The Overarching Catalysts for Ethnic Identities in South Sudan

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Abstract: The paper thoroughly discusses issues pertaining the occasioning of identity politics. However, ethnicity is an attestation of a situation of political struggle. Additionally, ethnicity is vehemently, presages and splashes, economic and political grievances and, lack of good governance. Substantially, ethnic identities are also, staunchly, sparked by economic, political transition, inequity among the people and communities, corruption, malpractices, weak regimes, unstable institutions, identity politics and unfinished issues of the colonial era. However, the paper endeavors to painstakingly expounds and belabors the centerpiece catalysts of ethnic identities in South Sudan, the country that dexterously immersed and enmeshed in the internecine conflict which generally wrought by unscrupulous political rivalry or vying for power and leadership by politicians in the world’s youngest nation.

Furthermore, ethnic animosity and antagonisms precarious led into gruesome and humongous subversion and ginormous corrosive of properties and loss of the tens of thousand of lives. However, the peace attempts culminated into a cul-de-sac in many times, Substantially, the ethnic conflict immensely engulfed around resources, economic and the political power. The involvement of ethnic identities was politically made as sine – quo non for an aching mobilization for emphatic and steadfast support in the leeway of the conflict. Politically, ethnic identities are the political product of particular time socially defined and historically determined, they are socially constructed and deemphasized by power-seeking politicians. It’s used as a vigorous and rugged instrument for the imminent achievement of power, and the culture in the situation of the conflict, is a raw material, ethnicity or ethnic difference is not a cause of the enmity and abomination, but it is summum emerges in the leeway of the conflict.

Meanwhile, the study strenuously sheds light on the current ethnic conundrums in South Sudan that had been a fervent dispute over political power, since time immemorial in Sudan and before, the independence. Therefore, the conflict ushers and evinces the elites’ fiery and blind ambitions for leadership, and in order to stalwartly achieve their aims and goals, ethnic identities are unscrupulously manipulated and exaggerated in an attempt to seize power. Consequently, to discreetly, ameliorate, emasculate and abort the detrimental conflict, as the government is the overarching and lynchpin actor in this conflict, it essentially, warrants a restructure of the regime to be more inclusive, pervasive and representative which could augur an ethnic balance in power sharing, fair resources, and employment opportunities allocation, democratisation of the political system, poverty alleviation, health, education, expedition of economic development, gender and women empowerment, incredible exploitation and management of natural resources and preservation of the environment in the oil producing areas are eloquently, recommended and mooted to be an incontrovertible intervention to politically put an end to this despicable and deplorable conflict in the country.

Keywords: Ethnicity, identity, politics, resources, conflict, economic, power, animosity, and inequity.

1. Introduction

The issue of ethnic identity became a controversial and an alarming issue in the aftermath of the Cold War era and the decline of the interstate war. However, ethnic conflicts are punctiliously, attributed to the unfinished issues of the colonial and Cold war eras. Substantially in the cases of ethnic conflict in Africa, it brazenly subsumes, bad leaders, warlord economies, state collapse, ethnopolitical, religious extremism. Also, ethnic wars are often occasioned by inequality, economic decline, state collapse, (Hanlon, 2006). However, many schools rigorously, address the woes of the ethnic conflict in the twentieth-first century. But the in leeway of Cold World era, most of the disputes and conflicts were in the form of an ideological struggle between the West and the East. But after the War, many conflicts had erupted in Africa, Asia, Balkan and the part of the former communist world. The nitty gritty catalysts of the ethnic conflict have been vigorously deemed to be exacerbated and
exaggerated by ethnic animosity, religious, and minority groups, poverty, population pressure and the hatred of the international terrorists and this new violence had no direct relation with the hegemony of the state (Richards, 2005).

However, the word ethnicity comes from the ancient Greek *ethnos* which mean a range of situation in which a collective of humans lived and acted together and it is typically translated today as people or nation (Jenkins, 1998). Ethnicity also refers to beliefs, values, and practice that characterize a particular group. Moreover, the word race refers to socially constructed categories based on biological traits that the society steadfastly considers indispensable and utmost. While minority group is the group that the society sets apart in some way and disadvantages due to the traits set them apart (Lewis, 2014).

Furthermore, a dominant group is the group that has greater power, privileges, and prestige than other groups (Lewis, 2014). Additionally, ethnic group assiduously affirms or potently creates its own identity due to the pressure of dominant majority groups. Consequently, an ethnic group is a self-perceived inclusion of those who hold in common a set of traditions not shared by others with whom they are in contact. Also, an ethnic group is perceived as minority group dominated by a dominant majority group. Therefore ethnic group refers to a non-dominant people with a shared interest and common culture (VANLALTLAN, 2007).

Moreover, Schlee meticulously weighed ethnicity as a form of social identity, which is fixed by definition of self and others. Accordingly, nobody can have an ethnic identity affiliation which is unknown either to themselves or to others. Ethnicity cannot exist unless people are aware of it. That means ethnicity is not the cause of the conflict but rather something that emerges in the cause of conflict or acquires new shapes and functions in the cause of such events (Schlee, 2008).

