

Civil Society and Peace: Local Civil Society Engagement in South Sudan's Peace Efforts

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Abstract

South Sudan is one of the countries that has been hit by internal conflict since its independence in 2011. This article basically describes the involvement of civil society in peace negotiations in South Sudan. Using the literature study method and through the concepts of civil society and peace, this article reviews and analyzes the extent to which local civil society is involved in the peace negotiation process in South Sudan. This article has a finding that civil society participation in peace efforts in South Sudan is quite high, but not significant. This is an implication of the conflict pattern which tends to be structural. On the other hand, limited resources, both technical and material, are a major obstacle in relation to the ability of civil society in South Sudan to engage in peace efforts. Thus, as far as civil society is involved in peace efforts in South Sudan, their presence is only a mere formality, while the main decision remains with the political elites in South Sudan.

Keywords: Civil Society, Conflict, Peace, South Sudan.

Abstrak

Sudan Selatan merupakan salah satu negara yang tengah dilanda konflik internal sejak kemerdekaannya pada tahun 2011. Artikel ini pada dasarnya menjelaskan keterlibatan masyarakat sipil dalam upaya perdamaian di Sudan Selatan. Menggunakan metode studi pustaka dan melalui konsep masyarakat sipil dan perdamaian, artikel ini mereview dan menganalisis mengenai sejauh mana keterlibatan masyarakat sipil lokal pada proses negosiasi perdamaian di Sudan Selatan. Artikel ini memiliki temuan bahwa partisipasi masyarakat sipil dalam upaya perdamaian di Sudan Selatan cukup tinggi, namun tidak signifikan. Hal tersebut merupakan implikasi dari corak konflik yang cenderung struktural. Di lain hal, keterbatasan sumberdaya, baik teknis maupun materil, merupakan hambatan utama dalam kaitannya dengan kemampuan masyarakat sipil di Sudan Selatan dalam melibatkan diri pada upaya-upaya perdamaian. Dengan demikian, sejauh manapun masyarakat sipil melibatkan diri dalam upaya-upaya perdamaian di Sudan Selatan, kehadiran mereka hanya sebagai upaya formalitas belaka, sedangkan keputusan utama tetap berada pada elit-elit politik di Sudan Selatan.

Kata kunci: Masyarakat Sipil, Konflik, Perdamaian, Sudan Selatan.

INTRODUCTION

The involvement of civil society in the process of conflict resolution and peacebuilding in violent conflicts is an important issue that has been emphasized by the international community in recent decades. The idea of civil society is that it serves as a platform between the people

and the government, typically taking the form of a group that facilitates the representation of the needs of the people and debate of societal concerns (Putnam, Leonardi and Nonetti, 1993). It is suggested for civil society to help peace by fostering communication and amity

between divisive groups engaged in conflict. Additionally, there are now more non-governmental actors working to promote peace (Woodward, 2014). This demonstrates how the role of civil society is becoming more and more crucial for democracy and peace. In order to change state-society interactions and promote the development of responsive and legitimate institutions that can deal with conflict effectively, this position advocates the growth of civil society building in international policies on democracy and peacebuilding (Woodward, 2014).

One of the conflicts that is still an important issue in studies related to peace is the South Sudan conflict. South Sudan itself became independent on July 9, 2011. This marked a series of trends and phenomena for the establishment of a government that was born through rebellion in the East African region. Since the mid-1980s, the insurgent to achieve independence have been able to take over political leadership in Uganda, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia. The success of these insurgent groups is usually judged by their ability to carry out political campaigns that are considered revolutionary. This is often done before they take control of the state. However, the characteristics of governments in East Africa, which promote political stability through repressive measures, are still the main characteristics of the governance in East Africa (Lyman, 2013). The outbreak of civil war in December 2013 in South Sudan then raised questions about the sustainability of the existence of an independent South Sudan state. In addition, the outbreak of the conflict intensified the debate about the organizational capacity of the Sudan

People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) in running and managing the state office.

According to Øystein H. Rolandsen, there are many factors that underlie the outbreak of the South Sudan conflict. As for Rolandsen, in his article, the culture of civil war, neopatrimonialism, and poor state governance made a new civil war in South Sudan possible which was almost unavoidable (Rolandsen, 2015). South Sudanese society has been militarized as a result of decades of war and structural insecurity, which has resulted in the emergence of enmity and segregation among community groupings. According to Rolandsen, the internal divisions that also exist in other East African nations are basically not all that different from the political and social divisions that exist in South Sudan. However, East African nations frequently have developed initiatives to deal with political heterogeneity. Thus, key variables in determining why the South Sudan crisis started in December 2013 include the politics of the post-war SPLM rebel movement and the projected 2015 presidential election. (Rolandsen, 2015).

