

# THE NATIONAL QUESTION, IDENTITY AND THE CRISIS IN SOUTH SUDAN

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## ABSTRACT

The crisis in South Sudan that broke out on 15 December 2013 has been the gravest political debacle since the country gained its independence in 2011. This crisis typifies the general political and social patterns of post-independence politics of nation-states in Africa that are born out of armed struggles. Not only does the crisis expose the reluctance of the nationalist leaders to continue with nation-building initiatives, but the situation suggests the struggle for political control at the echelons of power within the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). This struggle has been marred by the manufacture of political identity and by political demonisation that seem to illuminate the current political landscape in South Sudan. However, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) hurriedly intervened to find a lasting solution supportive of the government of President Salva Kiir, and this has suggested interest-based motives on the part of the regional body and has since exacerbated an already fragile situation. As such, this article uses the Fanonian discourse of post-independence politics in Africa to expose the fact that the SPLM has degenerated into lethargy and that this is at the heart of the crisis in South Sudan.

**Keywords:** Sudan People's Liberation Movement; Intergovernmental Authority on Development; national question; manufacture of political identity; crisis; Fanonian discourse

## INTRODUCTION

The crisis in South Sudan that broke out on 15 December 2013 typifies the general political and social patterns of post-independence politics of nation-states in Africa that are born out of armed struggles. This crisis exposes not only a disdain for erasing the vivid memories of the legacy of the civil war that began in 1955 and only ended in 2005, but also an antipathy towards turning the youngest African nation into a formidable state. The situation provides insight into the crisis of nation-building and the old Fanonian problem of “pitfalls of national consciousness.” These pitfalls have been mirrored by exhausted nationalism on the part of the ruling Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM), a once vibrant, people-driven movement that has degenerated into ideological impotence through the failure of the elite nationalist leaders to define the national question.

This paper argues that at the heart of the crisis is the lack of political and ideological goodwill that has manifested itself within the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) since the second civil war and the return of power struggle within the SPLM that emerged in the early 1990s and was allowed to go unchecked well into post-2011 South Sudan. The dimensional twist of this power struggle seems to be premised on an ethnic discourse that has polarised the SPLM party and the government largely into a dichotomy between the Dinka and Nuer ethnic people of the country. The ethnic discourse remains highly relevant given the fact that South Sudan is only slightly more than a geographical expression. It contains more than 60 cultural and linguistic groups, each of which has a stronger sense of citizenship in its tribe than in the nation, and this dimension has been amplified by politics of marginalisation that has culminated in a renewed search for national identity (Jok 2011, 2).

The SPLM claims to be the only political formation that represents the will of the nation of South Sudan as it is the custodian of the liberation struggle against the North (i.e. North Sudan). This reinvention of the country’s history by the SPLM has illuminated interesting dynamics in the political landscape of South Sudan. The SPLM monopolised the struggle against North Sudan hence discrediting other parallel movements that fought to liberate the country. This exclusive approach to the situation deserves some analysis. In the first instance the reinvention of history by the SPLM gives an insight into the twists of the politics of liberation movements as authors of post-conflict and colonial nation-states on the continent (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009). Secondly, it indicates that the SPLM has degenerated into an ethnocracy where the Dinkanisation of the party has created an antipathy towards nation-building, thus sowing the seeds for disaffection in other ethnic groups, such as the Nuer, who have thus far transformed political frustration into a full-scale military confrontation with the government. Subsequently, there has emerged the manufacture of political identity and demonisation within the SPLM between President Salva Kiir and opposition political forces, led by the former vice-president, Dr Riek Machar, who defected from the party. This situation has been expressed in the twists of the civil war in a manner that has escalated the conflict and

circumvented meaningful regional and international initiatives to halt the conflict. Most importantly, the SPLM—led by President Salva Kiir—has employed the Machiavellian discourse of maintaining power by hook or by crook, thus denying the opposition any chance of involvement in the mainstream governing of the country and thereby delaying any meaningful resolution to the crisis. This unfortunate turn of events has since been exacerbated by the intervention of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), whose approach to the crisis seems to mirror interest-based motives. IGAD's impartiality is crucial to the foundation of inclusivity in the political landscape of South Sudan, and a panacea for halting the conflict. As a result, as the war rages on and human casualties continue to escalate, one thing that remains unanswered as part of the dynamics of post-independence politics in South Sudan is what the national question is and who defines this national question. Furthermore, it is imperative to establish the link between what is framed as South Sudan's national question and the politics of identity.

