

HABSMUN 2020

Specpol 1 briefing Paper

**The Question of South Sudan**

**Background**

The Republic of South Sudan, a landlocked country in east-central Africa, became the world’s newest nation on July 9, 2011 when it gained its independence from Sudan. Previously, Sudan gained independence from British Egyptian rule in 1956. However, this resulted in the emergence of two different cultures: the Islamic north, which was more developed, and the underdeveloped but oil rich Christian south. For 22 years a civil war raged in Sudan between these groups.

In 2005 a peace agreement was reached between the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), from the south, and the government of President Omar Al-Bashir. The agreement laid out a timetable for a referendum on South Sudan’s independence. In January 2011 this passed, with 99% of South Sudanese voting for independence. Following this, the SPLM became the leading political party in South Sudan. However, tensions among ethnic groups in South Sudan, the Dinka and the Nuer, arose. In December 2013, tensions manifested in open clashes between the Dinka, led by President Salva Kiir, and the Nuer, led by Kiir’s former deputy, Riek Machar.

These decades of civil war have undermined development gains since independence, and resulted in the deaths of over 1.5 million people. As a result, 82% of people within the country are poor, based on the World Bank’s $1.90 PPP poverty line. Outside of oil production, which accounts for 40% of GDP, work is concentrated in unpaid agricultural work. Poverty is expected to remain high in South Sudan, due to food insecurity and limited access to basic life sustaining services.

Despite a peace deal in September 2018, which agreed to extend the timeline for the formation of a transitional power sharing government, little progress has been achieved on milestones like the unification of the army. The main aim is therefore to ensure sustainability of peace and security in South Sudan.

**Key Issues**

**Ethnic tensions**

South Sudan’s civil war can be traced back to strong ethnic tensions between the Dinka and Nuer groups. The Dinka group of President Salva Kiir and the Nuer of Vice-President Riek Machar constituted the majority of fighting. In order to alleviate fighting, underlying ethnic tensions must be resolved.

**Availability of small arms and light arms**

South Sudan relies heavily on imports of small arms and light arms from a variety of countries. Between 1968 and 1972 the Soviet Union supplied tanks, artillery and aircraft, enabling the South Sudanese army to grow from 18,000 to 50,000 men. The United States and allied countries resumed supplying Sudan with arms in the mid 70s, aiming to counteract Soviet support. In 1987, after the second civil war erupted in Sudan, American assistance was cancelled. Iran, in November 1993, pledged $17 million in aid to the Sudanese government, and arranged the delivery of $300 million of Chinese arms.

More recently, the rebels have been supplied with weapons through Ethiopia, Uganda, Eritrea and the Israeli embassy in Kenya. During the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) interim period, Ukraine was the most prolific exporter of small arms to South Sudan, with imports travelling through Kenya and Uganda. China and Bulgaria have also been accused of supplying small arms.

**Humanitarian Impact**

The conflict in South Sudan has had a significant impact on civilians, with over seven million people in need of assistance. In the Sudanese civil war between 1983 and 2005, over 1.5 million people were killed.

Sudan is one of the poorest countries in the world, and the civil war has resulted in underdevelopment and an economic crisis. More than four million people remain displaced in the country (the greatest refugee crisis in Africa) driving people off their land and leaving them with no access to food or agriculture. Rises in food prices have led to over 9,000 people losing access to food each day. Therefore, food insecurity is a significant problem, with 4.4 million people, 43% of the population, living in famine like conditions. The priority needs for the people of South Sudan are food assistance and medical services.

**Timeline of Key Events**

1956 - Sudan gained independence from the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium (Condominium of the United Kingdom and Kingdom of Egypt). Mutiny arose between southern army officers, who launched the first north south civil war.

1972 - The war ended with the Addis Ababa Agreement between the South Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM) and the Arab Government of Sudan (GOS), which aimed to address and appease concerns of the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement

1983 – The president of Sudan, Gaafar Nimeiry, declared Sudan an Islamic state, including areas of non-Islamic majority, like the South. This led to the civil war between the Central government of Sudan and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), between 1983 – 2005

2005 – The Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed between the SPLM/A and the central government. This states that the newly formed autonomous Government of South Sudan had autonomy for six years

July 2011 - In the South Sudanese independence referendum 98.83% voted in favour of independence, resulting in the formation of The Republic of South Sudan

December 2013 – Fighting broke out between President Salva Kiir and recently dismissed Vice President Riek Machar, resulting from Kiir accusing Machar of attempting a coup

October 2016 – A UN panel of experts sent a note to the Security Council that the conflict is fuelled by arms deals with Israel and Bulgaria

January 2017 – The US lifted it’s 20 year policy of sanctions of Sudan to improve access for aid to those in South Sudan

February - May 2017 – The UN declared 5.5 Million will need food aid by July. 1 Million children have fled, and another 1 million are displaced within the country, becoming the world’s fastest growing refugee crisis

September 2018 - Peace agreements are signed by all parties to the conflict in Ethiopia. However these agreements do not address the root cause, and thus are unlikely to produce lasting changes in the conflict.

