



Vivekananda International Foundation

India and UN Peace keeping Operations in South Sudan

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Background

South Sudan is a landlocked country in Central East Africa that gained independence from Sudan, after decades of civil war. On July 2011, South Sudan became the newest country in the world. It is a landlocked country bordered by Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, Republic of Congo and Central African Republic. The country fares poorly in many socio-economic categories and is one of the poorest countries of the world. It covers an area of 239,285sq miles and the population is around 12.2 million.



Source: http://www.miseancara.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/South_Sudan.png

Challenges that South Sudan faces have been worsened by the ongoing tensions with Sudan over oil revenues and land borders fights. Tensions prevails between government bodies and insurgent groups, and also, inter-communal brutality persists. More than 80 percent of the population lives in the rural areas and are dependent on farming. The number of people relying on animal husbandry is miniscule. The Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) is among the world's highest for a variety of reasons which includes shortages of healthcare workers, facilities and supplies. Poor roads with lack of transport and cultural belief prevents women from seeking obstetric care have catalysed the abysmal social health indicator. Educational attainment is extremely poor due to lack of schools, qualified teachers and course materials. Less than a third of the population is literate. This rate is even lower among women and half of them live below the poverty line. Teachers and

students are also struggling with the switch from Arabic to English as the language of instruction. Many adults missed out on schooling because of ongoing conflicts which has led to their further displacement.

Causes of Conflict in South Sudan

South Sudan is blessed with abundant resources like minerals, oil, and water. However, these very resources have also fueled conflicts and kept the country at war for many years, even before the independence of Sudan. Additionally, the country has witnessed poor governance with weak institutions for a long time. Hence, the two main reasons that cause instability in South Sudan are: first, the problem of oil and weak institutions; and, second, the chaos of liberation as the transition from the liberation movement to the governing phase has been difficult and chaotic which has further resulted in weak institutions in the country. South Sudan has also been crushed by corruption. To make matters worse, growing insurgency accompanied by ethnic clashes has led to political instability. Another reason for conflict in the country is cattle raids which further lead to inter-communal violence. Let us now examine the reasons for conflict in details:-

- **Corruption and Indemnity** - Since independence, the government has exercised political power to secure wealth. There was an increase in the government's fund, with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005 between Sudan and SPLA. In 2012, around \$4 billion was stolen from the state fund, for which President Salva Kiir accused 75 ministers and asked them to return the money. According to reports, only 1.5% of this sum was returned and of that only a fraction of the recovered amount was once again invested into the country (Aljazeera, 2014). The revenues from the oil sector were rarely re-invested in critical sectors of the economy. Thousands of people were killed and millions were displaced, which further led to forty percent of the population suffering from food insecurity. Till date, no instrument has been established to hold them accountable for these crises (International Crisis Group, 2014).

- **Military Expansion** - With the rise of conflict in South Sudan there has been an increase in the military expenditure. This is exceeding the social spending, further leading to dissatisfaction among the local community. The government is in need of huge incomes to tackle the prevailing unrest and for improving the lives of the South Sudanese. Ironically, the guerrilla organisations present opportunities for survival, rewards, recognition and advancement which are, otherwise, not available to most civilians in South Sudan. In addition to this, in fulfilling its functions of the guardian of authority and legitimacy, the South Sudan Government attempts to accumulate and imports a bulk of modern

weapons systems (Briedlid and Arensen, 2014). According to a survey, “What is more, the existence of plentiful weapons as a consequence of war should not be omitted from the analysis of potential causes of conflict, because the second civil war in Sudan lasted more than two decades and resulted in high militarisation and arm proliferation among civilians” (Small Arm Survey, 2014).