## CORRELATION BETWEEN THE NATIONAL QUESTION AND IDENTITY POLITICS

Blaut (1987, 1) defines a national question as “the question of how the fight for political sovereignty is to be carried out and what role it should play in the larger struggle for social justice.” Thus, in the context of African politics the discourse of the national question is encapsulated in nationalism. Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Ndhlovu (2013, 1) present nationalism as an ambivalent ideology informing the protean process of identity-making, nation-building and state-making, especially in terms of the decolonisation of Africa. This discourse fits into the narrative of the history of the Sudanese peninsula (North and South Sudan) as having played a very important role in shaping its politics and history. According to Deng (1995, 14), identity is about how people (individually or collectively) define themselves or are defined by others in terms of ethnicity, language, religion, and culture. Kowert and Legro (1996, 435) amplify Deng's description by illuminating the correlation between politics and identity, arguing that a political identity is a “perspective representation of political actors themselves and evolving of their relationship to each other.” In addition, Dzimiri et al. (2014, 228) suggest that these perspective representations often denote differences in political actors thus prompting a quest for preserving identity that often perpetuates undesirable consequences. Dzimiri and co-authors caution that the ultimate end of preserving identity is often that it breeds violence as the politics of identity are motivated by a struggle for domination.

The national question has been predicated on the context of trying to change the status quo of any given society especially during the epoch of colonialism in Africa. It can be argued that the explanatory value of the term national question lies in the appeal to cultivate that which constitutes the political, economic, and social patterns that promote a sense of belonging and subsequently lead to the formation of a nation-state. At the heart of these political, economic, and social patterns are two fundamental questions

that form the nexus between the national question and identity politics. The questions asked are: what is the national question, and who defines the national question? The essence of this paper is to depart from these questions in locating the current crisis in South Sudan by illuminating how the national question, as defined by certain elites, has led to the manufacture of political identity.

## ORIGINS OF THE NATIONAL QUESTION AND THE MANUFACTURE OF POLITICAL IDENTITY IN THE SUDANESE PENINSULA

The history of the national question in the Sudanese peninsula has been divided into three distinct periods: British colonial rule; post-colonial Sudanese state (1956–2011); and post-South Sudan nation-state up to the present. Blaut (1987, 1) presents the nexus between the national question and the desire to right the wrongs of an unfavourable political landscape to achieve social justice by arguing that in every liberation struggle there is concern about the national question. True to Blaut's views was the case of Sudan during British settler rule where the national question was the quest for political sovereignty as a means to achieve social justice for the majority.

The independence of Sudan in 1956 saw the formation of the nation-state of Sudan along Arab-Islamic lines (Deng 2001, 13, 21). Typical of the banner under which politics operated on the African continent in most countries immediately after independence, the National Unionist Party (NUP) of Sudan sought to address the national question (uniting North and South Sudan) by means of policies. The aim of these policies, which most post-colonial states introduced, was to embark on “a vigorous process of nation-building with the aim of welding their multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-religious countries into one nation” (Laakso and Olukoshi 1996, 13). An attempt to create the so-called homogenous society was aimed at creating a one-party theocracy which was predicated on the principles of Islam, and in the process consolidating the political fortunes of the NUP. Distinctive of the features of the national question in Sudan was the Islamisation of the nation-state in a manner that categorised the Southerners who were largely non-Arabs, black Africans and mostly Christians as second-class citizens. This was in stark contrast with the fact that the term Sudan is an offshoot of an Arabic term *Biladus Sudan* or *Bilad-El-Sud* meaning the land of the blacks (Benjamin 2004, 37, 44). The emergence of a predominant Islamic ideology in Sudan was followed by the manufacture of an identity according to which Southerners were viewed as *abeed*<sup>1</sup> in their native land, thus prompting their identity crisis which culminated into a protracted civil war from 1955 to 2005.

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1 A derogatory Arabic term to describe non-Arab people used as slaves in Sudan.

