (Mebratu, 2015).

Riek Machar/SPLM-IO is the leading person of the rebel group Sudan People's Liberation Movement- In Opposition. He is the ex vice-president of South Sudan, but was sacked in the summer of 2013 with his entire cabinet by Kiir. They have a history of political and ethnic disputes with Kiir. As studies show his interests lay not only in his personal success, but it also has an ethnic side as well. As it was seen with Garang during the second Sudanese civil war, the factionism of SPLM/A, not only interests but also ethnicities varied. Now in the modern history Machar's motives are to make his ethnic group more represented. (Koos & Gutschke, 2014). The rebels have been also accused of targeting not only armed forces but civilians as well.

Many other militia groups are also present. The *Nuer White Army* is a militia group gathered from Nuer youth fighting other tribes, stealing cattle and killing civilians, they mainly focus on bordering regions; this group is fighting alongside with Machar. The *cobra faction* of the another militia group, assembled from the Murle ethnic group led by Yau Yau, their main goal is to fight for a more developed Pibor state and gain seats in the government, their main supplier is Sudan. Many other smaller militia groups and factions are present, at one point from the SPLM-IO Taban Deng broke off as well creating his own opposition military group too.

Main external contenders:

Uganda supports the South Sudanese Government (SPLA) militarily. The reason for that is that as a southern neighbor to this conflicted state, they have a common interest to securize the region and do not let this grow into a regional war. The Ugandan addition to the war has a proxy side too, against Sudan. They both supported each others rebels groups in the civil wars and this is the continuation of that conflict (Mebratu, 2015).

Sudan – Sudan's long history of conflict with South Sudan is not new, but nevertheless pipe-line flows through Sudan and they want this oil production to be secure in order to do that, they provided 900 oilfield technicians (Koos & Gutschke, 2014). Though Sudan maybe playing a double-agent in this conflict. They have been accused multiple times that they aided the rebels (Mulle, 2014). The reason for this is the above stated proxy warfare situation in the region (Mebratu, 2015).

Kenya and Ethiopia – they push for diplomatic solutions within the region under the partnership of IGAD. Many of the peace negotiations took place in Ethiopia. Their goal is to secure the region, because the spread of violence never helps. South Sudan is an economic partner and there is a huge amount of refugees flowing into those countries. Overall peace could help everyone (Koos & Gutschke, 2014). These countries have been also accused of aiding rebels and destabilizing the situation (Michieni, ca.2015).

IGAD pushes for peace negotiations. With members: Ethiopia, Uganda, Sudan, Kenya, Djibouti, and Somalia provided peacekeeper troops and have started monitoring the situation (Koos & Gutschke, 2014). Though some of the member's standpoints are questioned. On one hand they pursue peace through the organization, on the other they support their favoured sides militarily.

China and USA – China is the biggest investor in South Sudanese oil. The US is mainly a peace negotiator. This level of influence can be also easily considered to be a —proxy power-struggle, though GoSS is leaning onto the Chinese side because of the oil revenues and is accusing the US of backing up the rebels (Mebratu, 2015).

UN, EU, Troika – United Nations is mainly focusing on diplomatic peace talks, and also trying to secure civilians' lives and rights under the project UNMISS (Mebratu, 2015). The EU has also stated that it will impose sanctions if the military conflict will not stop, unfortunately this effort was denied by the GoSS (Koos & Gutschke, 2014). Troika members – US, Norway, Britain are peace guarantors in the conflict (Michieni, ca. 2015).

Development of the conflict:

The outbreak of the war took place on the 16th of December 2013 in Juba between the members of the presidential guard that have had a disagreement. This left 20 dead behind. Other sources say that this infact was the result of Kiir's accusation of Machar's planned coup. This later erupted into a violence that was ethnically oriented. Government forces loyal to Kiir against rebel forces loyal to Machar massacred each other. Machar later fled Juba and settled in Jonglei state pg. 2 (Koos & Gutschke, 2014). This started the Juba massacre – around 20,000 people were killed. Later in December government forces loyal to Kiir and rebel forces loyal to Machar were on and off occupying strategic oil-producing towns: Bor, Bentiu and Malakal. And the conflict mainly spread to the centre and north-east part of the country. The new year of 2014 made the conflict more international and internally more brutal. It was not targeting only armed forces, but it was targeted also against civilians mainly attacking them for their ethnicities, UN reports stated from the very beginning the conflicts had a genocide nature (HRW, 2016). Several cease-fire agreements were persuaded but all of them were violated by both sides. The international community grew more and more eager supporting the government and providing international aid to the affected, everything in order to secure the region. The first important break came in 2015 with the IGAD led peace agreement that both sides signed (www.bbc.com, 2018). This made it possible for Machar to come back as a vice-president in late April 2016, but in the summer the conflict was reignited and Machar fled to exile. In the Opposition forces another factionism happened which was led by Taban Deng. His goal was to break off and let the SPLA into a winning position. He was later recognized as a legitimate successor of Machar and was appointed as vice-president (Young, 2017, pg. 12-13). In 2017 famine was declared in many regions. Some sources state that famine was used as a tool to famish the rebels, many aid workers have been harassed, aid supplies hijacked by rebel forces and the GoSS even stopped international aid at some point (vox, 2017). The latest news state that the US is pushing for an UN arms embargo but the success of this plan is questioned because of China and Russia veto rights and their regional interest in central Africa (vox, 2016). Overall the conflict still remains open. Until this day it costed 2 million IDPs and 2 million refugees many fleeing to neighboring countries (HRW, 2018). The number of deaths is difficult to provide, because both warring sides limit access to information. The number can be up to 300,000 or more (Casey, 2017).

Ideologies and possible outcomes:

To summarize up, this war can be considered mainly ethnic. But it is important to know that it's only ethnic because of political mismanagement of the past. This political mismanagement negatively influenced farming and herding rights as well. These farmers' conflicts are also an important grassroots building block of the conflict as it was mentioned before. As a possible outcome it is very difficult to state whether one party could win over the other militarily. But the solution for peace does not lie only in military forces. If the 2005 CPA conflict resolutions would be respected there would very much likely be there another South Sudan. This means that political changes must be also prioritized, the question of unity, ethnicity and citizenships must be fulfilled. And a better government led.

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