



ASSESSING THE JUBA PEACE AGREEMENT 2020: PROCEEDING TOWARDS PEACE IN SOUTH SUDAN

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The Juba Peace agreement was signed on October 3, 2020, nearly a year after the initiation of negotiations. The peace process was headed by the transitional government of Sudan and international and regional parties including African Union, United Nation, Chad, Egypt, Qatar and UAE. Juba peace agreement took place between the transitional government of South Sudan, Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF), its factions, and the Sudan Liberation Movement-Minni Minnawi.¹ The Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) and Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) also signed the agreement which has been welcomed by the United Nations Security Council.²

The Juba agreement 2020 raises the prospects of resolving the South Sudanese Conflict that has now raged for almost 7 years. This protracted conflict has killed nearly 400,000 people, displaced 2.24 million people and left 1.3 million children at the risk of acute malnutrition.³

Political reforms are a major part of the Juba agreement. It covers the key issues of security, displaced people, configuration of states and power sharing along with dismantling of the rebel

¹ "Sudan's Government, Rebel Groups Sign Landmark Deal," *Al Jazeera*, October 3, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/3/sudans-government-rebels-set-to-sign-landmak-deal>.

² "Security Council Press Statement on the Juba Peace Agreement (Sudan) | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases," <https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sc14323.doc.htm#:~:text=The%20members%20of%20the%20Security>.

³ "Civil War in South Sudan," Global Conflict Tracker, November 17, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/civil-war-south-sudan>.

groups to integrate them into the national army.⁴ It also ensures the South Sudanese people that the national army will be reflective of the heterogeneity of the society as South Sudan is home to more than 60 ethnicities. Ending violent conflicts is one of the top priorities of the peace deal, especially in Darfur and Kordofan where violence has continued since the civil war broke out in 2013.

Leaders of the transitional government, President Salva Kiir and opposition leader Riek Machar, are celebrating the signing of this peace deal calling it a landmark deal. They vow to carry out negotiations with rebel groups who are yet to sign this peace agreement in order to escape the threat of both structural and direct violence.

Currently, the implementation of this deal remains slow given the challenges and pitfalls that it faces. David Shearer, head of the UN peacekeeping mission to South Sudan recently commented on the implementation of the Juba peace agreement. He said that the implementation has slowed down drastically since the outbreak of Covid-19 as falling oil prices hit the already fragile economy; however the pandemic cannot be entirely blamed.⁵ The communal violence, food shortage, falling oil prices and corruption are together making the progress slow.

Critics are sceptical of this power sharing pact as they are of the view that it will not abolish inter-communal violence. It is an “elite level Power-sharing agreement” which constitutes the same power sharing formula that has failed twice before.⁶ It also does not encompass issues like Sudan’s state oil being used for war funding. Many analysts are of the view that South Sudan state owned oil has fallen into hands of predatory elites and is used for military and war funding.⁷

The Juba peace agreement should have addressed the oil revenue issue and the deep-rooted communal grievances throughout the state. This lack of inclusivity led to various protests throughout the state, for instance, the Beja people and their rebel group protested as the peace process

⁴ “Sudan Rebels Agree Key Peace Deal to End 17-Year Conflict: Report,” *Al Jazeera*, August 31, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/8/31/sudan-rebels-agree-key-peace-deal-to-end-17-year-conflict-report>.

⁵ “Progress on South Sudan Peace Agreement Limps Along”, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/progress-on-south-sudan-peace-agreement-limps-along-/1976599>.

⁶ Justin Lynch Gramer Robbie, “Diplomats Fear a Collapse of South Sudan’s Latest Peace Deal,” *Foreign Policy*, March 5, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/03/05/south-sudan-peace-deal-diplomats-fear-collapse/>.

⁷ “South Sudan’s Leadership Uses State-Owned Oil Company Nilepet to Funnel Millions into Brutal Security Services and Ethnic Militias,” *Global Witness*, accessed November 11, 2020, <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/press-releases/south-sudans-leadership-uses-state-owned-oil-company-nilepet-funnel-millions-brutal-security-services-and-ethnic-militias/>.

continued, blaming the agreement of not protecting their rights.⁸ Hence, many officials fear the collapse of the peace pact as the transitional government in Juba seems to be more inclined toward appeasing political parties and less interested in mitigating the suffering of South Sudanese people.