## FANONISM AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION IN SOUTH SUDAN

Frantz Fanon's work, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1960), was an important blueprint for post-colonial African states in their efforts to fulfil their dreams and hopes associated with nationhood. Fanon's cautionary tale served as advice to liberation movements coming out of conflicts and seeking to answer the national question so that the fruits of liberation would materialise into the birth of a new African being (Sithole 2013, 84–85). Though the work is mainly premised on the decolonisation of the continent, it has an organic link with the politics of South Sudan as it illuminates discourses that befit the narrative of South Sudan's failure to articulate the national question. Sithole (2013, 85) locates the Fanonian discourse in the making of a nation-state by extracting two important themes.

The first theme that Fanon deals with is that the national consciousness is an important factor in articulating the national question. The national consciousness in South Sudan drew its strength from the troubled history of the peoples of South Sudan who were regarded as second-class citizens from 1956 to 2010. This troubled history under the tutelage of the Muslim North aroused a quest for identity that transcended ethnic boundaries with an emphasis on uniting the southern region in a common collective opposition to the North (Jok 2011, 2). Of importance in the new nation-state of South Sudan was the national question of integrating various and different ethnic groups into one nation-state where a sense of belonging and a common identity would be envisaged.

However, Johnson (2014, 303–4) maintains that the current fighting in South Sudan is a reflection of the failure of integration within the SPLM and the SPLA. This argument resonates deeply with the ethnic politics of South Sudan where most ethnic groups are more loyal to their groupings than to the nation. Interesting in this discourse were the inadequacies of the SPLM leadership under President Salva Kiir in failing to continue with the national project for restructuring the country as envisaged by the late nationalist, Dr John Garang. This discourse was argued well by the former Minister for Higher Education, Science and Technology, Dr Peter Adwok Nyaba, in his book (Nyaba 2011). He maintains that the untimely death of Dr Garang and the ascendance of Salva Kiir to the echelons of power as the head of state and leader of the SPLM saw the abandonment of integrating warring factions in the political landscape of South Sudan. The situation was further exacerbated by the purging of Dr Garang's inner circle, replacing them with Kiir loyalists who had a disdain for carrying forward the national project of South Sudan and establishing warm relations with Islamic Sudan, an antithesis of the development of the people of South Sudan.

The second theme captured in Fanon's cautionary tale is repetition without difference, where the elite nationalist leaders assume the role of the former colonisers by oppressing the very same people they seek to liberate from colonial oppression (Sithole

2013, 85). This has been the case especially with the SPLA since the second civil war that lasted from 1983 to 2005.

## THE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PATTERNS IN SOUTH SUDAN, 2011: FANON'S REPETITION WITHOUT DIFFERENCE

In 2011, Africa witnessed the southern region of Sudan transforming into the nation-state of South Sudan. This political miracle was not only a milestone in the discourse of African Solutions to African Problems but it raised hopes in the context of conflict resolutions on the continent. However, on 15 December 2013 the gravest political crisis in the short history of South Sudan erupted into a civil war that is threatening to cause the country to degenerate into a failed state (Pinaud 2014, 192). The same author maintains that contrary to popular suggestions that the root cause of the current fighting in South Sudan is ethnicity, there are deep-seated factors, such as the war-time predatory tendencies and military aristocracy of and in the SPLM/A since the second civil war (1983–2005), which have gone unchecked and resulted in resentment amongst the people of South Sudan (Pinaud 2014, 193). The degeneration into lethargy of the SPLM/SPLA can also be traced back to the second civil war where the liberation movement concentrated on looting resources, stealing relief items and accumulated wealth to enrich the elite leaders at the expense of the masses (Johnson 2007, 143–144). These war-time predatory tendencies were accompanied by lack of political indoctrination by the SPLA soldiers, which resulted in deep-seated resentments amongst the people (Nyaba 1997, 51):

The SPLA, instead of being a genuine national liberation movement, turned into an agent of plunder, pillage, and destructive conquest. The strong link between being a soldier in a national liberation movement and the solidarity with the people ... was completely absent. ... The SPLA became like an army of occupation in areas it controlled and from which the people were running away.

