

# South Sudan: Post-conflict State Building

## (Setting the stage for the pre-requisites)

**\*Abdu Mukhtar Musa**

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This paper is based on a central **question** that: what are the urgent pre-requisites for building a stable South Sudan state?

The state of South Sudan can be classified as one of the failed states. State failure is often seen as due to endogenous factors, rather than systemic or external ones. This paper advocates the idea that states can be built by supporting internal processes and institutions; and the focus should be on nation-building rather than state building only.

### **A/ Problem Setting:**

It seems that the leaders of the South Sudan state were taken by surprise as they found themselves leading a new state without being well-prepared for the task. They had no plans, nor the vision to establish a stable country by starting from the scratch. Although there was ample time of six years (2005 – 2011) of interim period, they were heavily engaged in dispute with their partner of the central government of Khartoum – the National Congress Party. They found themselves leading a country overwhelmed by the following problems:

1. No infrastructure;
  2. No well-established institutions;
  3. No qualified labor force or adequate human resources;
  4. No technical know-how;
  5. No constitution to maintain a sustainable governance;
  6. With very low literacy;
  7. Lack of public awareness and political culture;
  8. Partly traditional and partly primitive society governed by traditional leaders; influenced by superstitions and myths.
  9. Corruption is rampant;
  10. Highly tribalized and ethnically-divided society, with no strong centralized political system.
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\*Abdu Mukhtar Musa: professor of political science at the Islamic University of Omdurman. Abdu received his undergraduate and post graduate studies at University of Khartoum. He has more than (60) journal articles and research papers (in English and Arabic), 9 books and participated in more than 20 international academic conferences.

## B/ Background:

As Sudan prepared to gain independence from joint British and Egyptian rule in 1956, southern leaders accused the new authorities in Khartoum of backing out of promises to create a federal system, and of trying to impose an Islamic and Arabic identity. In 1955, southern army officers mutinied, sparking off a civil war between the south, led by the *Anya Nya* guerrilla movement, and the Sudanese government. The conflict only ended when the Addis Ababa peace agreement of 1972 accorded the south a measure of autonomy.<sup>1</sup>

But, in 1983, the south, led by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and its armed wing, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), again rose in rebellion when the Sudanese government cancelled the autonomy arrangements. At least 1.5 million people are thought to have lost their lives and more than four million were displaced in the ensuing 22 years of guerrilla warfare. Large numbers of South Sudanese fled the fighting, either to the north or to neighbouring countries, where many remain.<sup>2</sup>

The conflict finally ended with the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, under which the south was granted regional autonomy along with guaranteed representation in a national power-sharing government. The agreement also provided for a referendum in the south on independence in 2011, in which nearly 99% of southern Sudanese voted to split from Sudan. The yes vote in the 2011 referendum on independence sparked scenes of jubilation.<sup>3</sup>

In July 2013, President Salva Kiir removed his vice-president Riek Machar and all member of the government in a sweeping cabinet reshuffle. In a separate decision Pagan Amum, Secretary General of South Sudan's ruling party – the Sudan's People Liberation Movement (SPLM), was chastised for publicly criticizing the government's performance. These decisions came as a result of an internal power struggle among the leadership of the SPLM that had been building since July 2005, shortly after the death of the movement's leader John Garang in a suspicious helicopter crash.

Conflicts among the South's leadership surfaced following Machar's dismissal, when he announced his intention to run for president in the 2015 elections. Machar was supported by a number of former officials who had been sacked by President Kiir, including Pagan Amum, secretary-general of the SPLM; Deng Alor, Sudanese minister of state for foreign affairs before partition; and Rebecca Garang, widow of the movement's founder John Garang.<sup>4</sup>

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1. BBC, South Sudan profile – Overview, 20 May 2015

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> BBC, op. cit.

