The Dynamics of Sudan's Armed Conflict: Interrogating the Relevance of Power Sharing Along Ethnic Lines as a Panacea for Peace

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Abstract

Sudan has experienced decades of armed conflict marked by ethnic, regional, and political divisions. This study delves into the multifaceted dynamics of Sudan's armed conflict, focusing on the role and relevance of power-sharing agreements as a potential avenue for conflict resolution and sustainable peace. A comprehensive analysis of historical data, including conflict timelines, peace agreements, and socio-political factors, was conducted. The study reveals that Sudan's armed conflict is deeply rooted in historical grievances, economic disparities, and ethnic tensions. Power-sharing agreements have been recurrent features of peace efforts, with varying degrees of success. These agreements often aim to distribute political power among different factions, including rebel groups and the central government. While some have contributed to temporary ceasefires, the sustainability of peace remains challenging due to underlying structural issues and contentious interpretations of power-sharing provisions. The study concludes that the dynamics of Sudan's armed conflict are multifaceted and deeply entrenched, demanding a nuanced approach to peacebuilding. Power-sharing agreements offer a relevant but imperfect mechanism for conflict resolution. For lasting peace, they must be part of a broader strategy that addresses historical grievances and structural inequalities, fostering an inclusive and stable political environment.

Keywords: *Sudan, Armed conflict, Power sharing, Peace agreements, Conflict dynamics, Peacebuilding, Transitional justice, Conflict resolution*

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Background to the Study

Collier & Hoffler, (2004) argues that most of the armed conflicts in Africa occur because of the contestation for resources. Thus, they postulated the Greed and Grievance theory (Collier & Hoffler, 2004). It is important to note that, from available evidence, the desire to control natural resources is only a secondary driver of conflict in Africa (Olar, 2014). Most of the armed conflicts in Africa occur largely as a result of the artificiality of the post-colonial nation-states in Africa. By artificiality, I mean, colonial administrative policies which wielded diverse ethnic groups with distinct identities together. Thus, independence was granted to a lot of these nascent African nation-states without addressing existing inter-ethnic rivalries, issues of ethnic domination and structural imbalance. Post-colonial Africa was and is marred with a lot of civil wars fought along ethnic lines (Kornprobst, 2002).

Sudan, since its independence in 1952, has been a nation in search of peace. The Sudan civil war lasted from 1957 to 2005 (Olar, 2014). It was an internal conflict between the predominantly Arab-Muslim North and an African, Christian and animist South. The Sudan civil war, like most African post-colonial armed conflicts, has as its remote cause issues of ethnic or identity rivalry and structural imbalance. The paper attempts to examine the dynamics of the Sudan armed conflict from 1957-2005. To this end, two research questions are germane to this essay: How well has a power-sharing arrangement kept the peace in Sudan? What are the inherent limitations of a power-sharing agreement in the context of ethnic-based violence in Africa? The paper argues that power-sharing along ethnic lines or regional lines, especially in Sudan, only led to a short-lived peace. This is because an independent South Sudan was soon embroiled in its own civil war. Drawing from Sudan's experience, the paper argues that power-sharing sometimes creates an elitist class that becomes power drunk. It concludes that power sharing can lead to sustainable peace if only the disputants have a history of giving in to compromise. The paper is divided into three sections. The first section is the introduction. The second section examines the Sudan civil war, its root causes, actors and rival factions. The third section explores attempts made at peace-building and post-war reconstruction in Sudan.

Objective of the Study

The goal of this research is to analyze the historical, social, political, and economic dynamics of Sudan's armed conflicts over the past decades and assess the effectiveness and relevance of power-sharing mechanisms as a means to facilitate conflict resolution, sustainable peace, and inclusive governance in the Sudanese context. This research goal emphasizes the importance of looking at the conflict's many facets while concentrating on the function and effects of power-sharing agreements as viable remedies for Sudan's ongoing problems.

Research Problem

In recorded history, Sudan has been plagued by recurrent armed conflicts characterized by ethnic, regional, and political divisions, causing immense human suffering and instability. It is an established fact that power-sharing agreements have been recurrent

features of peace efforts, with varying degrees of success. These agreements often aim to distribute political power among different factions, including rebel groups and the central government. While some have contributed to temporary ceasefires, the sustainability of peace remains challenging due to underlying structural issues and contentious interpretations of power-sharing provisions. Despite numerous attempts and doctor's prescriptions to cure or achieve peace through power-sharing agreements, the country has struggled to sustain lasting stability. It is on the above backdrop that this study seeks to provide insights into the multifaceted dynamics of Sudan's armed conflict and to critically examine the relevance and limitations of power sharing as a mechanism for resolving the conflict and building a stable, inclusive, and prosperous Sudan.

