

The Centrality of Conflict Transformation in Solving Political Struggles and Political Violence in South Sudan

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Abstract

South Sudanese have borne the brunt of the civil wars that have engulfed the country since 1955 to the present. People are perishing at the hands of government soldiers, militias and rebel forces. Using document analysis, this article evaluates the centrality of the conflict transformation model in reducing political violence in South Sudan. Political struggles and political violence in South Sudan have significantly led to the deterioration of human security and human rights. Conflict transformation helps South Sudan in realising that there is more to their future as a country rather than power struggles largely driven by ethnic politics. The North-South divide has since diminished. This implies that tolerance should now prevail. The Dinka-Nuer dichotomy should be a cause for celebration rather than animosity. It is significant for the country's political leaders to realise that ethnic differences are going to forever be part of their lives, and should therefore be a source of strength as they seek to rebuild their country. The transformation of relationships is thus essential in eliminating the so-called 'politics of isolation' in the country and ensuring that violence is not viewed as the solution to the problems affecting the country.

Key Words: *Ethnic Politics; Factional Politics; Civilian Suffering; Inclusive Politics; Conflict Transformation*

1. Introduction

People are dying in Africa because of direct, cultural and structural forms of violence (Galtung 1969, 2002) happening in most regions of the continent. The reasons for the continent's political and economic challenges are multifaceted and they have a bearing on the lives of millions of people. In the midst of political and economic turmoil, civilians do not remain docile. Multiple survival strategies are implemented in order to deal with the brutal effects of violence. Flight usually emerges as both a common and popular survival strategy implemented by civilians. For example, of the more than 176 thousand asylum seekers in Italian shelters in 2016, most of them were from different countries of Africa (Africa News 2016). If one considers the political turmoil, corruption, bad governance and human rights abuses rampant in countries such as Ethiopia, Nigeria, Libya, South Sudan, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Central African

Republic and Somalia, to name a few, it comes as no surprise why civilians are migrating from Africa in huge numbers.

There are convincing reasons why South Sudan should not be in a state of disaster it is in right now. Competition for power radicalised by ethnic overtones has brewed nothing but catastrophe. South Sudan should realise that many if not all African countries are made up of different political parties and different 'tribal' affiliations. This makes it important to have leadership that is thoughtful of the plight of the citizens, leadership that tolerates divergent political views and leadership that respects life. Horowitz, Stam and Ellis (2015: 8) highlighted the importance of leadership style in politics when they said, "While common sense tells us that leaders play a crucial role in setting their state's course, sorting out in a systematic manner what explains how leaders will behave is more difficult". In relation to the violence in South Sudan, this research discusses how the war in South Sudan can be better explained by the 'dictatorial'¹ tendencies of William Deng, John Garang and Salva Kiir evidenced by the various machinations they put in place in order to dominate southern politics since the independence of Sudan in 1956. The war can also be understood by Machar's defiance and 'reluctance' to respect superiors as seen in the 1991 and 2013 splits. The research uses the splits that happened in the South in 1968, 1991 and 2013 to examine how Dinka 'dictatorship' and Nuer 'discontentment and vindictiveness' descended the South into political turmoil. Solutions to this problem should therefore be seen and regarded as such. The need for mending relationships should be guided by the common understanding that the people of South Sudan are always the victims and that the strengths of South Sudan are rooted in unity and diversity.

Peacebuilding revolves around nonviolent methods of conflict resolution, reducing direct violence (short-term peacebuilding), conflict transformation (transforming relationships) and building capacity (long-term peace building) (Shank and Schirch 2008: 4). The goal of conflict transformation is to mend relationships that would have been ruptured by conflict. Conflict transformation helps South Sudan in realising that one of its greatest assets is its ethnic diversity. This research gives prominence to the aspect of conflict transformation because of its bias towards addressing the emotional aspects of conflict. South Sudan has been affected by the problem of mutual suspicion as shown in the history of the schisms between the Dinka and the Nuer. This explains why the transformation of relationships is of the utmost importance.

2. History of Conflict in Sudan: The First Civil War

The South Sudan conflict is better understood in the context of the civil wars that engulfed Sudan between 1955 and 2011. Studying it in isolation, we run the risk of neglecting a myriad of important historical watersheds which helped shape up the current conflict in the South. Sudan derives its name from the Arabic expression "Bilad es-Sudan" which means land of the blacks (Ruay 1994). The country gained independence in 1956 after decades of Anglo-Egyptian condominium rule. This was a system whereby Sudan was administered by a governor-general appointed by Egypt with British consent. This meant Egypt wielded

¹ Dictatorship is a controversial term. This paper uses it in the context of the behavior of successive Dinka leaders to dominate southern politics at the expense of the other 'tribes'.

significant influence. As in many parts of the African continent, colonialism helped in laying the roots of the conflict in Sudan (Heleta 2008).

