

Committee: DISEC2

Topic: The question of the conflict in South Sudan

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Summary:

South Sudan became independent from Sudan in 2011, which makes it the most recent sovereign state. The region has long experienced regional tension with it being seen as key to the USSR and United States during the cold war as both countries sought to use it to fight local proxy wars fuelling tension between militia groups and leaving South Sudan today with lasting Russian influence following the collapse of the Soviet Union. This form of proxy war and subsequent deals that the Sudanese government has had with United Nations member states in order to sell them weapons has resulted in what has now become South Sudan having a very large number of illicit weapons. From 'safer world' based on a small arms survey that was only conducted in government areas there are an estimated 232,000-601,000 illicit arms in circulation in South Sudan. This has meant that many regional militia groups are very heavily armed.

The conflict in South Sudan began when President Kiir accused his former deputy, the Vice-President Riek Machar of attempting a Coup d'état. The Vice-President then switched parties from the ruling party the SPLM to join the SPLM-IO. It was this move that caused the outbreak of civil war in December 2013 with the President and former Vice-President both accusing each other of corruption.

In South Sudan much of the conflict has followed along ethnic lines with the President being originally from the Dinka tribe and the VP being originally a Nuer. In the civil war this has given the two different power centres with the two tribes having always occupied different regions of South Sudan. Historically the conflict between the two tribes has often emerged over the issue of cattle and grazing land and it should be said that in the conflict forces have targeted civilians based on their ethnic identity using murder, rape, assault and torture amongst other crimes.

To date we have seen conflict in the relatively recently made independent country of South Sudan for approximately six and a half years, which has almost been constant and by April 2018 had left approximately 400,000 dead with just over 4 million displaced. Despite this we have seen some progress in trying to resolve the conflict, the first ceasefire was in January 2014 and on February 22nd the President and former VP struck a unity deal and formed a coalition government. This agreement is still in place and recognises the most significant progress towards achieving lasting peace and unity in the country to date. There are a great number of challenges though in the country as a UN commission on Human Rights in South Sudan outlines. With investigators finding that government officials have profited amid the country's long conflict, diverting millions of dollars from government money through tax evasion, money laundering and bribery again amongst other things. Whilst for now the conflict in South Sudan does appear to have ended though hegemony in South Sudan has always seemed to suffer as corruption does appear systemic.

Definition of Key Terms:

SDLP- Sudan People's Liberation army

SDLP-IO- Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Opposition

Dinka- Widely known as the legendary cattle keepers of Sudan, they mainly practise traditional agriculture and pastoralism. Relying on cattle husbandry not just for commercial profit or food but as a measurement for wealth and power.

Nuer- People who originated from marsh and savanna country on both banks of the Nile River in South Sudan, more sparsely populated across the country than the Dinka and following very similar traditional farming methods of cattle herding.

Background Information

Between 1899 to 1956 the United Kingdom ruled Sudan and the area that has later become South Sudan through the Anglo Egyptian Condominium. This was when the region of 'South Sudan' was first proposed. As during this period of colonial rule British administrators divided the country of Sudan into 'North' and 'South' through a process called the 'Southern policy' this administrative breakaway separated the poorer south of the country from the wealthier and more arable north. The implemented policy sought to try and prevent the wealthier north from exploiting the underdeveloped south.

However, this was unsuccessful as Britain's lack of attention on what was happening in the region in combination with its laissez-faire approach to the region more generally meant that the south which was more in need of economic investment was completely neglected and, in many cases, entirely excluded from government-sponsored economic development. It was this attitude towards the south of Sudan that led to a hegemonic domination of the north over the south. With many economic, social and political benefits being given to the north that the south simply did not get. This power disparity became ever greater led directly to the Sudanese Civil War, which was fought between 1956 and 2005, before South Sudan was granted its very own independence.

In 2011 when South Sudan became independent, it was one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world. After enduring a century of neglect under colonialism and later of violence and oppression from north Sudan. The country looked to have a very insecure future, which remains the case to this day.

Major Countries and Organisations Involved

- Government of South Sudan
- SSPDF (South Sudan People's Defence Force)
- SSAF (South Sudan Air Force)
- Mathiang Anyoor (Dinka militia group)
- Mabian Defence Force
- SSLM (South Sudan Liberation Movement)
- SRF (Sudan Revolutionary Front)
- JEM (Justice and Equality Movement)
- SPLM-N
- SLA (Sudan Liberation Army)
- EUPF (Ethiopian Unity Patriots Front)
- Uganda
- Egypt
- UNMISS (United Nations Mission in South Sudan)
- United Nations Regional Protection Force
- Rwanda
- Ethiopia
- SPLM-IO
- Nuer White Army
- Sudan
- WAU State insurgents
- Arrow Boys
- South Sudan National Army
- South Sudan Opposition Alliance
- Uganda

Timeline of Events

December 2013- President Kiir accuses Vice President Machar of attempting a coup d'état.