Moreover, (Markakis, 1994), Markakis carefully opined that ethnic or tribal identities are essential, political products of a specific situation, socially, defined and historically determined, in other words, ethnicity and its representative structure (tribes) emerge as the consequence rather than the cause of conflict. Consequently, (Hanlon, 2006), discreetly indicated, those ethnic groups are defined as the descriptive difference, whether the in term of color appearance, language, religion, or some other indicators of common origin. Finally, ethnicity is defined broadly, to include all racial, tribal, religious or linguistic groups, nation and communal minorities and the ethnic criteria used by these groups to defined themselves, anomalously, incorporates common descent, shared historical experience and valued cultural traits.

2. Methodology.

The article was painstakingly, prepared on the basis of descriptive and qualitative in nature in terms of techniques or the method and tools that are used. The collection of data is mainly based on participant observation, other techniques like interviewing, records, documents consulting and group discussion. Also, it was based on peripheral literature and in-depth interviews with key persons in the field and direct observation. Secondary sources: include materials from libraries, books, newspapers, documents, internet web site scattered administrative reports, United Nation records, as well as other appropriate organizations’ reports on the conflict and the land issues.

3. The Ethnic Conflict Approaches: Instrumentalists and Primordialists

In the recent years, ethnic conflict dramatically emerged in many countries in the world in the aftermath of the Cold war. However, to explicate and enunciate the catalysts of these new arm conflict analysts and policy makers pay heed to the groups in the conflict in order to discern these conflict. However, analysts focus on local actors and local institutions to construe the reasons behind claims for self-determination aiming for independent, autonomy, secession, the control or participation in government. Conflict causes are found around: territory, ideology, dynastic legitimacy, religion, language, ethnicity, self-determination, resources, markets, dominance, equality, and revenge (Porto, 2002). To elaborate and unpack ethnic conflict there are two main approaches for ethnicity as follows:

Instrumentalists

Instrumentalists conceptualized ethnicity as an instrument, a contextual, fluid and negotiable aspect of identity “a tool used by individuals, groups or elites to obtain some larger, material ends.” According to Timothy Sisk, instrumentalists argue that ethnic identities: "Wax and wane, contingent on a wide variety of variables including the capacity and skills of political entrepreneurs who can effectively, mobilize groups for collective aims and articulate beliefs about common ancestry and destiny... Some instrumentalist known as structuralists suggest that ethnic identity is socially constructed, often created or de-emphasised by
power seeking political elites in historically determined economic and social armaments”.

The two approaches reflect academic analyses in a way that scholars see ethnicity as immutable and innate versus socially constructed beliefs about the types of political system that can ameliorate conflict along the ethnic line (Porto, 2002).

**Primordialists**

Primordialists argue that ethnic identity is innate and largely fixed and they view ethnicity as an exceptionally, strong affiliation which is often linked to ancient conflict, age-old hatred, and Past atrocities. These identities change little over time. It leads to the view that is an irreconcilable difference between ethnic groups, and that violent clashes are inevitable. Meanwhile, instrumentalist argues for the social construction of identity, molded by social systems, leaders, and circumstance (Malith, 2016).

Identity is malleable, change rapidly over time, is often recently, formed and not inherently, conflictual. Because of this, constructivists focus on elites and the way they manipulate ethnic, religious and class identity and the strongest view was given Alexander that "ethnicity is understood to be unnatural, to be historical, invented, constructed or imagined and used instrumentally, by politicians (Hanlon, 2006), as alluded above the intervention and implications of constructs and Primordialists interpretation are contradictory. Constructs try to keep the groups together and solve underlying problems, while Primordialists want to keep the groups apart. The differences in academic approach can lead to real and significant differences in choice of intervention on the ground (Hanlon, 2006).

**4. Introduction to South Sudan.**

South Sudan was originally a part of the former Sudan, until the advent of Turco -Egyptian invasion, little was known about Southern Sudan. The Southern provinces of Bahr el - Ghazal, Equatoria, and Upper Nile were organized, administered equivalent to colonies under the Turco-Egyptian Sudan (1821-1885). However, in the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium (1899-155) the three southern provinces were also administered separately, by governors answerable to the central government in the North. Moreover, from 1956 to 1972 the North Sudan treated and persecuted the southern provinces as colonies and administered them separately. The South Sudan provinces shared one destiny as they had been sources of slaves to the North with the gross marginalization (Lupai, 2014).