Sudan's first civil war was waged from 1955 to 1972 when southern insurgents, called the Anya Nya, fought against the Government of Sudan (GOS) for greater autonomy. From 1956, the Southerners suffered from the harsh policies imposed and supported by the Khartoum administration. There was land grabbing by the Northerners and attempts to replace local cultures with the Arab-African culture of the northern Nile Valley (Gramizzi and Tubiana 2013: 11). As noted by Dixon and Sarkees (2016: 372), South Sudan was historically subordinate to the North. Despite possessing the bulk of the country's oil reserves, the South found its situation deplorable (Ottaway and El-Sadany 2012: 1). By 1956, Sudan had been officially divided into two areas: Arab Muslim North and Black Christian South (Ottaway and El-Sadany 2012: 4). The North constituted what French colonial authorities called the "useful country". This was the region most favoured in terms of development of social services and infrastructure than the Southern region.

After coming to power in 1970, the leader of the South Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM), Colonel Lagu, realised that even though the Southern guerrillas could prevent the government from controlling the South, they could never achieve decisive victory (Lesch 1998: 46). The First Civil War led to the death of hundreds of thousands of people. The Addis Ababa peace agreement of 27 February 1972 between SSLM and GOS ended the first civil war. This consequently created a ten-year period of relative peace. The peace agreement ratified the Southern Provinces Regional Self-Government Act. This meant that new regional state apparatus were to be established in the South, including a legislative, an executive organ, a regional administration, three provincial administrations and district/rural administrations. The overall objective was to initiate and implement the reconstruction and development of the South (Tvedt 1994: 71). The peace agreement granted significant regional autonomy to South Sudan. The regional government was tasked with internal security and local administration (Lesch 1998: 46). It had also its independent budget, whose revenue came from local taxes and fee as well as from a special fund from the central government. Arabic remained the country's official language but English was designated the principal language in the South and Southern schools could teach indigenous languages (Lesch 1998: 46-47). The autonomous state of the southern region was enshrined in the Permanent Constitution in 1973 (Lesch 1998: 47). It, however, later emerged that the autonomy was limited and eventually eroded into nothing in the next decade as a result of the manipulation of the leaders of the South by the North and the intervention of the North in the affairs of the South (Rolandsen 2005: 25). The North and the South thus slowly drifted towards war.

3. The Second Civil War

Some of the original Anya Nya fighters refused to accept the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972 from the outset. They hid along Ethiopia's west border. One can use this evidence to argue that the first civil war never ended (Rolandsen 2005: 25). This also shows that there were already disagreements among the leadership in the South. Ethiopia's Derg regime supported the Anya Nya fighters, who were also reinforced by mutineers. Ethiopia did this as retaliation against Khartoum's support for Eritrean separatists. The rebel

groups, now referred to as Anya Nya II, became increasingly assertive as the institutions created by the Addis Ababa Agreement began to fall apart (Rolandsen 2005: 26-27). Despite the debate over the genesis of the second civil war, the mutiny in the southern town of Bor in 1983 is generally regarded as the beginning of the war (Rolandsen 2005: 26). In 1983, the Southern units of the army mutinied and launched a new civil war (Shillington 2005: 1501). The revitalised rebel groups (Anya Nya II) grouped themselves into political and military wings, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLM/A) respectively (Europa Publications 1971: 1008). The central government created paramilitary groups such as Popular Defence Forces (PDF) in 1989 to fight against the SPLM/A.

While the first civil war was about questions of equality and political reform, the second civil war was essentially a matter of political freedom. The non-implementation of the Addis Ababa Agreement awakened the Southerners to the fact that only independence would free them from northern exploitation. Consequently, from 1983 to 2005 Sudan became entangled in another brutal civil war. Led by John Garang, the Southerners sought independence from the North under the direction of the party's political and military wings. Garang succeeded in recruiting fighters in Sudan's most marginalised and peripheral regions, especially South Kordofan, popularly known as "Nuba" by outsiders (Gramizzi and Tubiana 2013: 11). With Nimeiri as President of Sudan, opposition to the North's economic and political policies accelerated. The Addis Ababa Agreement was violated by Nimeiri who undermined the autonomy of the South by introducing Islamic Law in 1983. He also reshaped the boundaries between the South and the North after the discovery of oil and other minerals in Southern Sudan in the early 1980s (Biel 2003). Nimeiri also divided the South into smaller regions. The protracted war had huge human costs. More than two million people died and four million were uprooted (Eagle 2010). Others experienced disease and starvation. These catastrophes inevitably put Sudan on the top of the regional and international agenda.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005 ended decades of civil war in Sudan. The signatories were the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, based in Juba, and the ruling National Congress Party (NCP), based in Khartoum. The CPA was facilitated through a regional effort led by the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and backed by the international community, namely the United States, the United Kingdom and Norway. In essence, the CPA mandated a cessation of hostilities between the North and the South. Added to that, there were recommendations to create a power-sharing government over a period of six years, which indeed happened. SPLM/A leader John Garang was appointed first vice-president of Sudan, and the regional government of the South was transitioned into the hands of the SPLM/A (Campbell 2015). Garang's rule lasted only six months before he was killed in a helicopter crash in Uganda, thereby paving way for Salva Kiir – another former rebel. Nonetheless, the CPA did very little to end fighting between the North and the South (Aall 2015: 2).

