

Sudan is the Solution to South Sudan's Problems

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Global Research, June 04, 2014

Region: [sub-Saharan Africa](#)

Theme: [Militarization and WMD](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#), [United Nations](#)

In spite of the recent peace deal, the conflict in South Sudan seems to be far from over. Almost all the regional and international players that are involved in the peace process have their own agenda to pursue, and this has left the South Sudanese people highly vulnerable.

Amidst all this conflict, Sudan has managed to keep quiet. However, time has come for Sudan to be pro-active and play a bigger role in the current conflict in South Sudan. In all likelihood, only Sudan can pave the path towards sustainable peace in South Sudan.

South Sudan: Deplorable Conditions

It has been quite some time since clashes erupted in South Sudan. The fighting, which initially began as a tug of war for political power between President Salva Kiir and the then Deputy President Riek Machar, eventually became a full-fledged civil war.

As of now, there have been thousands of deaths and millions have been internally displaced. Human rights violations have become a normal sight in South Sudan, according to the latest [UN reports](#). Tribal strife, fractured army, devastated socio-economic prospects and loss of life and property have severely crippled South Sudan, and the country is, in all likelihood, [a failed state](#).

Last month, both the rival factions involved in the South Sudanese crisis [signed a peace deal](#). Apart from the formation of a transitional government, the said deal also talks about the immediate end of conflict and potential humanitarian relief work.

However, this peace deal is highly fragile owing to a number of reasons. First, the parties involved in the civil war have been fighting to grab power, and they are uninterested in any peace treaty that does not assure them of absolute political superiority. Second, the role of the international and regional players too has been unsatisfactory.

For that matter, the body language of South Sudan leaders who signed the peace deal too was far from impressive. In fact, Daily Nation [reported](#) that President Salva Kiir himself admitted that he was being forced to sign the deal in order to avoid arrest.

The International Community's Role

Ever since the formation of South Sudan, the United Nations has been involved in humanitarian aid and relief work. But UNMISS, in spite of its best efforts, is in the good books of neither the South Sudanese government nor the rebels. Similarly, international NGOs and donors who had signed bilateral trade agreements with South Sudan too are now left disillusioned by the unimpressive policies of the government and the rebels.

South Sudan's divorce from Sudan was brokered by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). However, IGAD's credentials have now come under the scanner. Uganda, one of the member-states of IGAD, has openly sided with Kiir's government, and this has not made Machar's troops very happy.

Ethiopia and Kenya too are no longer being viewed as trustworthy players, because both of them have their own regional agenda to pursue. Similarly, even Rwanda is an unacceptable mediator because many Rwandan troops aid and work for UNMISS, which, once again, is not the favorite entity of South Sudanese government and rebels alike.

Egypt, not a member of IGAD, has offered to contribute to the proposed Peace Enforcement Forces. However, it is being alleged that in lieu of its contributions, Egypt will seek South Sudan's support against Ethiopia regarding the River Nile Renaissance Dam.

South Africa, US, UK, China, Norway, African Union and European Union have appointed special envoys to keep an eye on the situation.

The Key Player? Sudan!

Amidst all this chaos, there is one country that has better understanding of the South Sudan conflict than any other state or body – Sudan.

So far, Sudan has kept itself aloof from the ongoing conflict. Owing to unresolved issues between Sudan and South Sudan, it was being assumed that the former will attempt to take advantage of the latter's miserable position and further its oil interests in the region, but none of that has happened. In fact, unlike the members of IGAD, Sudan has ruled out any form of direct political involvement in South Sudan.

Several African states, including South Sudan, have termed Sudan's potential involvement in the conflict as 'party spoiler'. However, if there is one country that can actually claim to have understanding of South Sudan's tribal friction and geopolitical strategy, it is Sudan! As a matter of fact, Sudan's involvement can also ensure that South Sudan does not become a proxy colony of international actors and/or regional hegemons such as Ethiopia and Kenya.

Conclusion

Back in 1965, during the course of the then ongoing roundtable discussions the South Sudan issue, it took longer to agree on who would represent the 'south', than it took to make the actual agreement. Quite obviously, the southern part of Sudan has always been a divided lot, and seems pretty much incapable of standing on its feet. For that matter, anyone who felt South Sudan will do a good job as an independent nation has now been silenced, because the country seems [headed towards failure](#).

Yet, Sudan can be the saviour that South Sudan needs. The unjust balkanization of Sudan, which resulted in the creation of South Sudan is surely a bad memory, but it is high time Sudan accepted the role of being 'the better neighbor', because the South Sudanese folks seem incapable of putting their house in order all by themselves.

As such, Riek Machar's visit to Khartoum presents a peacebuilding opportunity that can restore trust between the two countries. South Sudan's fragile state of affairs need to be fixed, and Sudan can do the needful.

South Sudan is the problem; it is time for Sudan to be the solution.

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