In lieu of the provincial and ethnic lines, the people of three southern provinces moved their resources together to confront the marginalization by the North. Due to their similar aspirations, in 1972, the North granted local autonomy to three southern provinces which became to be known as the Southern region. But in the southern region was brought back to its status of three provinces of Bahr el –Ghazal, Equatoria and Upper Nile and the were called by then southern regions. South Sudan become a new sovereign state and the Republic which consists of three regions that were divided into ten states which had been translated in 32 states in 2015, that formed its territory. Each state is determined by political leadership headed by Governor. The Governors work with Ministers, parliamentarians, and the technical wing to form governance and administrative duties of the State respectively. The political leadership of the Republic of South Sudan derives its mandate and powers from the Constitution (Lupai, 2014). South Sudan territory covering an area of 650,000 square kilometers (Lupai, 2014).It is bordered by Uganda, Congo, Kenya, and Central Africa from the south, west, Sudan from the north and west and Ethiopia from the east. However, South Sudan the world’s youngest country had achieved, its independence from Sudan in July 2011(Malith, 2016).

**5. Identity Politics after 1972 and During the Civil War in South Sudan**

South Sudan, had not floundered pervasive ethnic or tribal animosity through the first civil war from 1955-1972. However, in the leeway of the first war, the region was united, and its communities inclusively fought for the war en masse. However, the first war came to an end t by the signing of Addis Ababa Agreement between the Government of the Sudan and the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM) in 1972, which practically thwarted the seventeen years old war (Malith, 2016).

However, a first act under the Addis Ababa Agreement was the formation of provisional High Executive Council in 1972 and with the tasks of the repatriation, rehabilitation, and resettlement of refugees and setting up of public administration and socio-economic development in the South and, the organization of free elections at the end of the interim period. The general elections for a new regional were held in 1974 and both the speaker and the president of Higher Executive Council were elected, the elected government continued from 1974 to 1978.Under Self- Governor Act, 1972. Southern Sudan became an autonomous region with three provinces of Bahr el Ghazal, Equatoria, and Upper Nile. Later on Lakes, Jonglei and Western Equatoria provinces were created.
These provinces were administered by commissioners under the people’s local government Act 1971 (Malok, 2009).

However, the period between 1974 and 1978, vehemently witnessed the incipient of stalwart political rivalry or between southern politicians over power which politically marked the first advent of ethnic identities, animosities or tribalism into the politics which were constructed by politicians whom unscrupulous took political differences to personal issues and eventually, into tribal disputes in South Sudan. Ethnicity or tribalism staunchly broached, as a mechanism for rigorous mobilization and political recruitment by power seeking political elites who were steadfastly contesting for political power (Malith, 2016). Furthermore, the Agreement provided a regional Assembly and a Reginal High Executive Council. The members of Reginal Assembly were democratically, elected and the Assembly in the meeting will elect the President of High Executive Council who could form the government. There were two Southern Political parties, weighed themselves as the centers of political power in the South Sudan. These parties were the Sudan African National Union (SANU) and Southern Front (SF) (Malok, 2009).

Substantially, the two parties ruggedly vied for seats in the parliament and eloquently competed for gaining support in the election and either one of them could form the government. Moreover, in such process of competition, the two parties antagonized themselves and ended up being hostile two camps, which led to quarrels on some issues. For instant in a quest for the leadership of High Executive Council, Joseph Lagu one of the politicians used different divisive argument when addressing different audiences, when in Equatoria, he would say he is an Equatoria nationalist, in Bahr el Ghazal he would say that people of Bahr el Ghazal to succor him to put an to the domination of Bor Dinka in particular. The aim for the contradiction was that leaders vied for the president of High Executive Council. Most of the politicians use ethnicity or tribalism, while other used both tribalism in their respective parties as a springboard to achieving power. The contestation over power, unfortunately, brought chasms in the Reginal Assembly along with the ethnic antagonism for the first time in the history of South Sudan and the emergence of KoKora which called for the division of the region into three autonomous sub-regions and eventually, culminated with an officially, abrogation of Addis Ababa in 1983 (Malok, 2009).

Additionally, For elites, fierce competition for political power and their debacle and meltdown to portray the harmony, cohesion, and unity amidst the people of South Sudan, Adweek Nyaba:opined that: “Despite many years of common historical development including fighting together for common nationhood, many intellectuals now, more than ever, before, still identify themselves first as Dinkas, Nuer, Moro, Shilluk, Zande, etc and then South Sudanese, even when they are interacting with each other. This alienation was accentuated by the experience South Sudan went through in the Southern Regional Government in Juba following the Addis Ababa Agreement in 1972. The political elites who took over the power structure in the South emphasized their attributes and unity with the north at the expense of and against the South Sudanese nationalism which started developing on the eve of the independence of Sudan.”

Also, Nyaba asserted that “Although the elite in the South presented a façade of unity along their perceived political parties, this did not stand the test of times ethnic and sectional tendencies overwhelmed many of them to the point of neglecting the southern national concerns and aspiration.” (Nyaba, 2000). The greedy for power among South Sudanese’s politicians, their intransigent and recalcitrant led to the collapse of the Addis Ababa Agreement and resumption of the civil war in 1983 (Malith, 2016).