**Relevant Stakeholders**

**Sudanese People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A)**

The Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) is a political party in South Sudan, founded as the political wing of the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA). It was formed as a guerilla movement against the government of Sudan and engaged in conflict with the government between 1983 – 2005. In 2005 the SPLM and the Government of Sudan signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, ending the civil war. The SPLM then became the ruling party of the new republic in July 2011. In the most recent South Sudanese Civil War, President Salva Kiir has led the SPLM, whilst former Vice President Riek Machar has led the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement in-Opposition. The SPLM was officially renamed the South Sudan People’s Defense Forces (SSPDF) in 2018 by President Kiir.

**The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS**)

The United Nations Mission in South Sudan is the newest United Nations Peacekeeping mission for South Sudan, established on 8 July 2011. Under UNMISS more than 14,000 peacekeepers, police, security and civilian personal work to protect civilians from violence, striving to create a safe environment for displaced South Sudanese people. They also work to facilitate the safe delivery of humanitarian assistance, aiming to return displaced people to their former homes. Overall UNMISS worksfor political peace within South Sudan, removing the need for violence.

**Previous Measures to Combat the Issue**

**2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)**

The CPA, also known as the Naivasha Agreement, was signed on January 9, 2005 by the SPLM and the Government of Sudan, with the purpose of ending the Second Sudanese Civil war, developing democracy and sharing oil revenues. It established a six year interim period throughout which South Sudan had the right to govern affairs in their region, prior to a referendum for independence in 2011. It also eased tensions by establishing that Shari’a law remains applicable in the Muslin north, but does not apply to non-Muslims in the south.

The CPA also included the implementation of a Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program in South Sudan, offering financial incentives, vocational and skills training and family assistance to ex-combatants, who may otherwise pose a threat to peace.

**Arms Embargo**

In 2013 the UN security council imposed an arms embargo on South Sudan, passing with the minimum nine votes required. This aimed to stop the flow of weapons from abroad to armed groups, with the aim of reducing violence. South Sudan’s UN ambassador Akuei Bona Malwal responded by saying the embargo would “undermine peace” in South Sudan. The embargo has since been renewed in May 2018.

**Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS)**

The R-ARCSS is a peace deal signed in September 2018 between President Salva Kiir and main rebel leader Riek Machar. It attempted to revive the initial ARCSS, which broke down due to violent confrontations in July 2016. The deal called for an immediate ceasefire and demilitarization of the capital. It also reinstated Machar in his role as vice president, and called for a power sharing transitional government. The security council called on the parties to fully implement the peace agreement, however the deal failed to address the concentration of power in the President, which resulted in conflict in 2013. The mistrust between Kiir and Machar remains, so many believe the deal, like the three previous forms, will break down and result in violence again.

**Questions to consider**

1. How can the United Nations ensure the 2018 peace treaty is upheld, given the failure of all past peace agreements?
2. How can the United Nations facilitate an end to violence, and peace among political groups and rival ethnic communities?
3. Are embargos and further sanctions appropriate solutions for the UN to adopt, if fighting were to continue?
4. How can the international community support the development of the South Sudan, and meet the humanitarian needs of the South Sudanese people?

**The Question of the Radicalisation in the West**

**Background**

While radicalism has been an issue for as long as those with outside views seek to gain power, the internet has aided those aiming to radicalise people in the West substantially, especially in the 21st century. In 2017, Twitter suspended 360,000 accounts for the promotion of terrorism, however, it is likely that this problem is much more deeply rooted in society, especially affecting young people who might be increasingly attracted to aiding terrorist organisations due to their vulnerability in society and their consequent brainwashing.

**Key Issues**

**Stopping online radicalisation**

Although it is important that web pages and social media accounts that promote violence and cause radicalisation are shut down, this often isn’t enough as it is hard to shut down every page. Therefore, innovative ways of stopping radicalisation online need to be found. For example, recently Jigsaw, the thinktank founded by Google, created a series of videos to show what life is truly like under Islamic State, and targeted these using ad targeting at those who were most at risk from radicalisation. They subsequently found that lots of time was spent looking at these videos.

