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Article 33 on South Sudan

Developments in South Sudan Conflict: Update on various actors position and the misguided calls of international actors.

Our Articles 1 to 3 and 5 to 32 (A) and 32 (B) were situation analyses of the conflict in South Sudan. Our articles 4 (A), 4 (B) and 4 (C) were the first of our series on “Who is Who”. This article 33 is dedicated to an update of the situation in South Sudan and Addis Talks. We have also added comments on the “Easy Road” taken by AU, IGAD and the UN and every other Tom Dick and Harry calling on the two warring parties to go back to the negotiations where and when there is no “Process” in “Session” to go to.

Introduction and highlights of situation analysis:

The more the IGAD Mediation (The three envoys) delay going back to session, the more difficult and more time consuming it will be for the SPLM/A-IO to reassemble in Addis. The speed with which the various chairs of the Opposition Committees (Government in Exile) were established and set up shop makes it very difficult to have a new credible team of negotiations to return to Addis. 10 of the 16 original negotiators have been pulled out into other more pressing functions and it will be far-fetched that they come back to Addis.

Ato Mesfin and his team went to Juba and met with president Kiir during the 3rd week of July¹. Kiir asks them to meet with the negotiating team (who are still in Juba as there is no session in place). This takes us to our worry expressed in article # 32 (A), page 4 bullet 13 as to which “Hat” Mediation is wearing. Since that directive by President Kiir for Ato Mesfin and his team to meet with his negotiations team, The IGAD team has been dead silent.

The GRSS as voiced by the Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Peter Bashir Bandi² asked Mesfin’s team to meet with the “Multi-Stakeholders” in Juba. He however indicated that “An invitation to the multi-stakeholders from both sides is to be given for them to go to Addis for Consultations” with the Mediation Team”³. Is that backtracking from having the “Multi Stakeholders in the hall”?

Minister Bandi lashed undiplomatically on Ato Mesfin for going to NY and talking to the UNSC without going through the proper channels of presenting the statement –first-to the IGAD Governments (Including South Sudan) to get clearance for that. We have addressed the dangers of a “Mediator” wearing a “Political” hat in our article # 32 (A) bullet 13.

¹ Middle East (Al Sharq Al Awsat)-London July 20th.

² Our own reliable sources

³ Our own reliable sources

It is also surprising that it is UNMISS that criticised the fighting in Nasir under the ears and eyes of the IGAD Cessation of Hostilities MVT and the IGAD. Then comes the usual hollow threat of “The consequences”.

No war-no peace-no alternative

The International and Regional Stakeholders are good at making sure that they are looking “Politically Correct” sometimes without knowing the full extent of their invalid communiqués and statements. Why on earth would Ban Ki Moon⁴ and various American Officials lash on the SPLM/A-IO for attacking Nasir/defending Nasir (Depending on who is talking). Nasir, in the first place was attacked and taken by the SPLA (Kiir) in violation of the cessation of hostilities agreements. The town is one of the heartlands of the Nuer and is not different from Akobo. The question is why it took so long for SPLM/A- IO to retake it! We are not sure if the SPLM/A-IO would go back to Addis and negotiate in good faith with Nasir in the hands of Kiir’s forces.

The last thing that any armed group leader in opposition would want is for his forces to “do nothing” or sit and wait while there is no alternative. And right now there is no alternative. The Peace Talks Process is frozen through no fault of either of the two fighting parties. Dr. Riek is in a particularly delicate situation as his forces are a mix of the ex-regulars of the SPLA and the “Local Security Arrangements Forces”⁵. The so called “White Army” is not a bunch of “Ragtag” boys that Machar or Kiir collected from the bush. They were there to fill the gap of security in Greater Upper Nile Region (In particular) created over tens of years by the lack of presence of any credible security provided by the State. This has been long going and is not a phenomenon of this war or even the 21 years civil war. While other tribes had (and still have) their own Protection Forces, the Nuers and Murle are best at that.

Regular soldiers get paid, they have structures and have barracks and have their families with them. Volunteer fighters do not have that.

If the so called “International Community” or the IGAD want fighting to stop, they need to stop talking and set up a credible process in Addis to give the fighting forces an alternative.

Our great worry is that either one or both parties may soon reject ALL three “Envoys” turned mediators and request a more professional mediation team and more professional terms of reference and ground rules. There is nothing that IGAD can do in that case than to tell the 3 Envoys to go home and appoint new mediators and hopefully without calling them “Envoys”....Unless IGAD is in the mind set of “Arbitration” and not “Mediation”.

There is also little to write home about on the ‘Bedside Manners’ of the Envoys in treating the parties they are paid to serve as mediators. The communiqués, the statement in NY on June 27th, the threatening and the verbal bullying in the halls in Addis that was reported to us by credible sources from the teams of both parties are not usual in such a mediation that delicate and intricate⁶.