However, in the leeway of the civil war (1983-2005) ethnic identities were unscrupulously used by successive governments in Khartoum. For instant President Numeiri seriously coined a policy of forming and arming tribal militias in South Sudan as a counter the insurgency such a policy constructed a husky ethnic animosity among the various groups, exploited by the state through transforming war into a war of one ethnic group against other groups. Moreover, due to such the policy of divide and rule, the Bor Dinka and the Aliab Dinka and the Mundari and Bar, on the other hand, had viciously embroiled in the conflict. Mundari and Dinka had lived in peaceful co-existence relation punctuated by periods of conflict, over grazing land and cattle rustling. Due to that most of the conflict between the Mundari and the Dinka, and between the Dinka Bor and Dinka Aliab are related to the change in the hydrology and grazing areas in Bahr el-Jabal (Pual, 2004).

Moreover, the period followed the end of the first civil war in 1972 witnessed animosity and deterioration in Dinka –Mundari relations due to an increasing number of Dinka`s cattle in the area, the competition over the cattle and meat market in Juba and towns in Equatoria. The Dinka controlled the executive and security posts in the Regional Government, and Bor and Aliab Dinka used that advantage to trespass and undermine the traditional agreement with the Mundari pertaining the dry
season and grazing areas. Moreover, Mundari believed that most of the licenses were granted to Dinka. However, after, re-division of the southern region into three sub–regions in 1980, Mundari strongly, demanded to supersede Dinka in the meat and cattle market in Juba. Due to a divisive dimension which was applied by southern politicians, and the Sudan government at that time to potently, use historical animosities which were based on natural resources. Mundari formed a militia, clandestinely upheld by authorities from the area, the leadership of the militia was placed under a retired police officer. The division of the Southern Region into three regions in 1983 culminated in violence against the Dinka and the Mundari killed Dinkas who remained in Juba town as tit-for-tat and a catalyst for identity politics in the war (Pual, 2004).

However, The civil war engulfed Mundari area in 1986 with effect on Dinka –Mundari relations. The SPLA/M forces stormed Gemmeiza, Mangala, and Tereka; most of them were Dinka who used to share the same Tuach with the Mundari. There was a report of a violation of human rights, cases were reported. Other, actions included the planting of mines in water points, fruit areas, and farms. The activities of the SPLA/M forces in the area was construed by Mundari as tit-for-tat on Equatorians for the division of South Sudan Region into three sub-regions, and particularly, against the Mundari for what they have done during the period leading to division of Southern Region into three sub-regions and the general feeling of antagonism was shown against the SPLA/M which was deemed as Dinka movement by both Mundari and Bari, that conflict between Mundari and Dinka was a conspicuous phenomenon of political struggle between southern elites over political power and the Sudan government in the war-torn South Sudan (Pual, 2004).

However, in South Sudan among pastoralists who have a culture of warfare which involved cattle rustling or fighting over traditional pastures, water and some of these tribes include Dinka, Nuer, Murle, Mundari, Toposa and Didinga. Those conflicts were relatively less destructive because traditional weapons spears, knives were used, but during the war, tribes were armed by the state with lethal weapons to directly, embroiled in the war. The aim of President Nimeiri was exploitation of traditional antagonism among the tribe so that he could defeat the rebellion in South Sudan. Moreover, to implement his policy, he called three governors of the three regions. James Tambura, (Equatoria), Danial Kout Mathew (Upper Nile), and Lawrence Wol (Bahr el-Ghazal). The aims of the meeting were to put an amicable plan and staunch ways to vanquished the rebellion he ordered the three governors to form tribal militias among the smaller tribes to protect them against the master tribe and its rebel organization (Maith, 2016).

In achieving that malicious plan, an enormous amount of money was granted to enable them to train militiaman to sturdily forestalled and precluded the insurgency from smearing into other areas. In Equatoria, hundreds of Mundari were armed as militiamen. The Mundari youth fled to Juba joined the militia in a quest to secure arms for protecting their cattle. The militiaman was commanded to cocoon themselves against the SPLA rebel. But they sued the arms which were given them to raid the Danka’s cattle camps the process which culminated in the demise of innocent people especially women and children. Moreover, the Dinka in Juba were horrendously, sallied and their properties were gruesomely, extorted. Furthermore, in Upper Nile Region Daniel Kout Mathew supported the militia in his region after the fight broke out between Gai Tut and Dr. John Garang. For reason, he wrote a letter to president Nimirie recommended that Gai Tut rebel wing be heavily armed to grapple the SPLA and to vehemently, inhibit it from advancing into the interior of Upper Nile. Governor’s proposal was endorsed, he was assured, that Choul’s rebels would be succored. That coincided with the death of Samuel Gai Tut and Akuot de Mayen in April 1984. However, Choul, who took over from them got support from the governor. Choul renamed his movement as Anya- Nya II. He regrouped his scattered forces and establish his headquarters at the Zeraf Vally in Fangak District. Hence, Choul began to resist the SPLA forces and hampered them from advancing into the area under his control while at the same time intercepting and killing the SPLA recruits from Bahr el Ghazal from crossing over to Ethiopia for training. The period from (1984-1986) witnessed a great deal destruction of thousands of recruits from Bahr el Ghazel. Almost weekly, bodies were seen floating on the Nile River at Malakal (Arop, 2006).