- **Lack of Strong Institution** - Another reason behind the conflict is the existence of weak institutions in South Sudan. There also exists lack of institutional capacity which needs to be checked for the betterment of the people.
- **Organising Ethnic Identities** - Ethnicity is an instrument used to protect the political, social and cultural positions, as it has control beyond our likeness and choices. It helps in the organisation of socio-political mobilisation and can also systemise violence and political instability. In South Sudan, Dinka and Nuer ethnic identities were intentionally modified during the second civil war. Also, the structure within certain communities, such as the Gelweng, Titweng and White Army Bunam were organised (International Crisis Group, 2014). However, there is still a need in the society to unify the ethnic identities to stop the conflict in the country.
- **Lack of Participation of State Apparatus** – There has been lack of participation of the government in South Sudan, which has led to sharp contradictions between constitutional provisions and existent practices (Radon and Logan, 2014). Political parties in South Sudan are not that efficient to run a healthy government due to which there is a lack in development of the society.
- **Lack of Devotion towards Nation Building** – In 2005, the struggle for independence ended through a negotiated Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), aiming at democratic transition and self-determination for the people of South Sudan (Debay, 2012). But the post-independence phase was more inclined towards the establishment hierarchy opposed to nation building. This required a serious check to eliminate conflict persisting in the society which has also contributed to the current conflict in South Sudan.
- **Oil as a Major Reason for Conflict in the Region** – In South Sudan, eighty percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Ninety-eight percent of the government annual operating budget is dependent on oil. This makes South Sudan the most oil reliant country in the world (Nyathon et al, 2006). Instead of using this revenue to invest in public service for the improvement of people, the government continues to finance its military and security apparatus. The government officials of Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) robbed much of

the revenues from this sector and deposited the money in foreign countries which has led to conflict in the country (Tiitmamer and Awolich, 2015).

India and UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

With the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 and the culmination of a six-year peace process, South Sudan came into existence- with further adoption of the Resolution 1996 (2011) by the UN Security Council on 9th July, 2011. During this phase, the situation in South Sudan was seen as a threat to international peace and security (UNMISS Report, 2011). Thereafter, UN Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) was established to consolidate peace, security and help the established conditions for development. After the oil crisis, which broke out in South Sudan in December 2013, the UNSC by its resolution 2155 (2014) of 27 May 2014, reinforced UNMISS. The mandate towards examining human rights, protection of citizens, delivering assistance for humanitarian support and for the implementation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement were brought in order. The UNMISS, is also the newest UN Peace keeping Mission of South Sudan (UNSC Resolution, 2014).

Since December 2016, the UNMISS is headed by Special Representative of the Secretary-General David Shearer. As of August 2017, it is composed of 17,140 total personnel with the headquarter in Juba (UNMISS Facts and Figures, 2017). The UNMISS directives includes:-

- i) support for peace consolidation and thereby fostering longer-term state building and economic development,
- ii) Support the Government of the Republic of South Sudan in exercising its responsibilities for conflict prevention, mitigation and resolution and protect civilians,
- iii) Support the government of the Republic of South Sudan in developing its capacity to provide security, to establish rule of law, and to strengthen the security and justice sectors. (UNMISS Mandate, 2012).

In order to maintain peace in various parts of the world, India has constantly provided commanders, armed military contingents and military observers and staff officers during UN peace keeping operations. Assistance has also been extended to maintain peace by the Indian Air Force attack and utility helicopters to many of the United Nation missions where they have been deployed. Furthermore, India has provided police personnel to a number of UN missions like Namibia, Western Sahara, Cambodia, Haiti, Sierra Leone, Congo, Liberia, Sudan, South Sudan, etc.

Till date, India has deployed 2392 peacekeepers in UNMISS, which are stationed in two of the largest regions of South Sudan - Jonglei and the Upper Nile. Several welfare initiatives are being taken up by the Indian contingent viz. holding medical camps, building roads, etc; which have been highly appreciated by the local population. In 2013, around 36 Indian soldiers were attacked while escorting the UN convoy from Pibor Bor in Jonglei. One senior officer from the Indian army got killed while four soldiers were severely injured. In another attack on 19th December 2013, which took place on the United Nation base at Akobo in the Jonglei region, two Indian soldiers were killed. Two Indian soldiers suffered injuries during an attack in 2014 on the United Nation base at Bor in the same region once again (Embassy of South Sudan, 2016).

The Indian peacekeepers of UNMISS, deployed in the Jonglei region were acknowledged for their contribution in providing safe and secure environment for 2,500 civilians in October 2017. Fifty peacekeepers were presented with awards by the UNMISS Force Commander Gen. Frank Kamanzi. The local government of the region also paid tribute to the Indian troops for their commitment in protecting civilians and maintaining peace in the conflict ridden country. Their efforts played an important role in keeping the community safe and secure, as they had also provided the much needed support to the community outside of their core mandate, such as medical care for local residents and support for local farmers. The Indian Ambassador to South Sudan Mr. Srikumar Menon was also present during the ceremony and thanked the peacekeepers for showing their commitment to the objectives of UN charter and for being ready to support the UN peace keeping efforts globally (David Awuou, 2017).