Sudan was partitioned into two states following a January 2011 referendum in which 98,8% of Southern Sudanese overwhelmingly voted for independence. The referendum constituted part of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement that officially ended the war between the Khartoum government and the South-based SPLM (Seri-Hersch 2013). The 2011 division of Sudan resulted in three quarters of Sudan's oil

being transferred to South Sudan while the infrastructure for exporting the oil remained in the north (Revenue Watch Institute nd). The partition thus did little to ameliorate relations between South Sudan and its northern neighbours who all depended on one revenue source. Resultantly, the oil-rich nation has been hit by internal conflict since its formation (Mokone 2014: 5). There have been border clashes with Sudan around the Abyei area. There is oil in the border area of Abyei, which the governments of both countries desire to possess, for example, the Difra oil field is disputed (Hamer 2015). Part of the efforts to solve the border crisis was the creation of the United Nations peacekeeping mission called the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), which have monitored the situation there since 2011 (Hamer 2015). Nonetheless, this has not stopped interstate and intrastate clashes.

4. The need for Conflict Transformation in South Sudan: Insights from the 1968, 1991 and 2013 splits

Conflict transformation takes as its central tenet the view that conflict is not necessarily violent or negative, but rather inherent in all societies, and must be seen as a potential vector for change towards something positive, or pacifist (Life and Peace Institute 2009: 19). There are several examples on the African continent where warring parties reached compromises for the good of the citizens. Zimbabwe had a government of national unity between 2009 and 2013 while Kenya had the same between 2008 and 2013. These arrangements brought together formerly hostile parties with the aim of ending politically-motivated violence and resurging economic growth. Conflict transformation allowed South Sudan political leaders to come together to reflect on their common interests as a people and as a nation and how best to move forward. What united South Sudanese is greater than what could separate them. They were together in the trenches for many decades to resist Northern exploitation. It is in this regard that they should realise that what they fought for was for the people to live happier lives not the bloodshed they now experience as a result of 'parochial' political interests.

What emerged from the South Sudan conflict is that the struggles for power contributed to instability in the South even before partition. This means that solutions to instability in the country should take account of these power struggles. The politics of alienation and vengeance prevalent in South Sudan point to the need for a comprehensive reconciliation process in order to end violence. There is a long history of mistrust mainly between the Nuer and the Dinka. This justifies why relations should be transformed. The Dinka have dominated southern politics at the expense of other groups such as the Nuer, who also think they should be equally represented in all spheres of life. This implies that South Sudan should seriously think about eliminating the monopoly of the presidency and other important political positions. On the other hand, Nuer leaders should work to win the hearts and minds of the people rather than relying on violence to settle political disputes. Fissures can be reduced, for example, by rotating the presidency between the Dinka and Nuer and other dominant ethnic groups. If this is considered impractical, the incumbent should then tolerate opposition so that no certain 'tribe' is entitled to higher posts in party and government. Such approaches are important because the rebel groups saw themselves as having played major roles in the liberation of the

country and thus should be treated accordingly. Although there could be other better ways of solving the conflict other than these, efforts should be directed towards amicably solving the political impasse that has dragged on for quite long. The strategy of structurally inhibiting candidates from other ethnic groups from equally participating in the political activities of the country is what took South Sudan to the brink of collapse. Finding a long-term solution is important because the conflict has had a disturbing effect on the citizens.

4.1 The 1968 Anya Nya I Split

The Anya Nya movement was formed in 1962. It was the military wing of the Sudan African Nationalist Union (SANU). It took its name from a traditional poison concocted from snake parts and fermented beans. The Anya Nya was not a strictly united fighting unit and such divisions were reflected in SANU itself; SANU operated in exile. The Equatorians, who were the best educated of the Southerners, dominated the movement (Clammer 2005: 29-30). The Equatorians wanted full independence for the South while the few Dinka in SANU, led by William Deng, supported a federalist solution for the whole country. SANU split in 1964 following the return of civilian government in Khartoum in the same year. The Anya Nya refused to partake in talks with the Khartoum government. Deng was assassinated by government forces in 1968 (Clammer 2005: 30).