The authorities in Khartoum began to send large quantities of arms and ammunition and cash through Governor Daniel Kout Mathew, for Choul’s group support and to secure the support of Anya-Nya II, Khartoum contemptuously exaggerated the nineteenth-century Nuer-Dinka antagonism successfully. It declared that SPLA was a Dinka movement. The government used its propaganda machine and depicted the Dinka as a belligerent group. However, the Sudan government continued to support Anya-Nya II. Choul was ambushed and killed by the SPLA forces. The new
leader of the Anya-Nya II was Gordon Kong Chol, its original leader. But this change over to Gordon Kong culminated in Anya-Nya II-SPLA reconciliation later that year (Arop, 2006).

In Bahr-el-Ghazal, Governor Dr. Lawrence Wol found it very difficult to execute the militia policy. First, it was in Bahr el-Ghazal that the underground movement began, it was also there that the Anya-Nya II of northern Bahr-el-Ghazal was first formed. The majority of the natives who went to Ethiopia were victims of Arab and Anya-Nya II disruptions. Second, the leadership of the SPLA and the new regional government in Bahr el-Ghazal were composed mostly of members of solidarity Committee and the council for the Unity of the South who had been against re-division of the Southern Region into three Regions. Under such situation, Governor Wol could not move freely – even though he had to prove to Nimieri that he was doing something to defeat the SPLA. He did encourage Darius Bashir, the Deputy speaker in Regional Assembly, to form the Fertit ethnic group militia (Arop, 2006).

However, the militia was a mobile force intended to support the nomadic Arabs tribes of southern Darfur and Kordofan (the Misseriya and Rezeigat) to gain water and pasture without difficulties from Northern Bahr el Ghazal and Abyei. They were reorganized into popular defense forces. The later melted horribly in scorched earth terror against the civilian population in the guise of fighting the SPLA rebels. These atrocities also introduced another dimension in the war: children and women trafficking in the classical slave trade became a norm which even embarrassed successive governments in Khartoum. But they were at least willing to admit or stop the practice. Meanwhile, the militia policy was meant that the SPLA had to fight two fronts: the Sudan government’s regular forces and South Sudan militiamen. The later was instrumental in transforming a north–south conflict into south-south conflict. Thus Nimieri dream of fighting the SPLA had flunked, instead, the policy only complicated the war to his own detriment and which eventually, led to his final demise. The difficulty, to the SPLA, was the government’s policy of arming the tribal militia to fight against SPLA and operating within the SPLA lines of defense. However, eight of militia groups were operating within the SPLA-controlled territories. The most effective tribal militias were the Mundari, Murle, Zande, and Fertit, Toposa, Acholi, the Anya-Nya II and Misseriya and Rezigat (Arop, 2006).

After the collapse of the Nimieri regime, Sadig el Mahdi he took over as the Prime Minster, and he followed the militia policy in Southern Sudan, to be fervently resuscitated to fight alongside the army. The Misseriya Militia, associated with Ansar al-Mahdi democratic regime in the capital. The Mahdi militia was also given another sacred role to fight against the Dinka tribe where SPLA leader John Garang and most of his commanders hailed from. After short well charged political, religious, orientation and military training, the Misseriya were unleashed. Their first target as expected was the Dinka territory in northern Bahr el-Ghazal, northern Upper Nile. With a short time following their graduation, the Arab militiamen went on a rampage in the said areas (Arop, 2006).

They were dispersed, some were on foot, some in Lorries, and others on horseback. In the process, they violently, extorted Dinka’s cattle, and the scale of subversion was ginormous. During the Arab militia campaign (1986-1989), whenever a Dinka village or cattle camp was in sight, it was declared a rebel and targeted for devastation. It was then that large areas of the Dinka population were displaced forcing them into big cities in the south and north. The young, however, responded to these masquerading militias by trekking with their cattle southwards into more secured areas in Tonj, Rumbek, Gogrial and Yirol Districts where they sought the SPLA protection. In the process, tens of thousands of these swallowed the ranks of SPLA guerrilla forces. The Sudan Council of Churches, Relief Department “reporting in 1988 stated about 1.2 million had entered Khartoum, 800,000 to other northern regions of Darfur and Kordofan. Over a million were displaced to the southern towns of Aweil, Tonj, and Wau. And a further 500,000 into the neighboring countries of Ethiopia and Kenya. Despite international and national condemnation and appeal to the government to desist the carnage and catastrophe nothing was done to streamline the situation. Instead, northern Bahr el-Ghazal and northern Upper Nile were ethnically cleansed (Arop, 2006).

