

Revisiting the Role of Superpower Leverage in Resolving Secessionist Wars: The Case of Sudan

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Abstract: As a greater number of sub-national groups demand secession, as is the case in the Horn of Africa, conflict mediation theories are without concrete principles with which to respond. Paradoxically, while mediation theories argue that peace is best guaranteed by superpower leverage, as it ensures the commitment of belligerents to signing and implementing peace agreements; separatist groups actively enlist the support of superpowers in their quest for secession. This article critically analyses superpower mediation and how it affects the negotiations, and the resolution, of secessionist wars. Two shortcomings are explored: First, secessionist wars are not accorded appropriate consideration in the literature despite their intricate nature. Second, superpower leverage in mediation is not considered a form of superpower hegemony. Two questions guided this research: would superpower leverage be appropriate to resolve conflicts pertaining to secessionist wars specifically? Also, does the mediation literature address the detrimental consequences of superpower leverage in mediating secessionist conflicts. Extensive interviews and findings from Sudan's 2005 peace agreement validate the main arguments of the article that the negative role of superpower leverage in mediation has been neglected and depoliticized in the literature which, consequently, legitimizes foreign intervention and exploitation and perpetuates the imposition of ready-made resolutions. Mediation theories could be more relevant and useful in fostering an indigenous end to secessionist wars by promoting subaltern ontologies and epistemologies in order to challenge the theoretical disposition of superpower hegemony in mediation theory, which, in turn, will strengthen local ownership of peace processes and foster consensus on indigenous resolutions. The aim of article is to call for a critical theory discourse to expand the very limited research on the role of external powers in determining the outcomes of secessionist negotiations rather than providing concrete alternatives to current mediation theories/policies.

Keywords: Sudan, Secessionist Wars, Superpower.

Introduction

The Horn of Africa is renowned for its secessionist conflicts, South Sudan, Eritrea, and Somaliland, to name a few. Secessionist Scholars argue that the birth of a new country via secession is not an internal matter as it is very much contingent upon the recognition and support it receives from superpowers or a hegemon such as the USA¹. When separatist groups are negotiating their independence from their host country, they actively enlist, during negotiations, the support of superpowers sympathetic to their cause. Superpower's decision whether to induce secession or not is principally based on their own geopolitical interests at the expense of local interests. As such, mediating secessionist wars by superpowers should

¹ Coggins, B. (2011). Friends in high places: International politics and the emergence of states from secessionism. *International Organization*, 65(3), p433.

be critically analyzed by examining their geopolitical interests, which determine whether a new state joins the international community of states or not.

Despite the increasing number of sub-national groups demanding secession, conflict resolution theories are without a dedicated critical discourse with which to deconstruct the role of the geopolitical interests of superpowers in determining the outcome of secessionist wars. Conflict resolution theories, generally, and mediation theories, specifically, argue that the attainment of peace, during civil war negotiations, is best guaranteed by superpower mediation². The rationale is simple: Superpower leverage ensures the swift commitment of the warring parties to signing a peace agreement and to implementing its mandates. As such, two questions guided this Article: would superpower leverage be appropriate to resolve conflicts pertaining to secessionist wars specifically? And, does the mediation literature address the detrimental consequences of superpower leverage in mediating secessionist conflicts.

Unlike conventional civil wars, secessionist wars have unique attributes that have not yet been afforded critical theoretical considerations by the mediation literature. For example, the potential birth of a new country, out of secession, requires the legal and political recognition of the international community and particularly superpowers. As such, secessionist wars are characterized by significant involvement by international and regional actors who might be vying for, or against, secession. Consequently, these foreign actors intervene heavily to influence the negotiations, and the outcome of the peace agreement, in order to align it favourably with their own interests. Accordingly, the geopolitical interests of the intervening international and regional actors overshadow the interests of those fighting the war. Put differently, superpowered mediation undermines the ability of the negotiators to arrive at a consensus on peace outcomes conducive to subaltern needs. Extensive interviews with stakeholders along with an examination of the role of the US mediation in Sudan's 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and its role during the six years interim period prior to the eventual secession of South Sudan in 2011, details how the use of leverage, in mediating secessionist wars, could be detrimental. Leverage during the CPA mediation was utilized to secure the interests of the US and its regional allies rather than the desires and aspirations of the locals at war who might have had a very different perception of peace. As such, it is crucial that mediation literature introduces a critical discourse on secessionist conflicts and critically reexamine the validity of superpowers' leverage in mediation.

Methodology

Utilizing an interpretive epistemology, this article drew on extensive interviews with 100 individuals, represented a broad range of the population in Sudan, as well as UN, AU, and NGO officials³. They reflected the perspectives of both Northern and Southern Sudanese and other involved parties in order to arrive at a balanced argument about the mediation processes.

Main Arguments & Theoretical Parameters

The overarching argument is that the use of mediation **processes** by superpowers to serve their geopolitical interests is not accorded appropriate consideration in mediation **literature**. In fact, the highly **politicized** role of superpower intervention in mediation **processes** has been **depoliticized** in the **literature**. Findings suggest that superpowers use mediation processes to serve their own hegemonic interests while ostensibly appearing to be 'assisting' the locals, out of humanitarian impulse, to restore 'peace' and 'prosperity'. Accordingly, it is further argued that mediation literature should not advocate the use of superpower leverage to mediate an end to secessionist wars as it only leads to the imposition of externally constituted resolutions and legitimizes foreign intervention. The aim is not to provide concrete alternatives to current mediation policies/theories but is on calling for a critical discourse within mediation literature to expand the limited research on the role of external powers in determining the outcomes of secessionist negotiations, and influencing peace agreements favorable to them, through mediation.

Theoretical Parameters

The theoretical aim is to provide an incentive for introducing a critical theory discourse within mediation literature. The article elaborates on previous critical research which argues that the role of superpowers in mediating secessionist wars is a form of **Hegemonic-Mediation** (Ahmed, 2020). It is important to critically question the Euro-American-centric ontologies and epistemologies of mediation knowledge and call for a new Critical Mediation Theory Discourse in which the role of superpower intervention in mediation literature is critically reconceptualized as a form of **Hegemonic-Mediation** that impedes local ownership of peace processes predicated upon consensual local interests⁴.

The high regard afforded superpower intervention in mediating secessionist wars enjoys an unchallenged ontological stability in the mediation literature that must be deconstructed and reconceptualized by subaltern ontologies and epistemologies in order to challenge the theoretical disposition of superpower hegemony in mediation theories. It is important, however, to unequivocally state that this article does *not* argue in favour of any specific outcome – whether it is

2 Walter, Barbara F. (2002). *Committing to Peace: The Successful Settlement of Civil Wars*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. p75. Hannum H. & Babbitt E. (Eds.), (2006). *Negotiating self-determination*. Lanham [Md.]: Lexington Books. p135.

3 All interviewees have consented to their names being mentioned in the article.

4 Ahmed, Khalid Elagab (2020). *Introducing Hegemonic-Mediation*, *Peace Review*, 32:1, p31.

secession or unity – except the one that is arrived at amicably, without foreign intimidation, by the local parties in negotiations; and does *not* intervene in the discussion of whether groups have the *right* to secede or not.

