South Sudan: A Nation in Trouble

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ABSTRACT---- *This study pragmatically examines the root cause of the crisis that erupted in South Sudan and how a once the euphoria of the public was betrayed by the tragic vision of its politicians. The study explains at least three major dichotomies that oppose each other and have an important role to play in escalating the ethnic rivalries and confrontations in the region. These are: a) heterogeneous opposing ethnic groups of the state, b) the regional actors, and, c) the international actors with particular emphasis the Western countries who were the midwives of South Sudan for one hand, and the Chinese whom engaged Sudan's conventional resources since its exploration and exploitation for the other. The study argues that the political disagreement between the president, Salva Kiir from the largest ethnic group, the Dinka, and his rival, former vice president Riek Machar from Nuer, who makes up the second most populous ethnic group in the region, has both ethnic and political roots. The study regards the politics of consensus and compromise with the grassroots engagement and the regional conflict resolution mechanism, the IGAD, not only as a way forward, but also as a lasting solution to the crisis that may polarize to the other parts of the region.*

Keywords---- South Sudan, trouble, ethnic rivalry, ethno-phobia, power struggle, consensus, compromise, dichotomies

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1. INTRODUCTION

More generally, when the root causes of the Africa's tragedy and agony are analyzed, there are multifaceted factors which lack any single explanation and logical point of view. While some see the causes of the Africa's problems as economic and linked to poverty, debt and structural adjustment programs from the international financial institutions, political and governance-related factors, others could relate it the artificially carved African boundaries by which many regard it as a colonial creation that cause frequent confrontations as a form of interstate conflict (John, 2008). With the existence of these factors as root causes of the Africa's conflicts, one may never downplays the role of identity in causing or escalating the conflicts and describe it the major if not the sole source of the crises and confrontations happening in Africa (Francis, 2001; Kurimoto, 2001; Takeuchi, 2001; Martin, 2006; Asfaw, 2008; Jon, 2008; Paul, 2008). For instance, the large territory which the British carved out and called Nigeria enclosed three major identities and several smaller ones. One of the results of this artificial mixture is the Nigerian civil war of 1967–1970 regarded by many Africa's great human tragedies. The carved boundaries were ill-conceived and parceled out homogenous groups into different states while re-grouping different, often mutually hostile, entities within the same territorial boundaries (Ali, 2008). However, the African leaders at independence had accepted those boundaries and were sanctioned by the OAU in 1964 and stressed by its successor, the African Union, on the grounds that the borders would generate new and future conflicts[1].

It is not difficult to find examples of political unrest linked to colonial legacy, there are wealthy of examples to mention in regards to West's conspiracy not only against the African states but also against its citizens[2], for example, the Congo's six decades-long conflict and crisis, the Nigerian civil war, the Genocide in Rwanda, the Somalia's state collapse and disintegration, the question of the Western Sahara, military coup d'états which are overt across the continent

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[1] Articles which make intact and sacred the boundaries that the African countries have inherited from the colonial powers adopted by both the OAU and the AU are: a) Resolution AHG/Res.16 (I) on border disputes between African States, adopted by the 1st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU, held in Cairo, Egypt, in July 1964, were mentioned as following: "Considering further that the borders of African States, on the day of their independence, constitute a tangible reality", and, b) the second article to note is the article 4 (b) of the Constitutive Act of the African Union which upholds its predecessor's position and puts it as following: "respect of borders existing on achievement of independence"

[2] The international system architected by the western powers punishes only African citizens including their leaders, for instance, a warrant arrest against Al-Bashir, the Sudanese president from the ICC; while there is another against some Kenyan leaders including the president. These are the most recent examples showing how the west conspire Africa

and caused multiple political instabilities and economic destitutions are the results of the Whiteman's colonial seeds and hypocrite policies post-independent African states[3].