Colonel Joseph Lagu seized control of the Anya Nya in 1970 and emerged as a unifying figure overcoming southern divisions. The Anya Nya rebel group combined into the South Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM) in 1971, the precursor to the modern Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) founded in 1983 (Zapata nd). The SSLM received military assistance from Israel which assisted them in driving the government from huge areas of southern territory (Clammer 2005: 30). The Israeli government and the Israeli Defence Forces were instrumental in the consolidation of the Anya Nya, and its administrative apparatus, especially between 1967 and 1972. Israeli support for the Anya Nya was driven by geopolitical and strategic calculations (Poggo 2009: 2). The aim was to stab the Arabs in the back. Consequently, the Israeli government diverted to the Anya-Nya forces large quantities of weapons that the Israeli Defence Forces had captured from the Arabs during the Six-Day War of 1967. Thus, the first civil war in Sudan was funded by stable governments whose goals and objectives were diametrically opposed to one another (Poggo 2009: 2).

In 1968, several Anya Nya senior commanders dispersed the Anya Nya movement into multiple factions because of political differences among politicians. Khartoum took advantage of these differences to cause more disruptions. According to Guarak (2011: 227), the Anya Nya I Split of 1968 should have been a prime example to guide subsequent movements. Future leaders should have taken some lessons about the significance of unity and tolerance in developing Southern politics. Internal strife was a visible feature of politics in South Sudan since the independence of Sudan. This later on became a huge impediment to nation building as demonstrated by further splits and many other incidents of intra-party violence.

4.2 The Politics of the 1991 split

In the second civil war that happened in Sudan (1983-2005), the SPLM/A made progress in the battlefield. Nonetheless, the politics of the movement was in disarray. The SPLA coup plotters (Riek Machar, Gordon Koang Chuol and Lam Akol) denounced John Garang on 28 August 1991. They described him as a dictator, called for greater democracy in the SPLM/A command structure and pledged themselves to a greater respect for human rights, especially in relation to the release of political prisoners, and the curbing of the recruitment of 'child soldiers' (Johnson 2003: 97). They also declared the need for the South's independence. The message partially read:

During the past eight years John Garang has headed the Movement in the most dictatorial and autocratic fashion... To save the Movement from the imminent collapse, it has been decided to relieve John Garang of the leadership of SPLM/A. He is no longer the leader of the Movement. An interim leadership composed of the high command members listed in this message will be as of today 29/8/91 take charge of the Movement's affairs. The struggle will henceforth be wage(d) with a clear sense of purpose to achieve equality, justice and freedom under democratic set-up (Talk of Juba 2016).

The three commanders, Riek Machar, Lam Akol and Gordon Kong expected the coup to be supported locally in areas such as Equatoria and Bahr-el-Ghazal but there lacked systematic domestic preparation for the coup. Resultantly, the only areas to immediately join the Nasir faction were the Nuer districts already under the Upper Nile Command (Johnson 2003: 97).

John Garang was also blamed for using force and trickery to bolster his position as supreme leader of the movement (Rolandsen 2005: 29). The nature of the SPLA Political Military High Command (PMHC) was at the heart of the power struggle within the SPLM/A. It was the highest decision making body of the SPLM/A outside the National Convention. It had two types of members: ordinary and alternate. Only ordinary members were allowed to vote while alternate members did not have the right to vote. The PMHC did not meet regularly which meant that Garang and a few personal aides made all the important decisions within the SPLM/A (Rolandsen 2005: 29). This created divisions because some SPLM/A members believed that they were working so hard for the party yet they remained alternate members. Recruitment was also alleged to be biased towards the Dinka ethnic group. In the so-called "mother of all drafts," at least 10,000 young men were conscripted from Dinka areas around Bor in 1991 (Dixon and Sarkees 2016: 402).

In August 1991, the SPLA exploded into two warring factions. The conflict was first restricted to the highest ranks of the southern military leadership but the political rift soon ignited a full-scale conflict between the Dinka and the Nuer, which were the two largest ethnic groups in the South that provided most of the guerrilla soldiers during Sudan's second civil war (Jok and Hutchinson 1999: 126). Riek Machar, an ethnic Nuer, broke away with several other discontented SPLA officers to form the "SPLA-Nasir" faction following his failed coup attempt against Garang. On the other hand, John Garang, an ethnic Dinka from Bor, rallied

his supporters to become the “SPLA-Torit” or “SPLA-Mainstream” faction (Jok and Hutchinson 1999: 126). The Nuer dominated SPLA-Nasir faction held most of the countryside in the Upper Nile, while the Dinka-dominated SPLA-Mainstream faction controlled most of Equatoria and the Bahr-el-Ghazal (Jok and Hutchinson 1999: 127).