Definitions

Not all ethnic conflicts are secessionist conflicts. In most ethnic conflicts, warring parties are typically fighting for greater degree of autonomy, as in a form of federalism, confederalism, or over greater wealth-sharing and power-sharing pacts within the central government. Conversely, secession is defined as the complete political and territorial independence of part of an established state, which would entail the redrawing of international borders, acceptance by regional actors, and most importantly recognition by superpowers⁵. The tendency of mediation literature to analyze secessionist wars as an internal ethnic struggle for sharing political and economic powers is misleading. By underemphasizing the role of leverage in deciding the outcome of secessionist wars, mediation scholars mask the role of external factors affecting local parties' bargaining powers during negotiation and ultimately the outcomes of these negotiations. It is argued that "Sensing the potential for political recognition, for example, may encourage secessionist movements to continue fighting rather than accept seemingly generous settlements from their home states"⁶. The impact of superpowers on secession is undeniable; nevertheless, the literature continues to propagate, and rely on, superpowers despite them constituting a decisive prerequisite for achieving secession.

This article adopts Zartman's definition of mediation and peacemaking⁷:

Mediation is a form of third-party intervention in conflict for the purpose of abating or resolving that conflict through negotiations. In common with other forms of peacemaking or conflict resolution, it is an intervention that must be acceptable to the adversaries in the conflict, who cooperate diplomatically with the intervener. Peacemaking differs from other forms of third-party intervention in that it does not involve the use of force and is not intended to help one of the participants to win or prevail.

Contrarily, superpower mediation in secessionist wars does habitually involve the use of deadly militarized force and is frequently intended to help one of the warring parties to prevail in accordance with the interests of superpowers. In regular civil wars, Zartman, explain it succinctly⁸:

It would be rare for governments to engage in mediation for humanitarian reasons only. In fact, in view of the considerable investment of political, moral, and material resources that mediation requires, and the risks to which mediators expose themselves, it is reasonable to assume that mediators are no less motivated by self-interest than by humanitarian impulses. To some extent, then, the mediator is a player in the plot of relations surrounding a conflict.

Secessionist wars deserves equal or more attention than regular wars in the literature since the influence of a powerful mediator could contribute to secession. Understanding the literature's origins and critically analyzing the Euro-American-centric discourse clarifies its limitations.

Since the end of the Cold War, reliance on superpower mediation increased due to the new unipolar world order which allowed the US and other Western governments to intervene freely in mediation processes. Prominent mediation theorists argued that superpower mediators outperform others since they have the leverage (the ability to use carrots-and-sticks) necessary to coerce belligerents into signing peace agreements⁹. Scholars argued that powerful third-party mediators outperform neutral mediators in delivering agreements¹⁰. What is evident is the use of carrots-and-sticks regardless of the nature of the war e.g. secessionist war or not.

Accordingly, policy initiatives in the West adopted ready-made resolutions tailored to 'mediate' civil wars¹¹. Consequently, decisions on who would secede were not devised locally. A new world order would be rearranged by using mediation and reaching peace agreements agreed upon internationally¹². Briefly reviewing some of the major studies within mediation theory and practices reflects the shortcomings of its debates in addressing secessionist wars and in critiquing superpower leverage.

Understanding the Role of Superpowers in Mediation Literature: Theoretical Debates

5 Bereketeab, Redie (Ed.), (2015). *Self-Determination and Secession in Africa: The Post-Colonial State*. Abingdon, Oxon: New York, NY: Routledge. p99.

6 Coggins, B. (2011). Friends in high places: International politics and the emergence of states from secessionism. *International Organization*, 65(3), p22.

7 Zartman, I. W. (1985). *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p7.

8 Zartman, I. W. (1985). *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p8.

9 Babbitt, E. F. (2009). The evolution of international conflict resolution: From cold war to peacebuilding. *Negotiation Journal*, 25(4), p530.

10 Svensson, I. (2007). Bargaining, bias and peace brokers: How rebels commit to peace. *Journal of Peace Research*, 44(2), p185. Svensson, I. (2009). Who brings which peace? Neutral versus biased mediation and institutional peace arrangements in civil wars. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 53(3), p450.

11 Richmond, O. (2007). Critical research agendas for peace: The missing link in the study of international relations. *Alternatives*, 32(2), p254.

12 Richmond, O. (2007). Critical research agendas for peace: The missing link in the study of international relations. *Alternatives*, 32(2), p264.

There is general acknowledgement in the literature regarding the existence of ulterior motives in mediation; however, despite these assertions, the ulterior motives of mediators and the detrimental effects of their motives are very limited. Furthermore, mediation literature focuses on important technical aspects of third-party mediators and on the sequencing of peace processes and strategies, albeit without a critical discourse deconstructing mediation processes in secessionist wars.

Third-Party Mediators: The Techniques Debate

The literature centers around issues such as the perfect *timing* to intervene¹³, and whether mediators should intervene hurriedly to save lives and end the bloodshed or wait for a *ripe* moment to intervene in the conflict. Zartman¹⁴ contends that conflicts are only resolved when they are “ripe”. The ripeness occurs when the negotiating parties reach a stalemate. Many factors cause stalemate, including depleting resources to fund the war and/or when the war could not be won militarily. This stalemate creates a ripe moment for international mediators to intervene since warring parties would be more interested in negotiations than the continuation of war.

Moreover, debates such as *who sits at the negotiation table*, are prime¹⁵. This refers to how those excluded from the negotiations would probably become *spoilers* to the eventual peace. Excluded strong local, regional, and international actors, who deem that the negotiated peace does not serve their national interests, would attempt to undermine it.

Likewise, substantial consideration is given to who provides *security guarantees* to ensure peace¹⁶. Walter, for example, argues that having powerful security guarantees provided by powerful states is conducive to getting the warring parties to sign the peace agreement and to commit to implementing its provisions.

Third-Party Mediators: The Impartial and Biased Debate

A key debate surrounding external motives of mediators centers on impartiality. Impartiality assumes that mediators mediate without biased support to one side or the other; and is “one of the main requirements of acceptability by the parties, and as a prerequisite to establishing a relationship of trust”¹⁷. For mediation to be voluntary, warring parties must be interested in receiving the mediator’s assistance.

Some scholars argue that the mediator’s impartiality is crucial, while others argue that successful negotiations require biased mediators. Maoz and Terris¹⁸ posit that impartiality is a fundamental precondition to mediation and to gaining the trust of the warring parties in conflict. However, according to Svensson¹⁹, a powerful biased mediator can solicit concessions out of the side they support. Concessions, subsequently, resolve thorny disagreements.

Similarly, a biased mediator, Carnevale and Arad²⁰ argue, incentivizes practical resolutions and influence during negotiation. However, Greig and Diehl²¹, argue that biased mediation, of mediators holding a similar ideological disposition, are accepted when the cost of war increases.

Third-Party Mediators: The Motives and Interests Debate

An integral debate in literature is devoted to motivations of mediators in intervention. Based on Maoz and Terris²², mediators are more willing to intervene when material or ideological advantages outweigh the cost of intervention. Carnevale and Arad²³, affirm that “personal interests” may instigate mediators’ involvement.