Looking at the dimensions of conflict in a postcolonial country such as Sudan, it is better if we need to look at the ethnicity aspect of South Sudan itself. According to Ferenc David Marko, South Sudan has indeed developed a citizenship regime that is formally inclusive, but in practice it is highly stratified (Marko, 2015). Stratified in the sense that South Sudan constitutionally applies classes of citizenship, in which second class citizenship is generally granted to the majority of people in rural areas. The response to these discriminatory practices led to rebellions against marginalization

and asserting citizenship equality. The dominance of actors affiliated with SPLM practically presents exclusivity for individuals and communities who were part of the SPLM during the independence effort, where they tend to discriminate against individuals/communities who are outside the circle of the SPLM movement (Marko, 2015). Such inequality then gives rise to class segregation between the ruling elite and the majority ethnic group. As an implication of class segregation, factional identity becomes more significant than ethnic identity in relation to the internal conflict in South Sudan (Marko, 2015).

There have been many attempts by regional and international actors to mediate the South Sudan conflict itself. One of the regional actors who play a role in mediating the South Sudan conflict is the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). IGAD is the main actor that is substantially relevant in efforts to restore peace in South Sudan from the beginning of the conflict in December 2013 until the end of the conflict in August 2018.

In the article written by Micheale K. Gebru it is stated that during the five years of the South Sudan conflict, IGAD became an actor who played an important role and achieved extraordinary success. IGAD became the mediator and initiator of the Khartoum Declaration Agreement, which discussed unresolved issues related to the governance and security system between the conflicting parties (K. Gebru, 2020). The agreement was held on 5 August 2018 in Sudan. The Khartoum Declaration Agreement helped the two sides reach an agreement to form a new united government.

The new government has a mandate to rule for the next three years. The acceptance of the proposal submitted by IGAD, regarding the distribution of power between members of the legislative and executive branches of the transitional government, to the conflicting parties is one of the achievements in efforts to maintain peace, especially in relation to the characteristics of the conflict in South Sudan. Under the peace discussion initiated by IGAD, the process involved several parties. Those involved in the discussion included several civil society organizations, religious groups, political parties and former political prisoners. IGAD encourages the participation of civil society so that South Sudanese civil society can bridge the divisions that occur between armed groups and local communities who are involved in conflicts with such ethnic dimension (K. Gebru, 2020).

Looking at some of the studies mentioned above, I have not found any studies that discuss the involvement of civil society in the conflict resolution process that was carried out in South Sudan. In many literatures it is widely known that civil society is able to play a key role in promoting democratic governance in social situations where people tend to be in a peaceful situation. However, the significance of the role of civil society involvement may be increased in the social situations of communities with conflictual patterns. This departs from the assumption that conflict situations always have the characteristics of a higher level of politicization, a lack of effective state institutional governance and a lack of accountability. Based on this, the social situation of the community in a state of conflict is assumed to be able to produce a

more intense mobilization of civil society (Buzzan, Wæver and Wilde, 1998).

Considering the related issues, this article discusses how civil society actually engages in the reconciliation of internal conflicts in South Sudan. This article aims to determine the level of involvement and how far the involvement of civil society in the reconciliation process is carried out in relation to the South Sudan conflict.

METHOD AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Method

Literature study was chosen as the data collection technique in this article. The data obtained by accessing books, articles, scientific journals, official documents and other digital or physical sources. The data obtained were then collected to explain the problems that are discussed in this article. The data analysis technique is descriptive-qualitative. The data found through various sources are used to describe a phenomenon through interpretation that refers to the conceptual framework.

The war in South Sudan is reviewed in this article using a critical peace research methodology. The extent to which South Sudan's civil society is active in the peace negotiations is the major topic of this article. The two key conceptual frameworks this study must utilise are peace studies and the function of non-state actors in the peace process.

Peace Studies

In the past few decades, there have been major advancements in the field of peace studies. Generally speaking, these changes are seen as having moved beyond the political vision of liberal peace, which

emphasizes state analysis more, and in the direction of an emphasis on the role of non-state actors (MacGinty, 2011). From this angle, the state, its actors, and institutions are not the only sources of power. Richmond contends that the liberal peace paradigm's underlying assumption—that the state's legitimate interests must be pursued on a top-down basis—is untrue (Richmond, 2005). From this angle, the state, its actors, and institutions are not the only sources of power. Richmond contends that the liberal peace paradigm's underlying assumption—that the state's legitimate interests must be pursued on a top-down basis—is untrue (MacGinty, 2011). In order to achieve a lasting post-conflict peace, Roddy Brett contends that substantial participation is more likely to promote ownership of the peace process and successful peacebuilding (Brett, 2013). However, the inclusive peace agreement does not ensure that the conflict resolution procedure would result in a situation where the post-war situation is sustainable.