South-on-South fighting mostly targeted the civilian population along ethnic lines (Jok and Hutchinson 1999: 126). The first encounter within SPLA took place at Waat on 11 September 1991. In late September, SPLA Nasir and SPLA Mainstream clashed around Ayod and the SPLA Mainstream retreated. In the process, Dinka civilians were massacred by the Nuer of the Nasir faction. In October, Nasir-Nuer forces attacked ethnic Dinka, killing hundreds of Dinkas in the Bor massacre. The civilians were targeted because they were believed to have benefited from the previous cattle raids carried out by the Dinka and SPLM Mainstream. Women, children and the elderly were the primary victims (Dixon and Sarkees 2016: 402). The counterattack launched by SPLA Mainstream inflicted a heavy blow on the Nuer warriors thereby forcing them to retreat to Ayod. Nuer villages were attacked. Fighting declined in 1992 as SPLA Mainstream faced a new government offensive in March 1992. The intervention of the Organisation of African Unity in May 1992 also helped the two factions in suspending their operations (Dixon and Sarkees 2016: 402). Low-level fighting continued in September as another coup attempt against Garang was reinforced by troops from SPLA Nasir. A group of SPLA Nasir called the Blockbusters attacked SPLA Mainstream positions in November. Then in March 1993, Garang’s forces raided a meeting of SPLA-Nasir leaders (who were in the process of setting up a new organisation called SPLA-United), killing sixty of them in the process. These and other actions drove the SPLA-United into the government’s arms (Dixon and Sarkees 2016: 402). The 1991 conflict claimed the lives of nearly 2,000 mostly Dinka civilians (Large and Patty 2011: 1). As a result, many saw the violence of 2013 as an attempt by the Dinka to payback for the events of 1991 (Mamdani 2017).

When the Mengistu regime in Ethiopia was toppled in 1991, the new Ethiopian regime was hostile to SPLM/A. This further weakened Garang’s movement (Leach 2012: 197). The fall of Mengistu deprived the SPLA of its bases, supplies and support and left it vulnerable to a flanking attack through Ethiopia by the Sudanese army (Johnson 2011: 130). However, Ethiopia realised that the fall of the SPLM/A would not be in its interests. In 1993, ties were re-established evidenced by the deployment of military advisors to the SPLA. Both Ethiopia and Uganda stepped up political and military support to SPLM/A. The aggressive Islamic identity of the North led to increased sympathy to the SPLM/A among many non-Muslim states, especially sub-Saharan Africa. By 2002, the United States of America (USA) showed interest in taking a predominant role in the mediation process. The USA and Kenya seemed to be in competition for that role. The USA, Norway and United Kingdom (UK) expressed their willingness to fund the mediation process (Leach 2012: 201). The African Union and IGAD also played important mediatory roles. The Machakos Protocol (2002) signed in Kenya produced the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005 (Johnson 2011: 132).

Commenting on the 1991 split, Jok and Hutchinson (1999: 139) highlighted that:

Peace between Dinka and Nuer at this stage requires support from the leaders of the warring factions. Without Garang and Machar taking the initiative in restraining the

continuing abuses and hostilities of their troops, it is difficult to imagine a lasting regional peace.

The 1991 split helps us in appreciating the consequences of the widening political rift in South Sudan since the 1968 split. Some commentators noted that the memories of the ethnic massacres of the early 1990s had an influential role in shaping the crises that happened later (Thomas and Chan 2017: 6). One can thus note that conflict transformation can give birth to tolerance in South Sudan. Kiir should not criminalise dissenting voices. Machar should not view militarism as an option in solving conflicts.

4.3 The 2013 split and beyond-Political struggles continue in South Sudan

The world's newest state celebrated its independence in 2011. Intra-party fissures were set aside after independence in order to deal with the vast internal and external threats of the period 2011-2012, particularly the oil shutdown and cross-border military crisis caused mainly by the uprising of the party's own northern adherents, SPLM-North, in the Kordofan and Blue Nile territories (Oudenaren 2014). The Government of South Sudan also battled against rebel militia forces led by defiant former military leaders (Sommers and Schwartz 2011: 2).

In April 2013, when the situation was relatively calm in South Sudan, evidenced by the uninterrupted flow of oil, internal fissures resumed. President Salva Kiir stripped his deputy Riek Machar of powers and initiated a cabinet reshuffle which deposed him altogether. The 'restructuring' also trimmed the number of ministers (South Sudan Human Rights Commission 2014: 2). The reshuffle was applauded by analysts as a positive step and many citizens valued it as an important step to save resources to be used for basic service delivery and improve infrastructure. Nevertheless, the reshuffle had the effect of heightening political rivalry and tension within the party and the country. Before the reshuffle, some key members of the SPLM had begun campaigns within the ruling party aimed at assuming the leadership of the party and subsequently the leadership of the country (South Sudan Human Rights Commission 2014: 2). In this case, Machar had made clear his intentions to run for the chairmanship of the SPLM, which would open chances to be the president of South Sudan.

