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RESEARCH REPORT

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THE SITUATION IN SUDAN

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Basic Overview of the Issue

South Sudan is the newest country in the world. It declared independence on the 9th of July, 2011 after almost 60 years of civil conflict in the Republic of Sudan. South Sudan is ranked as one of the poorest and the most unstable countries in the world. Since their independence, they have been dealing with border and oil revenue disputes with Sudan, the inner conflict between the government and opposition groups, such as the Nuer White Army and the National Salvation Front (NAS), and the overall clash of different ethnic groups such as the Dinka and the Nuer. South Sudan, as a whole, inhabits some of the gravest examples of political polarisation and intolerance towards people from different ethnicities.

Explanation of Important Terms

Coup d'état: Coup d'état or shortly a coup is the word for overthrowing the government. The difference between a revolution and a coup is that a revolution is usually done by people of the general public, whereas a coup is performed by high-ranking members of the government and usually the military.

Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/SPLA): SPLM/SPLA is the guerrilla group that emerged during the Second Sudanese Civil War. This group was the one that fought against the North (nowadays Sudan). SPLA became the national army when South Sudan established its independence.

Sudan People's Liberation Movement-In Opposition (SPLM-IO): The SPLM-IO is the opposition group that was born after its separation from the SPLM during a time of tension between President Kiir and Vice president Machar.

Peacekeeper: Peacekeepers are military personnel from various nations who are appointed by the United Nations to observe peace processes in conflict and post-conflict regions.

The Nuer White Army: The White Army, named after the white ash they sometimes used to smear on their bodies led by Bordoang Leah, is a military group formed by the Nuer people. It is believed to have formed for two reasons: protecting Nuer cattle herds from neighboring groups and for fighting in the Second Sudanese Civil War.



Detailed Background of the Issue

After many years of internal conflict in Sudan, South Sudan emerged as an independent state in 2011. However, this did not stop conflicts in the Sudan-South Sudan region. In fact, the conflict has continued to worsen in the past years. This section of the research report will give a detailed background of the years leading up to the establishment of South Sudan and also the current conflicts.

The Years Leading Up to the Establishment of South Sudan

Until 1946, North Sudan and South Sudan were ruled by the United Kingdom and Egypt as two separate regions, which worked well due to the religious and cultural differences between the two regions. In February 1953, the United Kingdom and Egypt granted independence to Sudan as a whole. The state established its own government under prime minister Ismail Al-Azhari, a Muslim politician.

A critical fact about this situation is that the northern region of the country was primarily Muslim while the southern region was primarily Christian. Due to their lack of representation in the government, the Southern region demanded regional autonomy, and this resulted in the First Sudanese Civil War, lasting 17 years, from 1955 to 1972. Half a million people died during these years, and hundreds of thousands were displaced from their homes. In 1972, the two sides reached an agreement with the aid of Haile Selassie, the Emperor of Ethiopia (then Abyssinia.) According to this ceasefire-like agreement called the Addis Ababa Agreement (1972), the Southern Sudan Autonomous Region was established. The official languages were set as Arabic for the North, and English for the South.

However, this fragile state of peace only lasted until June 1983, when the North attempted to impose Islamic Sharia Law upon the autonomous South. The Second Sudanese Civil War broke out that year, and this one lasted until 2005, leaving behind two million deaths, many people without homes, and a country without any kind of infrastructure to support anything but war. While the international community mostly got involved by supplying weapons to either of the sides, there were some notable efforts to supply humanitarian aid to both sides, namely the Operation Lifeline Sudan, conducted by many NGOs under the leadership of UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund.)

The peace treaty signed in 2005 gave the South another six years of autonomous rule, and the chance to decide their own fate with a referendum in 2011. This referendum resulted



in 98% of the Southern people voting to become independent. As a result, South Sudan became a fully independent, self-determining state on the 9th of July, 2011.

The South Sudanese Civil War

After its establishment, South Sudan formed its government under President Salva Kiir and his Vice President Riek Machar. The SPLA became the national army of the state. However, forming the government and establishing a military group was not enough to unite the country under the single demonym, South Sudanese.

The majority ethnic group in South Sudan, according to the CIA World Factbook, is the Dinka by 35.8%. The Nuer follow as second with 15.6%. There are many other ethnic groups, but these two are the most common. There has always been tension between these two ethnic groups, but those tensions heightened significantly in 2013 when President Kiir, a Dinka, accused his Vice President Machar, a Nuer, of planning a coup d'état to overthrow him. The clash between the President and the Vice President affected the whole nation and dragged it into a civil war. Thus, The SPLA divided into two, with the Dinka President supporters remaining as the SPLA and the Nuer VP supporters forming another army, the SPLA-IO.

South Sudan has officially been in a civil war since 2013. The White Army and SPLA-IO are fighting against the government-backed SPLA. President Kiir and former Vice President Machar are acting as the leaders of the Dinka and the Nuer side respectively. Thousands of people are facing death due to famine, and more die during combat each day. There was an attempt from the international community to negotiate a peace treaty in 2015, which reinstated Riek Machar as the Vice President. Although he first hesitated, President Kiir eventually signed the agreement. However, the state of peace, as always, did not last long. The tensions heightened again very recently at the beginning of 2016 when army divisions loyal to either the President or the Vice President started shooting at each other on the streets of South Sudan.

The conflict continues to this day, and the situation is becoming graver each day as the conflict becomes more decentralized and harder to contain with diplomatic approaches. Several states and organizations, such as the United States of America (USA) and the European Union (EU) have imposed embargoes on arms. The same is expected from the whole of the international community. However, the neighboring countries of South Sudan such as Uganda continue to ignite the civil conflict by supplying heavy arms. The South Sudanese government has also been reported by the United Nations Security Council



regarding their purchase of arms with money from its oil sales.