Not different from the other conflagrating African countries, Sudan has experienced many years of political unrest and civil war since the dawn of its independence (Terlinden & Tobias, 2004; Suzanne, 2006). The conflict in southern Sudan that started in early and mid 1950s and lasted half a century was a conflict that can be expressed by many in three major dichotomies: a) a conflict between Arabs and Africans, b) Muslims and Christians, and, c) oppressors and oppressed. One of the most illuminating findings of this study is that Sudan's civil war between the northern Arabs and the southern traditional Africans illustrated primarily both ethnic and religious, economic and class exploitation (Abdelghaffar, 2008; Mark, 2013). Given emphasis in this context, Ali A. Mazrui (2008a) has argued that southern Sudanese were the only sub-Saharan Africans who were being Arabized faster than being Islamized.

In this atmosphere, the southern Sudan, far from the national center, remained one of the most marginalized parts of the main Sudan due to the absence of modern governance structures to provide social services, economic development, and among other benefits to the citizens. Indeed, south Sudanese people were oppressed and excluded from opportunities; Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan (1985) argues that the oppressed are the primary victims of structural violence and the prevailing paranoia and remain victims of others and of themselves. Therefore, it is the denial of their social reality that complicated the situation and raised so many questions against the central Government of Sudan. As a consequence of accumulated grievances of southern Sudanese people against Khartoum (Samson, 2010), Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) come into being and launched guerilla warfare which lasted for decades.

Since the eruption of the Second Civil War in 1983, several governments brokered numerous peace deals, pressured or persuaded the warring parties to end the conflict. Those attempts were from various fronts, such as the US, and most notably, from African Governments. These attempts have never produced peace and stability in the long term. But, one of the most useful things to come out of the long debates has been the willingness of the two parties for ending the longest running war in contemporary Africa (Suzanne, 2006; Idris, 2008; Jok, 2011). Eventually, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in 2005 which paved the way the emergence of the South Sudanese republic.

This paper, therefore, primarily examines the roots of the South Sudanese crisis and the major actors that involve and play an important role in escalating the conflict in the region. It looks at the role that grassroots' actors can contribute to the peace efforts and in the ways in which regional support can help strengthening prospects for peace to happen in South Sudan. The study examines the challenges that face newly emerging institutions, and asks to what extent responsible state institutions are capable of managing the numerous tensions evident in the society before further conflict erupts. The study also reflects on *"the way forward"* for deconstructing South Sudan's ethnic identities which are the epicenter of the conflicts and crises happening not only in the Unity, Jonglei and Malakal States which are predominantly ethnic Nuer, but also across the Republic of South Sudan.

2. METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research design was employed for this purpose; both primary and secondary sources of data were combined and collected from different sources. In the primary, interviews and discussions with South Sudanese citizens as well as academicians and researchers were conducted and consulted. The secondary data was collected from books, journal articles, and policy documents on this subject.

3. SOUTH SUDAN: FROM CIVIL WAR TO CPA

It has been half of a century since the north–south conflict has erupted in Sudan, which was one of the crucial security challenges faced by the Horn African states since the dawn of their independence. Since then, a number of attempts have been made to cease the hostility and reach sort of agreement. These attempts include: the Addis Ababa Agreement, which ended the First Sudanese Civil War and produced more than a decade (1972–83) of relative calm and stability; but unfortunately followed by the second phase of the conflict which gained momentum because of the involvement of many actors including Anyanya II and the group led by the late Colonial John Garang in 1983(Terlinden & Tobias, 2004; Kinfe, 2006). The second phase of the conflict which started in 1983 was concluded by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005.

At this point, it is worth mentioning the work and the mediation efforts attempted by various actors at regional, continental, and from distant powers as well. For example, Nigeria, Germany, Egypt, the US, and Libya among other

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[3] Africa has been the epicenter of endemic and chronic problems seeded by the Europeans before they left the continent in the dawn of the second half of the twentieth century

governments attempted to persuade both parties to end the war that ravaged the region. On the other hand, though the conflict resolution objective of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) between and among the member states is far from a success story. The organization attempted, to the best level of its ability to resolve Sudan's lingering conflict, therefore, the role of the IGAD in bringing to the Sudanese Government and the SPLA to the negotiation table in Kenya with international engagement was much more fruitful in ending the civil war and remains a remarkable achievement of the organization (J. Quinn, 2004; Pontian, 2004; Suzanne, 2006).