**Integrating the most vulnerable back into society**

Many who have suffered physcological damage or have become diconnected from society, such as ex-prisoners, often turn to the radical sources, both on the internet or in person, in search of some form of closure. Much of these sources feature preachers who inspire radical action and deepen people’s disconect from society, driving them further from established governance and civilisation. Such a situation occurred in the United Kingdom in December 2014, where after months of brainwashing from ISIL sources, Sharmeena Begum left to join ISIL, two months later the ‘Bethnal Green Trio’ also left for ISIL. Disconnect from society eases resistence to forms of radicalism, and therefore measures must be taken to insure all are well accomodated in society. The RAND Corporation has identified 200 factors, including trauma, discrimination, their associations with people and their socioeconomic status that can make someone more vulnerable to radicalisation

**Law Enforcement**

Due to the issue being one which has been largely exacerbated following the increased prominance of the internet, many nations are illequiped to handle such a problem. The UK’s Counter Terrosim Internet Referel Unit (CTIRU) removes roughly a 1000 pieces of content and websites a week, however, many states affected by such issues may not possess such an ability to combat and it is consequently immensely important that there is global co-operation and information sharing.

**Deradicalisation**

While there may be developing measures to stop the spreading of radicialism, a problem still exists as there are a lack of provisions for those who may have been radicalised and their consequent re-entering into society. Their re-integtration must be heavily monitored and would require solutions similar to the thinking behind programmes such as Jigsaw.

**Timeline of Key Events**

In September 2006, the UN adopted the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy that aimed to strengthen international efforts to stop terrorism. It is reviewed every 2 years and is commited to stopping the causes of terrorism, and hence combatting radicalisation.

In January 2016, the Secretary-General presented Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, which was recognised by a resolution passed by the general assembly the next month.

In June 2017, the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism was created to ensure the full implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

**Relevant Stakeholders**

While individual incidences in Western States can be identified, the impact of radicalism and consequent extremism is apparent all over the West and thus requires the co-operation of all to member states to combat this issue.

The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has launched an inquiry into combatting radicalism, explaining that “there is practically no country in the OSCE that has not been affected by violent extremism. In 2016, terrorist attacks in OSCE participating States caused more than one thousand deaths. They destroyed billions of Euros worth of property and infrastructure, undermined people’s confidence in government and institutions, and created fear and suspicion between members of different ethnic and religious communities. Violent extremists not only cause death and destruction, they poison societies with hateful ideologies, and hinder peaceful development, dialogue, and cooperation”, and are consequently seeking to contribute to *Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalisation that Lead to Terrorism* (VERLT).

**Questions to consider**

Delegates should consider how to develop consensus among member states to generate a genuine and tangible solution, as so far, no United Nations resolution has been passed to combat the problem.

Delegates should also consider measures to address alienation from society, and the issues within individuals lives that drive them to join radicalistic groups. Such a resolution would include provisions to ensure that the most isolated members within society are integrated. Delegates may also consider the concept of “community policing” and its potential positive impact on society.

Delegates might further consider provisions on how to limit the spread of online radicalism and more dynamic measures to limit the spread of such information and contact. This is especially apparent as not all websites can be shut down, meaning more programmes such as Jigsaw would be suitable.

Delegates might consider programmes which support the reintegration of those who may have been previously radicalised and the means in which to support such a transition.

**The Question of Kurdistan**

**Background**

Kurdistan refers to the geographical region historically inhabited by the Kurdish people, that spans across modern-day Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran and Armenia. Kurdish roots can be traced back to ancient Persia, and they form a distinctive community united by race, culture and language even if there is no standard dialect. Today, around 30-40 million Kurds live in the area and although they make up the fourth-largest ethnic group of the Middle East, they have never had a permanent nation-state. In Iraq there is an autonomous Kurdish region.

Since 1918 after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, Kurdish groups have launched repeated rebellions and attacks against multiple governments in attempts to gain independence but also to respond to the oppression of the Kurds. In Iraq, Iran and Syria there has been frequent discrimination and conflict, and Turkey refuses to acknowledge the Kurds as a minority group.

**Key Issues**

Internal divisions

Within the Kurds themselves, there are several divisions. Many campaign for a separate nation while others just want greater autonomy in their existing regions. Although larger political groups such as the Turkish PKK have control in multiple areas, the lack of overall unification is partly what had prevented the creation of a Kurdistan in the past. In Iraqi-Kurdistan a civil war between the two main political parties, Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and the Kurdistan Democratic Party in 1994-97 caused many deaths and destroyed the autonomous government in the region.

Lack of support for Kurdistan

Very few countries are in favour of Kurdistan, with only Israel having expressed clear support. States such as Iraq, Iran and Turkey are strongly opposed to Kurdish independence, so any government considering explicit support for Kurdistan would risk its relationship with countries that are important in terms of strategic location, energy resources and military capacities.