This political decadence and ideological impotence of the SPLA resulted in an exhausted nationalism.<sup>2</sup>

## THE POLITICS OF ETHNICITY AND THE CRISIS IN SOUTH SUDAN

Ethnocracy is mirrored through the political, economic, and social patterns of South Sudan that have been narrowed to create some sort of SPLM cult. This has resulted

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2 Interview with Professor Ndlovu-Gatsheni at the Archie Mafeje Research Institute, Pretoria, October 17, 2014.

in the nation being governed along ethnic lines with the Dinka largely dominating in the political, economic, and social spheres (and fortunes) of the country. After years of struggle against political marginalisation by the North, an inclusive political dispensation in South Sudan was at the heart of elite nationalist leaders' defining the national question of South Sudan in a post-independent nation-state (Buay 2012, 1). With that, as Fanon (1990, 163) captures it, "that magnificent song that made people rise against oppressors, stops short, falters and dies away on the day independence is proclaimed."

South Sudan is home to two main ethnic groups, the Dinka and the Nuer, and they constituted the bulk of the SPLA in the protracted civil war with the North. Interesting was the way in which these two ethnic groups translated nationalism into political entitlement to lead the nation-state in a post-independent South Sudan. This tendency of political entitlement is typical in Africa where certain ethnic groups naturally appropriate the right to govern a country based on their nationalist historical responsibilities. Luxemburg ([1909] 1976, 141) poses the following questions in this regard:

The nation should have the "right" to self-determination. But who is that "nation" and who is the authority and [has] the right to speak for the nation and express its will? How can we find out what the "nation" actually wants? Does there exist one political party which would claim that alone, among all others, truly expresses the will of the "nation"?

Nation-building in South Sudan has been epitomised through the lenses of the Dinka ethnic group which accounts for 25 per cent of the population yet controls over 55 per cent of the state structures. The state has degenerated into a project by the Dinka whose domination seems to be the banner under which South Sudanese politics operate. Accordingly, the SPLM government is accused of being a vehicle for Dinka domination: President Salva Kiir has appointed ministers and top crucial leadership from his loyal Dinka clan—a case in point is the appointment of the ministers of Legal Affairs and Constitutional Development and of Finance and Economic Development, as well as various local government officials (Buay 2012, 1). The colour of ethnic domination in South Sudan's political and economic patterns has been fostered by the ideology of the SPLM in which the government views nation-building as based on ethnic domination. This approach of the SPLM speaks of a disdain for inclusivity and an antipathy towards the involvement of other minority ethnic groups in the mainstay activities of the country. This, in essence, illuminates the old Fanonian discourse on repetition without difference. Since 2011, South Sudan has witnessed the legacy of the politics of marginalisation as mirrored through the never-ending pursuit of the Dinka's control of the country at the expense of the Nuer, Bari, Zande, Acholi, Madi, Moru, Kuku, and other ethnic groups that view the SPLA as a vehicle for Dinka domination and complain bitterly about their treatment at the hands of the SPLA (Branch and Mampilly 2005, 4).

The continued marginalisation of other ethnic groups translated into a mutiny that broke out within the South Sudanese army on 15 December 2013 and the civil war that followed after a fallout between President Salva Kiir and the then Vice-President Riek Machar (Nyak 2014, 1).

## THE BETRAYAL OF THE NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE CRISIS IN SOUTH SUDAN

The causes of the current fighting in South Sudan can be observed in the rhetoric of exhausted nationalism and the betrayal of the national consciousness by the so-called nationalist leaders. The SPLM, a liberation movement that brought democracy to the country, has reneged on its war-time promises to the people of South Sudan. This paper argues that the commitments of the SPLM and SPLA to nation-building and the national consciousness have been opaque. In the context of nation-building initiatives, there is truth in this argument considering the political orientation of the former vice-president, Riek Machar, and the never-ending mutinies that were the face of the SPLA since the end of the civil war in 2005 (Nyaba 2011, 181–182). Interestingly, Riek Machar's political history has generated debates about his sincerity, and this has allowed for the emergence of demonisation within the SPLM and his opponent President Kirr. This demonisation has to be understood as part of the Machiavellian politics<sup>3</sup> of maintaining power by hook or by crook through the manufacture of political identity and the reinvention of history, to state but a few of the contours of the political landscape that inform the country.