The most abominable incident of this ethnic cleansing practice was the Dhaein Massacre of 1987, where crowds of displaced Dinka people were merciless, mown down by the militia and tribesmen while the national police and authorities looked on. The massacre was even made more medieval when those Dinka, who ran into some houses for sanctuary, were dragged out and exterminated. The Rezeigatt Arab militiamen took advantage by capturing Dinka’s children and young
women into slavery. The international outcry and condemnation of the *Dhaein* massacre forced the government to issue statements that denied its knowledge and participation. But Professor Mahmoud Ushari and Professor Suleiman Baldo, both lecturers at the University of Khartoum, took the matter seriously and investigated that inhuman tragedy and made it public in their famous: Without Ushari and Baldo’s investigations, the government would have successfully smothered the massacre completely. Frustrating by the revelation, the Government turned against the two Professors with impunity and locked them up as traitors writing damaging lies against the state and the government. The useful revelation of the massacre would go down in history that not all northern Sudanese share the same brutality against their southern counterparts (Malith, 2016) (Arop, 2006).


The first incident of the ethnic conflict, unfortunately, broached with the formation SPLM/SPLA in 1983 was followed by a political conflict which turned into the ethnic conflict between the Dink and the Nuer which was over leadership of the movement. The political struggle was between Dr. John Garang and Samuel Gai Tut and Akuot Atem de Mayen, the two leaders of the National Action Movement (NAM) that had been notoriously active thought out the ten years of self-rule in the South Sudan. Gai and Akuot were ministers of the Anya-Nya dominated government under Joseph Lagu in 1978-1980. The leaders Gai Tut and Akuot Atem de Mayen and William Abdella Chuol and Gordon Kong arrived in Ethiopian in Bukteng village. However, the power struggle steadfastly began after Bor and Ayod mutiny of battalion 104 and 105. The forces withdrew to Ethiopia and joined together with the forces of Anya-nya II who were already on the ground. The forces of Anya-nya II were under the leadership of Mr. Samuel Gai Tut from Nuer. The Bor-Ayod group was under the leadership of Dr. John Garang de Maibor from Dinka. The two groups disagreed over the leadership of the movement. The disagreement later erupted into violent which continued up to 1988 when Gordon Kong took over the leadership of Anya-nya II after the death of William Abdella Chuol. Kong integrated the forces of Anya -nya II with SPLM/SPLA (Arop, 2006).

However, due to that conflict, tens of thousands of lives had been grisly lost in a conflict which had no linked with the ethnic hurdle or conundrum. It was purely a political struggle over leadership of the movement, the ethnicity or tribal affiliation subtly emerged in the leeway of the conflict and it was not directly enmeshed. Moreover, ethnic identity was very important, as mean for recruitment, mobilization, and provision of the support for the conflicting groups. Additionally, it was very conspicuous that differences among the leaders lead to ethnic unrest or violence in which ethnicity was politically constructed to serve the interest of the warring political leaders for immensely, lobbying for gargantuan succor and therefore it is politically made (Malith, 2016).

The second phase of the power struggle, unfortunately, betided in 1991 when Dr. Riek Machar and Dr. Lam Akol declared a coup against SPLM/SPLA the leader Dr. John Garang. Dr. Riek formed a rival movement called, SPLA/M Nasir and later the formed SLPA/A United and after Dismissal of Dr. Lam, Dr. Riek farmed his movement South Sudan Independence Movement /Army. However, Dr. Riai reached the Agreement with Khartoum in 1997. The Agreement did not last long due to the regime intransigence to implement some demands. Riek defected and joined the SPLM/SPLA before signing of Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005. Dr. Riek became the Vice-President of the Republic till his dismissal in 2013 after the Independence. Furthermore, it is plain from all sorts of ethnic animosities in South Sudan before and after independence that they were inventive, constructive or made in order to serve material ends of the parties in the conflict. In South Sudan, the political struggle historically used ethnic identities which started by the formation of Reginal Government in 1972, when ethnicity had been encouraged by the two parties, Sudan Nation Africa party, and South Sudan Front. The two parties used to compete over the power in the region and tribalism was used for mobilization and forming allies. Some politicians took political differences into the personal and tribal issue. However, the Nasir Coup attempt was exaggerated and exacerbated by ambitions of the leaders of the coup which was deplorable and with the killing of thousands of innocent people and it was, in fact, politically calculated in the form of tribal affiliation for the achievement of personal interest in the name of the tribal animosity which culminated in the heavy loss of lives and properties among Dinka and Nuer (Malith, 2016).

7. Identity Politics in the Interim period and after the Independence of South Sudan.

After, the longest civil wars in Sudan, the first war started in 15th of August before Sudan’s independent in 1956. The first war culminated in
Addis Ababa Agreement in 1971 which was signed in the Ethiopian capital. The Addis Ababa Agreement had granted Southern Sudan autonomy, due to the agreement economic development and the establishment of the political and administrative institution was prioritized. However, due to the autonomy guaranteed by the Agreement, the parliament and the High Executive Council established, however, manipulation of Southern politics and interference from Northern made the regional government loose effectiveness. Moreover, lapse and debacle in fighting corruption, nepotism contributed to the negative perception of the regional government (Lupai, 2014)

Furthermore with the agreement the consensus was reached on issues such as self-governance, organized relationship between the Regional Government in the South and the central government in Khartoum, financial resources, political rights, freedom, agreement on ceasefire and security arrangements, general amnesty, judiciary, reintegration, reconstruction and rehabilitation (Alier, 2003). The Agreement continued for ten years before it was rescinded by the former president of Sudan, Nimeiri in 1983, the act was considered a violation. Additionally, the agreement recognized cultural differences, between the North and South and was based on the fact that the unity of the country will be built on these objectives and realities. The southerners have rights to develop their own cultures in the united (Malith, 2016).