Two associated aspects in particular, namely: (1) Peaceful settlements that can successfully address the structural causes of conflict; and (2) Participation of civil society, especially victims, in talks, play a vital role in fostering more durable peace circumstances. Without addressing the final point, it will be impossible to address the first point since conversations won't be pertinent to the victim's condition, decreasing their sense of ownership in the process and making it difficult to address a range of topics, such as the reasons of armed conflict (van Tongeren, 2013). The legitimacy of the effort can be increased by incorporating members of civil society in the peacebuilding and peacemaking process (Odendaal, 2010). Additionally,

individuals from civil society in the peace process may cover the credibility gap left by traditional liberal peace operations. According to Odendaal, non-state actors can present alternative ideas and agendas that are frequently broader and more inclusive than the peace agenda selected by only the negotiation parties. While the engagement of civil society is unlikely to lessen division in a conflict scenario, it is likely to increase the debate over which components of the peace agenda should be prioritized by bringing together different representatives of religion, gender, culture, business, and politics. This is due, in Odendaal's perspective, to the motivation of non-state actors, who are commonly seen as the embodiment of the moral forces factor, to ensure that there is a lasting and just peace (Odendaal, 2010).

On the other side, discussions that are confined to armed groups tend to disregard the factors that are causing conflict, whereas civil society players prefer to urge participation with a wider array of problems. Importantly, even if civil society participates in the necessary discussions, a permanent peace is less likely if the conflict's root causes are not addressed. Without the participation and presence of civil society actors, who may exert pressure on the parties to the discussions, a peace settlement is likely to take precedence over issues that are essential to citizens' aspirations.

Non-State Actors and Peacebuilding

The benchmark for peace negotiations that are defined under the liberal peace paradigm is the notion of Track One diplomacy, where the disputing parties determine the subject of the peace talks and exclude civil society players from

direct involvement. In recent decades, the global system has seen significant changes. These changes accelerated the rise of non-state participants in the main power arena, such as in peacemaking and peacebuilding activities (Keck and Sikkink, 1999). Guatemala serves as an illustration of this. The implementation of actions related to peacemaking and peacebuilding that were outlined in the 1992 United Nations Agenda for Peace was a major factor in changes to UN processes. This is because well-known liberal peace organizations and international organizations have begun to recognize the role that civil society actors play in establishing and sustaining peace (Vogel, 2016).

The manner in which peace negotiations are actually carried out on the ground has changed as a result of these alterations, as well as pressure from civil society organizations in conflict-affected countries. Particularly in the case of Latin America during and after the transition from authoritarian administration, civil society and victims' organizations began to emerge as key political players following the Agenda for Peace. They demanded to take part in efforts to bring about peace. This implies that actors from civil society are playing a more prominent, albeit supportive, role in the formal peace process, which is hastening a substantial shift in the conventional Track One diplomacy paradigm. The formal involvement of civil society actors in peacemaking logically challenges the stated presupposition that power lies in the state and emanates from the military forces alone, which is the driving force behind Track One's state-centered diplomacy. In Track One diplomacy, the state's and its negotiating allies' legitimacy

is crucial. However, during the last few decades, techniques to promoting peace and fostering peace have developed and become more sophisticated on a number of levels (Ramsbotham, Miall and Woodhouse, 2005). As a result, actors from civil society now have more space. Most international actors still view peacemaking and peacebuilding from a state-centric viewpoint, according to Brinkerhoff. In his declaration, he argues that in order to have the capacity to construct networks that link central government programs to conflict-affected regions, peace must be built through a process that can articulate multiple levels and players, such as the state and civil society. By using this tactic, according to Brinkerhoff, peace will be genuine, long-lasting, and capable of leading to the development of functioning administration. (Brinkerhoff, 2007). Aside from these adjustments, it will be challenging for the state and illegal armed organizations to readily cede control to people they view as illegitimate actors. Delegitimizing actors that lack political clout, economic clout, or political experience will be relatively simple.

Given that the state continues to be the main source of public legitimacy and that it is still a major player in the international system with a legitimate set of powers to negotiate with armed opposition parties capable of endangering its integrity, the exclusion of members of civil society from the negotiation process is understandable. Non-state actors are powerless to compel the state to comply with the demands of unlawful armed organizations during times of conflict. When there is an imbalance of power, civil society players in the Westphalian system lose their capacity and influence, and the

state is considered as having the power to accept and enforce the agreements made during the peace negotiations. It could be harder to put an end to armed conflict if non-state entities with a broad agenda are involved (Brinkerhoff, 2007).