### MANUFACTURING POLITICAL IDENTITY, AND DEMONISATION DISCOURSES

According to Tendi (2014, 1252), the concept of demonisation provides a useful lens to understand a given political landscape or terrain. Moreover, Tendi uses the explanation of Linn Normand in locating the origins of demonisation in politics and amplifying its effect in contemporary politics that is rooted in religion and retains a figure of speech of metaphoric persuasion in manufacturing a political identity of one's adversary (2014, 1252). Accordingly, President Kirr, as the leader of the SPLM, has used colourful nationalist retorts that resonate well in the political space in South Sudan following his fallout with the former vice-president, Riek Machar. The use of retorts such as "traitor" in characterising Riek Machar was viewed by many as a move by the SPLM to purge formidable political opponents. This general feeling was substantiated by apocalyptic events that had crystallised since mid-2012 when the president was presented as increasingly autocratic, promoting an antipathy towards other ethnic tribes other than the Dinka. Opposition to the president was as a result of what was presented as his decision to circumvent the Political Bureau, and his acting unconstitutionally in dissolving the party structures and dismissing state governors.

Further opposition arose because of the unconstitutional and undemocratic dismissal of the entire cabinet including the former vice-president, thus compromising the government of national unity that had been made possible by involving the Dinka

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3 Interview with Nicholas Govo, an MA candidate in African Studies at the University of Venda, Limpopo on 15 March 2015.



and Nuer in a position of power (Maru 2013, 1). President Salva Kirr is said to have downplayed his political opponents within the government and party by pointing a finger at them in corruption scandals. The suspension of the ministers of finance and the Cabinet and the subsequent reshuffling of the Cabinet, which led to the dismissal of Vice-President Riek Machar, a Nuer, was viewed as instigating tribalism through weakening the influence of the Nuer in shaping the politics of the country (Gal 2014, 1). Thus, on 15 December an armed confrontation ensued at the presidential palace in the capital of Juba between soldiers loyal to President Kirr and disgruntled soldiers loyal to former Vice-President Riek Machar, a move that the president described as an attempted coup. The deliberate decision to term the mutiny an attempted coup was seen as a means to employ state power for the illegal purpose of silencing opponents within the SPLM (Maru 2013, 1). This argument resonates well with the events that followed, especially the arrest of key SPLM figures, such as Taban Deng, Oyayi Deng, John Luk Majok, Deng Alor, and Chol Tong, who were seen as vocal in their criticism of the president's increasing autocratic tendencies. Rather disturbing were the follow-up events that resulted in the shift of the political landscape: the government was said to have employed state power in pursuit of what threatened to escalate into a genocide. President Kirr has been accused of deliberately exterminating tens of thousands of Nuer in the capital of Juba (Nyak 2014, 1)

However, another explanation that has found fertile ground in accounting for the possible reasons at the heart of the conflict in South Sudan lies in the betrayal of the national consciousness and in the populism of Riek Machar. The history of Riek Machar in the narrative of South Sudan politics has remained ambiguous and opaque. As a result, his political opponents and the sympathisers of South Sudan's turbulent history have demonised him and to a certain extent manufactured a political identity for him as a divisive pretender (Fletcher 2013, 1). Machar's one-time collaboration with the Muslim North during the civil war with the South at the expense of his fellow Southerners, and the 1991 Bor massacre in Jonglei where the Nuer fought the Dinka ethnic tribe, are classical examples that have discredited him as a sincere South Sudanese politician. As a result, Riek Machar is presented as a nationalist with a volatile history and a person who is not committed to nation-building. Machar's history of falling out with Dinka leadership within the SPLM is a reality and not only a perception. A case in point is the fallout between Machar and the late Dr Garang de Mabior in 1991, which resulted in the Bor massacre. Whatever the causes of the crisis and whoever the perpetrators, this dimension of the current fighting in South Sudan remains an interesting one. President Kirr has labelled the crisis the result of an attempt to usurp power. Machar, former vice-president turned rebel leader, sees the crisis as caused by a deliberate move by the president to narrow the political landscape in South Sudan through silencing opponents within the SPLM.

## The Lack of Political Goodwill, and Ideological Orientation within the SPLA

The crisis in South Sudan that erupted on 15 December emerged after a mutiny that broke within the ranks of the SPLA. The fact that the crisis has its origins in the SPLA exposes the long-standing legacy of lack of integration, political goodwill, and ideological indoctrination within the army that can be traced back to the civil war (Johnson 2014, 303–304; Nyaba 1997, 51).

Since the first Anyanya rebellion of the 1960s, the SPLA has been susceptible to mutiny and the return of renegade soldiers. This pattern of insecurity reached a feverish pitch as a result of the fallout between the late Dr Garang and Riek Machar in the SPLA in the early 1990s, which led to a split within the army and Riek Machar forming an alliance with Sudan against the SPLM (Johnson 2014, 305). Nonetheless, in 2002 Riek Machar and Lam Akol were reintegrated within the structures of the SPLM mainly because of their doctoral degrees in engineering and not because of their ideological convictions or their interest in national consciousness. The return of these prodigal sons set a very uncomfortable precedent because some felt that preferential treatment had been given to those who had defected (Arnold and LeRiche 2012, 159, 162). Thus, in reality the SPLA mirrored ideological impotence and betrayal of the national consciousness, and it was not surprising that the years that followed saw mutiny being used as the only viable currency to express political frustration in situations where some were rewarded politically with the aid of soldiers and some were not. A case in point was the armed militia led by David Yau Yau, a former highly ranked official within the SPLA, George Athor Deng, a former SPLA general, General Peter Gadet Yak Robert Gwang, and Captain Olonyi.

## Attempts at Intervention by IGAD

On 10 July 2015, a Special Envoy for South Sudan in the Office of IGAD released a press statement expressing the confidence of this office in the fourth anniversary of the country's independence. The office was wary of the current war going on in South Sudan and of renegeing on dreams and hopes associated with independence. IGAD further stressed that the purpose of this "senseless" war would only careen the country on a trajectory of further destruction and misery (IGAD 2015). This statement gives insight into the perceptions and involvement of IGAD in the political landscape of South Sudan. IGAD, as the guarantor of South Sudan's transition to independence in 2011, was once again involved in trying to define and minimise the crisis in the country and to find an all-inclusive solution to it. Since the conflict in South Sudan broke out in December 2013, IGAD has tried on several occasions to bring an end to the war between the faction of President Salva Kiir, as the head of state and government of South Sudan, and the

opposing faction of Riek Machar, as the head of the SPLM. Notably, on 8 May 2014, 11 June 2014, and 30 August 2014, the region failed to agree unanimously on an amicable solution to the crisis. It seems the greatest challenge facing the regional body is the non-compliance of the warring parties, and this challenge has unfortunately rendered the body powerless. As such, on 11 June and 30 August 2014, under the chairmanship of Ethiopia's Prime Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, IGAD called for the cessation of hostilities and reiterated the commitment to previous memoranda of understanding (e.g. the one signed on 8 May 2014) to end the conflict in South Sudan (IGAD 2014).

Chief among the problems faced by IGAD is the failure to define the causes of the crisis and the possible solutions to the crisis (Kuek 2014, 1; Nyak 2014, 1). IGAD is on record as denying the intensity of the conflict, defining it as a senseless war, and denying that it might constitute a genocide regardless of the escalating intensity of the war in recent months. One of the striking dynamics of the regional body's perception of the crisis has been condemning Riek Machar as the instigator of the conflict. The manufacture of political identity and the demonisation have been viewed as reneging on any meaningful solutions to the crisis. The demonisation of Riek Machar by IGAD has to be assessed within the context of IGAD's interest-based motives in South Sudan, particularly Uganda—"a cock among the hens in the region"—that has thrown its weight behind President Salva Kiir (Kuek 2014, 1). Under Uganda's tutelage, IGAD has been accused of undermining the wishes of the people of South Sudan as it perceives and presents Riek Machar as the legitimate leader of the country. Moreover, the unequivocal military support rendered to President Salva Kiir by Uganda has been presented against the ever-increasing hegemonic tendencies of President Museveni, whose history in Eastern and Central Africa and the continent's Great Lakes Region is wanting and disappointing because he is regarded as a power monger. Not only did the military resolution narrow any real chances for bringing the warring parties to a negotiating table, but it was a reflection of the militarisation of politics in South Sudan (Akol 2014, 9).