However, abrogation of Addis Ababa Agreement precipitated the incipient of the civil war in Sudan in 1983, led by Sudan’s People Liberation Movement and Sudan’s People Liberation Army (SPLA/M), the catalysts for the second war subsume, the zigzag of the administrative boundary so that, to northern usurp over oil-rich regions of South Sudan (Sharon, 1996). The relocation and transfer of proposed construction site of Chevron oil refinery from the southern town of Bentiu to Kosti in the North, the division of South Sudan into three regions, the Jonglei Canal construction which was a top-down approach to resources’ management contributed to the civil war in Sudan (Sharon, 1996). The political agitation from Equatorian politicians who supported the division of the South. However, the abrogation of the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972 war a blessing disguise. The liberation struggle in South Sudan garnered unprecedented momentum that Southern Sudan was ultimate to become independent in its own right (Lupai, 2014). After a 22-years war, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed between the Government of Sudan and the rebel of Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLA/M) which was culminated in six years interim period up to 2011 when South Sudan gained its independence (Malok, 2009).

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was honored in Naivasha - Kenya on January 9, 2005, granting autonomy, to the state. The Government of Southern Sudan was formed and Dr. John Garang de Mabior became President of the Government of South Sudan as well as the Vice President of Sudan. A constitution was endorsed in December 2005. But on 30th of July 2005, Garang died in the plane crash in South Sudan and Ugandan border, and he was succeeded in both posts by Salva Kiir Mayar Dit with Riek Machar as Vice – President of South Sudan. A referendum on independence for South Sudan was held from 9 to 15 January 2011. After three days of voting, representatives of the SPLM promulgated that, according to their consideration, the 60% turnout threshold required for the referendum validity had been attained. Official confirmation came later the same day when the referendum commission released a statement acknowledge that turnout would exceed the required 60 percent threshold. The result of the referendum was 83 percent of eligibile voters in the south and 53 % in the north had voted. More than 90% of those who voted supported the independence, which was officially granted on July 9, 2011 (Malith, 2016).

The government of South Sudan in the leeway of the interim period had received an enormous amount of financial support, by donors, and the oil revenue which was transferred to the South by the central government. In lieu of these financial resources succor, the government could not sufficiently, deliver adequate such as health care, education; poor physical infrastructure and poor economic planning afflicting the country. Due to that meltdown, in the government, tribalism, nepotism, pervaded the country, which led to Identity politics this in addition to corruption, expropriation, and embezzlement. However, in such backdrop, millions of dollars were unearthed in personal accounts in foreign banks abroad. Substantially, tribal identities hike among communities in the country due to political exaggeration of ethnicity as means in order to seize power (Malith, 2016).

The Political competition became more perilous in 2013 when, Kiir, reshuffled the government sacking all his ministers, including Vice President, Dr. Riek Machar. However, Machar deemed it as a dictatorship and asserted that he would rival Kiir for the presidency. On 15 December 2013, an attempted coup was put down led ethnic violence (Malith, 2016). The political struggle between

On 15 December 2013, an attempted coup was put down led ethnic violence (Malith, 2016).
leaders was construed as an ethnic conflict which led to the killing of innocent people. The fatalities of the conflict were estimated to more than 10,000 lives and displaced more than two million within the country and the neighboring countries. After several, attempts by regional blocs to achieve peace, the SPLM-Juba led by President Salva Kiir and the SPLM-IO led by former Vice President Riek Machar signed the Peace Agreement under auspices of IGAD on the 17 of August 2015. The Peace deal ensures two years and half a year interim period with Kiir as a president and Machar, first Vice-president. And also the accord stipulates powers sharing, SPLM 53%, SPLM-IO 33% and opposition parties 14% and the peace to be implemented in three months, after consultation between warring parties (Malith, 2016).

The government of national unity was unanimous, formed in April 2016 with the opposition leader Dr. Riak Machar as First Vice President in the government, but again the fighting broke out in 7th of July 2016 between body gourds loyal to the Vice president and those for the President. The incident led to the loss of lives in Juba and let the Vice President flee to the bush around the capital and related his return to Juba with the bringing of the third party forces from African countries with approval of the United Nation Security Council to protect civilians, officials, NGOs and UN bases in the country. The government agreed for the bringing of the forces and preparation is going on for forces to be brought to the capital in order to provide security and insulate the national airport and government’s officials and in the absent of Dr. Riak his former chief negotiator Taban Deng Gai has been appointed as Vice president supplanting Machar who declared his return to rebellion to topple the government to bring about justices asserting that the peace has collapsed (Malith, 2016).