However, given the expanding number of international players and the scientific perspective of critical peace studies, people affected by conflict and violence need to have a large voice in conflict transformation. Given the complexity of the Westphalian system and the tendency of states to be hesitant to renounce their claim to power, the challenge is how to design effective mechanisms to ensure considerable involvement of non-state parties at the national and local levels. In this article, the conceptual framework was used to explain how civil society groups took part in the Sudan peace discussions.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

South Sudan Conflict

Sudan has been embroiled in internal civil conflict since gaining independence in 1956. It began in 1955 and lasted until 1972 with the first civil war. Then, from 1983 to 2005, there was a second civil war, which was followed by the wars in the South Kordofan, Blue Nile, and Darfur regions from 2003 till the present. After attaining independence, Sudan's lengthy path was dominated by conflict and war rather than state formation, which implied a loss of 52.53 percent per person on economic growth from 1990 to 2010 (United Nations Economic Commission Africa, 2011). In comparison to the average cost of economic growth loss in Africa, the loss amount is over three times larger.

Between 1955 to 1972, the first civil war in Sudan claimed 500,000 lives and caused a protracted famine (Johnson, 2003). In South Sudan, the second civil war, which lasted from 1983 to 2005, resulted in the deaths of almost 2 million people, 420,000 refugees, and more than 4 million migrants (United Nations Economic Commission Africa, 2011). Around 70,000 more people died as a result of the 1998 famine in the Bahr el Ghazal disaster, according to Francis Deng's estimate. On the other side, the violent conflict in Darfur caused the deaths of almost 300,000 people, 1.5 million displaced persons, and a rise in the death toll from famine from 1984 to 1985 to about 40 per thousand (Alex de Waal, 2005).

The Anglo-Egyptian government that seized control of Sudan in 1898 created a political system that emphasized ethnic diversity and long-standing customary institutions in order to carry out its power. The new South Sudanese government has adopted an indirect style of rule based on traditional self-governance through "indigenous administration," which incorporates local traditions, ideologies, and legal frameworks (Johnson, 2003). Later, the state put into practice the South Sudan Policy of 1930, which included indigenous management and intended to protect South Sudanese residents from slavery, Islamization, and Arabization of North Sudan (Rolandsen, 2015). Sudan went through a relatively tranquil phase under British colonial authority from 1898 to 1956 because the system of administration that predominated at the time was more or less able to embrace variety and empower people through traditional customary institutions. (Rolandsen, 2015).

The new regime succeeded in preserving security and the rule of law, but it disregarded South Sudan's growth in favor of North Sudan. As a result, North and South Sudan have different rates of development, which later contributes to social, economic, and political inequality. During the early 1950s negotiations for Sudan's independence, the South Sudanese elite pressed the British colonial authority to allow for South Sudan's development. The purpose of the demands is part of the agenda of the South Sudanese elite in order to prepare South Sudan to join East Africa instead of joining North Sudan. The North Sudanese, who negotiated Sudan's independence with the British colonial government, were in a position to counter the demands of the South Sudanese elite. Due to this, the elite of South Sudan demanded federalism as the only form of governance that could guarantee self-government, preserve unity in variety, and effectively quell aspirations for secession in Sudan after independence. An autonomous negotiation delegation from the northern Sudanese elite carefully accepted this plea for federalism rather than rejecting it, promising to give it proper consideration following independence in 1956 (Kuol, 2020b).

The aspirations of the South Sudanese elite about federalism in the post-independence Sudan were not taken into account or acknowledged by the British colonial rulers who negotiated Sudan's independence with the North Sudanese elite. a new state that was arbitrarily founded without sufficient preparation in its governance structure as a result of the rejection of the federal system. As was already said, after Sudan gains independence, South Sudan's

political structure must be able to deal with its diverse ethnic and religious populations. The first civil war in Sudan, which broke out in South Sudan and before independence in 1955, is noted as having been caused by the British colonial government's decision to establish Sudan in secrecy as a unified state without a system of government capable of running their own government, in which the communities in South Sudan are relatively disadvantaged (Deng, 1995).

According to the terms of The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), the people of South Sudan chose to secede from Sudan through a referendum that is overseen by an international body. South Sudan subsequently gained independence in July 2011. Since gaining its independence, South Sudan has gone through two civil wars, the first lasting two years (2013–2015) and the second begin a year after the first (2016–present), as a result of the country's ruling elites' failure to carry out the peace accord they signed in 2015. Nearly 4.2 million people, including 2.2 million in neighboring countries, have been forcibly displaced as a result of South Sudan's first and second civil wars (2013–present), and 6 in 10 people now experience acute hunger or food insecurity. According to estimates, 400,000 people have perished in civil war, with half of them dying in fighting and the other half from diseases, malnutrition, and other factors made worse by the bloody conflict (Checchi *et al.*, 2018).