December 2013- Fighting breaks out near the presidential palace and other areas around Juba.

December 2013- President of the UN security council announces that UN peacekeepers would not intervene in the fighting.

December 2013- UN report outlines that approximately 13,000 people had sought refuge in the UN compound in Juba.

December 2013- Two Indian peacekeepers were killed trying to protect 36 civilians in Akobo, Jonglei.

December 2013- UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon sanctions the death and all of the fighting that has gone on in the area.

December 2013- 16 workers at petroleum operators are killed in the fighting which leads 200 workers for some of the largest operators in the world seeking refuge in a UN compound in Bentiu. With reports that rebels were seeking to take control of the country's oil fields after fears that Sudan would intervene.

December 2013- Fighting breaks out in Pariang after some SPLA troops defected to the rebels.

26th December 2013- SPLA claims to have destroyed 37 rebel vehicles in Pariang county which remained in the hands of the SPLA.

December 2013- Uganda deploys its troops to Juba to assist in securing the airport and evacuating Uganda's citizens.

December 2013- A flight of three US Air Force V-22 Osprey is en route to evacuate US nationals but took small arms fire from the ground injuring four navy seals. A later evacuation attempt by four UN and civilian helicopters was successful.

December 2013- Nigerian Envoys travel to Juba to try and seek a resolution to the conflict.

January 2014- Direct negotiations began between both sides and were mediated by IGAD + (which includes eight regional nations as well as the African Union, United Nations, China, the EU, United States and UK) in order to ensure a stronger negotiating position.

January 2014-August 2015- Fighting continues throughout the country.

April 2016 Machar returns briefly to be VP again, but in July fighting breaks out again as Machar goes into exile accusing Kiir of trying to have him killed and he is re-placed as VP.

June 2018- Kiir and Machar meet for the first time in two years.

September 2018- The two leaders sign a new peace agreement to end five years of war that had killed 380,000 and displaced 4,000,000 from their homes.

May 2018- Power sharing government is delayed continuously as both leaders state "outstanding differences"

February 2020- Machar is finally sworn in as the first Vice President after Kiir agreed to move forward with the power sharing agreement.

2022- A Un report that was published warns that rival forces still must be knitted together into a single army a process describes as "behind schedule" and "poorly provisioned" with high level corruption being rampant, militias are still being armed and civilians deliberately starved.

Relevant UN treaties and Events

17th August 2015- The Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan was signed in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Which made contingency plans for a permanent ceasefire, the unification of all South Sudanese militia forces into one unified South Sudanese army, Institutional reforms, a new power structure on the executive, a new council of ministers, internal elections to be judged in their legality by outside observers, a strategic defence and security review as well as humanitarian assistance and reconstruction.

This agreement has been followed since the President and VP joined the power sharing agreement in February 2020.

Previous attempts to solve the issue

Any previous attempts have fallen short of having the agreement of all parties, with a great deal of outside interference. Countries such as Ethiopia, Rwanda and Uganda have sought to influence the conflict in order to install Kiir or Machar, as they looked to gain favour from either leader if they ended up winning and seizing power.

To date all attempts have been short sighted and it is likely that with the very fragile power sharing agreement that exists between the two leaders either one of them could very easily attempt to take out the opposition as they have done so in the past. Whilst President Kiir is the leader of South Sudan Vice President Machar will very likely be looking to become the leader outright as it ultimately was his ambition that caused the outbreak of the conflict in 2013.

Ceasefire agreements have been signed in 2014, 16, 18 and 2020. These have all been short-lived, with no power sharing agreement having been reached during any of those four periods. However, despite this the fact that we have had almost two and a half years without conflict in South Sudan and that the international co-operation from UN member states has been constructive. It is possible and does look increasingly likely that if Machar can't see an opening of weakness in President Kiir's leadership then the peace will continue, and the issue could potentially continue to be solved.

Possible Solutions

Could include greater economic development of the country, economic partnerships and trade deals that bring about more economic success could only help ease the tension between the two ethnic groups.

A different approach to education in the country could also help. After the Rwandan genocide the education system was centred and focused around putting aside ethnic differences and living in harmony a similar kind of program could easily be implemented as when South Sudan (formerly Sudan) became independent from the UK it has faced ethnic

tensions since the 1960's. Eliminating these tensions really is fundamental to the success ultimately of a lasting peace.

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