8. Conclusion

In conclusion ethnic identities, historically emerged as a political struggle between elites and politicians in South Sudan. The period between 1974 and 1978 vehemently witnessed an incipient political rivalry between southern politicians over power which was the first advent of tribalism into the politics. Tribal identities were invented by politicians who took their differences to personal issues and eventually, into tribal disputes in South Sudan. Ethnicity or tribalism is one of the mechanisms for gaining power by power seeking elites. However, successive governments in Khartoum used the policy of divide and rule as a pretext to undermine or derail the autonomy of regional government. Moreover, Khartoum’s governments unscrupulously used tribalism to weaken the movement and to invent internal conflict that would weaken the position of the movement. However, in the movement difference among politicians led to tribal conflict and the loss of lives due to elites’ interest, and ambitions. Moreover, that was the situation when SPLM/SPLA was formed in 1983, the competition between politicians for the leadership of the movement led to the gruesome and horrendous massacre of thousands of innocent people among the Dinka and Nuer. The conflict over leadership was between leaders and it was not a conspicuous tribal animosity before the war, but the tribal confrontation emerged in the leeway of the conflict.

However, the second incident in the movement was the attempted coup in 1991 which was a sign of a struggle in the movement when Dr. Riek Machar and Dr. Lam Akol announced their coup against SPLM/SPLA leader Dr. John Garang. The attempted coup culminated in ginormous corrosive and massacre of the thousand among the civilians especially among Dinka and the Nuer. The coup was a sign of a struggle for the leadership, it was made to be an ethnic conflict between the Dinka and the Nuer For instance when more two thousand people were mown and destruction of humongous of livestock and properties which led to a massive displacement. Moreover, that conflict did not have a tribal background only was constructed by politicians themselves which were an explicit dimension of identity politics invented by elites. After all subversion, destruction, and havoc sparked by internecine conflict, Riek Machar had returned to the SPLM/SPLA and attended the signing of Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005.

The final phase of the struggle over power transpired on 15th December 2013. The struggle was over the leadership of the SPLM party and the 2015 presidential elections. Dr. Riek a Nuer announced himself as a presidential candidate for 2015 elections. The Incumbent president of the party and president of the Republic Salva Kiir Mayer Dit a Dinka was willing to contest for 2015 elections although; he did not overtly, divulge his candidature. The disagreement during the plenary discussions of SPLM-National liberation Council led to the eruption of violence and broke out of the tension between President Kiir and his former deputy Riek Machar. The president accused Mr. Machar and ten others of attempting a coup. Machar denied the coup and fled, calling for Kiir to step down. Consequently, the fighting broke out between the SPLM and Machar’s group, igniting the civil war in the country.
However, the conflict was aggravated by lack of good governance, weakness of government’s institutions and law enforcement agencies, high rate of unemployment among the youth and the corruption in the government. Lack of development and poor management, especially in health and educations, poor network of roads and lack of clean water and the inflation which diminished the quality of life and the unfair government employment and services delivery and distribution practices, all these issues conditionally, precipitates construction of ethnic identities for putting more pressures on the government in order to give an equal share to other ethnic groups in the in the country.

Therefore, ethnic identity, historically was determined in a situation of confrontation and it remains a negotiable and malleable aspect of identity depending on the situation and therefore, it is socially imagined when there is a conflict. The rising cost of living, insecurity and food shortages and the struggle over power in the government, instantly turned into an ethnic conflict between the groups where the two leaders belong to. Also, this conflict led ethnic groups to claim power and privileges in the government. The ethnic violence is staunchly wrought by elites and politicians making use of the impoverishment, frustration, embarrassment, hopelessness and desperation the citizens are vexatiously, floundering in the country. However, the situation is conducive for politicians to use ethnic identities for the achievement of their own aims. Therefore, ethnicity in South Sudan is a tool in the hands of politicians and its susceptible or incontrovertible that there are genuine and legitimate grievances but it will not suffice to woo people into the violence, only if it immersed politicians who might use such a situation to their interests and advantages.

South Sudan ethnic conflict was made by its own politicians and the suffering of people could be attributed to expropriation, negligence, and embezzlement by the same politicians and when they are removed, they use people who are deprived off, destitute and aggrieved to fight and take them back to power. However, to address these snags cataclysms, there should be an inclusive government and the most effective strategies for making everyone feels included in government are to deliver basic services equitably and to ensure ethnic presentation to the government and treat everyone equally and the delivery of basic services to all South Sudanese is the panacea of many tribulations that is challenging the country, education and employment are very imperative for promoting a feeling of inclusion. Moreover, ethnic representation, both in the position of power and civil services employment are magnificent to reassure South Sudanese that they are part of the government. Fair representation is a harbinger of inclusiveness, cohesion, harmony, unity and utmost treatment of South Sudanese regardless of ethnicity or economic, religion and social status.

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