It is important to note, however, that the consequences and costs one of the oldest civil war in Africa amounts millions of innocent people who lost their precious lives, displaced millions (internally and externally) and devastated unimaginable amount of properties from both sides (Terlinden & Tobias, 2004; Samson, 2010). For instance, due to the war that ravaged South Sudan half a century, the citizens of the region scattered not only in the Horn, East and Central African states, but also moved beyond the African continent heading to the far southern hemisphere and to the remote western world, most notably, the Australian continent and the United States of America respectively[4].

In the wake of the CPA accord signed in January 2005, there were pressures and persuasions from various fronts to end the war which was quite remarkable. In addition, there has been a general recognition of the role that unofficial efforts have played, directly or indirectly in laying the groundwork for the North–South breakthrough. In this context, various actors and observers – both within and outside of the Horn of Africa – have engaged the efforts to broker a peace and end the war. The ideas that paved the way for the Nairobi agreement were shaped by political realities on the ground that existed in the region and have an impact on the long and short-term interests of the parties (Terlinden & Tobias, 2004; Idris, 2008). Furthering this, direct interactions between the two sides facilitated the agreement and were a compromise of positions in a win-win approach.

It was not easy, but it has been possible to agree and compromise. The agreement was finally signed in Nairobi on 9 January, 2005; and warring parties agreed in principle six protocols with strong implementation and supervision both from the signed parties and the donors respectively. These protocols include: the Machakos general framework of guiding principles; security arrangements; power-sharing; wealth-sharing; resolution of conflict in the states of Southern Kordofan/Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile; and finally resolution of conflict in the contested (between North and South) area of Abyie. There is, one fascinating point to note, the ultimate objective of the SPLA was to achieve full sustainable development in all parts of the marginalized areas of Sudan, this agreement, however, gave the right of self-determination for the people of southern Sudan, and finally the people have decided their fate as an independent state (Suzanne, 2006; Ibid). In spite of its many blessings, separation does not bring with it some key opportunities which the people of South Sudan were expecting and can take advantage of.

There is no question that South Sudan is in a serious trouble, indeed, one of the most important aspects to note is that in post-conflict societies, due to the damage of its society and governance structures, state is often unable to provide its citizens with a minimum level of basic services such as education, health and security (Nasir, 2014). Undoubtedly, the major problems faced the South Sudanese Government was and still remains the absence of strategies aimed at improving the performance of the basic government institutions and functions due to the fragility of the state in terms of governance and security (Jok, 2011; Leben & Traci, 2012). Thus, the establishment of viable governance institutions with committed leaders, remains the most fundamental approach that can overcome the most recent critical challenges that face South Sudan.

4. IDENTIFYING THE ROOTS OF THE CONFLICT

It is not a surprise to say that South Sudan has almost the size of Kenya, Rwanda, and Burundi combined, but a protracted war with the northern Arabs made it to have one of the worst human development indicators in the world (Jok, 2011). This newly independent South Sudanese republic is a home to around 64 ethnic groups on various demographic size with varying degrees of political participation, those ethnic groups include: Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk, Latuka, Acholi, Toposa, Murle, Bondo, and Ondo, to name a few[5]. This makes it necessary to analyze the situation from the lens of presence of diverse ethnic groups that in turn determines the peace and stability of the nation. Having said so, analyses of the South Sudanese conflict describe it as a conflict between the Dinka and the Nuer – the two most populous ethnic groups – in the region, aggravated by local and regional as well as international actors.

In 1990s, a number of conflicts have escalated into open violence, adding to the already significant number of cases of ethnic strife and civil wars in the region, for instance, the Genocide in Rwanda and the Civil War in Somalia (Francis, 2001; Takeuchi, 2001; Suzanne, 2006; Stefan, 2010). In South Sudan, tensions between ethnic Nuer and Dinka have existed for decades, with members of the two groups confronting over resources and power exacerbated by intervention from the region. These tensions erupted leading to some thousands of people being killed and tens of thousands displaced

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[4] Discussions with one of the South Sudanese intellectuals in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
[5] Ibid., 4.

