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Building a Culture of Peace for Sustainable Socio-Political and Economic Stability in South Sudan

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ABSTRACT

Persistent civil wars, inter-communal clashes, and hostile interpersonal relations have made peace highly elusive in South Sudan; despite numerous local, regional, and international efforts, these instabilities prove resistant to resolution. The endless conflicts have resulted in critical humanitarian crises and social and economic difficulties affecting nearly everyone. The devastating history of violence in the country has entrenched a culture that undermines peace efforts. The article, therefore, explores the root causes of the instabilities, their nature and impact, and advocates for practices such as harmony, reconciliation, the rule of law, and institutional development that foster a Peace culture to break the cycle of violence, ensuring lasting peaceful coexistence and sustainable political and socio-economic stability across the country. Using secondary data from academic articles, and UN reports, the article draws on Émile Arnaud's pacifism theory, emphasizing nonviolence and peaceful means to achieve peace. Based on the Pacifism theory is the belief that peace is good, that we must work for peace, and that war should be avoided, if not abolished, advocating love, reconciliation, and care as essential values. The article concludes by recommending practices, behaviors, and attitudes that can help various stakeholders develop peace as a lasting cultural norm rather than a temporary fix to achieve enduring stability in South Sudan.

INTRODUCTION

South Sudan emerged as the world's youngest country following its independence from Sudan in 2011 after a successful referendum following the 2005 Naivasha-Kenya Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) and the government of Sudan. The CPA brought to an end a devastating civil war from 1983 to 2005 that displaced millions of people and claimed hundreds of thousands of lives (Pinaud, 2021).

Despite this milestone, South Sudan plunged into civil war just two years after independence (Johnson, 2014) as a result of a split within the ruling SPLM/A party in 2013 over a power struggle triggering renewed conflict. Many armed groups emerged, dragging the young nation into severe political instability, economic hardships, and social adversities. (Hoffman, 16 C.E.). The conflict grew increasingly complex, taking on tribal dimensions as old wounds, enmity, and political mistrust resurfaced among SPLM/A factions. Further fuelled by the involvement of neighboring countries and the international community, the conflict quickly escalated like "a tank of petrol exposed to fire."

Peace initiatives by the government and regional and international communities to establish political and socio-economic stability have been mainly unsuccessful. Inter-communal conflicts, cattle rustling, ethnic targeting, and the presence of armed groups continue to spiral across the country, signifying persistent uncertainty and unpredictability around the prospect of peace in South Sudan. At the moment, peace remains elusive, hindered

by a nexus of deeply entrenched historical, political, social, and economic factors. A prominent threat to peace is a culture of violence cultivated over decades of conflict (Shulika, 2013).

The "virus" of violence and hostility, fostered by a history of conflict, revenge politics, and socio-economic disparities, has permeated ethnic groups, political institutions, religious sects, civil society, and private entities and the decades of armed conflicts during Sudan's civil wars (Rolandsen, 2005) preceded by the Mahdist Islamic expansion, the discriminatory Sharia system, colonialism, and slave trade where the Southern Sudanese violently resisted, culminated a culture of hostility and war. Violence became a common practice for liberation, self-defense, and territorial and economic protection. Simon Harragin argues that violence has long been a feature of Nilotic societies, even predating British colonialism and the establishment of current territorial boundaries (Harragin, 2011).

Many writers who have made publications on South Sudan's instabilities, including political analysts and peace researchers, tend to have a common conclusion about the complex web of factors sustaining violence in South Sudan. These factors include fragile state institutions and weak governance, economic challenges and dependency, nonstate actors, ethnic divisions and identity politics, international and regional influence, including proxy conflicts and external support for the different parties to the conflict, Lack of trust and reconciliation among communities due to cycles of violence and atrocities and youth vulnerability to recruitment by armed groups.

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These interconnected issues impede peace efforts in South Sudan, rendering peace a distant aspiration.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conflicts in South Sudan, Nature, Causes, and Attempts for Resolution

Conflicts/Violence in South Sudan

South Sudan experiences complex conflicts ranging from civil or political wars to inter-communal, ethnic conflicts occurring both on small and large scale. Historical factors, political power struggles, cultural values and practices, international influences, economic competition, and social attributes exacerbate conflicts in South Sudan (Geburu, 2020). Below is a systematic exploration of the conflicts in South Sudan since its independence, with a significant glance at its history of violence or civil wars.

The History of Conflicts in South Sudan

South Sudan formally attained independence from Sudan on 9th July 2011 after two decades of civil war staged in search for justice, fair treatment, and autonomy against the brutal Islamic Sharia regime that functioned on an imbalance scale where non-Arabs add with dignity and respect for cultural, religious and political rights (Jok, 2015). The Sudan civil war was not the genesis of instabilities in the country. Conflicts in Sudan are as old as the civilization of the country, and history dates it to the days when the land formerly known as Kush/Cush used to rival her neighboring societies of the current Egypt, Ethiopia and internal conflicts (Török, 2017).