13 Mattes, M & Savun, B. (2009). Fostering Peace After Civil War: Commitment Problems and Agreement Design. *International Studies Quarterly*, 53(3). p749. Svensson, I & Wallensteen, P. (2010). *The Go-between: Jan Eliasson and the Styles of Mediation*. USIP Press Books. p139.

14 Zartman, I. W. (1985). *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p30. Bercovitch J. (2007). "Mediation in International Conflicts: Theory, Practice and Developments." In *Peacemaking in International Conflict: Methods and Techniques*, edited by William Zartman. 2nd ed. Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace. p234.

15 Bercovitch, J., & Houston, A. (2000). Why do they do it like this? *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 44(2), 179.

16 Walter, Barbara F. (2002). *Committing to Peace: The Successful Settlement of Civil Wars*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. p135.

17 Fisher, Ronald J., (2001). Cyprus: The Failure of Mediation and the Escalation of an Identity-Based Conflict to an Adversarial Impasse. *Journal of Peace Research*. Vol. 38, No. 3, Special Issue on Conflict Resolution in Identity-Based Disputes. p311.

18 Maoz Zeev, Lesley Terris G. (2009) ‘Credibility and Strategy in International Mediation’, in Bercovitch Jacob, Gartner Scott Sigmund (eds) *International Conflict Management: New Approaches and Findings*, London: Routledge. p. 69–95.

19 Svensson, I. (2009). Who brings which peace? Neutral versus biased mediation and institutional peace arrangements in civil wars. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 53(3), p456.

20 Carnevale, P.J.D., & Arnd, S. (1996). “Bias and Impartiality in International Mediation”. In J. Bercovitch (ed.) *Resolving International Conflicts: The Theory and Practice of Mediation*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner. p39.

21 Greig, M & Diehl, P. (2012). *International Mediation*. Cambridge: Polity Press. p35.

In addition, Bercovitch and Sigmund²⁴ assert that mediators will certainly strive to achieve their interests through intervention. Similarly, Woodward lists the key motivations for mediation as ideology, national security interest, strategic interest, and bureaucratic interest²⁵.

The major mediation literature reviewed provides debates on external mediators and their impact on peace outcomes concerning regular civil wars. Clearly, secessionist wars, irrespective of their specific nature, are not differentiated and, are expected to be mediated in a manner akin to regular wars. Additionally, constructive critique on the detrimental effects of superpower mediation is neglected in the literature.

Limitations of Mediation Theory

The literature has not critically deconstructed the role of leverage in mediation. Only Richmond²⁶, specifically considers Western mediation to be a form of hegemony, albeit, without discussing specifically the role of hegemony in secession. Richmond argues that:

Mediation arrived in modernity through a heritage of mainly European, elite diplomacy, aimed at defending many privileges embedded in the system as far as possible. This understanding of the role of mediation is embedded in the Westphalian system of sovereignty, which it supports. At the same time it valorises the possibilities of elite-led, rational-legal discourse, and the use of intellect, knowledge, and communicative skill, along with status and power. Mediators were men with standing in the international diplomatic system, or wielding material power in the states-system as during the Cold War (i.e. Henry Kissinger, President Carter, or later Richard Holbrooke), or with moral standing in the UN system (Dag Hammarskjöld or later Hans Blix), or moral standing at another level, such as the Vatican during the Beagle Channel Dispute. There was little to challenge these systems with its epistemological frameworks that tended to adopt problem-solving approaches to maintaining territorial, material, ideological, normative and hierarchical aspects of the current order.

Richmond elaborates that contemporary mediation practices, and the peace processes they advance, have evolved from the 19th century world of elite, state-centric and territorialism “power” diplomacy, mediated by elite officials deployed to attain their power and interests. Richmond²⁷ illustrates that:

In the past, various forms of international intervention, from peacekeeping to peacebuilding, statebuilding, and the R2P doctrine, were either high-level processes essentially used to maintain a fragile strategic and territorially sovereign balance between states and their elite leaders, or to build new states and inculcate new norms, using a mixture of diplomacy, direct or governmental power. International mediation, once a fashionable and widely studied aspect of IR, suffered from having settled into its understanding of an elite and status or power-driven form of ‘impartial’ mediation facade, embedded in liberal-institutionalism, and spoken through the medium of ‘elite-phrased English’.

Yet, Richmond’s research does not address how superpower meddling in mediating secessionist wars could dictate outcomes. Western debates continued to operate as a narrow technique that is predicated on Euro-American-centric ontologies and epistemologies. Consequently, mediation literature/practices are reflections of dominant western theories and conception of peace. Subaltern discourses of peace such as *bashinganthe* in Burundi, *gacaca* in Rwanda, and *mato oput* in north-central Uganda are sidelined in favour of realism, liberalism, game theory and other problem-solving methods.

On how to mediate wars of self-determination, Hurst Hannum and Eileen Babbitt²⁸ (ed.) provide the single literature available to the author’s knowledge. However, they propagate superpower leverage to decide on who to secede or who to remain united:

22 Maoz Zeev, Lesley Terris G. (2009) ‘Credibility and Strategy in International Mediation’, in Bercovitch Jacob, Gartner Scott Sigmund (eds) International Conflict Management: New Approaches and Findings, London: Routledge. p. 69–95.

23 Carnevale, P.J.D., & Arnd, S. (1996). “Bias and Impartiality in International Mediation”. In J. Bercovitch (ed.) Resolving International Conflicts: The Theory and Practice of Mediation. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner. p40.

24 Bercovitch, J. and Gartner, Scott Sigmund (2009). “Is there a method in the madness of mediation?” in Jacob Bercovitch and Scott Sigmund Gartner (Eds.) International Conflict Mediation: New Approaches & Findings. Abingdon: Routledge Print. p74.

25 Woodward, S. L. (2007). Do the root causes of civil war matter? On using knowledge to improve peacebuilding interventions. Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding, 1(2), p154.

26 Richmond, O. P. (2018). A genealogy of mediation in international relations: From ‘analogue’ to ‘digital’ forms of global justice or managed war? Cooperation and Conflict, p7.

27 Richmond, O. P. (2018). A genealogy of mediation in international relations: From ‘analogue’ to ‘digital’ forms of global justice or managed war? Cooperation and Conflict, p13.

28 Hannum H. & Babbitt E. (Eds.), (2006). Negotiating self-determination. Lanham [Md.]: Lexington Books. p162, p122.



I discuss the importance of powerful states as mediators because of their ability to bring resources to bear on the contending parties in form of “carrots” (incentives) and “sticks” (punishment). My analysis demonstrates how important such states can be in moving antagonistic parties through the negotiation process. Such mediators can sometimes change the cost benefit calculation of governments or elites who reap economic and political rewards from the continuing chaos of war. Some would argue, for example, that the United States is the only state that has the capacity to play that role in the ongoing war over contending Israeli and Palestinian claims for self-determination in the Middle East.

Their analyses legitimize foreign intervention and allows superpowers to hold the keys to peace outcomes. In turn, superpower leverage could be utilized to manipulate local leaders in order to shape a specific outcome, favourable to superpowers, during the negotiations. They elaborate:

Because self-determination touches upon identity issues as well as political power questions, the negotiation process is especially challenging and is open to manipulation by leaders and extremist elements. A committed and knowledgeable mediator can monitor the ebb and flows of these issues and keep the negotiation process on track.