On November 10, 2013, *The Sudan Telegraph*, an English-language newspaper, reported that a meeting of the South Sudanese leadership would take place from November 23-25 to make long overdue decisions on fundamental issues, including the constitution. President Salva Kiir's opponents have continued to accuse him of tailoring the constitution to concentrate power in his hands, and claim that he is rapidly turning into a dictator with absolute power. On the basis of party rules, elections should be held every five years, but have been delayed since April 2010. Those criticizing President Kiir and his government's performance began spearheading a drive within the party to change its leadership, as well as the government's, through tactical political action alongside a media campaign, both of which should focus on how Kiir is running a security state and restricting freedom of the press and freedom of speech.<sup>5</sup>

At the end of 2013 and early 2014 the situation the world's newest country has been gripped by violence. What started as a political dispute has escalated into fighting across significant portions of the country. A rebel movement controls important areas and more than a thousand people have been killed. Negotiations between the government and rebels have commenced in Ethiopia, but the fighting continues on the ground. The international community has responded rapidly, including by significantly expanding the size of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, but questions remain about international leverage over the parties. Meanwhile, it has been reported that about 200,000 South Sudanese have been displaced, with tens of thousands seeking shelter in U.N. bases.<sup>6</sup>

## **C/ Demographics of South Sudan:**

South Sudan has about 60 indigenous ethnic groups and 80 linguistic partitions among a 2011 population of around 11 million. Historically, most ethnic groups were lacking in formal Western political institutions, with land held by the community and elders acting as problem solvers and Adjudicators. Today, most ethnic groups still embrace a *cattle culture* in which livestock is the main measure of wealth and used for Bride wealth.<sup>7</sup>

The majority of the tribes in South Sudan are of African heritage that practice either Christianity or syncretism of Christian and Traditional African religion. There is a significant minority of people, primarily tribes of Arab heritage, who practice Islam. Most tribes of African heritage have at least one clan that has embraced Islam, and some clans of tribes of Arab heritage have embraced Christianity.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

Linguistic diversity is much greater in the southern half of the country, a significant majority of the people belong to either the Dinka people (35.8% of the South Sudan population, and primary residents of the historic Bor and Bahr el Ghazal Region) or the Nuer people (15.6% of the South Sudan population living primarily in the historic Greater Upper Nile region along with a significant number of Dinka). Both Peoples (tribes) speak one of the Nilo-Saharan languages and are closely related linguistically. Dinka is a standard language in South Sudan; however, its dialects are not all mutually intelligible.

Historically, both the Dinka and Nuer have no tradition of centralized political authority and embrace a cattle culture where land is held by the community and livestock is the main measure of wealth. It is common to conduct cattle raids against neighbors. The tribes are fragmented into clans of politically separate communities with customs against intermarriage among clans. Processes of urbanization are a source of significant cultural change and societal conflict.<sup>9</sup>

Beside the Dinka other main ethnic groups include the Luo people, the Nuer, the Shiluk, Toposa, lotuho, Didinga, Tennes, Acholi, Murle, Azande and Bari.<sup>10</sup>

## **D/ Conflict among the Southern Tribes:**

### **(tribalized politics and politicized tribes):**

South Sudan is a home to dozens of tribes that derive from three main groups. The largest is the Nilotic group, representing 65 percent of the population and the tribes with the greatest political influence. Within this group, the Dinka—President Kiir’s tribe—make up 40 percent, and the Nuer—the second major group and former vice-president Riek Machar’s tribe, accounts for about 20 percent. Pagan Amum, secretary-general of the SPLM, and Lam Akol Ajawin, one of the historical leaders, belong to the Shilluk, which represents 5 percent of the population. Ajawin disagreed with John Garang, and became an ally of Khartoum, where he lived until the SPLM split. He only recently returned to Juba after having received assurances.<sup>11</sup>

In 1984, during the civil war between north and south and following the collapse of the 1972 Addis Ababa agreement, Riek Machar joined the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA), the SPLM’s military wing. In 1991, he led an uprising within the SPLA after he and others, including Lam Akol, disagreed with Garang’s desire to maintain the unity of Sudan. Machar and his supporters were in favor of complete secession. As a result, a bloody conflict ensued, causing more casualties than all the wars between the North and South. In 1997, Machar made an agreement with the Khartoum government. The agreement enabled President al-Bashir’s regime to use Machar’s forces to secure the oil fields in the war-stricken areas, and in doing

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> For further details see: South Sudan entry at *the World Fact book*; also: the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) 24 December 2001. Distribution of ethnic groups in South Sudan.