(Samson, 2010). Despite the traditional enmity among the major ethnic groups, the political conflict that existed within the SPLA leadership while in the bush has its role in escalating the current conflict (Lauren, 2014). In the recorded history of southern Sudan, Emma's War[6] was the name some members of the rebellion – SPLM – gave to the warfare that broke out in 1991 between the followers of the late John Garang, the SPLA leader from the Dinka ethnic group, and those of his lieutenants, Lam Akol, Riek Machar and Gordon Kong from Shilluk and Nuer ethnic groups respectively (Deborah, 2002). This group was also known as the *"Nasir Faction"*.

In the wake of the 2011 referendum, political analysts have been warning of the grave consequence of any disagreement between or among South Sudanese future leaders. In 2010, in an unpublished paper *"South Sudan's Fate in Dilemma: Separation or Civil War?"* I have argued that possible future conflict between the major ethnic groups over the state power and the national resources will follow if the people in the region overwhelmingly decide separation. To be frank with the reader, I was not cynical about independent South Sudanese republic, but my concern was the presence of traditional enmity among the major ethnic groups plus absence of strong and viable state institutions that can save the nation. The conclusion, however, was that return to civil war in a struggle to control both the state power and the resources in the future is inevitable and unavoidable.

Moreover, since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 and the subsequent separation of the South from the North which ended after decades of civil war, oil is seen both as an obstacle and an opportunity to achieve durable peace within South Sudan. However, oil still remains the center stage of an armed conflict and fears of future instability in the region (Suzanne, 2006; Samson, 2010). Nonetheless, despite the absence of political compromise between the Dinka and the Nuer political elites, one may argue that a future war cannot be avoided. However, overshadowed by the threat of a renewed civil war within South Sudanese major ethnic groups, the influence of oil at regional and at local levels would generate other sources of conflict and instability in the future[7].

In all these states, one of the best examples that explain the strong and direct relations between the quest for power and resource sharing have been observed in the South Sudanese conflict both pre and post-independence periods. The conflict in South Sudan one may link it mainly to clashes over national resources among the major ethnic groups which had traditional roots of enmity. Hence, one can safely conclude from that if there are resources, there is competition, if this competition is not properly addressed by the concerned bodies, it will lead to confrontation and conflict as the experience elsewhere has shown. Hence, natural resources and power will be continuous sources of future conflicts in South Sudan.

In the context of this paper, South Sudan is experiencing horrible crimes committed by the warring parties in nearly three main states predominantly ethnic Nuer, the Unity, Jonglei and Malakal. In most recent conflicts, the Government of South Sudan allying with some other ethnic groups and a rebellion faction purely from Nuer ethnic group engage the fighting. The logic behind the Nuer rebellion one may link the quest for power and national resources sharing (Lauren, 2014). In many respects, though many describe the conflict in South Sudan as a conflict between the Dinka and the Nuer ethnic groups, there are many other ethnic groups involving the conflict in one way or another, for instance, Lam Akol from Shilluk ethnic group who previously was with Machar in 1991 together with Gordon Kong from Nuer when they rebelled against John Garang is allying the Government in the recent crisis. In either view, there is evidence showing that both conflicting parties are obliging or appealing other ethnic groups either to support or show sympathy for their struggle[8].

To summarize the argument, so far there is no simple or single factor that can be regarded as the cause of the South Sudan's crisis. Nevertheless, the available sources on the root cause or the driving factor often makes at least four interrelated factors. In essence, the major cause of the conflict is the quest for power aggravated by a weak leadership style both from the government and the opposition[9]. The heterogeneous community and traditional enmity among some ethnic groups who share the same territory in South Sudan is another cause and escalates the situation. South Sudan is poor because it were excluded, deliberately or not, from the state opportunities before secession, therefore, post-independence state resources exploitation is another factor, for example, corruption is prevalent in South Sudan and makes this newly independent republic one of the most corrupted nations in Africa adding it the list of Somalia, Guinea (Conakry), Kenya, Angola, Equatorial Guinea and Nigeria. The latter three countries have oil reserves and contribute their economies as South Sudan. Another significant challenge encountered is the absence of robust institutional mechanisms capable to provide services to the citizens at large which remains a factor of its conflict and demotes the exhilaration of the public.