They assume that the “committed and knowledgeable mediator” has no ulterior interests and/or their interests are benign. Consequently, the highly *politicized* role of superpower intervention, and how they “keep the negotiations on track”, was *depoliticized*, and legitimized, in their analysis and in all the literature reviewed. Case in point, the US’ leverage during Sudan’s CPA mediation, “[kept] the negotiations on track” by waging a war on, and by manipulation of, local actors.

Case Study: The 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CP)

The following sections examine the role of the IGAD mediation process, 1993-2005, between the Government of Sudan (GoS) and the Sudanese People Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M), which contributed to the 2005 CPA signing, and to the secession of South Sudan in 2011. The mediators were the US and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) states of Eritrea, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Kenya. The mediation process was headed by Kenya under direct supervision from the US²⁹.

According to Taisier Ali and Robert Matthews³⁰, “The SPLA [Sudanese People Liberation Army] rejected secession on grounds that the war is not a fight between Northerners and Southerners. It is not a fight between Christians and Muslims. In essence, the [SPLA] movement saw its struggle as being against established structures and relations in Sudan.” Since the civil war was fought by the SPLA to create the structural foundations of a new Sudan for all marginalized regions, how did the ensuing peace negotiations end up with secession? What were the interests of those mediators and what outcome did they seek for this secessionist war? The administration of US President George W. Bush claimed victory at the signing of the CPA³¹. What were the contributions of the American and IGAD mediators to the negotiations and ultimate secession?

IGAD’s mediation effort in Sudan demonstrates how superpower mediators, along with their regional allies, were serving their own interests rather than the interests of the Sudanese people. In fact, the IGAD armies were fighting alongside the SPLA, with funding from the US, to overthrow GoS while simultaneously involved as mediators. Events during mediation illustrate how the breakup of Sudan was their own ulterior motive. The mediators, capitalized on shifting opinions toward secession within the SPLA and, supported South Sudan’s secessionist claims for their own geopolitical reasons. These mediators, ultimately, brought the GoS to accept secession through coercion and mediation. Yet, mediation literature on the secession of South Sudan had never considered the role of the US in the secession as a form of hegemonic-mediation (Ahmed, 2020). In addition, findings accentuate that while the regional and internal factors were crucial factors, the US intervention in the conflict was the most significant factor contributing to the secession of South Sudan.

Internal Politics Prior to the Agreement

The Sudanese People Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) began fighting Sudan’s second civil war in 1983. The 1989 National Islamic Front (NIF)-led coup in Sudan forever changed the dynamics of the war and its future mediation processes. The NIF had been historically against peace in the South and was vehemently interested in spreading its radical Islamic ideology in all parts of Sudan and beyond its borders to other regional states. This new radical Islamic ideology constituted a threat to Sudan’s neighbors, as well as to the US, and ultimately led these countries to adopt a very violent brand of mediation. However, in 1991, the SPLA suffered a major destabilizing crisis: an internal revolt within the SPLM/A’s leadership³².

The SPLM/A’s Internal Revolt: New Sudan vs Secession

29 Johnson, D. H. (2016). South Sudan: A New History for a New Nation. Ohio University Press. p93.

30 Ali, Taisier M. and Robert O. Matthews (1999). Civil wars in Africa: roots and resolution. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press. p200.

31 McCormick, TY. (2015). Unmade in the USA: a Special Report. Foreign Policy. p45.

32 Khalid, M. (2015). THE PARADOX OF TWO SUDANS: The CPA and the Road to Partition. Africa World Press. p88.

The SPLM/A was founded by the late Dr. John Garang, as a socialist movement, to create a ‘*New Sudan*’ free of marginalization³³. While many Sudanese embraced the New Sudan vision, especially after the NIF’s narrow Islamic agenda had further alienated various Sudanese regions and communities, some Southern Sudanese thought it would be best for the South to secede in order to “enable a South Sudanese national identity to evolve and develop”³⁴. In fact, these contradictory views amongst Southern elites led to an internal revolt in the SPLM/A’s leadership, between Lam Akol, Riek Machar, and Garang, which took place in August 1991, and fighting weakened the SPLM/A to near extinction³⁵. Garang agreed to the notion of self-determination to end the internal rift and accommodate the separatists, at least in principle³⁶. Consequently, self-determination was considered as a precondition for any future settlement. Despite this, Garang continued to strive for his vision of a new Sudan. The divide between secessionist and non-secessionists within the SPLM/A would eventually be used by the US, when it assumes control of the IGAD mediations process, by siding with the secessionists and excluding non-secessionists in the South from the negotiation process. Prior to the IGAD mediation process, the SPLM’s internal revolt was vivid during two earlier mediation efforts led by Nigeria named the Abuja I and Abuja II processes.

The Internationalization of the Conflict: Nigeria’s Mediation Efforts

The Nigerian Abuja I mediation efforts, in 1992, constituted the first efforts involving foreign states and commenced more international intervention. During the talks, the GoS insisted that the South could be exempt from Sharia law. The SPLA was represented by two separate factions led by Machar and Garang and countered the government proposal with demands for a secular democratic state and, for the first time, inserted the right of the South to a referendum on self-determination³⁷. Vries and Schomerus³⁸ explain:

Within the divided SPLA, the battle was not only military, but also ideological. In 1992, the split SPLA convened for peace talks in Abuja at the invitation of the Nigerian Government. While Garang continued to hold on to his vision of New Sudan, the SPLA faction under Machar – who was later to become Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan and then leader of the armed opposition against the government in 2013 – vocally supported secession. The Abuja talks were supposed to bridge the divide between the two positions. It was the first time that Garang’s SPLM/A put self-determination on the agenda.

Both the Nigerian and Sudanese governments rejected the SPLA’s self-determination proposal and the talks collapsed.

Nigeria, subsequently, mediated the Abuja II talks in 1993. At this time, the rift between the two SPLA factions had led to intense fighting between them in South Sudan. Consequently, the SPLM/A’s military and its bargaining power were weakened. The GoS offered economic and political sharing pacts, rejected secession and any constitutional reform where Islam would not be the official state religion³⁹. The SPLM/A rejected the government’s proposal and called for autonomy, a secular democratic state, and proposed that all marginalized regions of Sudan would have a vote on separation if the GoS reneged on their demands⁴⁰. Again, the negotiations failed due to disagreements over religion and self-determination. With the end of Nigeria’s mediation efforts, a new regional organization, the IGAD, took over the mediation tasks.

Superpower Mediation: Orchestrating Regional Attitudes

Sudan agreed that IGAD mediates since it was keen on having an African mediation process rather than a Western one. The IGAD states of Ethiopia, Eritrea, Uganda, and Kenya established a Peace Committee to mediate the war in 1993. In addition, Norway, Italy, the United Kingdom (UK), the Netherlands, and the US formed the Friends of IGAD forum in support of IGAD’s mediation efforts in Sudan⁴¹. The US contributed generously to funding the expenses of the peace process⁴². In 1994, the IGAD mediation session started with Ethiopia proposing a Declaration of Principles (DoP) document as the basis for the negotiations.

33 Deng F. M. (Ed.), (2010). *New Sudan in the making?: Essays on a nation in painful search of itself*. Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press. p233.