On the other hand, about 41% of people surveyed in South Sudan show symptoms of post-traumatic disorders comparable to levels of genocidal countries such as Cambodia and Rwanda (United Nations Development Programme, 2015). Given that conflicts always lead to material

losses, the recorded economic losses from the civil war to South Sudan are estimated at US\$ 158 billion. Meanwhile, the costs to be borne by neighbouring countries due to the conflict reached almost US\$ 57 billion. In an effort to mitigate these impacts, the cost of the international community in carrying out peacekeeping efforts and humanitarian assistance has increased to nearly US\$ 30 billion (Breckenridge, 2015).

The remarkable decision of the South Sudanese people to leave Sudan is a result of the ruling North Sudanese elite's failure to successfully lead the nation-building process after independence. Secession still applies to both parties, notwithstanding the CPA's requirement that the parties work together to give the people of South Sudan the option of reunification (Kuol, 2020a). The political establishment in South Sudan is pushing for secession. In this sense, the National Congress Party is worried that joining the secular Sudan will damage its political objective for advancing Islam, whereas the SPLM believes that secession is necessary to grow its support in South Sudan (Kuol, 2020a).

Secession is also viewed by the international community as the sole means of resolving cultural differences in an effort to build and uphold peace between two split countries. (Kalpakian, 2017). After independence, South Sudan adopted the decentralized federalism system that is affirmed by the Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan (ICSS), which includes the CPA's principles. The ICSS made it clear that the decentralized federal structure put in place during the CPA period would continue in an independent South Sudan if the outcome of the self-determination vote backed secession. All South Sudanese Political Parties (ASSPP) concur on a

national roadmap as the people of South Sudan get ready for the country's statehood transition following the referendum (Kuol, 2020a). The roadmap outlines an inclusive procedure for both the 2011 Transitional Constitution of South Sudan and the 2005 ICSS constitutional review. The South Sudanese president unilaterally chose to form a Constitutional Review Committee to examine the 2005 ICSS and the 2011 draft Transitional Constitution, which is against the promises made in the roadmap and the constitution (Kuol, 2020a).

With the structural political conflict pattern as described earlier, in relation to the involvement of civil society in the peace negotiation process, it can be assumed that the involvement is negligible. In the following discussion, the roles of civil society groups in the Sudan and South Sudan peace negotiations will be discussed. This was conducted in order to provide a clearer picture of the South Sudan conflict.

Civil Society and the South Sudan Conflict

The civil war that started in December 2013 generated a number of local intra-ethnic disputes that are still going on today, starting with the struggle for control and ethnic dominance inside the Sudan People's Liberation Movement. It stands for the failure of conventional conflict resolution processes and authority, such as chairmen and elders in local South Sudanese communities (Kuol, 2020b). An example that can be seen in this regard is that usually local disputes over livestock, grazing, agricultural land, and access to water and other resources, have historically been prevented and resolved at the local level through dialogue, with traditional leaders usually holding meetings to persuade conflicting or hostile

parties to resolve their differences with one another in order to maintain peace. The 2011 Transitional Constitution stipulates the inclusion of traditional authorities as key local government institutions. However, nowadays the roles and mechanisms of traditional authorities have diminished due to the development of many new civil groups, both formal and non-formal (Kuol, 2020b).

New challenges have emerged to establish traditional authorities in many parts of South Sudan, not only as a result of the generational change and fractured social relations brought about by the current conflict, but also because of a broader set of crises related to legitimacy, control and conflict resolution mechanisms (Kuol, 2020b). The prospect of involving traditional authorities in the peace process is closely related to the emergence of new forms of authority that derive legitimacy from the new set of rules created by South Sudan's political elites, which to some extent limit the role of tribal chiefs in responding to local conflicts. The striking diversity of responses to violence by religious leaders and authorities in the states of Unity, Upper Nile, and Western Equatoria, demonstrates the need for a series of interconnected and sustainable solutions. This situation underscores the importance of building a more substantial understanding of social dynamics at the civilian level, including the impact of conflict in many different parts of South Sudan and the region. Peacebuilding at the grassroots level and civil society initiatives have a key role to play in the peace process, but this is often not supported by South Sudan's political elites.

The peacebuilding model is often implemented in South Sudan without

taking into account its own domestic situation (Assal, 2016). High-level peace conferences, consultative meetings, and other similar initiatives have generally failed to encourage community participation at the grassroots level, so the implication of this then is that existing forums have difficulty in assessing and determining effective measures in order to resolve local conflicts. Furthermore, the outcomes of these meetings tend to overlook the importance of trust-building processes and structures at the community level in order to restore South Sudan's fragile social fabric.