If we analyse the previous peace deals we can conclude that none of these agreements were applied. They failed to understand that conflict is not simply between two main tribes of South Sudan i.e Dinka and Nuer from which President Salvakiir and Vice-President Riek Machar belonged respectively, it is much more complex. Issues like endemic corruption and weak rule of law had also not been addressed in the previous peace agreements.

For instance, in 2015, South Sudan President Salva Kiir, under the threat of UN sanctions, signed a shaky peace deal agreement on the resolution of the conflict in South Sudan with rebels in Ethiopia's capital with the help of Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia, which are part of Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD States).⁹ Key objectives of the "Compromise Peace Agreement" were to restore peace in the country, holding general elections and integration of rebel forces in national unity government. Unfortunately, this peace agreement failed to fulfil its objectives. Consequently, fighting between the two factions resumed in 2016 and more than one third of the population was displaced; nearly 383,000 people were killed, while 45.2 % faced acute food security.¹⁰

In 2018 again, Kiir and Machar met after two years to sign a peace deal in order to form a power sharing government. The South Sudan Peace deal 2018 was a revival of the 2015 peace deal. Once more it was not implemented, therefore conflict, violence, corruption and food shortages continued.

Keeping these in perspective, the Juba agreement too may fail to bring peace in a mosaic society like South Sudan. We can clearly see it today as violence is still prevalent throughout the state.¹¹ After analysing the drawbacks of Juba peace agreement, it is apparent that it needs to be inclusive of all the local issues and ensure implementation in order to achieve peace. This requires an inclusive conflict resolution strategy that works at national as well as community level.

In this regard, the first goal ought to be establishing a widely acceptable government. With help of peacekeeping forces and the current transitional government, a new broader national government

⁸ Michael Atit, "Sudan's Red Sea State Oil Facilities Reopen After Protests End", *VOA*, October 7, 2020, www.voanews.com, 2020, <https://www.voanews.com/africa/sudans-red-sea-state-oil-facilities-reopen-after-protests-end>.

⁹ "South Sudan President Signs Peace Deal with Rebels," *Al Jazeera*, August 27, 2015, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/08/27/south-sudan-president-signs-peace-deal-with-rebels/>

¹⁰ "South Sudan: Hunger Relief in Africa," *Action Against Hunger*, November 15, 2019, <https://www.actionagainsthunger.org/countries/africa/south-sudan>

¹¹ "Data Overview: Violence against Civilians in South Sudan • Stimson Center," *Stimson Centre*, October 13, 2020, <https://www.stimson.org/2020/data-overview-violence-against-civilians-in-south-sudan/>.

can be formed that is a decentralized form of government with local representatives from all the different identities. This widely accepted transitional government can help in confidence building of the nation so that the ethnic minorities and rebel groups would not feel left out. Only a truly democratic government can take care of dealings i.e. taxation or oil revenue sharing and help spend it on welfare of the society as they will be held accountable by their local community. It can break the vicious cycle of war economy.

Secondly, the revival of economy can help the state fight its famine conditions. Millions of dollars from oil revenue can be invested in the state's infrastructure and development. Apart from being affected by violence, 7 million people are at threat of severe food shortage.¹²

Third, upgrading law and order is necessary to implement the agreement. The agreement should lay out basics for creating local law implementing forces whose head can be further appointed by local elections in order to avoid injustice.

Fourth, peace agreement should address communal grievances. Grass root peace building measures should ensure incorporation of women into the state's economy and making education accessible to all in order to rebuilt the community. Political workshops must be organized to bridge the gap between the government and civilians.

All in all, the Juba Peace Agreement may be a "Landmark Deal" but it has many shortcomings, hence, it needs to be reformed as discussed above in order to attain peace in South Sudan.

¹² Council on Foreign Relations.(2019). Civil War in South Sudan. Global Conflict Tracker.
<https://www.cfr.org/>