34 Nyaba, P. A. (2007). SPLM–NCP asymmetrical power relations jeopardise the implementation of the CPA and the future of the Sudan. *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies*, 5(1), p142.

35 Vries, Lotje de & Schomerus, M. (2017). *Fettered Self-determination: South Sudan’s Narrowed Path to Secession*. *Civil Wars*, VOL. 19, NO. 1, p36.

36 Nyaba, P. A. (2007). SPLM–NCP asymmetrical power relations jeopardise the implementation of the CPA and the future of the Sudan. *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies*, 5(1), p143.

37 Khalid, M. (2015). *THE PARADOX OF TWO SUDANS: The CPA and the Road to Partition*. Africa World Press. p57.

38 Vries, Lotje de & Schomerus, M. (2017). *Fettered Self-determination: South Sudan’s Narrowed Path to Secession*. *Civil Wars*, VOL. 19, NO. 1, p33.

39 Khalid, M. (2015). *THE PARADOX OF TWO SUDANS: The CPA and the Road to Partition*. Africa World Press. p99.

40 Woodward, P. (2006). *US foreign policy and the horn of Africa*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate. p172.

41 El-Affendi, A. (2001). The impasse in the IGAD peace process for Sudan: The limits of regional peacemaking? *African Affairs*, 100(401), p591.

42 Vries, Lotje de & Schomerus, M. (2017). *Fettered Self-determination: South Sudan’s Narrowed Path to Secession*. *Civil Wars*, VOL. 19, NO. 1, p35.



The DoP acknowledged South Sudan's right to self-determination through a referendum if the GoS reneged on the DoP. These principals included a democratic and secular system, wealth and power sharing, various forms of regional autonomy, equality, and the independence of the judiciary system in Sudan⁴³. The secular system clause was critical for Sudan's neighbouring countries to curtail the spread of Sudan's Islamic agenda into their countries. The regional mediators began protecting their interests by setting the agenda of the peace process.

Dr. Zhagorav, who was a Senior UN mediator and the UN observer in the mediations leading to the CPA, confided in an interview that all the Foreign Ministers of the IGAD countries had told him personally that they wished secession for Southern Sudan. Their rationale was that Sudan was too large and strong in the region⁴⁴. Moreover, the secession of the South would weaken Sudan economically "By secession, 75% of Sudan's oil will end up in the hands of the South Sudan government. This would deprive the GoS of oil"⁴⁵. The Islamist GoS at the time was in support of the marginalized Muslims in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Furthermore, the IGAD countries felt more comfortable dealing with Southern Sudanese than with Northern Sudanese since Southerners are considered black Africans and Christian "like us"⁴⁶. Sudan did not expect that Ethiopia would set the DoP. The GoS had previously propelled the Ethiopian president to power in his country with material and financial support provided to him by Sudan when he was a rebel leader living in Sudan.

The two SPLA delegations accepted the DoP while the GoS rejected it and quit the negotiations until 1998⁴⁷. By producing the guiding principles of negotiations, the IGAD states decided to cultivate an outcome that would serve their own interests in the region.

The DoP also signaled strong support for the SPLM/A by the IGAD states and allowed the SPLA added bargaining powers despite its apparent internal divisions and military weakness on the ground. Conversely, this signaled to the GoS that the mediators had taken it upon themselves to resolve the conflict on their own terms. The DoP terms mandated that the Islamic regime in Sudan be substituted with a secular one that would be in line with the US' interests in fighting Islamism.

The US Policy towards the Sudan

The US policy towards the Sudan at the time was to change the GoS's radical Islamic regime. To the US, Sudan is to be punished for sponsoring terrorism, abandoning the IGAD mediation, and rejecting the DoP initiatives⁴⁸ (Khadiagala, 2007). The U.S used leverage to penalize the GoS by military intervention -- 'the stick'.

In a bold move, the IGAD mediators — Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Uganda — formed what was known as the "frontline states". They increased their military assistance to the SPLM/A, and, by late 1995, they became directly involved in the civil war by sending their armed forces deep into Sudan⁴⁹. The US financed the frontline states with US\$20 million in their efforts to overthrow the GoS. In addition, US decided a direct military action against Sudan by bombing a pharmaceutical factory in August 1998. The US presumed the factory produced chemical weapons but failed to provide evidence⁵⁰. Madeleine Albright, US Secretary of State at the time, met with SPLM/A members in Uganda in October 1998 and informed them of the US' wish to overthrow the GoS⁵¹. Effectively, this US-led coalition of mediators, now turned-perpetrators, was directly involved in the secessionist war while ostensibly leading its 'mediation' efforts⁵². Only Dr. John Young criticized the US and frontline states for their military engagement. Despite the violent effects of superpower mediation in Sudan, mediation literature on the CPA continues to depoliticize the role of superpower leverage in secessionist wars which lends it legitimacy.

When the author quizzed the UN mediator at the CPA, Dr. Zhagorav⁵³, on what the UN had thought regarding the US and frontline states' military intervention, he replied:

I spoke with my superiors and told them that what the frontline states are doing is wrong. However, my superiors' reply was that the Sudan's government was an illegitimate government and that they [the UN] should not do anything about it. I told them that Sudan is recognized by the UN as a Member State and Sudan has a representative in UN. Whether they came to power via military coup or democracy, should not be the deciding factor on whether the UN should act or not to

43 de Waal, Alex (2021). The ambiguities of self-determination: IGAD and the secession of South Sudan. *Nations and Nationalism*. 27: p85.

44 Interview with Dr. Zhagorav, 11-05-2018.

45 Interview with Dr. Mohamed Mukhtar, Jan 14, 2013.

46 Interview with Dr. Zhagorav, 11-05-2018.

47 Khalid, M. (2015). *THE PARADOX OF TWO SUDANS: The CPA and the Road to Partition*. Africa World Press. p222.

48 Khadiagala, G.M. (2007). *Meddlers or Mediators?: African Interveners in Civil Conflicts in Eastern Africa*. Martinus Nijhoff. p197.

49 Khalid, M. (2015). *THE PARADOX OF TWO SUDANS: The CPA and the Road to Partition*. Africa World Press. p342.

50 Woodward, P. (2006). *US foreign policy and the horn of Africa*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate. p157,

51 Woodward, P. (2006). *US foreign policy and the horn of Africa*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate. p163

52 Young, John (2012). *The fate of Sudan: the origins and consequences of a flawed peace process*. New York: Zed Books. p63.

53 Interview with Dr. Zhagorav, 11-05-2018.

protect its Member States from foreign aggression. The UN should have condemned the actions of the frontline states, but it didn't.

The US leverage turned the mediators into foreign aggressors operating under the pretense of mediation. Concerned about the US interest in ousting the regime, the GoS in May 1998 accepted the DoP as the basis for negotiations and rejoined the IGAD process. However, in 1998, a war between Ethiopia and Eritrea put the talks on hold⁵⁴.