Human Rights Violations

The debate of Kurdistan has been a major source of conflict in the region and tens of thousands of people have died. In every country, the Kurds are an oppressed minority group with little support from international bodies.

**Timeline of Key Events**

1920 – The Treaty of Sevres, after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, included the possibility of creating a Kurdish state alongside the formation of Iraq, Syria and Kuwait. This is then forgotten in 1923 with the Treaty of Lausanne that creates the borders of Modern-day Turkey.

1988 – Iraq launches the "Anfal Campaign" in in a systematic attempt to break the Kurdish resistance movement. Thousands of Kurdish civilians die in a poison gas attack on the town of Halabjah near the Iranian border.

1991 - the creation of a "safe haven" on the Iraqi side of the border. International aid agencies launch a massive aid operation to help Kurdish refugees.

1994-97 - Civil war involving forces of the rival Kurdish Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

2005- Iraqi constitution designates Kurdistan as an autonomous federal region.

2007 – Iran and Turley both initiate attacks against Iraqi Kurdistan

2010s – Kurds play an important role in fighting against ISIS in both Syria and Iraq, while also managed to expand Kurdish territory. Turkey again attacks the PKK in Iraqi Kurdistan

2017 – referendum in Iraq for Kurdish independence wins, but Iraqi troops immediately launch an attack to reassert authority. The UN Security Council warned that a referendum on independence by Iraq's Kurdistan region was potentially destabilizing, adding to international opposition to the vote.

October 2019 – US withdraws from Kurdish territory in Northern Syria. The next day Turkish forces invade the area.

**Relevant Stakeholders**

Turkey

In 1978, Kurdish Worker’s Party (PKK) was created as a response against Turkish oppression of the Kurds, where the use of Kurdish language, dress, folklore and names was banned, as well as the word “Kurd” itself being banned from use in government, instead referring to the Kurds as “Mountain Turks” . In 1984, the PKK first declared a Kurdish uprising, and the conflict essentially continued until 2013, although ceasefires were reached in the intermittent periods. When US president Donald Trump withdrew from Northern Syria in October 2019, this gave way for Turkish troops to invade the area and launch attacks on Kurdish bases.

Since the conflict in Turkey began over 40,000 people have died, the majority of which have been Kurds. Turkey’s treatment of the Kurdish people has been condemned by the European Court of Human Rights for thousands of human rights abuses, including torturing, forced displacements, systematic executions and the disappearance of several Kurdish politicians, activists and journalists. However, Turkey is a part of NATO and an important member state that provides countries such as the US influence over the middle east. NATO has not yet condemned the frequent purges in Turkey since 2016.

Iraq

In Iraq, Kurdish rebellions have also been dealt with harshly, most notably with the ‘Anfal’ attacks during the 1980’s. During the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1986), the Kurds sided overwhelmingly with Iran, but in 1991 a ‘safe haven’ is created in Iraq for Kurdish refugees by various international organisations. In 2005, a new constitution created an autonomous federal region, but there have been many conflicts since between the regional government and the Iraqi government, primarily about oil in the region. In a 2017 referendum, Iraqi Kurds voted overwhelmingly for independence, which then caused Iraqi troops to invade the region to take back Kurdish territorial gains.

Syria

In Syria, the Kurds have played a significant role in the Syrian civil war and the fight against the Islamic State. Since 2015, Syrian government troops have pulled out of Kurdish regions in the north of Syria leaving Kurdish forces in control, yet the future of the Kurdish region of Syria is in the hands of the two opposing Kurdish parties. The self-governing region,(Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria) is also known as Rojava. Human rights organizations have accused the Syrian government of routinely discriminating and harassing the Syrian Kurds, and many Kurds seek political autonomy for the Kurdish inhabited areas of Syria, similar to Iraqi Kurdistan in Iraq, or outright independence as part of Kurdistan.

Iran

Since 1979, the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) has been in persistent conflict against the Iranian government, most recently with clashes in 2016. In Iran, the Kurds have similarly suffered a long history of discrimination, and a report released in 2008 by Amnesty International declared that "social, political and cultural rights have been repressed, as have their economic aspirations."

**Questions to consider**

1. Unrest in the region; particularly considering recent escalations between Iran and the US, could re-addressing Kurdish independence spark further turmoil in the region?
2. Unification; could the UN facilitate the creation of a unified Kurdish authority that spans across different countries?
3. Alternative pathways; if borders will not change, an option which seems increasingly unlikely, how could the UN ensure relative peace between the Kurds and Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey?