

Special Political and Decolonization

Berkeley Model
United Nations



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Gabby Armato
Gloria Cheung
Adam Yankelevits
Robert Purviance



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South Sudan

Topic Background

It has been slightly over three years since this fledgling nation seceded from Sudan in July 2011. Now the country is fraught with a major political upheaval, a debilitating famine, a declining economy, and an impending civil war ripe with ethnic tension. The South Sudanese political and social schism erupted after President Salva Kiir began to crackdown on the supporters of his rival, former Vice President Riek Machard. Mr. Machard attempted a coup to overthrow the President shortly after Mr. Kiir dismissed the entirety of his government due to suspicion that they were plotting to overthrow his regime. The conflict boiled over and turned violent between the feuding army factions on December 15th 2013.

The political struggle between these two factions quickly escalated into a full-scale ethnic conflict and has created a violent schism within the country. Mr. Kiir identifies with the Dinka ethnic group, South Sudan's majority, whereas Mr. Machard is a member of the less populous Nuer group. After the attempted coup, Mr. Kiir went after many of Mr. Machard's supporters in order to reassert and consolidate his authority. However, the South Sudanese political allegiances generally correlate to ethnic identity and the vast majority of Mr. Machard's political base was from the Nuer ethnic group. Consequentially, the crackdown appeared to be a targeted ethnic attack, which simultaneously alienated the Nuer from the political party in power and created a sense of pervasive insecurity and a violent dichotomy within the country. These factors have escalated the political power struggle to a civil war fueled by ethnic tension.

This political crisis has caused debilitating humanitarian consequences for the entirety of the South Sudanese population. It is currently estimated that approximately 4 million individuals are in severe need of food due to a shortage caused by the conflict and over 50,000 children are suffering from acute malnutrition. The United Nations estimate that approximately \$1.3 billion is required in order to assuage the situation. Since the start of the conflict, 10,000 have perished and 1.5 million people have been displaced from their homes. For many of the refugee camps, issues of overpopulation, flooding, widespread rape, and other obstacles have made living conditions inhumane for the 800,000 refugees within South Sudan. The rainy season poses a major challenge for maintaining sanitary living conditions for these camps due to sewage contaminating floodwaters and disseminating throughout the camps. Living conditions within



these camps are not just an affront to human dignity, but also have resulted in hundreds of deaths due to infections and unclean drinking water caused from unsanitary conditions. Despite the dire need for humanitarian intervention, the current political climate has proven to be too unstable for outside countries or NGOs to provide sustainable aid to assist the affected population. Médecins Sans Frontières, a medical humanitarian organization, reported that 240 of their staff members working in the region were forced to flee due to a lack of security.

Past International Involvement and Attempted Solutions

Several on-looking states have been scrambling to find a solution to assuage the conflict, mostly due to the fact that the possibility of a civil war additionally threatens any viable economic partnership with South Sudan; the country is known for its large oil reserve that accounts for the majority of the new country's wealth and trade relationships with outside states, making it a high-profile global character that has been getting a lot of international attention. However, the security of South Sudan's partnerships and oil trade is compromised by the chaos that has been gradually consuming the country. Other nations in the region, such as Ethiopia, Uganda, and Kenya, have been struggling to reestablish the status quo through peace talks and a ceasefire. However, all bilaterally agreed upon talks and ceasefires have been promptly broken by one side or the other and have thus proved ineffective at brokering peace between the two factions. Furthermore, countries such as the United States and China have been mediating the situation in order to ensure their future economic relationship with South Sudan after the conflict subsides.

South Sudan's capital city, Juba, has turned into an international hub overnight; it is home to two different United Nations bases, 7,000 peacekeepers (a number that is expected to double), as well as Ugandan troops and air patrols. Furthermore, on August 8 2014 the United Nations Security Council released a statement warning that it will take action against the feuding political leaders responsible for the ethnic violence by enacting targeted sanctions. The Security Council is pushing for both Kiir and Machar to agree to a cease-fire and establish a transitional government for South Sudan. However, the two political leaders have thus far been unable to conduct constructive bilateral discussion regarding the future government regime structure.