At the resumption of mediation in 2002, in Nairobi, the lead mediator, Lazaro Sumbeiywo from Kenya, drafted a one-page document that did not mention the right to self-determination to use as a guide for the agenda. As a result, "the SPLM was furious and the United States hit the roof. The US envoy to the process just walked out and the SPLM/A went red"⁵⁵. This was a clear indication that the US was interested in secession and not the idea of a *New Sudan*. Previously, the extent of American support of secession was not made clear to the IGAD mediators. This was about to change. The US lent support to the pro-secession camp in the SPLM/A led by Salva Kiir — the current President of South Sudan. Gradually, Garang's New Sudan vision was shelved and those who believed in it marginalized during the negotiations. Under US pressure, the self-determination clause was reinserted, and the document was signed by the GoS and became known as the Machakos Protocol. The IGAD/US led mediation process had no expansive local consultations within the South regarding secession.

Southern Sudan is a heterogeneous society. It is comprised of hundreds of local communities and local languages and they have not all agreed on secession. An interview with Ismail Konyi⁵⁶ reveals the extent of rift between the secessionist and non-secessionists:

Most white people think that the Dinka tribe is the tribe that represents South Sudan. They only deal with the Dinka because that is where the leadership of the SPLA is from. We do not approve of that. The Dinka do not represent the South. We also have people died in the struggle to free the South. Why should they be given more attention than us? We are [the Morle] a strong and big tribe and we will not let any other tribe in the South tell us what to do".

It was apparent that the process was set up to negotiate the terms of the separation between the North and the South and the secessionists/non-secessionists had little room to resolve their differences. Two things happened due to the Machakos Protocol.

First, the leaders of the Sudan and South Sudan delegations were replaced. Dr. Ghazi Salahudin was removed from the Sudan team and Salva Kiir was replaced as the Southern lead negotiator by Dr. Garang. The GoS was not happy with Dr. Ghazi for succumbing to US pressure and agreeing to the self-determination clause and was replaced by Vice President Taha. In an interview with the author, Dr. Ghazi said that he "did not think there will be any referendum"⁵⁷. In other words, he signed the document to cool down the US pressure and to avoid its aggression towards the GoS. He believed that, even though the US was working with separatists in the SPLM, the Sudanese government had a good chance at avoiding secession by working with those who believed in the vision of a New Sudan. Sudan at this time did not desire or think separation would happen.

Second, the split within the SPLM/A was exacerbated by the mediator's position favoring secession. Kiir, a well-known separatist, did not share Garang's vision of a New Sudan and had wanted secession, opening the way for the 'mediators' to gain a foothold for their preferred position⁵⁸. Therefore, Garang was angry at the betrayal by his Vice chairman of the SPLM/A for signing the Machakos Protocol. Garang's vision of a united and New Sudan, had a position that might have contributed to a more indigenous outcome where the two parties would have to discuss how to transform Sudan into a more inclusive country for all its marginalized regions. The Machakos Protocol was "very much due to international pressure, especially by the US and the UK"⁵⁹. According to the South Sudan Democratic Forum, the inclusion of the self-determination clause in the Declaration of Principles "would not have happened without American involvement"⁶⁰. Kiir cleverly used the support of the US in Machakos as an opportunity to insert and assert the right of South Sudan to secession in the CPA. The US' Carrots and Sticks were on full display.

54 Young, John (2012). *The fate of Sudan: the origins and consequences of a flawed peace process*. New York: Zed Books. p67.

55 Waihenya, W. (2006). *The mediator: Gen. Lazaro Sumbeiywo and the Southern Sudan peace process*. Nairobi: Kenway Publications. p85.

56 Interview with, Sultan/Colonel Ismail Konyi, Militia leader, SPLA officer, and MP of the Morle Tribe, 13-12-2006.

57 Interview with Dr. Ghazi Salahudin, May 2006.

58 Young, John (2012). *The fate of Sudan: the origins and consequences of a flawed peace process*. New York: Zed Books. p112.

59 Woodward, P. (2006). *US foreign policy and the horn of Africa*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate. p127.

60 Woodward, P. (2006). *US foreign policy and the horn of Africa*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate. p127.



Mediation and the War on Terror: Peace by other Means

Throughout the IGAD mediation process, the credibility of the GoS decreased because of its radical Islamic agenda, while the SPLA's popularity as a movement increased in the US. Garang's reputation as a black Christian, and as an oppressed freedom fighter who was fighting an Islamic terrorist state, won him many allies in the US' inner circles of power⁶¹. The US took several measures to contain the GoS's Islamic agenda.

First, in 1993, the US added Sudan to the list of countries sponsoring terrorism in connection with the bombing of the World Trade Centre in that same year. This prevented Sudan from receiving debt relief (among other financial assistance) from international financial institutions (IFIs)⁶². Second, in 1997, President Clinton imposed economic and trade sanctions on Sudan for its sponsoring of Osama Bin Ladin, who lived in Sudan between 1991 and 1996⁶³. The bombing of the US embassy in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1998, led the Clinton administration, which accused the GoS of involvement in the bombing, to authorize food supply and material aid to the SPLA in 1999. Madeleine Albright and her Assistant Secretary, Susan Rice, orchestrated with Baroness C. Cox of Christian Solidarity International the supply of food to the SPLA⁶⁴. The US actions made it clear that they were against the GoS and that they were sympathetic to the SPLM/A cause. The political and material support for the SPLM/A by the US administration will further increase during George W. Bush's administration.

The Christian, Black, and Oil Lobbies: Shaping the US Foreign Policy Towards Sudan

President George W. Bush solidified the US' interests in Sudan by appointing, in 2001, Senator John Danforth as a special peace envoy to Sudan. The US' support of secession increased for several reasons. The American Christian Right, which was closely associated with President Bush, thought that the SPLM/A was a Christian movement fighting a war against Islamization. In addition, the Congressional Black Caucus in the US Congress portrayed the secessionist war in Sudan as a war of blacks fighting a war of survival against Arabs. The oil lobby, in addition, pressed for a resolution since it was eager to enter the Sudan market. Asteris Huliaras⁶⁵ elucidates:

Shortly after Bush took office, a group of activists came to see presidential adviser Karl Rove, who had masterminded Bush's electoral strategy. The group included born-again Christians and liberal Jewish activists, and its objective was to ask the new administration to intercede in the Sudanese civil war. Rove, according to participants in the meeting, was 'unusually receptive'. The need to retain evangelical voter support was an important factor in persuading the new administration to show a strong interest in Sudan's civil war. While the evangelicals' demands were a headache for many career State Department officials, Rove saw an opportunity to encourage cooperation between evangelicals and African-American lobbyists. For African-American activists, building alliances with other lobby groups was highly desirable, considering that their influence on US foreign policy was in decline. The retreat from public life owing to illness of Black Muslim leader Louis Farrakhan, who was a defender of the Islamic government of Sudan, helped encourage rapprochement between African Americans and evangelicals. African-American groups such as the National Black Leadership Committee and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) banded with evangelical groups, and the anti-Khartoum coalition became a significant political force... That same month, then Secretary of State Colin Powell told the Congress that 'there is perhaps no greater tragedy on the face of the earth today than the tragedy that is unfolding in the Sudan'. He added: 'The only way to deal with that tragedy is to end the conflict'. One week after these comments, Powell commissioned a review of US policy toward Sudan.