India was among the first countries to invest in united Sudan's oil and gas sector in the early 2000's. Henceforth, at stake in South Sudan are India's economic investments, political partnerships and its credibility as an international peace keeping actor. The pipelines that remained in the northern region created several disputes leading to further worsening of the region after the beginning of the civil war in 2013. Since then, this investment has turned into more of a liability, as Indian nationals and workers have had to be routinely evacuated with every new cycle of violence. The recent evacuation, Operation Sankat Mochan, shows India's effectiveness in protecting overseas citizens. Violence in the region leads to uncertainty, thus political strategy needs to accompany India's economic investments since national companies like Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited, (ONGC) Videsh have flagged several new locations in Africa for foreign investment. In addition to economic investments, India has devoted significant human and financial peace keeping resources to the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

A significant number of Indian soldiers have been injured and lost their lives since the beginning of the civil war in South Sudan. The Indian deployment largely constitutes medical corps, engineering units, and supply corps which have been crucial to running a mission in a new country with almost no existing infrastructure. However, given the nature of the conflict, Indian soldiers have not shied away from robust peace keeping and have also played an important role in protecting the mass of civilians fleeing from violence. The most recent example is when the UN's Protection of Civilian camps came under heavy attack in Malakal and Pibor; the Indian battalion played a vital role in protecting the thousands of civilians seeking shelter there (Jugal R. Purohit, 2016). However, UNMISS is deeply characterised by fundamental weakness and does not have the mandate to provide a lasting solution to an increasingly brutal and ethnicised civil war. The existing political parties of the region are reluctant to give away control over the armed groups. Given these restrictions, regional and external actors have taken over the mediation process through forums like the Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and IGAD Plus, where India has not participated. Of late, the UN Security Council has extended its peace keeping mission in South Sudan until 15th March, 2018 and has declared new agenda to strengthen strategy to maintain peace for the unstable conflict ridden country.

The UNMISS has come under criticism for failing to do enough to protect the rights of the civilians. Last year in November, a complaint was lodged in Juba, capital of South Sudan where human-rights groups mentioned that the mission did not do enough to protect civilians from wave of mass rapes and murder that swept the capital, leaving at least 300 people dead. Even, Ban Ki-moon, in the year 2016, criticised saying that the South Sudan's leaders have been disloyal to people and exploited them for political gain. He warned that violence in South Sudan, could further lead to genocide which will have a negative impact on the relation share between South Sudan's government and the UN mission. The US proposed to deploy 4,000 peacekeepers in South Sudan which was initially refused by South Sudan, but later on they accepted their assistance. (VOA News, 2016). Despite the criticism, recently Indian Peacekeepers were lauded by the UN for their efforts in preventing a carnage in the South Sudan conflict which resulted in the death of two of its soldiers. India has so far provided two Military Advisors (Brig. Inderjit Rikhye and Lt Gen R K Mehta), two Police Advisers (Ms Kiran Bedi being one), one Deputy Military Adviser (Lt Gen Abhijit Guha), 14 Force Commanders and numerous Police Commissioners in various UN Missions(Saudi Arabia News, 2014). The Indian Army has also contributed lady officers as Military Observers and Staff Officers apart from them forming part of medical units being deployed in UN Missions.

India is committed to assist the UN in the maintenance of international peace and security with a proud history of UN peace keeping dating back to its inception. India has contributed many efficient troops to the UN and has taken part in several important peace keeping missions. Their contribution exceeds 180,000 troops and a significant number of police personnel have been deployed too. India has been one of the largest troop contributor to UN missions and it has also provided and continues to provide eminent Force Commanders for UN Missions. The high integrity and performance shown by the Indian troops and policemen deployed under such taxing and daring situation have won them respect worldwide. The perception of India is that the international community must get hold of the continuous changes that are underway for making the operations more efficient. The Security Council's mandates to UN peace keeping operations need to be applied at ground level. Besides, the troops and the police contributing should be fully involved at all stages of mission planning.