During the colonial era by the European powers, when most African countries fell victim, the country witnessed a series of violence in the quest for self-rule. The struggle for independence marked a memorial event of conflicts in the country's history and the entire continent of Africa. Fruited, for instance, by the 1960s, most African countries had attained independence from the colonial powers. Meanwhile, sister African countries started to gear towards development, putting in place state institutions, infrastructures, and frameworks; the southern Sudan territory woke up into another critical state of slavery, discrimination, and domination by the governing Islamic northern regime.

Sudan attained independence from the Anglo-Egyptians in 1956, and H.E Nimeri became the first president of the independent state. However, nothing much changed for the Southern Sudanese and other black majorities. Sharia law was harshly applied against the Southern Sudanese. Political, cultural, social, and economic marginalization humiliated the Southern Sudanese who had already witnessed various forms of injustice and violence against their social, cultural, economic, and territorial rights from Turko - Egyptian invasion of Sudan in 1821 under the Ottoman empire influences and need for slaves, gold, ivory, timber, and colonial domination by Belgians then the British hence the violent response of Anyanya 1 guerilla rebellion. The Anyanya, which refers to a poison that once gets to your body, will disturb you till death,

as always narrated by one of the Anyanya war veterans, Joseph Lagu, gave birth to Anyanya 2 war Clayton Thyne (2007).

Many writers, such as Clayton Thyne, who documented the history of struggle in Sudan, describe the invaluable efforts South Sudan made through blood and resources as sacrificial. The aspiration was for a future where every individual would feel the pride of belonging to a state with freedom of expression, association, political and civil rights participation, institutions, health care, and equality accessibility.

The sacrificial history of struggle is echoed in many local songs such as Yuma Sabastian's "Akir talagala ta Junub Sudan" (The last bullet for South Sudan). "Salam Ja Salam ja" by Emmanuel Kembe (Peace has come) etc. The 2005 Peace agreement excited the South Sudanese like the Israelites when God delivered them from Egypt.

This long history of conflicts, struggles, and civil wars demonstrates that the South Sudan people grew up and died in wars. All they witnessed was the domination of one group by another, looting, unfair treatment, and all forms of violence. This should have instilled a paradigm that all about life is by use of force, intimidation, coercion, threat, use of guns, killing, and isolating the inferior, hence normalizing violence as a way of life.

Post-Independence Conflicts in South Sudan

South Sudan witnessed a massive influx of conflict, which is still giving the country a walk into the future (Johnson, 2014). The achievement of independence in 2011 did not end widespread violence and insecurities in the country. Tensions breeding hostility stood between Sudan and South Sudan, especially on unresolved border issues of the Abyei and Blue Nile regions, but were handled amicably through talks mediated by the African Union. However, the disastrous internal violence stemming from armed uprisings, local-level violence, and counter-insurgency operations by the SPLM/A escalated vividly both before and after the independence (Harrigan, 2011). Some of the conflicts that occurred/occurring in South Sudan after independence are as follows;

Internal Conflicts and Political Dynamics

Towards the referendum in 2011, South Sudan started experiencing internal armed conflicts—for instance, in 2010, David Yau Yau and General George Athor, a former SPLM/A commander (Rolandsen & Breidlid, 2012) took up arms against the government in Juba following a loss in the Jonglei state gubernatorial elections. More devastating civil wars sprung between mid-December 2013 and mid-April 2014, two years right after the independence Zambakari *et al.* (2018), characterized by brutal massacres and attacks on civilians based on ethnicity and political affiliation. This period witnessed extensive destruction of property and widespread human rights violations arising from the civil war fuelled by political disagreements between President Salva Kiir and the relieved vice President Riek Machar.

Before the civil war, signs of discontent within the ruling SPLM party were noticeable. President Kiir's dismissal of his entire cabinet including Machar, and his decision to run the ministries with undersecretaries contributed to the escalating tensions (Zambakari *et al.*, 2018). Both Machar and Pagan Amun expressed ambitions to challenge Kiir's leadership, which further strained the political landscape.

The conflict erupted on December 15, 2013, with gunfire between Kiir loyalists and those aligned with Machar in Juba. Although Kiir labeled the violence as part of an attempted coup led by Machar, the latter denied these allegations, instead accusing Kiir of using the situation to eliminate political rivals. This conflict quickly intensified, spreading throughout the country, and Machar fully emerged as SPLA in Opposition (SPLA-IO) demanding Kiir's resignation.

Dismayingly, the civil war spun into an ethnic line between Kiir's Dinka community and Machar's Nuer community, leading to widespread human rights abuses committed by both sides (Hoffman, 16 C.E.). This aggressive conflict set the stage for the emergence of many armed groups exacerbating the instability in South Sudan. Armed groups such as the National Salvation Front and various coalitions of political parties and armed factions. For example, the South Sudan Opposition Alliance (SSOA) comprising multiple factions, including the Federal Democratic Party/South Sudan Armed Forces (FDP/SSAF) led by Gabriel Changson Chang, the National Democratic Movement (NDM), and several others engaged in fierce battles with the government (Advisory & Issue, 2019).