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[6] Emma McCune was a British lady working as an aid worker and later married one of the SPLA leaders, Riek Machar. Following their marriage, a conflict has erupted among the SPLA leadership which led the movement to split into two factions and confront each other. Deborah Scroggins, who is a journalist, wrote a book *"Emma's War: Love, Betrayal and Death in the Sudan"* about the biography of Mrs. McCune

[7] Ibid., 4.

[8] Discussions with one of South Sudanese citizen living in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

[9] Ibid., 4.

When analyzed the issue further, in the current South Sudanese politics, the ethnic interest remains the major if not the sole challenge against the concept of the state in the twenty-first century. Therefore, state resources exploitation and power struggle among the major ethnic groups are regarded as the center stage and the most serious factor in South Sudanese politics. In other words, ethnic-based politics in South Sudan will remain a factor of its conflict in the future; while the key cleavages of South Sudan's domestic political conflict and economic problems are not only unresolved, but still remain irresolvable.

5.   WHO ARE THE ACTORS?

Of course, there is no exaggeration to say that the recent conflict in South Sudan has produced at least three major dichotomies opposing each other and involve the internal politics of South Sudan. Since South Sudanese people overwhelmingly decided to secede from the rest of the Sudan in 2011, there were many scholars who predicted that sharing power and the natural resources of the state would escalate a vicious uncontrollable intra-ethnic conflict among the major ethnic groups in southern Sudan. According to the analysis of those scholars, if the conflict erupts, the region is on the verge to fall under the influence of opposing regional and international actors.

It is not a thing of surprise that South Sudan crisis unveiled the conflicting interests of the regional governments. In fact, the neighboring countries of South Sudan have been criticized for supporting the government and the rebel group or shifting their support from one side to another. In the region we are living today, it would be fair to say that Sudan is involving the conflict due to political reasons and publicly expressed its support for Salva Kiir, though reports confirm its support of the opposition as well. Despite the fact that Riek Machar were accused of being responsible for the poor performance and obstructing Khartoum–Juba ties, on the other hand Machar studied engineering at the University of Khartoum and has had close relation to the northern Arabs, therefore, there are many who argue that Sudan directly or indirectly has shown sympathy for Machar[10]. In the past, in particular 1970s and 1980s, the Khartoum elites supplied southern and western tribes hostile to the Dinka with machine guns and encouraged them to form militias to raid the Dinka. In the same way, during the Nimeiri's regime in early 1984 began supplying the Baggara tribes of southern Kordofan with automatic weapons to secure the oil fields (Deborah, 2002; Terlinden & Tobias, 2004; Samson, 2010). But this only intensified the fighting between the local people, the Nuer and the Dinka people and the Baggara.

Against the unclear position of Khartoum, Uganda has maintained regular contact and support with the SPLA and South Sudanese Government both pre and post-independence respectively. In the most recent crisis, Ugandan troops are physically in South Sudan fighting the rebels fearing that a collapsed South Sudan state will be the home of the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) and support the government in order to restore peace and order. In this context, Kampala has expressed concerns that the LRA, which has more recently operated in the neighboring Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, could regroup in a lawless South Sudan. However, though some may express the support of Uganda as a generous and friendly, Uganda on the other hand has its own plan and desire to protect its political and economic interests in South Sudan[11]. Not different from Uganda's stance, Kenya shares Ugandan concerns that prolonged instability in South Sudan will spoil its economic interests in South Sudan and reversely send back waves of refugees to its borders. Therefore, the Kenyan president has expressed *"support and solidarity"* with Kiir and called for a speedy resolution of the crisis[12].

The most important point to note is the Egypt's position in regards to the recent South Sudanese conflict. Indeed, Egyptians has involved Sudan's politics since the very beginning and has never shown interest in the secession of the South from the rest of the Sudan and tried to persuade the two parties concerned to resolve all their differences and problems. However, dealing with matters in a practical point of view, Egypt made all its efforts to make the unity an attractive option; nevertheless, though it was not easy, it has been possible that the separation was an imminent and inevitable. In the current conflict, though Egypt is in transition and deep crisis, there was a notable Egyptian absence from the scene[13]. However, the Egyptian president after the meeting with South Sudan's Foreign Affairs Minister said that his country is preparing to send troops to South Sudan in order to help protect the country from the chaos that resulted after the failed coup attempts staged by the former vice president Riek Machar (Neamin, 2014a). All these efforts were aimed to secure the flow of the Nile water which passes through the two Sudanese republics[14].