Official US pressure to intervene in Sudan's conflict was formalized when the Sudan Peace Act was enacted and signed by President Bush in October 2002. The Act made \$300 million, available over three years, for the US government to spend on its peace process in SPLM/A-controlled areas in Sudan⁶⁶. The fund was in support of the oppressed black Christians in Southern Sudan in their efforts to break free from the shackles of the oppressive Muslim Arabs of the North.

The Act stipulated that the US President must confirm every six months that the GoS and the SPLM are engaged in negotiations and the GoS is allowing the safe passage of humanitarian assistance. The US President was further authorized by the Act to ensure compliance by the GoS to the above requirements by seeking an arms embargo from the UN Security Council; and was authorized to influence the conduct of the GoS by other financial and diplomatic means (Sudan Peace Act, 2002). The Act demonstrated that the US was ready to intervene in Sudan to protect the interests.

61 Leach, J. D. (2013). War and politics in Sudan: Cultural identities and the challenges of the peace process. New York: I.B. Tauris. p189.

62 Woodward, P. (2006). US foreign policy and the horn of Africa. Burlington, VT: Ashgate. p111.

63 Johnson, D. H. (2011). The root causes of Sudan's civil wars: Peace or truce (Rev. ed.). Kampala: Fountain Publishers. p123.

64 Young, John (2012). The fate of Sudan: the origins and consequences of a flawed peace process. New York: Zed Books. p131.

65 Huliaras, A. (2008). The evangelical roots of US Africa policy. *Survival*, 50(6), p170.

66 Sudan Peace Act, 2002.

The late Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat, Kenya's Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation, admitted that the Kenyan government used the Christian Right, and the issue of religion, in the US to pressure the US government into taking a hard line against Sudan. Moreover, the Kenyan government had deliberately exaggerated the issue of slavery in Sudan with the Black caucus in the US (Interview with Kiplagat, May 10th, 2007). Their efforts on pushing the issue of slavery paid off. To this point, Asteris Huliaras⁶⁷ (2009) explains:

Steady campaigning on the slavery issue at the Christian grassroots level and fundraising through appeals to 'buy back' slaves by evangelical congregations helped to upgrade interest in Sudan's civil war, which was portrayed in simplistic terms as a 'biblical conflict' between Arab Muslims of the North and African Christians of the South. Gradually, evangelical groups started to show a strong interest in US foreign policy towards Sudan.

Ambassador Kiplagat, on how Kenya would benefit from its stance against Sudan, and its support for secession of Southern Sudan, added that "it will be Kenyan business and products that will replace Sudan as the main supplier of South Sudan's markets". He gave an example of how Kenyan beer products have been flooding the South Sudan markets after it signed the CPA and gained autonomy in 2005. He was convinced that the landlocked new country of South Sudan would have to "build oil pipelines to the Kenyan port of Mombasa in order to ship its oil to international markets — instead of its current pipeline through Northern Sudan. Kenya itself would benefit from South Sudan's oil"⁶⁸.

The oil lobby, in addition, pressed for a resolution since it was eager to enter the Sudan market but could not due to the 1997 US-imposed sanctions on Sudan⁶⁹. Owing to the sanctions, the benefits of early American oil exploration efforts at establishing the industry in Sudan were benefitting a handful of Asian companies, and Talisman Company of Canada, at that time⁷⁰. It is easy to infer that if the US would support South Sudan's independence, in return, US oil companies would benefit from any new oil exploration and production in South Sudan.

'I will not forget Sudan', Bush promised when he signed the Sudan Peace Act into law⁷¹. The IGAD mediation process would receive full US backing, and support, and that would prove vital in securing the agreement. In an effort to provide incentives 'carrots', the US offered to remove Sudan from the list of states sponsoring terrorism only after it had signed the CPA⁷². This removal would release funding from the IFIs to Sudan. This offer encouraged Sudan to conclude the talks⁷³. The US pressure to fast-track the process succeeded. At one point, however, the US had to use the 'sticks' again⁷⁴:

To break the impasse, Sumbeiywo contacted [Senator] Danforth, now US ambassador to the UN and chair of the Security Council. The former US special envoy to Sudan [Danforth] organized a convening of the Security Council in Nairobi on 18-19 November 2004 to encourage the parties to conclude the talks... and to coax the parties to agree to sign the documents necessary to conclude the peace process.

The GoS considered this meeting a threat because the Security Council's interference in the conflict could lead to further sanctions. Soon after the Security Council meeting in Nairobi, the CPA was signed on January 9th, 2005, and stipulated that an interim period of six years must pass before South Sudan had the right to a referendum of secession.

The role of the US was neither benign nor covert:

Of course, not all the factors that contributed to the agreement can be attributed to US diplomacy. But according to many analysts, the peace deal would never have been sealed if the United States had not brought such leverage to the process. The agreement was a diplomatic achievement and a great victory for evangelical activists⁷⁵.

Bona Malwal, a prominent Southern Sudanese scholar/politician, concurs that the CPA was due to the intense pressure from Western countries, especially the US (Malwal, 2005).

When President Barack Obama succeeded Bush, he perpetuated the policy:

67 Huliaras, A. (2008). The evangelical roots of US Africa policy. *Survival*, 50(6), p169.

68 Interview with Mr. Kiplagat, May 10, 2007.

69 Interview with Mr. Kiplagat, May 10, 2007.

70 Kobrin, S. J. (2004). Oil and politics: talisman energy and Sudan. *New York University Journal of International Law and Politics*, 36(Issues & 3), p445.

71 Huliaras, A. (2008). The evangelical roots of US Africa policy. *Survival*, 50(6), p169.

72 Interview with Mr. Osama Faisal, 2017.

73 It is important to note, however, that US reneged on its promise and Sudan was not removed from the list until Dec. 14th 2020.

74 Waihenya, W. (2006). *The mediator: Gen. Lazaro Sumbeiywo and the Southern Sudan peace process*. Nairobi: Kenway Publications. p142.

75 Huliaras, A. (2008). The evangelical roots of US Africa policy. *Survival*, 50(6), p172.



The evangelical community played a crucial role not only in placing Sudan on the US government agenda but also in affecting its actual policy toward this African country. And it continued to do so even after the signing of the North–South peace accord. As Danforth put it, Sudan became ‘a very, very high priority ... something that was of personal interest’ to Bush. This does not mean, however, that evangelical influence over US Africa policy will decline once Bush leaves the White House. On the contrary, there is reason to expect that evangelicals will continue to shape US policies even after Barack Obama is sworn in as US president on 20 January 2009⁷⁶.

The next section will analyze how the US policy on the secession of South Sudan has shaped the internal process during the six years interim period.

Superpower Mediation: Shaping Local Attitudes

The rationale for the six years interim period was to give unity one last chance. In those six years, the GoS in the North was expected to end the marginalization of the South and build trust and confidence between the North and South. However, interviews conducted in the North and South revealed something different.