Ethnic and Inter-communal Conflicts in South Sudan

Ethnicity is a main loophole for political instability in South Sudan, deeply intertwined with the country's history and social fabric. The concept of 'tribes' or 'ethnic groups' in South Sudan is essentially a colonial construct shaped by the British establishment of the current administrative boundaries and the grouping of diverse local communities. South Sudan comprises ten states, forming three significant regions: Greater Equatorial, Greater Bahr el Ghazal, and Greater Upper Nile. Each state hosts multiple ethnic groups, creating a complex interplay of identities and conflicts (Kon, 2015).

Ethnic violence is pervasive across all the ten states of South Sudan, with the youth, particularly those aged 15 to 30, being used in these conflicts. The historical context reveals that ethnic conflicts in South Sudan have deep roots, stemming from long-standing practices where communities mobilize along tribal lines to engage in violence for various reasons, including cattle rustling, where cattle are viewed as a vital resource and a status symbol, leading to frequent conflicts over theft or raids, grazing land, i.e. Competition for access to pasture especially in arid regions, often ignites tensions between communities and marital conflicts where disputes arising from marital practices and bride prices escalate into more

significant ethnic confrontations (Pui & Yiel, 2021).

During the Sudanese civil wars between the north and south, ethnic violence was prevalent, particularly between the Dinka and Nuer communities. This historical animosity has resulted in numerous inter-ethnic conflicts, such as clashes between factions on a purely ethnic basis. Most of the clashes in different states and even inter-state conflicts are fuelled by ethnicity.

Jonglei is one of the most conflict-ridden states in South Sudan. It is home to six main ethnic groups: Dinka, Nuer, Anyuak, Murle, Kathipo, and Jie, where the Dinka and Nuer are the most prominent groups with numerous subgroups including the Lou Nuer and Dinka Bor. Most rural inhabitants depend on cattle breeding for their livelihoods. The inter-communal conflicts, particularly between the Lou Nuer and Murle, have historical roots dating back over a century, often igniting violent struggles over pasture and resources (Rolandsen & Breidlid, 2012). The nature of these conflicts has evolved mainly due to the impacts of Sudan's two civil wars (1955–1972 and 1983–2005). Recent violence, particularly in 2011, led to the deaths of over 1,500 individuals and the displacement of approximately 26,000 people due to attacks involving the Lou Nuer and Murle. These conflicts have become increasingly complex, involving various actors such as government troops and local youth groups (Rolandsen & Breidlid, 2012). The myths also surrounding the Murle people suggest that they are too infertile to have children, contributing to cycles of child abduction and retaliation, further exacerbating tensions (Rolandsen & Breidlid, 2012). The presence of various rebel groups, often aligned with ethnic identities, complicates the security landscape in South Sudan. These factions engage in violence against the government and each other, driven by ethnic grievances and political motivations.

In Aweil East and other parts of Northern Bahr el Ghazal (NBeG), armed violence has been linked to historical grievances over resource allocation, political contestations, and colonial legacies. Although there are claims of reduced violence, regions like Warrap State Lakes state, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, and Western Bahr el Ghazal continue to experience inter-communal conflicts driven by similar issues (Santschi *et al.*, 2024).

Fundamental Causes of the Instabilities in South Sudan

The continuous conflicts in South Sudan are caused by various issues associated with the country's history, past grudges, ethnicity, and economic and political factors (Kon, 2015). Below are the leading root causes of the conflicts in South Sudan.

Historical Grudges and Divisions within the Sudan People's Liberation Movement

Since 1983, the SPLA has been divided into three main factions: the SPLA Torit faction led by John Garang, the SPLA Bahr-al-Ghazal faction led by Garbino Kuany Bol, and the South Sudan Independence Movement led

by Riek Machar (Pinaud, 2021). These internal divisions have continued exacerbating conflicts in South Sudan, challenging the peace environment. For instance, the political disputes within the ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) have contributed to violent conflicts both in the past and after the country's independence. The civil war that began on December 15, 2013, stemmed from a power struggle during the party's planned elections between May and December 2013. Key figures like Riek Machar, Pagan Amun, and Rebecca Garang expressed interest in challenging President Salva Kiir for party leadership, advocating for reforms to ensure democratic processes which rose from unresolved historical conflicts weakened relationships within the SPLM, fuelling power struggles, disputes over party elections, and coup allegations. These tensions, driven by fear, anger, bitterness, and distrust, ultimately led to violent conflict (Onapa, 2020).

Ethnic Politics

South Sudan's long-standing conflict has persisted due to the fragmentation of armed groups with varying interests. Ethnic divisions primarily drive the resurgence of violence in the country Kon (2015), which have been manipulated by political elites. Weak institutions and competition over resources have further prolonged the civil war. After South Sudan gained independence, the political elite exploited ethnic fault lines that originated during colonial times and were deepened during the north-south civil wars, contributing to factionalism.

