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An Update on South-Sudan Crisis and how it Affects Her Foreign Policy

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Abstract:

The study examined the south Sudan crisis, Africa's most recent independent state. The study identified a number of factors including ethnic divisions and rivalry, the power play between the President and his erstwhile deputy among many others as contributing to the crisis which has accounted for the deaths of thousands of South Sudanese and the displacement of many more. The growing number of south Sudanese refugees within neighboring states has thus become a course for concern. The study holds the view that the South Sudanese refugees' crisis if not managed well is capable of having spiral effects on fragile peace being enjoyed by a few African countries. To this end, the paper makes appropriate remarks and recommendation as to how the crisis can be solved despite the defiance of two ceasefire agreements. The ex post facto research design was adopted for the study.

Keywords: Crisis, Erstwhile, Refugees, Ceasefire Agreement, Displacement

1. Introduction

South Sudan, the world's newest nation attained independence from Sudan in July 2011 as the outcome of a 2005 peace deal that ended Africa's longest civil war. Bordered by Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya, Ethiopia and Sudan, a 2011 referendum facilitated its secession from Sudan to become Africa's new country since Eritrea split from Ethiopia in 1993. Its large expansive grassland swamps and tropical rain forest coupled with its diverse ethnic and linguistic nature stands it out in the southern part of the continent. South Sudan just like any other country on the continent is home to several ethnic nationalities. Among the largest ethnic groups are the Dinka, Nuer and Shilluk (BBC, 2014).

The young state plunged into crisis in December 2013 following a power struggle between the President and his deputy. The crisis erupted when the former sacked the latter in an attempt to embark on reorganization of the senior leadership of the government. The President Salva Kiir having suspected some misdeeds decided to do away with services of his former deputy Riek Machar.

This singular action has led to widespread killings and tribal divisions. The tribal divisions have also been fuelled by the fact that the two major actors stem from two dominant ethnic nationalities in the country. Mr. Salva Kiir is an ethnic Dinka, while Riek Machar is an ethnic Nuer.

Quite unfortunately, these positions by the two gladiators have assumed an ethnic conflict outlook because Kiir and Machar stem from different tribes with a history of conflict. Consequently, the conflict has degenerated further with each of the gladiator(s) accusing the other of deliberate attempts at extinguishing their respective tribes. Today, the group loyal to the former Deputy President, Mr. Riek Machar has emerged as the rebel faction. Fighting between government troops loyal to Mr. Salva Kiir and the rebel group loyal to Mr. Riek Machar have led to widespread culminating in the killing of thousands of South Sudanese and the displacement of over 800,000 people.

With the donations coordinated by the UNHCR in the realm of 600 million US dollars pledged to help the displaced and the growing number of South Sudanese refugees scattered all over Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda, the world's attention has become drawn to the humanitarian situation in the world's newest nation, South Sudan (OCHA, 2014). Following this development and incident, it has become imperative as a stakeholder in world affairs to enquire into the conflict in South Sudan which has defied two cease fire agreements with the aim of bringing peace, harmonious relationship and development back to Africa's newest nation.

2. Statement of Problem

Preliminary investigation into the civil conflict ravaging South Sudan have revealed that unlike other parts of the world where conflicts are fought based on ideological differences, the feeling of neglect amongst others, that of South Sudan appears unique as it appears to be a battle of wits, test of might between the President and former Vice President. Closely related to the crisis is the ethnic coloration it has assumed due the ethnic groups that the two major gladiators stem from.

The over six months conflict have thus become a concern to all as it has not only claimed the lives of thousands of South Sudanese, but also have displaced close to a million people from their homes and thus aggravating an already dire humanitarian situation.

The South Sudan situation calls for pragmatic action as it is capable of threatening the temporary peace presently being enjoyed by the rest of Africa. its effect on countries hosting South-Sudanese refugees has grave consequences. It is in the light of this, that this study will investigate the crisis in South Sudan and also examine if it has any significant influence on her foreign policy.

3. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to;

- Examine factors that may have caused the crisis.
- Examine its effects of the crisis on the people of South Sudan.
- Examine the consequences of the conflict on her immediate neighbours
- Examine if the crisis significantly affects South Sudan's foreign policy.

4. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study will affect the following:

- African countries, especially countries bordering South Sudan. Its impact on their economy, social life and security cannot be ignored. The restoration of peace in South Sudan will be as important for countries hosting South Sudanese refugees.
- The African Union in this instance has a lot to do to restore peace in South Sudan. As it appears, peace in South Sudan could also engender lasting peace for the rest of Africa and vice versa.
- The United Nations Organization also has a responsibility here to ensure the World Peace and Security which it superintends is restored in South Sudan. Efforts should be re-doubled to ensure warring parties are committed to peace especially against the backdrop of two ceasefire agreements which have failed to end the crisis.
- For the displaced South Sudanese, efforts should be made they return to their homes in order to continue their different means of livelihood. The scarcity of food currently ravaging the country can be eased if peace is restored and people go back to their means of livelihood.

5. Methodology

5.1. Research Design

The research design is the ex-post facto type since the researcher cannot manipulate or control the independent variables because they have already occurred. The independent variable in this study is the crisis in South Sudan, while the dependent variable is how it affects her Foreign Policy.

5.2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The conflict that have engulfed South Sudan and currently threatening its unity broke out on 15th December 2013 following sweeping reforms which the President, Salva Kiir embarked upon. The crisis have left thousands dead and displaced hundreds of thousands more (Oxfam, 2014). It was equally observed that the crisis has its root in the high handedness of the President who embarked upon reorganizing the senior leadership of his government, party and military in an unprecedented manner. The biggest causality in the reform was the dismissal of the Vice-President Riek Machar.

Following the dismissal of former Vice President, Riek Machar led an army of youths which made efforts at destabilizing the government of Salva Kiir. The crisis reached an eclipse on December 15, 2013 when a confrontation between army officers loyal to President, Salva Kiir and disgruntled soldiers backing his ex-deputy. The consequence of this action has degenerated so much that Mr. Riek Machar has emerged as a rebel leader controlling some parts of the country, while Mr. Salva Kiir also controls the larger percentage of the new state (Maru, 2013).

Consequently, South Sudan, Africa's most recent state has dashed the hopes of so many people who had great expectations of South Sudan's potentials following their ceding from Sudan in 2011, as the new state has failed to develop into a democratic and stable nation.

Today, the crisis has been fuelled by ethnic and tribal divisions, and fast assuming a humanitarian situation, requiring prompt attention of all stakeholders with the hope of restoring peace to that part of the continent. The situation in South Sudan is cut across several concepts namely conflict, civil war, coup, crisis amongst many others. For the purpose of clarity, each of these will be examined independently.

Conflict has been depicted as a situation or condition of disharmony in an interactional process. It is a situation of conflict in which the activity of one is actually or forcibly imposed at unacceptable costs, materials or psychic upon another. (Banks, 1984). It has also been defined as a process in which one party perceives that its interest are being opposed or negatively affected by another party. (Wall Jnr

and Callister, 1995). Conflict occur when two or more people or organization disagree because their needs, wants, goals or values are different. The situation in South Sudan can be said to have assumed a conflict pattern as there are open confrontations between the persons of the President and the former Vice President.

Furthermore, civil war is defined by Akinboye and Otoh (2007) as wars between competing factions in the international border state. In the same vein, the term civil war depicts a conflict within a nation. A civil war according to Wikipedia (2014) is a high-intensity conflict often involving regular armed forces, that is sustained, organized and large scale. Civil wars may result in large number of casualties and the consumption of significant resources. In this regard, it will not be out of place to label the crisis in South Sudan a civil war considering the intensity of the conflict involving government troops led by the President and rebel forces led by Mr. Riek Machar. The consequence of the crisis has led to the deaths of thousands of South Sudanese, and the displacement of over a million people.

Furthermore, the term crisis which has also been likened to the situation in South Sudan has been described as any event that is, or is expected to lead to, an unstable and dangerous situation affecting an individual, group, community or whole society. Crisis are deemed to be negative in nature in the security, economic, political, societal or environmental affairs, especially when they occur abruptly, with little or no warning. The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary described crisis as an unstable situation, in political, social, economic or military affairs, especially one involving an impending abrupt change. Apparently, the power grab competition between the two leading figures in South Sudan has assumed an unstable or dangerous trend. Consequently, it will not be out of place to label the South Sudan situation a crisis.