The above assessment suggests some of the internal and external problems that circumvent a meaningful solution to the conflict in South Sudan. It has been taken into account that politics in South Sudan have for long been militarised given the fact that the bulk of the politicians in the SPLM are either military personnel or have served in the military, whose prerogative has been to use military solutions to political problems. The need to demilitarise politics in South Sudan is an urgent matter because this will pave the way for cordial civilian-military relations and the possibility of a civilian constitutional government. What is more, Uganda's support for the government of President Kiir has only served to exarcebate this political reality. This support has in some way given the regime in Juba immunity from constructive engagement with Dr Riek Machar and perhaps the civil societies that may offer an alternative and non-military dimension to the crisis in South Sudan.

## CONCLUSION

The possibility of finding a lasting solution to the crisis in South Sudan has been marred by various important factors that the government of South Sudan, the opposition, and IGAD have not bothered to consider seriously. These factors relate to the causes of the conflict, the perception of each party of the resolution to the conflict, and the ever-increasing manufacture of political identity. Most importantly, promoting inclusivity has been marred by the insistence on political entitlement by those (in the government and the opposition SPLA) with liberation war credentials and a “straight-jacket” attitude to fighting for the control of South Sudan.

Until the causes of the conflict are well defined, the crisis in South Sudan will continue to escalate and perhaps cause untold suffering to the millions of innocent civilians who have not enjoyed peace since the first civil war with the North. The solution to the crisis depends on the ability of IGAD to exercise pragmatism in its mediation approach: that is, to show impartiality and at the same time condemn the methods used by both the government of South Sudan and the opposition in addressing their political differences. Until now the challenge in South Sudan has been that there are two domains in the mainstream politics of the country (the government and the opposition SPLA). As such the definition and nature of the conflict have been limited to these two parties’ understanding according to which the only viable solution has been a military one that has been expressed in their fixation on power and outwinning each other. IGAD, under the tutelage of Uganda, has not fared any better in terms of defining the causes of the conflict. The regional body’s indifference towards Riek Machar has only served to harden the opposition’s willingness to find an amicable solution. Thus, in the process, the regional body’s naivety has seen the warring parties defaulting on several deadlines, rendering the mediation process ineffective.

The manufacture of political identity that has been expressed through political demonisation by the government and the opposition has not only suggested the inadequacies of political insight on the part of the nationalist leaders but is a grave indication of failing to articulate the national question in South Sudan. The failure to address political differences against the backdrop of what is in the best interest of the nation exposes an exhausted nationalism on the part of a party that has degenerated into political and ideological impotence. It is imperative for the SPLM as a revolutionary party that brought democracy to South Sudan to move past the fight for political space and work towards the dreams and hopes associated with an independent South Sudan. Otherwise, what remains of the revolutionary party is a return to repetition without difference (as cautioned in Fanonian discourse) where the party has hijacked the people’s dreams of a better South Sudan. This situation was elevated to its highest pitch after the country’s independence in 2011 when the people’s hopes were dashed with the debacle that occurred on 15 December 2013.

The mainstream political landscape in South Sudan has been dominated by the SPLM as a revolutionary party since the first rebellion in 1956. The SPLM claims to be the only legitimate custodian of the history and future of South Sudan and has for long narrowed the political space for other contestants. This lack of inclusivity and the preference for political entitlement suggest arrogance on the part of the SPLM and perhaps elements of an ethnocratic state existing in South Sudan as the Dinka and Nuer have been at the echelons of power although the country is home to 60 different ethnic groups. An outcome of the fact that the crisis has been illuminated through the Dinka and Nuer dichotomy has been the recognition of the need to involve other relevant stakeholders to find a lasting solution to the problem facing the nation. Political entitlement has seen the government and the opposition blocking the possibility of other stakeholders, such as academics, civil society, community elders, and church groups, coming on board as a third party. The view is that these groups do not possess liberation credentials and as such they are not regarded as fit to take part in an inclusive solution to the crisis. This view speaks of arrogance on the part of those in power. Moreover, these perceptions are manufactured, do not reflect reality, and only serve to advance the contest for power between President Salva Kiir and the opposition leader, Riek Machar. Unless the proposed third party is involved, an escalation of the conflict is a real possibility as the methods to solve the crisis are being limited to military solutions, solutions that are preferred by the warring parties.

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