Many attribute the country's ongoing tribalism and inter-ethnic violence to its ethnic diversity, often simplified as consisting of '64 tribes.' This oversimplification overlooks the complex histories of migration, language, and clan relationships. Political leaders and humanitarian organizations frequently reduce South Sudan's population into broad ethnic groups, such as the Dinka and Nuer, ignoring the intricate socio-political dynamics (Kon, 2015). Following independence in 2011, the ruling SPLM party adopted an ethnocentric governance approach, relying on nepotism and ethnic favoritism over merit-based appointments. This practice weakened governance, fuelled corruption, and led to ethnic exclusion, human rights violations, and ineffective conflict resolution mechanisms. Ethnic minority groups lacking representation and influence in the government and military, have been particularly affected (Kon, 2015). These groups either negotiated peace agreements with the SPLM or formed opposition movements, sometimes resorting to armed rebellion against the SPLM-led government.

Quest for Power and National Resource Control

The South Sudanese conflict, both before and after independence, highlights the vital link between power struggles and competition over resource sharing, particularly among major ethnic groups with deep-rooted enmities (Onapa, 2020). The country, largely divided between pastoralist and agricultural communities,

has a long history of land and grazing rights conflicts (Saferworld, 2019). Its natural resources, particularly oil, are considered untapped areas ripe for exploitation. However, ongoing civil wars and displacement have left the population heavily reliant on international aid, while humanitarian funds appear to underpin much of the economy.

When South Sudan gained independence on July 9, 2011, oil production of 350,000 barrels per day was expected to generate billions of dollars annually, providing 98% of the national budget. This reliance on oil revenue undermined efforts to build a solid social contract based on taxation and public services. International aid, totaling approximately \$1.4 billion in 2011, was intended to support development, but little of this money reached the government or the people.

Instead, oil revenues were used to sustain a bloated military, paramilitary, and civil administration, expanded through nepotistic appointments of friends, relatives, and political allies. This was justified as a reward for those who "fought for peace" and a strategy to prevent potential opposition. Intra-elite competition, turf wars, and divide-and-rule tactics within the government exacerbated power struggles, creating an imbalance of power and fuelling further conflict (Rolandsen & Kindersley, 2017).

Weak Institutions and Culture of Impunity

South Sudan faces significant challenges due to weak institutions and a deeply entrenched culture of impunity. The lack of strong, independent institutions capable of resisting political manipulation has allowed political disagreements, such as those within the ruling SPLM, to escalate into full-scale armed conflict. If the SPLA had been a robust institution above political interference, the current crisis might have remained a political issue rather than a violent conflict (Saferworld, 2019).

In South Sudan, institutions that do exist are often subject to excessive political interference, and the rule of law is inconsistently applied. For example, while the draft constitution allows the President to remove elected governors, it also requires elections to be held within 60 days, a provision that has been frequently ignored. The absence of the rule of law contributes to a pervasive culture of impunity. Crimes such as killings, rape, and armed robbery by uniformed personnel often go unpunished due to the limited capacity of the police, harassment by the military, and the political influence of specific individuals. For instance, when a former finance minister was arrested, he was forcefully freed by soldiers from his community without any consequences. He was later rewarded with a position in the council of state.

Civil society and the media, which should promote civil rights and hold the government accountable, operate in a restricted and hostile environment. Their freedom to inform the public on critical issues is severely limited, and academic freedom is almost non-existent (Mulyani, 2013). Universities cannot hold open discussions, and dissenting voices have no platform. Even legislators face

harassment outside parliament if they speak too openly. This repression limits public participation in the peace process and stifles free expression.

The international community's emphasis on state sovereignty, has further entrenched this culture of impunity and invincibility among the powerful in in South Sudan.

Economic Challenges and Hardships

South Sudan faces severe economic challenges, contributing significantly to the ongoing conflict. The near-collapse of the economy, hyperinflation, and the declining value of the South Sudanese Pound have worsened living conditions and intensified the conflict (Rolandsen & Kindersley, 2017). With the government struggling to pay salaries regularly and military spending increasing to fund the war, many individuals see little alternative but to take up arms. Joining armed groups can offer greater rewards, as individuals often receive higher military ranks and government positions with associated privileges.

The economic decline began in 2012 when the government shut down oil production, accusing Khartoum of stealing their oil. This decision had devastating consequences since oil comprised 98% of South Sudan's economy. While some in the government justified the move by referring to their years in the bush without salaries, this approach proved unsustainable for managing a modern state that requires funds for salaries, infrastructure, and public services. South Sudan's GDP declined by 48% in 2012, and the country has not recovered from the austerity measures introduced then, which have only fuelled further conflict (Rolandsen & Kindersley, 2017).