Case Studies

1 | Sudan

Sudan and South Sudan share a volatile history prior to South Sudan's succession; the tension between the two began when Sudan gained its independence from the joint British-Egyptian rule in 1956. The tension during the transition was due to Southern leaders accusing the government of neglecting to create a federal system and attempting to establish an Islamic and Arabic national identity. By 1983, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement rebelled against the Sudanese government when officials backed out on autonomy arrangements. Over the course of the civil war that ensued in the next 22 years, over 1.5 million people lost their lives and over 4 million were displaced, resulting in a mass exodus of refugees from the south to nearby neighboring countries. In 2005, the north and south came to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, in which southern Sudan was granted regional autonomy from the north and guaranteed a referendum for independence in 2011. In July 2011, 99% of the southern Sudanese population voted in favor of becoming independent from the rest of Sudan, thus establishing South Sudan.

Ironically enough, one of the most prominent states backing Mr. Kiir is Sudan. However, this move can be attributed to Sudanese President al-Bashir's attempt to protect the supply of oil and cash that flows from South Sudan to Mr. Al-Bashir's resource-deprived state. Prior to the succession, Sudan was an oil-rich nation and was able to capitalize on the revenue generated from international trade. However, rather than direct the funds towards job-generating projects, such as agriculture, the government decided to utilize this money to build up its infrastructure. Following the division, South Sudan acquired 75% of the oil reserves that had previously resided in the former united Sudan. Much of Sudan's current wealth comes from transit fees that could potentially dry up in the event that a full-scale civil war breaks out in South Sudan. Recent austerity measures to mitigate the economic crisis in Sudan have given rise to riots. President Al-Bashir is acutely aware that his country's economic survival depends on him throwing his weight behind whichever political power in the south he thinks will come out on top; in this case he has chosen to put his money on Mr. Kiir.



2 | China

China is currently one of the most powerful hegemonic actors on the world stage and thus has been increasing its involvement with international peacekeeping missions and its participation with international human rights treaties. China currently is outperforming the other four permanent members of the Security Council in its participation with UN peacekeeping missions. In the case of South Sudan, China had initially committed 350 troops to the UN peacekeeping mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and as of September 2014, it has agreed to send an additional 700 Chinese peacekeepers to protect civilians and UN peacekeeping personnel, humanitarian workers, and equipment. Despite their previous peacekeeping efforts, this is the first time the Chinese delegation will contribute an entire battalion to a UN peacekeeping mission.

However, this substantial contribution to the peacekeeping effort in South Sudan cannot be fully attributed to Chinese benevolence, but rather is a reflection of the Chinese government protecting their trading partner and investment. Prior to the succession, China had already invested over \$20 billion in Sudan and another \$8 billion dollars was granted to Mr. Kiir following the division in order to develop oil infrastructure within the new country. China currently accounts for more than 80% of South Sudan's total oil exports, which makes up about 5% of the Chinese oil supply. Since the violent outbreak of the civil war, oil production has been compromised and has already dropped more than 20%, threatening the Chinese investment in South Sudanese oil. If the situation is not stabilized, China may be out on its investment, which may potentially affect its own growth and development.

Questions to Consider

1. How can the United Nations broker peace and provide humanitarian aid without appearing to pick sides in this ethnically charged conflict?
2. How can the United Nations help South Sudan reestablish a legitimate and publicly recognized national lead?
3. What is the role of NGOs throughout this conflict and how can they assist in crafting a culturally appropriate solution to the issues?



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Palestinian Refugees

Topic Background

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be traced back to the establishment of Israel in 1948 following World War II. After the Holocaust, the United Kingdom established Israel for Zionist Jews living in the Mandate of Palestine. This contentious origin fueled the conflict between the Palestinian and Zionist populations and created an air of animosity between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

Due to the 1946 and 1968 wars, thousands of Palestinians were forced from their homes because of the conflict and took refuge in neighboring Arab countries. Today, over 4.6 million Palestinians are refugees or direct decedents and reside in camps within the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. Within the Occupied Territories (i.e. the Gaza Strip and the West Bank), the Arab minority refers to themselves as “indigenous people” in order to fall under the protection of international law that govern the right of indigenous communities. , The Arab population within Israel and the Israeli occupied territories rely on international treaties and law to grant them their rights due to the fact that Arab citizens of the West Bank are not even protected under Israeli constitutional law because “Israel, as a belligerent occupier, cannot apply its law to citizens of the Occupied Territories” (Holzman-Gazit, 131).

In 2005, the Palestinian Authority (PA) conducted its second presidential election, along with the municipal election. In the municipal election, Hamas, a Palestinian political party and alleged terrorist organization, won 77 out of 118 seats in comparison to Fatah’s 26 seats, another major Palestinian political party. Both sides accused the other group of fraud and Israel established tight controls over Palestinian airspace and coastline following the election of Hamas. In Hamas’ charter, it refuses to recognize Israel as a legitimate state and calls for the destruction of Israel and the return of the Palestinian state, often utilizing violent tactics to achieve its political agenda.