<sup>11</sup> The Conflict in South Sudan: Background and Likely Consequences, Policy Analysis Unit, The Arab Centre for Research and Policy Study, Doha/Qatar, 27, January, 2014.

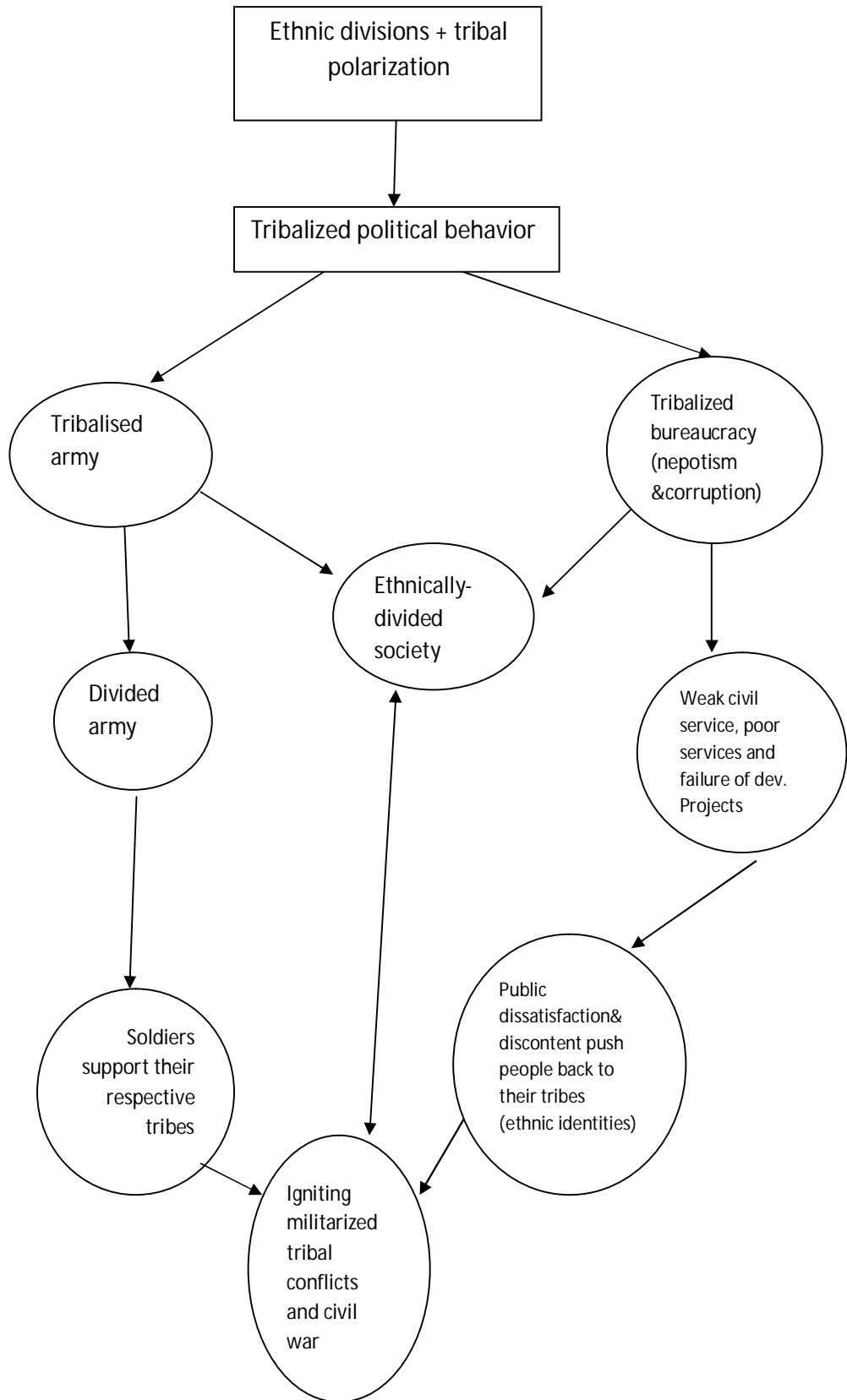
so, weakened the SPLA. However, Machar returned to Garang's movement a few years later, and after Garang's death, he was chosen as Kiir's vice president.<sup>12</sup>