Implications of the Post-Independence Conflict in South Sudan

Healy (2009) notes that the ongoing crisis in South Sudan has severely undermined the country's sovereignty and stability, pushing it towards a failed state, similar to Somalia. Several scholars, including (Jok, 2014; Koos & Gutschke, 2014; Mwanika, 2012), argue that the conflict has caused widespread suffering and devastation, both within South Sudan and in neighboring countries. The violence has claimed over 1.3 million lives (Martell, 2014), and many people have lost their lives, possessions, and socio-cultural connections.

The civil war has deeply divided communities, increased mistrust, and eroded social cohesion, making reconciliation nearly impossible. Polarization along ethnic lines has damaged the societal fabric, with many South Sudanese now identifying politically through ethnic affiliations. The conflict has also led to a proliferation of small arms and the rise of numerous militia groups, further destabilizing communities and worsening social and political relations. Additionally, the conflict has resulted in growing political fragmentation, a humanitarian crisis, a surge in refugees, economic collapse, and weakened institutional development.

Peace Efforts for Political Stability in South Sudan

Several Peace initiatives have been struck in South Sudan to realize political stability, ranging from regionally mediated peace talks and agreements to domestic intercommunal dialogues. However, these efforts have not been fruitful. Instead, the peace agreements have faced failures, delays, and extensions (Farouq *et al.*, 2024). New factions keep rising, and new push from different groups for peace deals hampers straight acceleration toward concrete stability. At grassroots levels, despite the work of humanitarian organizations and civil society organizations, ethnic violence and, in some instances, violence involving government officials and armed civilians continue to escalate (Gebru, 2020). Below are some of the peace initiatives;

The Agreement on Resolving the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS)

The 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS), signed between the Government of South Sudan and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO), aimed to restore peace and stability following the December 2013 grave conflict in Juba but ultimately failed. The key parties signed the agreement due to intense international pressure, not out of genuine conviction in its terms. This led to public protests and reservations about the agreement. As none of the signatories felt ownership or commitment to ARCSS, its implementation was neglected, with each party expecting external forces to pressure the other into compliance, particularly regarding provisions that threatened their privileges (Gebru, 2020).

Conceptual Review

The Concept of Peace and Perspectives

In 1969, a renowned Norwegian peace scholar, John Galtung, elucidated the peace concept and expounded it beyond simply the absence of war. He introduced the concepts of "positive peace" and "negative peace." Negative peace is the absence of conflict or war, and positive peace encompasses deeper human values like happiness, justice, and well-being. Galtung argued that true peace comes when mutually reinforcing social, psychological, and economic elements enhance harmony and prevent violence (Galtung, 1969).

The English language offers various definitions of peace, as Webster's Third New International Dictionary illustrates. Webster defines peace both negatively (e.g., "freedom from civil clamor") and positively (e.g., "a state of public quiet and order"). It also offers perspectives on "outer" peace, which relates to societal harmony, and "inner" peace, which refers to personal calmness and emotional well-being. Other interpretations include interpersonal peace, a mutual concord between individuals, and divine peace, which personifies ultimate tranquillity or a divine state of harmony. These nuanced meanings highlight peace as a condition of external security and internal serenity, aligned with Galtung's distinctions.

Conflict

Rummel (1976) Conflict is a balancing of powers among interests, capabilities, and wills. It is a mutual adjustment of what people want, can get, and are willing to pursue. Conflict behaviors, whether hostile actions, violence, or war, are a means and manifestation of this process. The ultimate goal of such actions is peace. Therefore, from this definition, we can conclude that balancing powers among interests, capabilities, and wills may be politically, socially, or economically motivated.

Peace Culture

The main point about a culture of peace, according to Boulding (2001), is that it deals creatively with difference and conflict, and it is a listening culture. A culture of peace needs lots of space for problem-solving. He argues that what we need to do in order to develop a peaceful culture is to create many spaces for problem-solving. Therefore, the concept of peace culture is a culture that maintains a creative balance between bonding, community closeness, and the need for separate spaces. Peace culture is a mosaic of identities, attitudes, values, beliefs, and patterns that lead people to live naturally with one another and the earth without the aid of structured power differentials to deal creatively with their differences and share their resources.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution, simply put, is the pursuit of ending conflict. It is finding a peaceful solution to personal, financial, political, or emotional disputes. Conflict resolution can be through negotiation, mediation, or arbitration to address differences. Nonviolent resistance and collective communication also foster reconciliation and resolve conflicts. The resolution methods parallel the nature of the conflict itself, focusing on peaceful outcomes through active dialogue and negotiation (Theresa, 2014).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Various methods and materials were employed during the development process of this article. Documentaries about Sudan and South Sudan, media news, organizational reports, frameworks, agreements documents, and consultations with people were observed to better understand South Sudan's political landscape. However, the structural development of the work is mainly a function of qualitative secondary data and publications from Google Scholar. This article explores conflicts in South Sudan, examining the nature, causes, consequences, and attempts for peace restoration as elaborated in publications. The article's geographical scope is South Sudan, with a significant focus on the after-independence conflicts from 2013 to 2024.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS)

The Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the

Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) seeks to revive the original ARCSS signed in August 2015, temporarily ending South Sudan's first civil war that started on December 15, 2013. Between August 2015 and June 2016, the ARCSS helped reduce confrontations between key parties, but conflict resumed in July 2016. Since the renewed civil war on July 7, 2016, efforts at national and regional levels have aimed to restore peace. The Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan was signed by the parties in 2018, leading to the return of Dr. Riek Machar and the formation of a government of National Unity with a provision for national elections. However, the agreement has faced unimaginable delays and extensions (Farouq *et al.*, 2024).

One key initiative was the establishment of the High-Level Revitalization Forum (HLRF) by the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) during an extraordinary summit on June 12, 2017. This eight member states regional bloc, consisting of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda, facilitated negotiations to revive the ARCSS. After its launch in December 2017, the HLRF conducted 15 months of negotiations between President Salva Kiir's SPLM/A in Government (SPLM/A-IG), Riek Machar's SPLM/A in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO), and other opposition parties. These efforts eventually led to the signing of the R-ARCSS.

The R-ARCSS followed five key agreements:

1. Agreement on the cessation of hostilities, Protection of Civilians, and Humanitarian Access, signed on December 21, 2017, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia;
 2. Addendum to the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities, signed on May 22, 2018, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia;
 3. Khartoum Declaration of Agreement between Parties to the Conflict in South Sudan, signed on June 27, 2018, in Khartoum, Sudan;
 4. Agreement on Outstanding Issues of Security, signed on July 6, 2018, in Khartoum, Sudan; and
 5. Agreement on Outstanding Issues of Governance, signed on August 5, 2018, in Khartoum, Sudan.
- These agreements aimed to address the key issues hindering peace in South Sudan.

Peace Dialogues in South Sudan

On December 14, 2016, South Sudan's President Salva Kiir announced a National Dialogue Initiative, offering a unique opportunity for South Sudanese to engage in peacebuilding and reconciliation. Reactions to the initiative varied locally, regionally, and internationally. The dialogue emerged in the context of widespread intercommunal violence, political power struggles, national governance challenges, economic instability, internal displacement, and national disunity. These issues were further worsened by the near-collapse of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS) in July 2016, following renewed fighting between forces loyal to Kiir and those aligned with then-Vice President Riek Machar.

To support South Sudan's ongoing efforts in building national cohesion, UNESCO's Social and Human Sciences Sector organized a National Policy Dialogue in Juba on July 17 and 18, 2024. The event brought together government officials, civil society representatives, youth leaders, and educators in collaboration with the South Sudanese government and local organizations. This dialogue represents a key initiative to address the country's complex challenges by promoting national unity and encouraging community engagement.

Women in Development Organisation (WIDO) collaborated with local stakeholders, including youth, elders, and local government, to engage up to 700 young people in various activities to foster dialogue and enhance conflict resolution skills. These initiatives included community dialogues between Tiap-Tiap and Pagor pajamas, sports events like football and wrestling, and the distribution of T-shirts to the params. Though these activities have strengthened connections, promoted ethnic coexistence, and fostered unity among the youth participants, reports show that there is a heightened awareness of local conflict issues and increased confidence in their ability to address them, leading to unprecedented youth involvement in conflict resolution within their communities, cases of Inter-communal attacks are still common in Warrap State.

Political Challenges to the Peace/Conflict Resolution Efforts in South Sudan

Since its involvement in the mediation process, IGAD, the main guarantor of peace in South Sudan, has faced various challenges. Below are some of the critical challenges of IGAD in seeking peace in South Sudan while working with parties to the conflicts in the presence of various international actors.

Lack of Legitimacy

The IGAD-led mediations in South Sudan have struggled with a lack of legitimacy, trust, and credibility among conflicting parties and stakeholders, primarily due to perceived biases, particularly Uganda's involvement in the conflict. Critics argue that IGAD has failed to adequately represent South Sudan's socio-cultural dynamics, resulting in power-sharing proposals that do not encompass all ethnic groups. Despite multiple peace talks, the organization has been unable to foster trust, leading to delayed implementation of agreements. Additionally, efforts to broaden support through the IGAD-Plus initiative have been undermined by competing international interests, particularly between the US and China, which have affected the UN Security Council's ability to impose necessary sanctions and address atrocities committed during the conflict.