A careful examination of the three concepts namely conflict, civil war and crisis indeed reveal that they are all situations which harm any individual group or entity. To this end, the South Sudan crisis is one that has engulfed the world's newest nation in crisis that has lasted over six months which has put over four million people at risk of acute insecurity of food and other basic amenities. To this end, the crisis in South Sudan has not only defied every means, but has also proven to have elements of the three concepts earlier examined.

5.3. Factors Seen to Have Caused the Crisis

The South Sudan crisis can be said to be connected to the country's foundations. The ceding and eventual pull out of South Sudan was not a perfect process. The in-fighting which ravaged the country for years was as a result of division between major parts of the country. Consequently, South Sudan's evolution has witnessed political indulgence and inclination marked by the absence of any credible and meaningful reform. It was however not surprising when crisis hit the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) the ruling party especially at the top echelon of political power (Maru, 2013). During the armed struggle for independence, the glue kept the various divergent forces of the SPLM intact as their common enemy was Khartoum to their aspiration for self-determination and independence. Immediately independence was achieved, it was only a matter of time before liberation movements face internal divisions and even total rejection by their various supporters. Due to its lack of common ideology, aims, goals and aspirations, crisis was inevitable. The consequence of this seeming unpreparedness has led to the competition and high handedness of key figures in power on the one hand, and the deaths and displacement of millions of South Sudanese on the other.

Another factors which appear to have stemmed the South Sudanese crisis has been the ethnic conflict outlook it has assumed over time. For the two key figures involved, Mr. Salva Kiir and Mr. Riek Machar though both belong to the same political party. The SPLM, they stem from different tribes with a history of conflict. Mr. Salva Kiir is an ethnic Dinka, while his counterpart is an ethnic Nuer. This piece holds the view that this division have not only made South Sudanese democratic practice weak, it has also fueled ethnic killings of the Dinka ethnic group by forces loyal to Mr. Riek Machar and vice versa. The competition and bitterness between the President and his erstwhile deputy has caused him to accuse Marchar of coup attempt while the camp loyal to Mr. Riek Machar was debunked the allegations, saying it had no basis.

The South Sudan crisis has today defied two ceasefire agreements. The first signed on January 23, 2014 which had representatives of Government and the Rebel forces took place in Ethiopia. The second ceasefire agreement came into being when the first failed to stop the fighting. The second ceasefire agreement was signed in Addis Ababa on May 9th, 2014. (Punch, 2014). Of concern is the growing number of South Sudanese refugees who have been forced to take refuge in neighbouring countries. Countries hosting South Sudanese refugees include Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, and Sudan (OCHA, 2014). The growing number of refugees seeking refuge has been of concern to countries hosting South Sudanese refugees and United Nations High Commission for Refugees, the United Nations specialized agency saddled with the responsibility of taking care of refugees. It is notable to mention that since the signing of the cessation of hostilities Agreement in Addis Ababa on May 9, 2014, the number of internally displaced people has grown by 46,000 people to 1.01 million (Punch, 2014).

With the conflict in South Sudan having put approximately four million people at risk of acute food insecurity and the potential for further displacement internally and into neighboring countries over the coming weeks, the time to act is now as the crisis in South Sudan is capable of spiral effect on the rest of Africa. The fragile peace being enjoyed by few countries should not be tampered with, rather be consolidated with the restoration of peace in South Sudan.

5.4. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is derived from the Theory of Structural Conflict put forward by Karl Marx. The theory states that conflict is inherently built into a society through a structure and organization. The theory looks at social problems such as political and economic exclusion, poverty, injustice, exploitation, disease and inequality which are considered as sources of conflict. The

structural conflict theory maintains that conflict occur because of exploitative and unjust nature of human societies. The domination of one class by another which is often noticed in a capitalist system is a cause for conflict (Wikipedia 2014). The crisis ravaging South Sudan today can be seen in the light of the structural conflict theory. The exploitative tendencies of big players in the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) have led to open conflict amongst stakeholders. The feeling of neglect, injustice, exclusion among others has led to the rush for power occasioned by the displacement and killings of so many South Sudanese. The failure of the new state to provide basic amenities, alleviate poverty among many others is a cause of conflict according to the structural conflict theory. The theory explains why citizens take up arms against the state when all avenues to have a fair share of resources fail, as in the case of the rivalry between the Dinka and Nuer ethnic groups.