It is a matter of 'chain effects': the newly emerging state in the South has inherited the illness of backward country. A situation could be traced back through the previous 'mother state' - Sudan to the colonial rule whose policies of closed districts kept this part underdeveloped. This state of 'underdevelopment' implied lack of all factors of a modern state notably – illiteracy, the pre-dominant tribal system with lack of consciousness, a society governed by superstitions and all backward traditions which hinder any effort for development. The absence of consciousness, along with the dominance of traditional – and mostly primitive – values, gives birth to 'tribalized political behavior'. This produces many illnesses and problems which may end with instability or civil wars. The following chart tries to depict this scenario.

So, it is obvious that conflict over power among the political elites is mostly tribally based. Ethnic belonging often demarcates the lines of political alliances.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.



## **E/ Political psychology matters:**

It seems that the political elite of South Sudan state do not lack only vision and strong political will to build a stable state, but they are enticed by temptations of the authority, motivated by personal ambitions and covets, moved by selfish interests. They have indulged in oil rich resources leaving behind the pledges they had made for their people, neglecting the motto they had raised during the struggle for separation: "liberty, justice and prosperity". They abandoned the slogan of "the New Sudan". How can prosperity be attained under war and continued conflict? It is rather misery that the people can get.

The complexity of the South Sudan conflict has gone to another level that needs emergency response from the world and the African continent respectively. There have been many discussions here and there in the Ethiopian Capital Addis-Ababa between the Government of South Sudan and the Sudan People Liberation Movement in Opposition (SPLM/IO) under the Leadership of Dr Riek Machar Teny. Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) have tried and still trying to bring together both parties of South Sudan conflict and nothing is being achieved up to now due to the fact that, "most of the African Leaders and International Community have taken the issue as the ground for employment opportunity to the jobless people in the developed countries, instead they should advocate for the peaceful resolution and reconciliation among the South Sudanese people".<sup>13</sup>

Some people 'Clicks' within the government officials in Juba do not want peace to come to South Sudan as well some elements in the Opposition are trying to advocate for an interest which is individualistic in nature. Those in the government under President Kiir leadership are too allergic to the peaceful resolution to the conflict. Both parties are just aiming for their interests not the interest for South Sudanese people.<sup>14</sup>

It is shame of the political elite that the political conflict erupted into violence in South Sudan. It is disappointing that the hope and optimism the world felt with the founding of the new nation in 2011 was overtaken by images of bloodshed and grief. Instead of seeing the promise of their struggle for self-determination realized, the people of South Sudan have suffered countless, unimaginable tragedies. The magnitude of this crisis is felt in both

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<sup>13</sup> Peter Gai Manyuon, *the Upper Nile Times*, January 5, 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

the devastation that violence has left in towns and villages, and the scars—visible and invisible—on the South Sudanese people.<sup>15</sup>

## **F/ The Quest for Solutions:**

### **How to address the crisis and set the pre-requisites?**

Some scholars believe that systems-building is one of the pre-requisites for state-building. It is a systemic precondition of state-building.<sup>16</sup>

**This paper recommends the following points to set the stage for peaceful settlement and pave the way for a post-conflict state building:**