Regional Interests and Rivalries within the Region

A notable challenge faced by IGAD in the peace talks for South Sudan was the lack of inclusivity in the mediation process. Critics, including (Farouq *et al.*, 2024),

highlighted that the negotiations were contentious due to the exclusion of key stakeholders necessary for achieving sustainable peace (Saferworld, 2019). The limited scope of the discussions failed to involve the broader public, which is essential for a successful transition and reconciliation. The peace efforts primarily focused on reconciling the two main warring parties, i.e., the government and the SPLM-IO, without recognizing the legitimacy of other factions or civil society groups, undermining the potential for lasting solutions. Zambakari *et al.* (2018) emphasized that despite the involvement of various groups in consultative meetings, they were largely excluded from the actual negotiation processes. Additionally, Rossi (2016) noted that civilian voices, who constituted a significant percentage of the conflict's victims, were often manipulated by the primary warring factions, further limiting the effectiveness of the peace initiatives.

External actors play a significant role in conflicts, often complicating mediation efforts and influencing negotiations. In the context of South Sudan, Alusala *et al.* (2023) highlights that IGAD has faced considerable challenges due to interference from neighbouring countries like Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Kenya. These competing interests not only slow peace processes but also complicate the implementation of agreements. Regional rivalries and power struggles further limit IGAD's effectiveness, as described by the International Crisis Group (ICG, 2015).

Furthermore, Adama Dieng, the UN Secretary-General's special adviser, pointed out that weapons continue to flow through Uganda and Kenya, undermining peace efforts (AU PSC, 2018). Advisory and Issue (2019) elaborates that IGAD's initiatives are often politically influenced by member states and external donors, with tensions among IGAD members leading to proxy wars that hinder mediation. The historical enmity between Uganda and Sudan has particularly affected IGAD's efforts, as Uganda's military presence in South Sudan has angered Sudan and fuelled accusations of support for insurgents that Uganda's alignment with President Kiir has further emboldened the government in Juba, creating additional obstacles to achieving peace.

Financial Constraints

IGAD has struggled with financial capacity since the onset of the conflict in South Sudan (Ngunia, 2014). The peace talks necessitated organizational and logistical efforts that exceeded IGAD's financial resources. However, the IGAD secretariat effectively institutionalized donor support through the IGAD-Plus partners, which include China, the Troika, the African Union (AU), the European Union (EU), and members of the IGAD Partner's Forum (ICG, 2015; Jok, 2015).

China has played a significant role in supporting peaceful resolutions, contributing financially to the early mediation processes, and advocating for a swift solution among conflicting parties (Grang, 2015). China's involvement is also driven by its regional strategic interests and influence,

engaging parties both bilaterally and collectively towards a nationally owned agreement. Notably, China provided IGAD with one million dollars for the mediation process in early 2014 and has maintained high-level representation through its special envoy to South Sudan and Sudan (Jok, 2015).

Social – Economic Obstacles for Peace in South Sudan

Ineffective law enforcement and justice delivery at state and local levels: South Sudan faces significant challenges in law enforcement and justice delivery, particularly at the local level. The police and other security services are often seen as inadequate and untrustworthy, with many officers being former combatants lacking proper training or screening since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005. Community members have reported issues such as arbitrary arrests, slow responses to emergencies, and police siding with their communities during conflicts, contributing to a deep mistrust between law enforcement and civilians.

The proliferation of administrative divisions has strained law enforcement agencies, limiting their capacity to deploy officers effectively. Logistical challenges, such as inadequate transport and low morale among police, hinder their ability to meet security needs. The presence of armed military personnel in towns has also generated fear among civilians, undermining trust in the military. Furthermore, the justice system is overwhelmed due to a shortage of judges, leading to delays and backlogs in court cases. A culture of impunity, influenced by political leaders and military commanders, exacerbates communal conflicts and revenge killings. According to Safer World, Participants in discussions noted the lack of clarity between statutory and customary courts, leading to ineffective dispute resolution and an erosion of the authority of traditional leaders. This overlap has contributed to an increase in violence and revenge attacks, further destabilizing the situation in South Sudan.

Spread of Small Arms and Light Weapons

The second civil war in Sudan (1983–2005) and the civil conflict that erupted in South Sudan in December 2013 had facilitated easy access to firearms, leading many young people to acquire guns for self-defense, community protection, and safeguarding livestock. Due to ineffective state security provisions, the security vacuum in much of South Sudan has prompted civilians to arm themselves. The lack of a comprehensive disarmament policy at both national and state levels has exacerbated the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) among unauthorized civilians, particularly pastoralists. This situation poses significant risks to communities, as these weapons can be used in armed robberies and escalate violent confrontations, including cattle raiding. Security providers noted that this proliferation complicates their ability to operate without firearms, further hindering efforts to establish a secure environment.

Land and Border Disputes

Land disputes have emerged as a significant driver of conflict in South Sudan, particularly in areas like Aweil, Bor, Juba, Tonj, and Wau. Inadequate land regulations and loopholes in land acquisition processes, leading to fraudulent land sales by individuals connected to state ministries. In Bor, issues such as delays in land allocation, unfair distribution, and double allocations due to unqualified land surveyors have contributed to tensions. Creating new administrative units has intensified conflicts over boundaries and land ownership, with rural areas experiencing disputes between pastoralists and agriculturalists as cattle damage crops. Violent clashes have occurred, particularly in Wau, where competition for grazing rights and access to swamp areas during dry seasons has escalated. Additionally, unclear policies regarding land leasing and rent have exacerbated tensions, with accusations against local chiefs of complicity in disputes. The occupation of homes by soldiers and other civilians during the displacement crisis poses a potential source of conflict upon the return of displaced persons, further complicating the situation.