Research Methodology
This study adopts a case study research design. The case study research design is an aspect of survey design where the researcher focuses on the variables that are currently ongoing with a view to bringing it to a logical conclusion (Adetoye, 2012). In other words, the study is limited to the case under investigation. The use of this is based on the occurrence of the issue under study. Furthermore, the method of data gathering for this study is a qualitative method or more specifically documentary method. In the Qualitative method, information is gotten or gathered in form of words, pictures, descriptions, narratives, and numerals from both primary sources like unstructured observations, interview schedules, focus group discussions, etc., and secondary sources such as documentary studies of official documents, internets, etc. (Wali 1999).

Discussion
Sudan Civil War, a War Rooted in Historical Differences and Diversity
The Sudan civil war is one of the bloodiest and longest civil wars in African history. About 2 million people died in the conflict (Douglas, 2004). The civil war is divided into two phases. The first phase is from 1957 to 1972. This period witnessed intense fighting between the North and the South. This period ended with the Addis Ababa Accord of 1972 (Gerard, 2005). The Addis Ababa agreement was broken, and hostilities resumed in 1980. The Addis Ababa accord gave the South a measure of autonomy (Gerard, 2005). In 1980, fighting became fiercer as a lot of rebel groups emerged from the South (Eric, 2009). One of these rebel groups which emerged from the South was the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

Colonial history is adjudged to be the remote driver of the Sudan civil war. North and South Sudan were administered separately by a British-Egyptian colonial rule, also known as the "Anglo-Egyptian Condominium" (Eric, 2009). The colonial administration had resorted to a separate administration of Sudan because of the identity difference between the North and the South. As earlier noted, the North was predominantly Muslim and Arabs, while the South was primarily African Christians and animists. This policy of administering the South separately from the North is called the "Southern Policy. The goal was to protect South Sudan from being dominated by a more economically advanced North Sudan (Mading, 1996). The plan was that South Sudan would be administered

along the African line" rather than the Arabic line" (Mading, 1996). The British government encouraged a South Sudan collaboration with Uganda and Kenya.

On the other hand, the British, due to its strategic interest in Egypt, had heavily invested in north Sudan. To the detriment of the South, the North became more economically and socially advanced. North Sudan's educated elites were incorporated into the colonial administration, while people from the South were primarily excluded (Mading, 1996). When the British were forced to grant independence to Sudan following the Egyptian Revolution of 1952, the new nation of Sudan emerged with unresolved problems of structural imbalance, ethnic or identity differences and economic disparities between the North and South.

A northern-dominated Sudanese government attempted to pursue, despite the cultural diversity, a policy of "Arabization" and "Islamization" of the South. To ensure this policy worked, the Sudanese government used violence to suppress opposition (Peter, 1991). This policy consequently led to the emergence of tribal-based armed groups in South Sudan. Thus, the stage was set for a civil war. It is in record that the Sudanese civil war is a multifaceted, protracted conflict that has lasted for several decades and involves numerous actors and regions inside Sudan. A number of important occurrences and developments have affected the Sudanese civil war's chronology. The followings are some significant turning points that highlight the significant occasions that have impacted the conflict's course:

Available evidence in existing literature shows that soon after Sudan obtained independence from British and Egyptian authority in 1956, the civil war broke out. The government in the north, which is dominated by Arabs, and the southern region, which wants autonomy and acknowledgement of its cultural and political rights, are at odds. Periods of fighting, cease-fire agreements, and discussions characterize the war. The Addis Ababa Agreement, which offered the southern area some limited autonomy, was signed in 1972, marking the end of the first civil war.

The Addis Ababa Agreement's flimsy peace was destroyed in 1983 when the Sudanese government, under the leadership of President Jaafar Nimeiry, enforced Islamic Sharia law throughout the whole nation, including the largely Christian and animist southern area. As southern rebels fought to oppose the implementation of Sharia law and for greater autonomy, this action rekindled the conflict. The southern rebels were led by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A).

As the southern conflict grew more violent over time, more people were forced to flee, and humanitarian crises emerged. Millions of people were displaced, and many lives were lost as a result of the protracted fighting between the two sides. During this time, a number of peace proposals and peace negotiations were made, but a long-lasting solution eluded them. A different conflict started in the western part of Darfur in 2003. Violence among rebel groups, government militias, and supported militias was a defining feature

of the Darfur conflict. Large-scale atrocities, such as genocide, were committed as a result of the conflict, which also caused a great deal of human misery. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in 2005 in Naivasha, Kenya, between the Sudanese government and the SPLM/A, which was a crucial turning point in the conflict. In addition to putting an end to the second Sudanese civil war, the deal gave the southern region autonomy and the opportunity to organize a secession vote. Additionally, the CPA cleared the groundwork for South Sudan's ultimate 2011 independence.

Post War Reconstruction

Sudan's post-war reconstruction efforts have taken many different forms and have included local, regional, and global activities. Following the Sudanese civil war, specific policies and actions were taken to support post-conflict reconstruction. Below is some of the policy measures employed.

Peace Agreements and Political Reconciliation

The signing of peace agreements, including the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), was crucial in bringing a stop to the fighting and starting the post-conflict reconstruction process. These accords sought to address the conflict's underlying issues, establish power-sharing mechanisms, and advance political peace between opposing parties.

Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR)

To disarm former soldiers, assist them in adjusting to civilian life, and facilitate their reintegration into society, DDR initiatives were put into place. In order to keep ex-combatants from engaging in armed activity again, this meant offering them vocational training, educational opportunities, and financial assistance.

Infrastructure Development

Post-conflict rehabilitation activities included repairing and reconstructing the infrastructure that had been damaged during the fighting. In addition to other vital public facilities, this includes roads, bridges, schools, and hospitals.

Rebuilding Economies

Programs for economic development and rebuilding were put into place to boost the nation's economy, encourage foreign investment, and create jobs for the populace, particularly in conflict-affected areas.

Humanitarian Support

Refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) who were resettling received help and assistance from international humanitarian groups. Among the services provided by this aid were food, housing, medical care, and instruction.

Transitional justice

Through different initiatives, including truth commissions and war crimes prosecutions, efforts have been undertaken to address historical human rights breaches and foster responsibility.

Governance Reforms and Capacity Building

Capacity-building measures were implemented to enhance government institutions and increase their efficiency in providing important services. This included educating civil officials, supporting good governance principles, and increasing transparency.

International Assistance and Donor Support

The international community helped Sudan rebuild after the war by contributing both financial and technical support. Resources were donated to numerous development programs and initiatives by donor nations and international organizations. However, the complicated and changing nature of the situation in Sudan must be noted. Based on the shifting circumstances and difficulties encountered during the implementation process, it's possible that the specific policies and initiatives for post-war reconstruction have been modified.

Conclusion

In a way of recapitulation, as earlier argued in this paper, that most of the armed conflicts in Africa occur as a result of the contestation for resources. It is essential to note that according to Marxist theory, conflict is indeed considered inevitable, and it plays a fundamental role in shaping societies throughout history. Marxist theory views society as being divided into different social classes, primarily based on the ownership and control of the means of production (land, factories, and capital). The inevitability of conflict in Marxist theory arises from the contradictory interests between these two main classes. However, it is essential to note that while Marxist theory emphasizes the inevitability of conflict, not all conflicts are necessarily revolutionary or lead to the establishment of a socialist society. The outcome of conflicts is determined by various factors, including the historical context, the organization and consciousness of the working class, and the response of the ruling class. As with any social theory, there are differing interpretations and critiques of Marxist perspectives on conflict and revolution.

It is sacrosanct to make the point at this juncture that the success of a power sharing arrangement or institutional power sharing arrangement is largely dependent on factors such as: the actors involved, their willingness to give in to compromise and the history of the identity conflict. In most African states, independence was granted without addressing the problematic issue of identity. Power sharing along ethnic lines is suggested by Cederman, Hug and Wucherpfennig as a panacea for peace (Wucherpfennig; 2022). It must be stated, however, that the practicality of these recommendation is largely dependent on the peculiarity of the societies, the willingness of the actors or disputants to give room for compromise. If South Sudan had been granted independence separate from the North, would the Sudan civil had broken out in the first place? The answer to this question is quite tricky. But a "yes" is an appropriate answer, owing to the fact that a lack of power sharing arrangement along ethnic line in the newly independent South Sudan led to the outbreak of another civil war. Power sharing, as seen in the case of Sudan created new local elites, as well as another class of aggrieved minorities. It is pertinent to make the point here that the United Nations (UN) was

involved in the Sudanese civil war, particularly in efforts to address the humanitarian crisis and promote peace and stability in the country. The UN's involvement spanned multiple dimensions, including humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping operations, and diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict.

Policy implications

Sequel of the study's results and conclusion, the following are some potential policy ramifications that could result from research on the dynamics of Sudan's armed conflict and the applicability of power sharing:

1. Policymakers should give priority to inclusive power-sharing systems that accurately reflect the diversity of the Sudanese people, including various ethnic, regional, and political factions. Such systems can aid in bridging gaps and increasing stakeholder trust.
2. Implementing thorough transitional justice procedures is essential for addressing past atrocities, ensuring accountability, and providing restitution. In order to achieve a lasting peace, this can aid in the healing of wounds and the promotion of reconciliation.
3. Resource administration: Establish rules and procedures for the open, egalitarian, and responsible administration of Sudan's natural resources, including as its water and oil, in order to reduce conflicts arising from those resources. Agreements on revenue sharing should be advantageous to all areas and communities.
4. Invest in conflict prevention techniques that deal with the underlying causes of violence, such as land conflicts, economic inequalities, and ethnic tensions. Early warning systems and neighborhood-based programs can assist identify and resolve potential disputes before they worsen.
5. Reforming the security industry is necessary to ensure professionalism, responsibility, and diversity. By doing so, the likelihood of violent clashes between security personnel and citizens can be decreased and the public's trust in government institutions increased.
6. Engage regional and global players to promote Sudanese peace initiatives. All parties can be pushed to uphold negotiated agreements by diplomatic endeavors, peacekeeping deployments, and external pressure.

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