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[10] Ibid., 4.
[11] Ibid., 4.
[12] *"Regional interests at stake in the South Sudan crisis"* remarks available at IRIN – humanitarian news and analysis
[13] Ibid., 4.
[14] Egypt's involvement in the Sudanese internal politics has had both economic and political as well as security dimensions including the Nile issue which determines Egypt's relation with its upstream countries

The northern Horn African nation and the region's problem child since its independence in 1993, Eritrea, have been accused of being maneuvered the crises in South Sudan. In fact, Eritrea's involvement in regional conflicts and crises has been the case for long and is not a new phenomenon, for instance, Eritrea has been accused with tangible evidences of being involving the Somalia's deteriorating situation as well as other countries in the region (Jon, 2008; Neamin, 2014). Nevertheless, Eritrea's government repeatedly denies all these allegations and regards as *"false"* fabricated by foreign powers and enemies of Eritrea.

In the olden days, the Derg regime of Ethiopia extended military assistance to the Sudanese rebel group, the SPLA, and mostly engaged by harboring, training, arming and allowing access to Media for propaganda purpose that aimed to weaken or topple the regime in Khartoum as it was common and part of the African states' tit-for-tat foreign policies (Kinfe, 2006). In post-Derg period, though Ethiopia neither involved the internal affairs of the Sudan nor armed its opposition groups, the US Permanent Representative to the UN Susan Rice at the State Funeral of the Ethiopia's late Prime Minister Ato Meles Zenawi sounded that Prime Minister Meles was the midwife of the South Sudanese Republic and sought to nurse this fragile progeny to strength[15]. However, though not confirmed yet, Ethiopia has been blamed by many for giving support for the opposition in the recent conflict[16]. Therefore, one may regard this as one of the reasons that the Salva Kiir's government has agreed to give a military base to the Egyptians under the pretext of the failed *"coup attempt"*. It seems obvious that IGAD in its extraordinary meeting agreed to send troops from different countries, namely, Kenya, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Burundi, and possibly Djibouti to counterbalance Egyptians attempt to engage the crisis (Neamin, 2014a). Apart from these allegations against Ethiopia, in the current conflict, its role remains neutral and it is the principal mediator of the current conflict working to foster negotiations between the two sides to reach a political solution to the crisis[17].

Indeed, the two main external actors behind the most recent crisis in South Sudan have been the Western countries and the Chinese who involve for their own economic and political interests, for instance, the British and the Europeans mostly support the opposition. Machar has close relation with the British, studied at the University of Bradford and married a British lady, Emma McCune. According to the analysis of many, Machar may shift the resources in particular the oil to the British or any other western company. Given the emphasis in this context, South Sudan has three oil blocks in the states of Jonglei, the Unity and Warab, the oil which South Sudan utilizes and exports sources from the Unity State which is the home region of Machar[18]. Not different from the Europeans positions, the America's position is confusing, and believed to be supporting the opposition, to come close to the point, the US has never shown sympathy to Kiir in the recent crisis and declined from describing the first incident that precipitated the conflict as a *"coup"*, while it requested to release the political prisoners.

Nevertheless, though the Western countries, mostly shown sympathy to the opposition, the Chinese have neither publicly supported the Government nor denounced the opposition, but its role has remained only in snatching the oil resources of the Republic[19]. From a Chinese point of view, China has urged all political parties in the region to refrain from violence or threats of violence, and called on the South Sudanese authorities to start negotiation with opposition to end the crisis. Nevertheless, on the basis of this analysis, one may conclude that the fate of the Chinese companies in the region is in jeopardy while the West and their oil companies may challenge the Chinese and perhaps take their fortunes.

6. CAN WE BLAME THE SEPARATION?

It was not easy, but it has been possible to separate from the rest of the Sudan in 2011 following the referendum conducted on 9 January the same year. Although initially the citizens of the new nation enthusiastic about separating from the north, the euphoria quickly changed to disenchantment as many citizens in South Sudan felt that their new leaders are not bringing better substitute policies and practices than those precipitated the separation from the north-dominated regime in Khartoum[20].

