

Overhaul Needed in Stalled South Sudan Peace Process

LSE alumnus Jacob Dut looks as the drivers behind the failure in the South Sudan peace negotiations.

On 15 December 2013, the fledgling nation of South Sudan made a **sudden descent into civil war** as the President Salva Kiir and his erstwhile deputy Dr Riek Machar found themselves on opposite sides of the political divide. Given the success of the regional body, Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) in negotiating the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), the international community assigned this body to take charge of the subsequent peace negotiations.

At the start of the mediation process, things looked promising with several agreements signed by the opposing parties now dubbed SPLM in government (SPLM-IG) and SPLM in opposition (SPLM-IO) and **SPLM-Former Political Detainees (FPDs) also known as G10+**. **Negotiations came to an abrupt halt** in what was expected to be the last round of mediation from 23 February to 5 March with the two main protagonists failing to agree on any of the outstanding major issues. In this article I will analyse three drivers why the South Sudan peace process has come to a standstill. These include the misguided model, inconsistency in mediation procedures and zero-sum interest of regional and international community.



President Salva Kiir and former Vice President Riek Machar stand at opposite ends in the South Sudan peace process

First, let us look at how the IGAD mediators have pursued a misguided model for the South Sudan peace process. Rather than analyse the situation for what it is, mediators have simply plagiarised the **Sudanese peace process model which ultimately led to the independence of South Sudan in 2011**. The agreement between the ruling National Congress Party of Sudan and the SPLM worked because it aided the secession of the then Southern Sudan.

This model fails for the current South Sudan situation particularly when we consider the elements of having two armies, wealth sharing and contracted debts. In peace theory, underpinned by international law, armies are meant to serve the State, not personal or political parties. So how could two standing armies protect and defend the constitutions of party leaders? Therefore, the idea of having two armies in a would-be South Sudanese peace accord is a misplaced ambition with serious negative consequences. The only way this would be feasible is if Dr Riek Machar has

ambitions of secession. Likewise with the idea of wealth sharing, one wonders what wealth Dr Machar of SPLM-IO wants to share with President Salva Kiir? Is it the oil wealth of the Greater Nile region? Under the 2012 Petroleum Revenue Management Act, there is already a wealth-sharing agreement in place with two per cent of the country's oil wealth going to the oil-producing states. SPLM-IO are also insisting that the full extent of SPLM-IG debt is made public, however, the group is believed to have significant debt of its own which has not been made public, having borrowed millions of dollars for armed operations which they hope to repay after peace is achieved.

The second driver leading to the failure of the peace talks is inconsistency in the mediation. Every process is conducted under the Declaration of Principles (DOPS) or Rules of Procedures (ROPS). The DOPs/ROPS were not strictly followed in the South Sudanese peace process. At the beginning of the talks, opposition parties lead by SPLM-Democratic Change (DC), Former Political Detainees (FPDs) and other civil society interested groups were allowed to participate in negotiations. However, the mediators then decided to bar these opposition parties so that negotiations were a bilateral affair between SPLM-IG and SPLM-IO, although SPLM-FPDs were invited back in towards the latter stages of the negotiations.

The final driver is the zero-sum interest of regional countries and the divided attention of the international community. A quick analysis of the region's heavyweights demonstrates how peace has been held hostage by segmented interests. Since South Sudan's independence, Uganda is reported to have earned billions of dollars in trade from the newest country in East Africa. Therefore, it is clear that Uganda's interest in South Sudan is linked to those benefits from trade. Kampala and Khartoum have had a strained relationship, accusing each other of harbouring and supporting each other's opposing rebel groups (namely SPLM-North and LRA respectively), which has led to a closer relationship between the former and Juba. Likewise, Khartoum views SPLM-IG as a political foe and instead maintains links with SPLM-IO.

Following their success in arbitrating the peace process that led to South Sudan's independence, Kenya, on the other hand, is more concerned with maintaining her foreign policy record which is embedded in non-antagonism and the principles of good neighbourliness. The truth, though, is that her ambivalence to the various negotiating groups is a calculated decision.

Tanzania, which boasts the city of Arusha, the de facto diplomatic hub of East Africa, would prefer that the negotiations take place exclusively in that country. As evidence, Dodoma points to the successful SPLM Arusha Unification Agreement, which unfortunately is now defunct following the failure of the abortive final round of talks.

Ethiopia seems to be pursuing a policy of dual diplomacy in this matter. On one side, her sympathies are tilted in favour of SPLM-IO which is not surprising given the large presence of the Nuer tribe in the country. On the other hand, Ethiopia is suspicious of recent closer ties between South Sudan and Egypt. This suspicion is rooted in **tension between Cairo and Addis Ababa over the Grand Renaissance Dam**.

Djibouti's main concern is that oil pipelines from South Sudan are routed through Ethiopia to her through the soon-to-be formalised LAPSET project. With the government delay in this project getting off the ground, Djibouti is under the impression that as soon as SPLM-IO win power, it will approve this project. In fact, a representative of the Djibouti government was present in Addis Ababa, serving as a consultant to SPLM-IO on petroleum issues.

With regards to the international community, one could argue that the IGAD-appointed troika of USA, UK and Norway are not reading from the same script. While USA has proposed individual target sanctions, a move approved by the UN Security Council, there was insufficient backing from UK, Norway or their parliaments for this proposal. This gives the impression that the Troika is divided in its support for the various SPLM negotiating parties. As a result, they find it impossible to speak in one voice. Looking at examples in the region and globally, it is clear that a united international community is key to successful peace negotiations. This is most evident in the

Northern Ireland Good Friday Peace Agreement which was reached at the last minute when the international community united and used the “departing train strategy” which refers to the fact that the train was leaving and it would never return and anyone not joining the train would be left behind permanently. This strategy was also effective in the peace negotiations that marked the end of the 3 1/2 year Bosnian War and which resulted in the Dayton Peace Agreement. Although it can be argued that the Dayton Peace Accord is not a good model given the challenges faced in its implementation, it certainly tested the muscles of the international community in the Consociational Agreement.

It is plausible to conclude that the delay in achieving peace in Addis Ababa is causally linked to the misguided model that failed to diagnose the problem of the South Sudanese conflict, the inconsistency in the procedures of negotiations and the vested interests of the regional and international community. Deadlines have been set and missed. However, missing the 5 March 2015 deadline is a big blow to the South Sudanese leaders. The final words of the IGAD chairperson, Hailemariam Dessalegn that the IGAD South Sudan peace talks had been adjourned indefinitely given the need to reinvigorate and reform the peace process can be viewed as an admission of the East African body’s errors during the process.

There is no doubt that peace in South Sudan will be high on the agenda at the next Summit of the IGAD Head of States and Governments. My advice would be for Tanzania to take over as mediators. After all, they have proved time and again that this is their specialty. We see their success in Kenya post-electoral accord and the recent Arusha SPLM Unification Agreement.

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The views expressed in this post are those of the author and in no way reflect those of the Africa at LSE blog or the London School of Economics and Political Science.

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