In mid-December 2013, South Sudan plunged into a civil war after a long-running feud between President Salva Kiir and his former deputy, Riek Machar (Miles 2016; Mutanda 2015: 2). According to Oudenaren (2014), what happened on the night of 15th December 2013 was a reflection of the simmering tension already present in the political party. On the fateful day, 14 members out of 124 of the SPLM National Liberation Council boycotted the meeting. The failed coup that happened in mid-December was followed by considerable defections of army brigades stationed in strategic places like Bentiu, Malakal and Bor. This added to a number of army units that also defected in Western Equatoria and Yei along with those who staged the rebellion in Juba (Sommers and Schwartz 2011: 2).

Ethnic politics emerged as a key driver leading to the massacres, but not the cause of the conflict. As noted by Fisher (2013), political rivalries became ethnic conflicts. Machar and Kiir advanced ethnic politics in the process of pursuing their political agendas. This inevitably resulted in the persecution and death of many

civilians. Ethnicity, as was the case in previous Sudanese conflicts, was used to commit atrocities. As told by Hilde Johnson, former head of the UN mission in South Sudan, ethnicity immensely contributed to large-scale violence in the form of mass killings, disappearances, rape and sexual violence of different sorts, abductions and extrajudicial killings, to mention but a few (BBC 2014). The United Nations concurred by saying that the violence in South Sudan amounted to ethnic cleansing and risked escalating into genocide (Africa News 2017). The armistice signed on 9 May 2014 in Addis Ababa was disowned by both parties thereby leaving the civilians at the mess of the warring factions. The crisis gave Riek Machar the opportunity to announce his intention to remove the government of Salva Kiir with military force (Mutanda 2015: 22).

The government's position was that Riek Machar staged an attempted coup d'état against a lawfully elected government, an allegation Riek Machar and his allies refuted (South Sudan Human Rights Commission 2014: 3). Angelina Teny, a member of the SPLA-In-Opposition political bureau and the wife of South Sudanese rebel leader Riek Machar said the "politics of isolation" were working against the interests of peace in Sudan (Bior 2016). This referred to the alleged discrimination being experienced by members of other ethnic groups. Former SPLA-IO faction spokesman, Deng, contended that the government's mission was to extinguish the non-Dinka South Sudanese (Zimmerman 2017). The firing of Machar, a Nuer, from the vice-presidency by Kiir, an ethnic Dinka added credibility to such sentiments. With support from neighbouring Sudan, Machar then embarked on a mission to topple Kiir. As one of the counterstrategies against Sudan-supported Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) from Uganda, male youths from the villages and peri-urban communities under threat organised themselves into militias, known as the Arrow Boys. The militias fought against armed LRA soldiers, using predominantly traditional weapons such as bows and arrows, spears and knives. Although some Arrow Boys used guns, they faced the problem of lack of bullets. Skirmishes between Arrow Boys and LRA were frequent and deadly (Sommers and Schwartz 2011: 2-3).

According to the International Crisis Group (2014: 6), following Garang's death in 2005, Salva Kiir took a radically different approach in dealing with Southern divisions. In 2006, he announced the Juba Declaration which resulted in the incorporation of the South Sudan Defence Forces (SSDF) into the SPLA and other security services under a "big tent" and creation of a more unified Southern front in the run-up to the 2011 referendum on self-determination. In January 2013, he replaced all the deputy chiefs of general staff and placed 35 senior officers on the reserve list. A month later, 118 brigadier generals were added to the reserve list, in effect retiring them. Salva Kiir also launched a process of consolidating security forces personally loyal to him, including presiding over the graduation of several hundred new Presidential Guards in 2013, many of whom were armed and well-organised Dinka youth. Kiir's expanded Presidential Guard reported directly to him, rather than the military high command, an arrangement widely viewed as a means of protecting himself with members of his own tribal section (International Crisis Group 2014: 6-7). Such evidence strongly point to the need for conflict transformation in South Sudan, especially in fostering political justice. It is painful to see how struggles over power in South Sudan have ransacked a country whose independence was perhaps prematurely celebrated. The euphoria quickly faded in December 2013 as rival factions began preparing for war. This also reminds us of Africa's poor responses to both emerging and ongoing conflicts. As a result of

the war, South Sudan was ranked fifth on the list of the world's most war-torn countries in 2017. Leading the pack were Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Nigeria (Worldatlas 2017).

5. The Consequences of the 2013 divisions on the civilians: Rape, Disease, Displacements, Famine, Deaths and Child Soldiers

This section does not intend to exhaust all the socio-economic and political effects of the 2013 civil war in South Sudan. It is simply an appreciation of the importance of reconciliation that prioritises the transformation of relationships. The change of attitudes at the top level can significantly benefit the citizens who have been at the receiving end of violence. Political leaders in South Sudan need to realise that they have a common past, common present and common future.