1. To build a newly-emerging state in South Sudan the ruling elite thereof need to exert great efforts but with strong political will and a concrete vision based on a comprehensive approach that encompasses all aspects of life in a developmental drive that moves forward – with all high gears - simultaneously. They need dedicated scholars to 'theorize' a road map for a safe way out of the dilemma. They need experts of visions to outline a workable plan of action, and need qualified and well-trained personnel to put theory into action.
2. **But (prior to no. 1 above) South Sudan state needs that its elites are to be faithful and with dedicated politicians to bring peace to put an end to the fighting by drafting a peace agreement.**
3. The people of South Sudan state need technical help, financial aid, and international support and UN supervision. An internationally monitored truce (ceasefire agreement) is badly needed to open safe corridors for humanitarian action to handle relief to the war-affected people in the war-torn areas of the country.
4. The people of South Sudan need a double-edged approach:

**To the elite:** to be reminded that their country is the richest in Africa – in terms of natural resources. That – with peace – all will benefit; but with conflict and war, all will lose.

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<sup>15</sup> – A statement by the United States President, Barack Obama appealing to the warring factions of the South Sudan conflict to put South Sudan first and work for peace to return to the war ravaged nation, Upper Nile Times, December 12, 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Haldén, Conflict, Security and development, Volume 10, Issue 4 September 2010.



**To the public** at large: to be enlightened that all will have a share in power and wealth. They should also need to be enlightened with the atrocities of war.

They are to be approached through their elders and traditional leaders who are to be represented in peace talks; and after peace, they are to be represented at the different levels of government.

They are to be addressed by their local languages, and intensive media campaigns are to be properly designed to that end to be carried out with well-trained media persons taking into considerations the socio-cultural environment and the frame of reference set by their values and beliefs system.

5. The leaders of South Sudan are to approach the UN Security Council to issue a resolution for a truce and an interim period to establish a transitional government to be made up from both fighting parties – in semi-equal footing (to be explained later in this article).
6. Meanwhile, during the truce, regional organizations such as the African Union and the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) should assign a mediation team – some sort of good-office or 'good-faith' committee – to supervise peace talks between the two warring parties to work out a new formula for 'power sharing'. This could be settled through interim government in which the major ethnic groups and forces are to be represented in the cabinet, the Parliament, the Judiciary, state and district levels and the whole bureaucratic structure, as well as in the various regular forces.
7. A prime minister post is advisable here to be filled by Riek Machar. Other posts such as the vice-president, the vice-prime minister, the speaker of the parliament and his deputies, together with all other constitutional and high ranking offices at the federal and state levels are to be divided in such a way (formula) to allow for the proportional representation of the majority (if not all) ethnic groups.
8. A federal system is to be introduced. This means more opportunities are created at different levels. This will incorporate all ethnic groups – from the top central government down to the bottom. This may achieve a degree of relative satisfaction for all tribes when they see they have their sons taking positions in the state machinery.
9. The would-be interim government is to embark on drafting a constitution for the new state. A national commission is to be named by the interim government to represent the major players (or forces) in the

state, to be assisted by specialized technical committee for constitutional writing.

10. Institution building is to be paralleled by capacity building and getting technical assistance from the international organizations.

11. This constitutionalization and institutionalization process should be accompanied by building good neighbourliness and good relations with regional and international community.

## **Conclusion:**

In addition to the above mentioned points for a road map, this paper suggests Consociational democracy along with federal system will guarantee power sharing and pave the way for sustainable peace and a stable state – where all tribes and ethnic groups will be represented.

A proportional representation type of election is more advisable here to guarantee a proper implementation of consociational democracy.

The South Sudan state should draw lessons from similar cases – particularly in Africa. A post-conflict state building case which gives good example for S. Sudan is Rwanda. This consociationalism proved successful in Nigeria and Rwanda.

South Sudan state can imitate regional forerunners. South Africa has set a good example for S. Sudan in the field of "Reconciliation and Justice".

But, as a matter of strategic thinking, the elite of South Sudan should not focus only on state building, but on 'nation building'. The key for this is comprehensive development with much focus of education and building political culture – through political socialization, inculcation and dissemination of democratic values.

The elite of the South Sudan state should exert great efforts to eradicate tribalism or alleviate its impact on politics. Also to combat superstitions and other backward traditions that impede development. This means, in broader sense, great efforts for modernization.