In an interview, Dr. Gazi Salah Eldeen Atabani⁷⁷, head of the Sudan delegation at the earlier stages of the negotiations, was asked about the amount of economic, political, and social development that the North was investing in the South to win Southern confidence and more importantly to win their vote for unity when the referendum would take place in 2011. His reply was swift “why should the North waste money on developmental projects in the South when we [the North] know that the US is leading them to vote for secession? Why should we build their future country for them? They are not staying with us so let them build the South by themselves”. To him, secession was a done deal. However, why was he so sure about secession? Dr. Abdulrahim Hamdy, Sudan’s Minister of Finance at the time, mentioned, in an interview⁷⁸, an encounter that Vice President of Sudan Taha had with President Obama in Helsinki, Finland, where Obama told Taha that “the West wants the South to ‘go’”. It seemed that the secession of the South was inevitable to members of the GoS. The interim period was nothing more than a waiting period.

As for the building of trust that was supposed to take place during these six years, quite the opposite happened. When asked an interview, Dr. Sulafedeen Salih Mohammed, head of North Sudan’s Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR), regarding efforts of trust building between the North and South through DDR practices, he mentioned that “the North cannot afford to trust the South ... these people [Southerners] you cannot trust them. They can decide to attack us any time that is why we will not disarm. We are actually training forces to be located by the borders in case the South decides to invade the North.”⁷⁹ These were the words of the person whom was entrusted by the UN and international community to disarm Northern Sudan’s militias.

Southerner Sudanese, on the other hand, were not willing to spend their resources on the development of their own region either during the interim period. During several interviews, I was informed that “if we [South Sudan interim government] develop the South during the interim period, the Southern population might think that it was the GoS that is rebuilding their region. They might vote for unity instead of secession in the referendum. It is best to continue keeping the South impoverished; and after we secede, we will start building the country”⁸⁰. Moreover, Rita Garang, Minister of Transportation and Roads, and widowed wife of former chairman of SPLA/M John Garang, mentioned in an interview that Salva Kiir, President of the South, is a separatist and was not interested in keeping her husbands’ vision for a New Sudan. “[H]e did not even visit a single Northern Province since he took office because he is not interested in a united Sudan”⁸¹. According to her, Kiir was assured by the Americans that the referendum would take place in 2011 and that the Sudan government would accept secession. Some of the CPA mandates appeared to be preparing the South for secession rather than unity. For example, the South, in its provisions, would keep all its armed forces. The SPLA would remain the army of the South under the control of the South and that South Sudan would establish its own Central Bank. The Bank of Sudan in Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, would no longer be the central bank of all Sudan. Per the Agreement:

14.1. The Parties agree, consistent with the Machakos Protocol of 20th July 2002, to have a dual banking system in Sudan during the Interim Period. An Islamic banking system shall operate in Northern Sudan and conventional banking system shall operate in Southern Sudan.

76 Huliaras, A. (2008). The evangelical roots of US Africa policy. *Survival*, 50(6), p173.

77 Interview with Dr. Gazi Salah Eldeen Atabani, 21-12-2006.

78 Interview with Dr. Abdulrahim Hamdy, 06 Jan. 2012.

79 Interview with Dr. Sulafedeen Salih Mohammed, 05-07-2003.

80 Interview with Pagan Amum, Secretary General of SPLA/M; 12/13-12-2006.

81 Interview with Rita Garang, 05-06-2006.

14.2. The Parties agree that conventional banking facilities are urgently needed in Southern Sudan. The Parties therefore agree to establish, during the Pre-Interim Period, the Bank of Southern Sudan (BOSS) as a branch of Central Bank of Sudan (CBOS) consistent with paragraph 14.1 above.

14.10 The BOSS shall be responsible for chartering and supervising financial institutions in Southern Sudan.⁸²

The support that the US extended to the South for secession encouraged Southerner not to settle for autonomy within a united Sudan. Indeed, on January 9th, 2011, South Sudan was declared the World's newest country.

Superpowers justify their support for the secession of a marginalized group by arguing that it brings about peace and stability⁸³. This claim appears invalid in Sudan. Sudan and South Sudan fought a brief war in 2012, and both Sudan and South Sudan have continuously been embroiled in devastating civil wars. Within two years of its independence in 2011, hundreds of thousands of Southern Sudanese were dead and millions were refugees in neighbouring IGAD countries⁸⁴. Secession, in Sudan, did *not* make peace.

Conclusion: Rethinking Mediation

Mediation **literature** continues to **depoliticize** mediation **processes** by ignoring, the unique attributes of secessionist wars and the highly **politicized** role of superpower leverage. This ostensibly "benign neglect"⁸⁵ of failing to expose the hegemonic forms of mediation legitimizes foreign intervention and exploitation. It portrays Western superpowers meditating civil wars as *saviours* of the world in line with the former colonial desire to *civilize* third world *savages* by 'solving' their problems through intervention. Mediation theories could be more relevant and useful in fostering an indigenous end to secessionist wars by promoting subaltern ontologies and epistemologies in order to challenge the theoretical disposition of superpower hegemony in mediation theory, which, in turn, will strengthen local ownership of peace processes and foster consensus on indigenous resolutions. The literature could have guided the CPA towards a truly comprehensive outcome.

Superpower intervention during the CPA mediation process had a tunnel vision with only secession at the end of it. The US sided with the secessionist within the SPLM/A and excluded those in the SPLM/A whom upheld Garang's vision of a New Sudan from the mediation process. Garang's vision involved a new political dispensation in which all Sudanese would be equal stakeholders irrespective of their race, ethnic affiliation, gender, etc.. It included a very precise observation regarding fundamental problems of deprivation, exclusion, and underdevelopment of the periphery, and the widening gaps between it and the center. To many marginalized Sudanese, the CPA was supposed to espouse Garang's indigenous vision which would not only end the violence, but to also end the structural foundations of it and enable a durable comprehensive peace. That hope was demised by the hands of superpowers using leverage in mediation. Consequently, people, within Sudan and South Sudan, continue to suffer as vicious wars still ravage with no peace in site.

- (1) Pagan Amum, Secretary General of SPLA/M; 12/13-12-2006
- (2) Rita Garang, widowed wife of former head of SPLA/M John Garang and, Minister of Transportation and Roads; 05-06-2006
- (3) Sultan/Colonel Ismail Konyi, Militia leader, SPLA officer, and MP of the Morle local community, 13-12-2006
- (4) Dr. Gazi Salah Eldeen Atabani, head of the Sudan delegation in the early stages of the CPA, adviser to The President of Sudan. 21-12-2006
- (5) Mr. Idris Mohammad Abdulghadir, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Head of Sudan Peace Delegation 2002; 01 Dec. 2013;
- (6) Dr. Abdulrahim Hamdy, Sudan's Minister of Finance, 06 Jan. 2012;
- (7) Dr. Vladimir Zhagora, Mediating Coordinator in Africa I Division at the UN Secretariat. Department of Foreign affairs. 11-05-2018;

⁸² Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement, 2005. p13.

⁸³ For more on the US foreign policy on secession and regional stability see: Paquin, J. (2010). *A stability-seeking power: U.S. foreign policy and secessionist conflicts*. Montréal [Que.]: McGill-Queen's University.

⁸⁴ The Guardian, Nov. 2022

⁸⁵ Ayers, A. J. (2012). Beyond the ideology of 'civil war': The global-historical constitution of political violence in Sudan. *Journal of Pan African Studies*, 4, p261.

- (8) Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat – The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation of Kenya. 10-05-2007;
- (9) Dr. Sulafedeen Salih Mohammed, head of North Sudan DDR office. 05-07-2003.

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