Civilians bore the brunt of the fighting through famine, disease, arbitrary arrests, torture and sexual abuse (Jidovanu and Höjje 2016). Due to South Sudan's ethnic divisions, the country's oil hub of Bentiu (one of the most affected by the conflict) among other civilian centres of population saw rape being used as a political instrument to humiliate and punish opponents. When rebel troops from the rival Nuer community re-took Bentiu in April 2014, they raped wives of Dinka men, both civilians and soldiers (BBC 2014). A woman raped by Nuer rebel soldiers narrated her ordeal as follows:

The reason they gave was '[President] Salva Kiir is in charge and is killing our people'.
They said they wanted to rape me because when Dinka soldiers came here, they did the same (BBC 2014).

The men allegedly also told her they wanted to get rid of her Dinka baby, but the attack did not cause a miscarriage. Similarly, a mother called Naynatong Mamjok confessed what befell her in the hands of government soldiers: "The soldiers entered my house and asked, "Are you Dink?" "When I said 'yes,' a soldier said 'leave'" (Kushkush and Sengupta 2014). In the capital of Juba, Nuer women who left the UN compound to buy supplies suffered the same fate as they were seized by troops loyal to Salva Kiir and taken to a hut at the base to be raped (BBC 2014). As observed by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) (2014: 49-50), all parties to the conflict committed acts of rape and other forms of sexual violence against women of different ethnic groups. For instance, there was a case when Nuer women were stopped in a street of Juba by SPLA soldiers and taken to unknown places where they were then assigned to soldiers who repeatedly raped them. For the reason of these abuses, Hove and Ndawana (2017: 2) highlighted that the outbreak of the third civil war led to growing insecurity among women. Conflict-related sexual violence against women and girls was rampant, especially in Unity and Upper Nile and later spread to other states which included Central and Western Equatoria in the second half of 2015 (UN Women nd).

The crisis in South Sudan generated a cross-border exodus – considered the largest in central Africa² since the 1994 Rwanda genocide (Cropley 2016). In fact, in South Sudan there were worst atrocities witnessed in Africa since the Rwandan genocide (Miller 2015). Because of the fighting in Yei, more than 2,000 people per day crossed the border into northern Uganda. The bulk of the refugees were women and children (Jidovanu

² Sudan and South Sudan are grouped among countries in both East and Central Africa.

and Höjje 2016). As of December 2016, more than a million people had fled the East African country, thousands of women raped (even as young as two years), the economy crushed – recording the world's highest inflation rate of above 800 percent in October 2016 (Associated Press 2016). South Sudanese refugees were found in countries such as Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic and Sudan. People could also move from one city or village to another, for example, people who fled violence in Unity State sought refuge in the neighbouring states such as the Abyei region. Fighting inevitably caused significant population movement. Inside South Sudan, many people took refuge at United Nations camps and other isolated shelters such as mosques, churches and hospitals. However, places outside UN camps were not safe. In 2014, hundreds of people died after taking shelter in a mosque in the town of Bentiu. Many days passed by before corpses were buried. Dogs and pigs in the town fed on carcasses before mass graves were finally dug (BBC 2014). Food aid was used by government as source of revenue and as a weapon of war. Aid workers were highly vulnerable, with some writers and commentators (basing on the events of July 2016 when gunmen, suspected to be government soldiers, looted World Food Programme's main stores in Juba. Government soldiers subjected national and international journalists and aid workers living in the Terrain hotel compound to murder, rape and torture) even arguing that South Sudan had become one of the most dangerous places in the world to be an aid worker (Financial Times 2017; Thomas and Chan 2017: 5).

In December 2016, three years after the outbreak of the conflict in 2013, the head of a team of UN human rights investigators told the UN Human Rights Council that South Sudan was on the brink of an all-out ethnic civil war with the potential to destabilise the entire region (Associated Press 2016). Since the conflict erupted in 2013, more than tens of thousands of child soldiers were conscripted by the belligerents (UNICEF 2016). More than 400,000 people were killed between 2013 and 2018 in South Sudan. As of mid-2017, of South Sudan's population of about 12 million, just about 1,5 million had fled the country and a further 2 million internally displaced while close to 5 million faced hunger (Financial Times 2017). The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) statistics for 2018 revealed that nearly 2 million South Sudanese had been internally displaced while about 2,2 million had crossed borders. Transforming the conflict would inevitably reduce the humanitarian crisis faced by South Sudan as this would bring significant succour to the citizens.