Along with its military aspect, this situation has become one of the greatest humanitarian crises the world has ever seen. The United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres remarked in his speech at High-Level Event on South Sudan in September 2017 that “Close to 4 million people are displaced within South Sudan or in neighboring countries [and] roughly 6 million are severely food insecure” (un.org).

Major Parties Involved

Sudan

Sudan has a very rocky relationship with South Sudan. They have many disputed territories, namely Abyei, Heglig, and Kafia Kingi. Most of these disputes stem from the rich oil resources found in those regions. The two nations have trading relationships focusing on oil, but that relationship is very fragile since the terms of their deals keep changing and both sides keep objecting to the new terms. An unstable South Sudan mostly profits Sudan in its oil deals, because it means that Sudan has more control over the terms. Also, even though the independence of South Sudan happened on peaceful terms, this does not change the fact that Sudan and, what is now, South Sudan waged war against each other for decades. Therefore, although Sudan is a major party involved in the region, it is not very willing to help South Sudan solve its fatal problems.

China

China usually has a policy of not intervening with other countries' domestic politics. However, the country is becoming significantly more dominant in the arena of international politics. Since China was one of the notable importers of oil from South Sudan, it had to make a decision on whether to leave its oil assets unprotected and just withdraw from the region, or get involved and help South Sudan overcome its inner conflict and bring the long lost peace back to the country. They chose the latter, and they did this entirely for their own economic profit. They have significantly helped the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) by providing peacekeepers.

Uganda



When the civil war broke out in South Sudan, Uganda initially got involved by supporting the official government of South Sudan in their fight against the opposition. Their political ties to the government go back to before South Sudan's independence. The government of Uganda supported the South's cause of independence back in the Sudanese Civil Wars. After its establishment, Uganda immediately formed economic ties with South Sudan. Currently, the Ugandan government is trying to initiate peace talks between the two sides. In the long run, trying to sustain peace will probably benefit them, because their economic activity with South Sudan will be much better than it is now if they accomplish to do so. South Sudan is Uganda's most important importer even now, and if they were not under war conditions, they would probably import much more materials due to a more stabilized economy.

African Union (AU)

The African Union has defined the question of South Sudan as one of the most destabilizing conflicts of the continent. The Union has urged South Sudan to a cease-fire and try to negotiate on peaceful terms but to no avail. Right after the conflict reignited in 2016, the AU deployed a peacekeeping mission to help keep at least the civilians from conflict, alongside the UNMISS. They argue that stability in South Sudan is of high importance to the Union, therefore they have decided to remain involved in the situation.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

As it has in 170 countries and territories, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) started working in South Sudan after it became independent in 2011 to eradicate the prevalent poverty problem in the country. One of the ways UNDP has been helping the issue is by investing in education. The UNDP helped villagers build a 120,000 dollar primary school. This construction has not only aided the people who have remained in the village but also those who left and have now returned.

Chronology of Important Events

February 1953	Sudan gains independence after being under Egypt and United Kingdom rule.
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August 1955	The First Sudanese Civil War begins.
March 1972	The First Sudanese Civil War ends.
June 1983	The Second Sudanese Civil War begins.
January 2005	The Second Sudanese Civil War ends.
9 July 2011	South Sudan gains independence from Sudan and becomes the Republic of South Sudan.
13 July 2011	South Sudan becomes a UN member.
27 July 2011	South Sudan joins the AU.
2013	President Salva Kiir accuses Vice President Riek Machar and others of plotting a coup against him.
26 August 2015	A peace treaty is signed by President Kiir and Vice President Machar. Machar is reinstated as Vice President.
2016	A few months after the peace treaty, members of the opposition army start fighting each other in the streets. This starts the ongoing war.
19 July 2016	The AU announces that it will be deploying a peacekeeping force to South Sudan.

Relevant International Documents

- Security Council Resolution, 8 July 2011 ([S/RES/1996](#))
- Security Council Resolution, 3 March 2015 ([S/RES/2206](#))
- Security Council Resolution, 12 August 2016 ([S/RES/2304](#))
- Security Council Resolution, 16 December 2016 ([S/RES/2327](#))



Solution Alternatives

There could be various alternatives proposed on how to solve the conflict between Sudan and South Sudan. One of these could be completing the creation of the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone (SDBZ) on the Sudan-South Sudan border. The completion of this demilitarized zone could be the first step in stopping the violence from both sides. One other solution alternative could be, although a bit more on the humanitarian side, encouraging organizations like UN-Water to cooperate with the South Sudanese government in order to allow citizens access to clean water, as a means of preventing disease. Another NGO to get help from for humanitarian aid would be the already set UNMISS. Although the mission has security problems, which causes the humanitarian aid sent to the UNMISS to not arrive at the bases, the arrival of the materials could be ensured which would definitely help solve the humanitarian crisis. The safe arrival of the materials sent to UNMISS should be ensured. One other significant reason why the conflict in South Sudan continues is that both sides have easy access to a variety of weapons. These are either sold by outside governments or private entities, which profit largely from the civil war. An arms embargo on South Sudan would definitely be an efficient solution after parties that are supplying weapons to South Sudanese parties are identified. Because the issue has deep-rooted causes in the ethnic division, military intervention would not be a long term solution. This is why instead of military intervention, political approaches should be considered. While this help could come from different relevant NGOs and nations that are willing to help, it is highly sensible to make use of the already established UNMISS. The mission has security problems, the humanitarian aid sent to the UNMISS usually doesn't even arrive at the bases. The safe arrival of the materials sent to UNMISS should be ensured.

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Useful Links

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