In the context of South Sudan's civil war, ethnicity is one of the factors that sharpens divisions in South Sudan's civil society and disrupts local and national peace-building processes. This is indicated by participation which is often determined by political and ethnic affiliation. Civil society groups sometimes trigger conflict through ethnic-based messages, so that the ethnic nature of conflict further hampers the ability of civil society organizations to be impartial (Marko, 2015). In the negotiations for the Addis Ababa peace agreement in August 2015, South Sudanese civil society was a fragmented force, and thus could not exert a positive influence on the peace process (Kalpakian, 2017). In fact, initially civil society representatives were not involved in the IGAD-led initiative, but were forced to lobby for their participation in the process. This has led to a deep distrust of civil society, as well as a lack of ownership of the peace building process by stakeholders in local communities (Kalpakian, 2017). Most of these civil society groups were not well informed about the peace process mediated by IGAD. In this regard, impartiality is one

of the toughest challenges facing the civil society sector in South Sudan.

In practice, however, South Sudanese civil society actors, both formal and informal, have had a more positive impact in achieving some improvements in human security. In the three months since the start of the civil war conflict in South Sudan that erupted in December 2013, the violence displaced 706,000 South Sudanese and displaced more than 173,000 in Uganda, Ethiopia and Kenya (Virk and Nganje, 2016). The South Sudanese civil society is crucial in the distribution of humanitarian aid and in alerting the Juba government and the international community to security-related issues. Numerous foreign NGOs helped this process along. Numerous meetings have been organized through the South Sudan NGO Forum to talk about concerns pertaining to the distribution of humanitarian aid during this time. In some areas of the country, civil society organizations have also taken on a role in providing public services including soup kitchens, emergency clinics, and shelters in the context of inefficient administration, notably since December 2013 (Virk and Ngantje, 2016).

South Sudan's civil society peacebuilding efforts need to be documented, which is still lacking to date. On the other hand, the various roles played by civil society, both at the national and local levels, during the current crisis have expanded the capacity of these groups. In relation to the involvement and enhancement of the role of civil society in peacebuilding in South Sudan, it can be said that there is an urgent need for national and local organizations, formal or informal civil society groups, and

international NGOs in South Sudan to build more concrete and strategic alliances to take advantage of their full potential in order to address the challenges posed by continuing conflict, corruption, unaccountable governance, poverty and injustice.

The involvement of community groups, particularly church groups and Muslim community councils, has been an influential peacebuilding actor at the local and national level in South Sudan. They were instrumental in mediating the conflict between the government of South Sudan and the Cobra David Yau Yau Force in Jonglei state after the 2010 elections, which led to the creation of the Greater Pibor Administrative Region. Three agreements between the government and local communities in the states of Western Equatoria and Central Equatoria were mediated by church leaders in November 2015. (Virk and Ngantje, 2016). However, due to the ethnic basis of the war, the church's capacity and efforts to promote peace are constrained. These civil society organizations must comprehend peacebuilding as an ongoing process that unites regional and international conflict resolution initiatives. As seen by the people-to-people peace process that resulted in the 1999 Wunlit Peace Agreement between the Nuer and Dinka in the West Bank of the Nile River, local conflict resolution is a crucial area in which South Sudanese civil society has the ability to participate (Virk and Ngantje, 2016).

By spotting problems that go unnoticed, examining policy gaps, and offering solutions, civil society actors can influence peace policy. Generally speaking, civil society actors are able to pinpoint the key concerns that must be addressed when

responding to conflict situations and deal with peace and security issues more widely. In order to overcome disagreements, civil society must engage in policy discourse, mobilize advocacy efforts to win over policymakers, and put policies into action. Only independent civil society can make this work.

The economic environment, on the other hand, presents a significant barrier to South Sudanese civil society organizations participating in the process of resolving the conflict. South Sudan's economic resources are still considered to be limited. This encourages civil society organizations to rely on donations, particularly from western nations (Assal, 2016). On the other hand, this results in a situation where the majority of outside funding for the civil society sector is restricted to NGOs with Juba as their base of operations. Since there is currently little infrastructure and access to South Sudan's remote locations, this is the preference of outside donors. Members of civil society are then affected by this imbalance in a variety of circumstances. As a result, community-based organizations in South Sudan with local supporters frequently lack the financing or technical support needed to operate (Marko, 2015).

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the Inclusiveness of the Peace Process in South Sudan

The protracted civil war in Sudan essentially came to an end when the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed in 2005 by the Government of the Republic of Sudan and the Sudanese People Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). This is one of the peacekeeping achievements of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which

resulted in the establishment of the new state of South Sudan in 2011 (Murithi, 2009). A trading group comprising eight African nations is known as IGAD. The governments of the Horn of Africa, the Nile Valley, and the Great Lakes of Africa make up IGAD. The city of Djibouti is home to its headquarters. However, on December 15, 2013, a bloody fight broke out in Juba, the capital of South Sudan. The conflict's occurrence raised concerns about the IGAD's long-term success in its efforts to advance peace (Back, 2016). The struggle between the two ruling factions of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), those loyal to President Salva Kiir and those loyal to Vice President Riek Machar, has resulted in violent clashes. A group of party members who supported Riek Machar left to form the opposition SPLM (SPLM-IO). Following the division, South Sudan saw widespread violence that claimed many lives. (Healy, 2009).