However, despite resorting to violent methods of promoting their political agenda, 94% of Palestinians reported satisfaction with Hamas’s military response to the Israelis in the most recent war between Israel and Palestine. The Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research has marked a positive correlation between levels of Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Palestinian approval of Hamas. These irreconcilable political and cultural differences have resulted in tit-



for-tat rocket fire between the two sides interspersed with intermittent cease-fires and peace talks in between. However, due to the military disparity and difference in population densities, Palestine has sustained far more casualties from this perpetual cycle of conflict over the years. However, Israel is reluctant to concede on any point that will strengthen Hamas or grant it any additional political power or legitimacy; instead Israel is directing negotiations towards demilitarizing Gaza and ensuring Hamas does not have rearming capabilities.

Currently, Israel controls all points of access for people and goods into Palestine, including coastlines, and has had a blockade established around the Gaza Strip for the past 7 years. Through this control, Israel can restrict the goods that are able to flow into Gaza, as well as the movement of the Palestinian people residing in the territory. These restrictions have debilitating economic effects due to the fact that they cut the Palestinian territories off from outside aid and resources, inhibit their ability to import cheaper goods, and limit vendors' ability to sell their products within and outside of Gaza, contributing to pervasive unemployment within Gaza. Furthermore, these actions have created a forced dependency on the Israeli economy, exacerbated the poverty rates within the territories, and threatened food security for the Gaza Strip and West Bank. In 2013, the Palestinian economy slowed to 1.5% growth of GDP.

Currently, there are 5 million Palestinian refugees who have been affected by this conflict, with over one third of them (over 1.5 million) residing in 58 refugee camps within Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem.

Past International Involvement and Attempted Solutions

Egypt is currently brokering a ceasefire between the feuding factions in order to clear the air for further diplomatic progress in negotiations, as well as provide necessary humanitarian aid to the Palestinians and repair crucial infrastructure within Gaza. France, UK, and Germany have all issued statements of resounding support for a bilateral ceasefire and voice support for Egypt's mediation while the US and the United Nations have condemned the violence that has recently broken out between the two parties. However, Israeli-Palestinian ceasefires have proven fragile in the past and often collapse or expire prior to parties moving forward in negotiations.

In the wake of this political turmoil, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) have worked to combat the escalating refugee issue by coordinating with host states in order to properly protect Palestinian refugees. However, issues of overpopulation and political status within the



host countries pose major obstacles for the sustainability of these refugee camps and thus cannot be a permanent solution to this burgeoning issue.

Case Studies

1 | United States

The United States plays an integral role when it comes to issues of Israel and Palestine, acting as Israel's most powerful ally both militarily and politically. Due to the fact that the United States holds one of the permanent seats in the Security Council, it has the ability to veto any resolution that poses a threat to the interest of the US or its allies. Under the Obama Administration, the President has voiced his support of Israel's right to defend itself in the face of missile threats and has thrown his support behind Israel in various UN Resolutions. Due to the United States' alliance with Israel, many of the resolutions regarding Israel/Palestine focus on condemning general violence, as opposed to singling out a party, and focus primarily on humanitarian relief, such as Resolution 1860 (2009).

2 | Jordan

Jordan hosts the largest number of registered Palestinian refugees, at over 2 million out of the total of 5 million Palestinian refugees in the Near East in 2013. Even though an infrastructure and camp improvement program was implemented in 2007, the funding has since expired in December 2013. This phenomena of "donor fatigue" is not just hurting refugees within Jordan and those seeking to enter Jordan, it is also hurting refugees who are victims of other ongoing crisis in the region. The Syrian civil war has cut off refugee camps in Syria from aid and supplies, such the Yarmouk camp near Damascus.



Questions to Consider

1. How should we deal with refugees who have settled in neighboring countries? / Should refugees who have settled in Israel's neighboring countries (such as Jordan, Syria, and Egypt) be assimilated into the country that they have settled in or establish a new Palestinian State?
2. What are Israel's responsibilities for providing for and politically accommodating Palestinian Refugees and the Arabs within the Occupied Territories? How have these responsibilities and expectations changed over the course of the conflict and why?
3. What role should parties outside the conflict play in promoting the peace-progress? Should foreign countries recognize Palestine as a state?



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