It is not a thing of surprise to raise a question that could seem as critical: can we blame the separation and regard it as a cause or driving factor for the current crisis and future conflicts as well. Following the eruption of the conflict between the South Sudanese political elites in late 2013 which sparked intra-ethnic strife in the region, there were many who blamed the separation and regarded it as a premature and the major cause of the conflict. Furthering this point, their intention was that any new entities which may emerge either in Africa or elsewhere will face the same conflict that South Sudan is experiencing nearly after three years of its independence. Proving or disproving this argument is subject to the

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[15] Remarks by Ambassador Susan Rice, the US Permanent Representative to the United Nations, at the Funeral of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia
[16] Discussions one of South Sudan intellectual in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
[17] Ibid., 4.
[18] Ibid., 4.
[19] Ibid., 4.
[20] South Sudanese citizens at the grassroots' are fed up about the policies and practices of their fellow leaders, and they are poor because they were experienced long practiced exclusion from the state opportunities

point of view of those adheres and the concrete evidences attached. According to the South Sudanese intellectuals approached by the study disregard any idea that establishes a connection between the separation and the conflict that ravaging South Sudan. Given the emphasis the latter argument, the conflict has existed among the ethnic groups in the region before the independence and will exist in the future.

7. THE WAY FORWARD

Conflict is an inevitable social process in any society and generally affects the weak and the vulnerable section of the society which suffer most from the uneven problems in economic, social and political aspects. However, without an appropriate mechanism to manage, conflict may result in unnecessary violence with destructive effects on communities and ultimately for regional and international stability (Stefan, 2006; Collier, 2008). Settling South Sudanese conflict, a wider menu of options and choices within a broadly defined framework can help accelerate the process of negotiation and reconciliation compared to the existing approach of focusing on policies and programs directed at providing specific privileges and opportunities to the politicians who are responsible the tragedy and agony in South Sudan. In this regard, there are limited options to solve the conflict, including but not limited to establishment of transitional inclusive government, which remains an option; nevertheless, the interim government will never end up the war[21].

In essence, the rule-mongering mentalities and the tragic visions of the South Sudanese politicians should be described as the center stage of the country's chronic problems as one may summarize that *"every politician wants to be a leader in South Sudan"* and can be one reason. While the suspicion and mistrust that existed for decades between the major ethnic groups is another viable reason, for instance, the Nuer and the Dinka ethnic groups will never accept each other's leadership. Due to this, many believe that the conflict will be a long-time not a short-time conflict as many may think. Nonetheless, if the recent conflict was resolved, analysis of the conflict tends to produce that the region will have another problem between the Dinka and the Nuer after three or five years and so[22]. In either view, the people will accept any leadership as soon as South Sudan establishes effective and responsible state institutions, enhances its military power and starts enforcing its laws properly without fear and reluctance[23].

Beyond these quite distressing relations among the major ethnic groups in South Sudan, though there is nothing to rebuild in South Sudan as everything starts from the foundation including the public institutions. On the other hand, rebuilding institutions after state failure or overcoming fragility is much more difficult than rebuilding damaged infrastructure. It is believed that building both the capacity of the state and the citizens is an enormous challenge, a challenge that requires imagination, cooperation and hard work among those seek to improve the conditions of post-conflict situations (Nasir, 2014). The complexity and fragility of post-conflict situations demand particular qualities of leadership, national vision, and a leadership committed to its principles to develop progressive and strong institutional framework. A more convincing argument is that South Sudan's crisis is an outcome of both weak leadership and governance institutions aggravated by suspicion and mistrust among the major ethnic groups in the region. Therefore, the region is in need to have a national leader that can serve the nation effectively, efficiently and impartially.