6. Efforts towards Peace since 2013 and the Prospects ahead

The international community has not folded hands in the midst of the civil war in South Sudan. Unfortunately, this has not helped much in easing tension. Since 2014, the South Sudan conflict consistently featured on the AU's annual meetings in Ethiopia (The Herald 2017). The final report of the African Union-mandated Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan (AUCISS)³ released in 2014 encouraged a thorough consideration of issues such as healing and reconciliation, human rights violations, accountability and

³ The commission was formed at the outset of the conflict to investigate human rights violations and other abuses committed during the conflict and to make recommendations on how best to ensure accountability, reconciliation, and healing.

transformation of institutions in South Sudan (Blanchard 2016: 8; AU Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan 2014: 32). As noted by Mamdani (2017), the African Union is the body with credibility to take charge of South Sudan's second transition. Mamdani (2017) further argued that South Sudan is not a failed state but a failed transition. It therefore needed a second transition under an authority other than the United States, Britain and Norway, whose projects had failed, or IGAD, whose members had conflicting interests in South Sudan. Mamdani (2017) further noted that the West could best help by providing resources to the African Union. While Mamdani (2017) relegated the role of the West to sources of income and IGAD to spectators, others still argued that the US helped so much in pushing Khartoum to allow South Sudan to secede. In this regard, Washington's efforts remained indispensable. Besides, the United States was the largest bilateral humanitarian donor in South Sudan (Blanchard 2016: 9). On the other hand, there was an argument that East Africa had done noticeably worse than West Africa in establishing acceptable norms. This meant that IGAD had to do more to protect people in South Sudan rather than watch their countries swamped by refugees (Financial Times, 2017). Nonetheless, IGAD's efforts to bring peace to South Sudan should be applauded.

In order to achieve negative peace, mediators from the regional bloc, IGAD, on 23 January 2014 presented a truce agreement, which, however, received no major recognition from the warring parties (Press TV 2014a). On 9 May 2014, the truce was signed by Kiir and Machar in Addis Ababa (Press TV 2014b.) The rebels, however, were quick to disobey it, accusing Kiir of either insincerity or reluctance to control government forces (Press TV 2014b).

Following international and regional pressure, Salva Kiir and Riek Machar signed a peace deal on 26 August 2015 in an attempt to end the fighting (Aljazeera 2016). This resulted in Machar returning to Juba to reassume his post of first vice-president in April 2016. The implementation faltered and violence between factions broke out again in July 2016, setting back the peace process (Search for Common Ground 2016: 1). Machar and many SPLA-IO soldiers fled the city. After his exit, Machar was replaced by his deputy Taban Deng. This obviously signified the divisions in the SPLM-IO while at the same time left the whole peace deal in question (Thomas and Chan 2017: 5). In December 2016, Kiir launched the national dialogue initiative that sought to reconcile and unite Sudan. The national dialogue was launched to revive the 2015 peace agreement. The steering committee appointed by Kiir faced the challenge that Machar refused to meet its members (Radio Tamazuj 2018). Because of the seemingly irreconcilable differences, in 2019 SPLM-IO announced its decision to be a political party:

SPLM/A-IO is already a full(y)-fledged political organization. It's a political party in itself. Maybe you are talking about a name (SPLM) only, but we have structures from the top to the bottom... the political and military structure which makes us a movement. We are already a party. So we don't see any urgency or any requirement that is necessitating unifying the SPLM (Xinhua 2019).

Conflict transformation was also pursued by the United Nations in an attempt to build ethnic trust in South Sudan. The UN compound in Bentiu (with over 30,000 refugees in May 2014) brought together children from separate Dinka and Nuer sections of the camp to dance together a couple of times a week (BBC 2014).

Despite its controversial role in the South Sudanese conflict, China, together with the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel, Ethiopia and other international powers were involved in mediation efforts (Ottaway and El-Sadany 2012: 10). China believed that a political settlement was crucial in solving South Sudan's crisis. China postulated that the parties in South Sudan should actively participate in order to settle their differences through dialogue and consultations and promote reconciliation in a joint effort to achieve national peace, stability and development (Xinhua 2017). China's views again take us to the centrality of transformation of relationships. Reconciliation in South Sudan should prioritise 'finding each other' through talking matters in an honest and transparent manner.

7. Conclusion

This paper made the argument that political struggles in South Sudan have had an impact on the security of the people. The effects of political failures were manifested through civilian deaths, refugee crises and rape, to mention but a few. Kiir was accused by his rivalries, just like his predecessors, of dictatorial tendencies. The December 2013 reshuffle specifically targeted Machar and allies but in a way, this enabled his rivals to achieve their aims in the Machiavellian style. Machar was guilty for using force on civilians in order to justify his cause. This inevitably led to bloodshed. The government was equally guilty for using retributive justice on ethnic Nuers. While the efforts of the African Union and the international community are critical in solidifying peace efforts in South Sudan, the onus is on South Sudan leaders and civilians to bring peace to their country. There is need for conflict transformation in order to reflect on who they were, who they are and what they want to become.

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