⁴ His office’s press statement on July 20th

⁵ Please read the HSBA, Small Arms Survey July 2014 on the local security arrangements in Greater Upper Nile

⁶ Our information comes from several sources

On the envoys, it beats us and other informed observers why someone such as Lt. General Mohamed Ahmed Mustafa Aldabi was appointed as “mediators” between Southern Sudanese belligerents. The man’s history does not qualify him for that. Let us narrate:

1. Between July 1995 and November 1996 he was the head of the Foreign Branch of Sudan Security.
2. Between 1996 and 1999 (The peak of fighting between SAF and the SPLA), Gen Dabi was the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and directly responsible for the war against the SPLA.
3. Between 1999 and 2004 he was Sudan’s Ambassador to Qatar. A job that can only be given to a very trusted man by the NCP and President Beshir.
4. Between December 2011 and February 2012 (Only 2 ½ months), Gen Dabi was the Head of the Arab League Observers Team in Syria. Through pressures from Syrian Opposition, dissident Syrian writers and thinkers and international condemnation for the choice of Dabi as head of the mission, he was forced to resign. One of his major misjudgments and foul-ups was his comment that Homs (In Syria) was “Reassuring” and he said that at a time that Homs was ablaze. In spite of the cover up denial by the Arab League, he was severely condemned by the Arab Parliament.

One wonders: why would the IGAD put such a man as one of a trio to mediate for South Sudan and he had the direct oversight of the civil war for 3 years. A bigger question will be: Can he possibly be a “Third Party Neutral” while so close to the Sudanese Military Establishment and Government?

Machar and Museveni

We were surprised that Dr. Machar agreed to meet President Museveni. We were also further surprised that he sends such a strong delegation to organize for the proposed meeting in Addis only to be humiliatingly “stood” for 10 hours at Entebbe Airport. While other analysts had their go at why the Ugandans behaved like that, we feel we have different reasoning and analysis:

1. We believe that Juba was unhappy with the idea and further unhappy with the media coverage of the visit and may have sent a strong message to Kampala to abort the mission.
2. Museveni, being the bully that he is, was not terribly happy that Dr. Machar exercises his “Nuer Pride” that the tribe are known for and not meet with him without preparation.
3. Being the *ONLY* head of state that attended the third anniversary celebrations with president Kiir in Juba may have sent a stronger signal to him that the boat is sinking in Juba and that he better waits and sees.

One would remind Dr. Machar of how difficult it was to meet with Dr. Garang and how his “hard to get” attitude won him respect and credit. He “stood” President Daniel Arab Moi more than once! He told Mandela that he will not be ready to accept his mediation when Turabi succeeded to convince Mandela to engage.

Diaspora

Unlike what has been reported about how IGAD Mediation sees diaspora, they have an important role to play. As Subsahara Centre is in contact and engagement with 6 different communities in Canada, we have a fair feel of their dynamics.

1. Polarization is continuing along tribal bases but the Nuers are organizing themselves as “Own Communities”
2. We observed that a lot of the anger is now more directed towards Kiir personally. Members from others tribes share the sentiments.
3. Canadian Church Groups and Community Centres, MPs and colleges are becoming more engaged in helping the communities.
4. Capacity Building is a common demand by communities so that they have tools to resolve conflicts in Canada and later in South Sudan.
5. Regrettably, Addis Process is not really in their radar screen. How can it be if it is so far ineffective?
6. All communities are now better organizing themselves to bring political pressure to bear on Canadian Politicians. Elections are coming in October 2015 and MPs would be more responsive to engaging with communities.
7. We are aware of several Nuer Only Communities, but last week we came across one “Chapter of the SPLM/A-IO” that was formed by through own initiative.
8. The financial pressure is mounting on Diaspora Communities as they are now bread providers for their destitute folks back home or in IDPs/Refugees Camps.

What next?

1. IGAD needs to, at least and soon, set a time for the resumption of talks and give the parties at least 10 days to show up in Addis.
2. Stop too much lobby in the region and look for “disinterested countries” that have no own agenda to support the process. The SPLM/A-IO is already sending envoys to West Africa!
3. Do something and something credible about the status of envoys/mediators.
4. Brush aside the group 9 as “resource persons”. They will soon join one military camp of the other. One cannot sit in the hall with no known and credible “Power Base”.
5. Find a credible and face-saving solution to the “Multi Stakeholders” group of small political tribes and Civil Society Organizations whose representatives are predominately Kiir’s camp or groups that have no constituency.
6. If there is “process design” IGAD is to revise it; if there is none, IGAD is design a process.
7. Start to do ‘Independent Formative Evaluation’ of the process so far to rectify and stay the course.
8. Beware of the “Security Arrangements” file as possible priority.
9. Avail issue specific experts for both parties especially on how to generate options and build scenarios.
10. Take the venue to one of Ethiopia’s magnificent retreats in the south or south east of Ethiopia.

11. Manage media
12. Come hell or high water: Keep the centre of gravity in IGAD and only IGAD.
13. Take a second look into the various competencies in the IGAD team and supplement as needed.
14. Stop travelling. Stop threatening. Stop recesses. Stop assuming authority and power. You really have neither. You are there to help the two parties reach a solution and not dictate a solution or even find one.

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