It might be argued that one of IGAD's normative priority is keeping control of the peace process in its sub-regions based on IGAD documents, institutions, and previous peace initiatives in Somalia and Sudan (African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, 2014). The establishment of IGAD in 1996 came with a mandate for the group to participate in regional peacekeeping, peaceful conflict resolution, stability and security, and the defense of individual and collective rights. The purpose of this is to establish a system for the dialogue-based prevention, management, and resolution of international and domestic crises in the IGAD sub-region. The agreement also supports IGAD's initiatives to resolve Member State disputes through sub-regional channels before they are

forwarded to other regional or international bodies. According to David Francis, IGAD is attempting to maintain ownership and leadership in regional peacekeeping by giving sub-regional structures priority (Armstrong *et al.*, 2010).

Ownership in this instance does not imply complete exclusion of outside parties. In order to incorporate external actors in peace initiatives, particularly international donor actors who are IGAD's own partners, IGAD has developed institutions like the IGAD Partner Forum and Troika along the way. Because cooperation is mostly material, IGAD uses this approach to increase its authority in sub-regions, but because final decision-making authority still rests with IGAD. This mechanism, which is run by IGAD, can be used to press for concessions from disputing parties, such the self-determination agreement that took place in Sudan and played a significant role in the peace process there progressing toward dispute resolution in 2005 (Nathan, 2017).

Additionally, ownership in this sense is neither necessarily conducive to inclusivity nor incompatible with it. The CPA, which is very exclusive and was mostly negotiated by two sides, notably the government of South Sudan and the SPLM, raises doubts among some analysts about its chances of achieving a lasting peace. (Akol, 2014). In reference to this, the Troika and the European Union pushed for IGAD to lead the peace negotiations throughout the Sudanese peace process. By including more people than only South Sudan's elite group, it seeks to end the ongoing conflict in that country. The South Sudanese civil society then participated in the "stakeholder phase" of the negotiations between May and September 2014 (Pring,

2017). There is evidence that South Sudan's civil society currently holds a variety of opinions about the war and potential solutions. This suggests that it may be difficult for the mediation process to include a sizable number of parties. When the inclusive strategy failed to produce a deal, the negotiations once more turned into an exclusive process with only the South Sudanese political elite participating (Virk and Ngantje, 2016). This is a crucial point: while thinking about the possibilities, prospects, and participation of South Sudanese civil society in peacebuilding efforts, it is crucial to draw lessons from the past peace process.

The Addis Ababa peace accord, which was signed in August 2015, intends to create the framework for South Sudan's long-term state and nation-building. In light of this, the Addis Ababa Agreement urges a thorough reorganization of the nation's governing system, including a revision of South Sudan's 2011 transitional constitution (K. Gebru, 2020). Practically speaking, the Addis Ababa Accord serves to promote the establishment of a new transitional administration and the preservation of South Sudan's unity as a nation. The reform effort, however, has encountered a number of difficulties along the way, including the influence of illegal riders who are interested in maintaining the status quo (Akol, 2014). The South Sudanese warlords, who at now rule the nation's military, were referred to as the stowaways. On the other hand, some South Sudanese consider the informal Jieng Elders Council to be the *de facto* parliament of South Sudan. The social fabric of South Sudan has been destroyed by decades of bloody violence and

interethnic hostility, undermining the trust necessary to carry out the Addis Ababa peace deal (Akol, 2014).

In overcoming this, the pseudo-attitudes and rhetoric coming out of the South Sudanese elites show that there is a lack of political will on the part of the ruling elite to carry out the mandate and spirit of the peace agreement (Back, 2016). One such instance is President Salva Kiir's unilateral decision to construct 28 nations out of 10 states in South Sudan in October 2015 (Nathan, 2017). Many parties consider this to be both a violation of the agreement and a barrier to its prompt implementation.

Since the August 2015 peace agreement process did not directly engage common South Sudanese citizens, civil society's contribution to the peace process in this case became more crucial, particularly in the context of the deal's dissemination and implementation. Certain aspects in the peace agreement regarding the involvement of civil society have only been partially implemented thus far. The failure of the creation of insignificant representatives in a number of areas, including the Special Reconstruction Fund Board and the Economic and Financial Management Authority, demonstrates the limitations of this execution. The agreement essentially makes it easier to confer with interested parties and members of civil society about the creation of commissions for recovery, reconciliation, and human rights (Nathan, 2017).