Ending the conflict is an obligation not an option, to realize this; grassroots engagement is necessary and crucial for restoring peace and order, in particular from the women, the youth, the media and the elders (Suzanne, 2006; Jok, 2011; Nada, 2011). Indeed, in the South Sudanese case, there are many who argue that, except the women and the media, the elders neither have a strong nor an effective role in the community[24]. In either view, though women are not represented in the state structure, women's engagement in the efforts for resolving the conflict is an essential approach due to their neutral role in the hope to settle South Sudan's conflict and avoid further confrontations in the future for one hand, and eliminate ethno-phobia among South Sudan's heterogeneous ethnic groups for the other. Against this argument, many argue that women can engage conflicts not only in South Sudan but also elsewhere in the world, for instance, Rebecca Garang, the widow of the late SPLA leader Dr. John Garang has been observed engaging the political conflict in the region siding with the opposition. This kind of practice from one of the prominent South Sudanese women shows the changing role of the South Sudanese women.

Coming to the final analysis, it is essential to adopt appropriate measures, strategies and mechanisms to address the challenges of building after the conflict that could threaten the stability and any peace agreement and reconciliation among the South Sudanese opposing parties. Though reportedly there is division among IGAD member states in regards how to solve the problems in South Sudan[25], on the other hand, efforts to address the conflict in South Sudan occupied the attention of the IGAD member states and its meetings in Addis Ababa. These gatherings tried to find a comprehensive and balanced approach to end the conflict, taking into account the links between the political

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[21] Ibid., 4.
[22] Ibid., 4.
[23] Discussions one of the experts on the Sudanese political and economic affairs, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
[24] Discussions with one of the South Sudanese student in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
[25] Ibid., 12.

reconciliation and sustainable peace. For peace to happen and last, IGAD should bring mechanisms to supervise the implementation of the peace plan and should deploy a team that monitors the situation with necessary provisions[26]. And finally, ensuring progress in peace and state building in South Sudan requires the establishment of clear targets and strategies aimed to reach the people at the grassroots coupled with a performance monitoring framework from the regional actors.

8. CONCLUSION

Unfortunately, after three years of its independence, South Sudan is experiencing vicious forms of conflicts in nearly three main states predominantly ethnic Nuer, the Unity, Jonglei and Malakal States. Since the separation of the South from the North in 2011, with the existence of minor clashes between the armed forces of the Government of South Sudan on one hand, and the rebellion from the Nuer ethnic group on the other. The current crisis, however, indicates that South Sudan's fate is in dilemma, therefore, if the current negotiations fail, this will escalate the situation and South Sudan will be in danger to submerge into worst-ever civil war within the major ethnic groups in the region. While the major cause should be regarded as a confrontation to share over the state power and the national resources, there is, on the other hand traditional enmity among the major ethnics which is another crucial factor deserves mention. In this regard, while the 2013 conflict in South Sudan has polarized to the entire state in particular the predominantly Nuer regions, political relations between the Government of South Sudan and the former vice president Riek Machar are extremely on a fragile stage. However, this division among the ethnic groups in the newly independent South Sudanese nation may invite the regional actors to mess the situation and fuel the conflict pursuing their own national interests by extending support one of the major ethnic groups in the region that involve the conflict.

So, though the recent problems in the region have both ethnic identity and resource allocation dimensions, on the other hand it has direct link with institutional weaknesses presence within the emerging state institutions intended to provide services and protection for its citizens. Though this newly independent state in South Sudan has various natural resources, it has one of the world's worst development indicators which demote the euphoria of the public at large. In conclusion, the future of peace and stable South Sudan remains only in the hands of the South Sudanese people and its politicians who failed to think about a working hypothesis with valid questions to produce convincing answers on two important compatible factors: a) how to share the state power, and, b) distribute the national resources to the state citizens in an equitable manner. The grievances and exclusions from opportunities expressed by some ethnic groups in the region could lead to further future conflicts and confrontations. This can be prevented only if the Horn African countries take the lead in finding appropriate solutions to ensure that peace and social justice prevails in South Sudan as a whole. To be honest to the point, South Sudanese people are poor because they experienced prolonged exclusion and marginalization from opportunities; therefore, people are in need of having a better future. Nevertheless, if the regional actors fail to de-escalate the conflict and reconcile those fought in South Sudan, more social and political instability will follow and certainly have an adverse effect on the wider Horn African region and beyond as the experience acquired from Somalia's protracted state collapse has shown.

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