5.5. Implications of the South Sudan Crisis

The implications of the South Sudan crisis are multifaceted. Efforts would be made to examine the implications one after the other. Apparently, the current crisis has grave implications for South Sudan's sovereignty against the backdrop of its recent evolution as a nation-state. The current crisis has negatively affected the 'young' state as it is yet to be stabilized. South Sudan cannot afford to tow the line of Somalia which has now been referred to as a failed state. The efforts or actions of Mr. Salva Kiir may not be the best as the stabilization of the country should be a priority. The exercise of Absolute power needs to be reviewed with the view to bringing all parties to a dialogue where every agitation can be addressed.

The implications of South Sudan's crisis on her immediate neighbours are better imagined. For Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Sudan hosting millions of South Sudanese refugees coupled with the economic implications, the crisis calls for concern. The immediate and distant implications of bordering South Sudan is also of concern as conflicts often transcend beyond national boundaries. The African Union has a role to play in this instance by ensuring the crisis does not spill into neighbouring countries. The security implications of this crisis on South Sudan neighbours are also grave. The smuggling of light weapons coupled with increase in crime rate also requires attention.

For the rest of Africa, the wide implications of the South Sudan's crisis cannot be overemphasized as Africa cannot afford another failed state. The South Sudan's situation is grave especially after defying two ceasefire agreements. For other ethnic nationalities, pondering secession, the South Sudanese situation has indeed proven that secession may not be the best. As has been seen that secession is not a guarantee for peace and security. In terms of security implications, the South Sudanese crisis requires prompt attention in order not to threaten the fragile peace being enjoyed by numerous states in Africa. The African Union has a role to play in this regard to redouble efforts to make sure the South Sudanese crisis does not degenerate further. The African Union should employ its most important organ which is the Assembly of Heads of State and Government to ensure the crisis is resolved.

The implications of the crisis on South Sudanese foreign policy are even more grave. South Sudan is today grappling with restoring peace and order. Consequently, it has practically abandoned any form of foreign policy. This piece is quick to mention that Domestic Policy is the pedestal or platform which Foreign Policy thrives on. As a result, South Sudan's foreign policy has become docile and inactive thereby negatively affecting her foreign policy and projecting her as an unstable entity, except for countries that have donated funds through the United Nations Humanitarian Agency, the UNHCR. Because of South Sudan's precarious situation, she is not in any position to put forward any demand before fellow countries unless the ones she voluntarily receives.

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

This paper concludes that the South Sudanese crisis be given due attention by the rest of Africa as Africa cannot afford another failed state. The paper concludes that South Sudan's peculiar situation of being a young state should be considered in resolving the conflict. The horn of Africa should take up this challenge to help stabilize Africa's newest nation. Political leaders need to realize that holding political offices is transient, as a result, should not exercise absolute power. The democratization of South Sudan will reduce the tension, rivalry and help solve the crisis. Efforts should also be intensified to ensure parties at war are committed to the rule of law. The commitment to the rule of law by parties is capable of solving the crisis especially with the reaching and signing of the ceasefire agreements. Doing this will help restore the troubled nation back to the path of peace.

In preferring recommendations to the South Sudanese crisis, this paper recommends that Mr. Riek Machar be given a constitutional role in government, though not necessarily reinstating him as the Vice President. The inclusion of Mr. Riek Machar in government will to a large extent force him to drop arms against the state and tow the path of peace. The example in Zimbabwe when Mr. Morgan Tsvangirai was made the Prime Minister by President Robert Mugabe to bring peace needs emulation from the South Sudanese authorities.

In addition, the President should intensify efforts at ensuring full democratization of the system. This will facilitate equitable distribution of resources and income, accountability and transparency. The feeling of discord been experienced is itself a catalyst for the ongoing crisis. Once government is accountable, transparent and open, citizens are not likely to take up arms against the state. Restoring and democratic stability is a priority. As a result, no efforts should be spared in bringing peace, tranquility and development back to South Sudan.

Conclusively, for the ethnic nationalities who have a history of conflict, there is the need to emphasize shared values and vision common to all groups in order for cooperation. The Nigerian example should be a model for the South Sudanese. Nigeria is home to over 250 ethnic groups and in spite of our differences, we still find it appropriate to cooperate and work together. Fairness in power sharing, equitable distribution of income, diversity in resources and above all poverty alleviation are panacea for sustained peace and tranquility.

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