The greatest barrier to the South Sudanese peace process is, in fact, economic. Given that the resources needed to carry out some of the actions anticipated in the agreement are fairly significant, the

nation's deteriorating economic situation creates further obstacles to the agreement's successful execution. However, South Sudan's decreased oil production, declining global oil prices, and the ongoing violence all had a considerable negative influence on the country's economy. The decrease in South Sudan's state revenue from \$13.3 billion in 2013 to \$9 billion in 2015 illustrates this (Assal, 2016). The South Sudan Pound (SSP), which fell from 18.5 SSP per dollar in December 2015 to roughly 80 SSP per dollar in September 2016, had an impact on the financial health of the South Sudanese government. South Sudan also experienced hyperinflation at the same time. Between September 2015 and September 2016, the Consumer Price Index rose 682.1 percent annually, according to the South Sudan Bureau of Statistics (Pring, 2017). This undoubtedly affects the ability and capacity of civil society organizations to contribute to and participate in the South Sudanese peacebuilding process.

Although civil society opinions may not always define and shape political reform, they can have a significant impact on the political reforms that are outlined in the agreement. On the other hand, the opinions of the civil society can contribute to ensure that the peace process is implemented locally and with local ownership. Additionally, in this regard, civil society organizations have a responsibility to encourage local communities to critically engage with the guiding principles and spirit of the peace accord in addition to disseminating accurate information about the deal to ordinary South Sudanese citizens. This will largely assist in ensuring that the execution of the peace deal is a grassroots

community-led endeavor rather than just a political elite enterprise.

South Sudan's civil society is firmly dedicated to taking part in the execution of the peace deal signed in August 2015. Many civil society organizations have helped create the fundamental foundations and build support for the full implementation of the agreement mediated by the IGAD based on the information learned from the inadequate implementation of the 2005 CPA. For instance, a number of civil society organizations have established educational exchange programs that enable South Sudanese to communicate with their peers in comparable-experienced African nations like Kenya and Rwanda. In order to promote thoughtful reflection and productive discussion on matters pertaining to the peace deal, the program arranges public talks (Virk and Nganje, 2016). Concerns about delays in implementing important parts of the peace agreement, like the demilitarization of Juba, have also been vocally voiced by civil society organizations. At the same time, they actively called attention of outside actors, such as the Troika, to the political stances of various stakeholders thought to be capable of endangering the peace process. The South Sudanese government, however, views some of the initiatives made by the NGO sector and civil society as hostile campaigns against it (Assal, 2016). Civil society organizations function in an atmosphere of fear, intimidation, and harassment due to South Sudan's history of lack of a legal system. The crucial role that civil society organizations must play in achieving a lasting peacebuilding process in South Sudan is undoubtedly significantly hampered by this.

Civil society organizations in South Sudan must establish positive alliances with their peers and other powerful players in the area if they are to lessen the effects of the unfavorable political environment in which they operate and keep making constructive contributions to regional and national peacebuilding efforts. This relationship may be a crucial source of assistance for their efforts to promote internal peace.

CONCLUSION

The changing patterns and characteristics of the role of civil society in South Sudan are closely related to the history of internal conflict and international involvement. Civil society participation, particularly in the peace process of South Sudan, can be said to be quite high. However, the high participation of civil society does not necessarily go hand in hand with its effectiveness and impact. This is because civil society groups still face many obstacles in carrying out civil society functions, both in relation to the peace process or other sectors.

South Sudan's civil society is very dependent on foreign donors and the lack of capacity has made South Sudanese civil society groups very limited in defining an independent agenda based on the interests of the South Sudanese people themselves. In addition, the effectiveness of South Sudanese civil society groups is also hindered by the political style of South Sudan which is dominated by group polarization and militarism. These limitations are at the same time a major challenge for South Sudanese civil society, given the complexity and resulting impact of the conflict at various levels throughout South Sudan.

In such a situation, civil society groups are in a situation where they do not have the capacity to carry out the demands made by the conflicting groups or factions. It can be said that efforts to involve civil society groups in the peace process initiated by IGAD are only a form of formality to the prevailing international norms related to peacebuilding. In practice, the local elites of South Sudan remain the main actors in the negotiation and implementation of the results of the existing peace agreement decisions.

Referring to this, the South Sudanese civil society needs to collaborate with other civil society groups, especially in the Horn of Africa region, so that they can then carry out civil society works that are more transnational in nature. Transnationalism in civil society work will be able to assist, at least theoretically, South Sudanese civil society groups in enhancing their image as significant actors, access to information and knowledge, and leverage.

Eventually, this article still has its limitations regarding the extent to which international non-state actors are involved in the peace process in South Sudan. It is important to study this further in order to build a comprehensive understanding of how significant the role of non-state actors is in the peace negotiation process at the global level.

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