India's unique combination of being the largest democracy in the world with a strong tradition of respect for rule of law and the successful experience in nation building makes it particularly relevant in the context of twenty-first century peace process. In South Sudan, India enjoys a certain amount of goodwill because of both its support of the burgeoning state and the presence of Indian peace keeping forces in the country. India was previously engaged in mediation between Sudan and South Sudan, when it was not technically seen as interfering in internal matters. South Sudan represents a good case for India to test a broader approach to peace keeping that includes diplomacy and conflict mediation support. The Ministry of External Affairs, in March 2012, appointed a special envoy to Sudan and South Sudan and the position was later given to P. S. Raghavan who was the Special Secretary for the Development Partnership Administration (Laura Barber, 2014). It is a body managing India's international development partnerships. Thus, India could both articulate its position for a speedy resolution to the conflict and offer South Sudan several capacity-building and infrastructure projects. However, these projects were either suspended or never initiated due to the civil war, and the position of special envoy became vacant in late 2013. Although India had sent diplomats to examine the situation and follow peace negotiations in Addis Ababa but the situation remained on the sidelines of the international mediation endeavor.

After the extension of the UNMISS mandate until 15th march 2018, the Security Council declared new plans to revive peace in the conflict ridden country. The 15-member organ gathered for the meeting and recognised that the crises in South Sudan has caused great suffering. The council was apologetic that the parties have not been able to pay attention for a lasting reconciliation and have been unable to deliver humanitarian aid to people. Hence, the demand from the party was to payat-

tention to it as early as possible. In the Presidential statement of the meeting held on 14th December, 2017, it was also brought to limelight that as South Sudan has been suffering from the crises for the past five years the Security Council must get serious about the people who are in need of aid. There are around six million people living with food insecurity and around four million people have been displaced. The council supported the idea of having a forum as proposed by IGAD which aims for significant development in the region. It mentioned that, support from women, youth and civil society of South Sudan is equally important (UNSC Resolution, 2017).

The African Union, Inter-governmental Authority on Development and the United Nations on South Sudan

In January 2017, a joint meeting was held by the three organisations on South Sudan where deep concerns were expressed over the constant fights and problem of inter-communal violence accelerating into mass outrage. This led to humanitarian crises situation in South Sudan. The African Union (AU), IGAD and UN have advocated their continued fidelity for tranquil, secure and stable form of governance. They further stated that the political solution to the crisis only possible within the structure of the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS). The organisations restated the call for an immediate cessation of hostilities and urged the parties to ensure inclusivity of the political process, both in the proposed National Dialogue and in the implementation of the ARCSS. In the meeting the AU, IGAD and the UN reaffirmed their commitment and determination to further enhance their cooperation in support of the South Sudan peace process (Belayneh 2017, African Union Peace and Security).

Conclusion

There are about 700 Indian nationals in South Sudan. Some of them have set up businesses in Juba and others are working for various companies. A small number of Indian nationals also work in Christian missionary organisations in South Sudan. Indians have been among the first to introduce the people of South Sudan to hotels, new companies, printing press and departmental store in Juba. The Indian community has also formed an Indian Association in Juba, and the Embassy maintains regular contact. The Embassy facilitates their various social projects. The UNMISS is present in the country since the Independence of South Sudan in 2011.

Drawing on this experience, India has the potential to become an influential player in Africa especially, in South Sudan. India's first-hand knowledge and efforts regarding peace keeping will not have an adequate impact in South Sudan unless the hard work gets combined with arbitration support and conflict obstruction.

India has had an extensive experience in using discourse to resolve conflicts in nations both internally and regionally. This would enable Indian troops to play a larger role in the protection of civilians. Hence, India must make a serious diplomatic push in Juba in inter-relating with territorial African powers. Although, there is no easy solution to the persisting, unmanageable and uncontrollable conflicts like of South Sudan. But India will have to evaluate how it can act as a positive and beneficial mediator. It has to act qualitatively different from other regional actors who are already engaged in the mediation processes to ensure that when the situation improves in South Sudan over a period of time, the nation looks to India as a strong and able ally in the next phase of its journey.

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Since its inception, VIF has pursued quality research and scholarship and made efforts to highlight issues in governance, and strengthen national security. This is being actualised through numerous activities like seminars, round tables, interactive dialogues, Vimarsh (public discourse), conferences and briefings. The publications of VIF form lasting deliverables of VIF's aspiration to impact on the prevailing discourse on issues concerning India's national interest.



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