Economic Hardship

South Sudan is grappling with severe economic challenges and rampant inflation due to the ongoing civil war that began in December 2013. Skyrocketing prices for essential commodities have led to widespread food insecurity, high unemployment, and increased crime rates. The economic hardship has also resulted in social issues such as drug and alcohol abuse, family breakdowns, and a growing number of children living on the streets, alongside mass migration within and beyond the country.

Participants, especially women in Juba, emphasized that the lack of access to affordable food and essential services, including healthcare and education, has further fueled insecurity as competition for scarce resources intensifies. Inadequate health facilities and delayed salaries for health workers have worsened health outcomes, particularly for women and children. In Aweil, concerns about corruption, mismanagement, and a lack of accountability among public officials were highlighted as significant threats to community safety and the effective delivery of essential services. Moreover, high youth unemployment is increasing vulnerability to recruitment by violent groups, pushing disaffected young people toward crime as a means of survival.

Breakdown of Social Cohesion

Ethnic divisions and tensions significantly hinder peace and reconciliation efforts among communities across South Sudan. In Bor, fighting among youth during social gatherings, such as traditional dances or wrestling events, often exacerbates community tensions, mainly due to disputes over inflated bride prices linked to monetary dowry payments.

In Torit, limited opportunities for communities to express their concerns previously hindered discussions

on sensitive issues essential for peace. However, the introduction of quarterly rallies led by the state governor has improved community engagement and strengthened relationships between citizens and the state.

In Yambio, the erosion of social values and norms has emerged as a critical security concern, alongside high levels of trauma stemming from over two decades of civil war and increased drug and alcohol abuse.

The role of women in exacerbating communal conflict in Rumbek, mainly through songs that incite violence, looting, and cattle raiding. Hate speech, often expressed through downbeat songs, derogatory social media posts, and ethnic stereotyping during community meetings, has also contributed to tensions.

In Wau, the aftermath of the violent conflict in 2016 saw youth and political leaders utilize social media to spread hate speech, which ignited further violence. This cycle of division and distrust emphasizes the critical need for comprehensive efforts to promote dialogue and reconciliation among South Sudanese communities.

Peace Culture

Culture is a way of life. It is how things are done. The dressing code of the people, food eaten, language spoken, marriage values, economic activity, houses built, political organization, gender perspectives, way of worship, etc. Some essential definitions for culture from (Oatey & Franklin, 2012) are as follows;

Culture ... is that complex whole that includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of actions, on the other, as conditional elements of future action.

Culture consists of the derivatives of experiences, more or less organized, learned, or created by the individuals of a population, including those images or encasement and their interpretations (meanings) transmitted from past generations, from contemporaries, or formed by individuals themselves.

Culture is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes members of one group or category of people from another.

The set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of individuals but different for each individual is communicated from one generation to the next.

Culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures, and behavioral conventions shared by a group of people. These conventions influence (but do not determine) each member's behavior and his/her interpretations of the meaning of other people's behavior.

The culture of the people shapes everything in every society. When cultures speak, societies dance. If the language of the culture is blood against one group of people or another individual, the society executes it. For something to find itself quickly in existence or operation, it has to be put in culture. It can be testified that due to the burial of the country in war ever since its existence, people have built a culture of war, hostility, brevity, and violence, which can be terminated by peace culture.

Some Key Characteristics of Culture (Oatey & Franklin, 2012)

1. Culture is manifested at different layers of depth
2. Culture affects behavior and interpretations of behavior
3. Culture can be differentiated from both universal human nature and unique individual personality
4. Culture influences biological processes
5. Culture is associated with social groups
6. Culture is both an individual construct and a social construct
7. Culture is always socially and psychologically distributed in a group, so delineating a culture's features will always be fuzzy.
8. Culture has both universal (etic) and distinctive (emic) elements
9. Culture is learned
10. Culture is subject to gradual change
11. The various parts of a culture are interrelated to some degree.
12. Culture is a descriptive, not an evaluative, concept

The concept of peace culture is a culture that maintains a creative balance between bonding, community closeness, and the need for separate spaces. Peace culture can be defined as a mosaic of identities, attitudes, values, beliefs, and patterns that lead people to live naturally with one another and the earth itself without the aid of structured power differentials, to deal creatively with their differences, and to share their resources (Boulding, 2001). Peace cultures as separate identifiable societies exist but are not expected. They may be found among some, but not all, indigenous peoples and in faith-based communities committed to nonviolence. Purely aggressive cultures where everyone actively defends their own space against the needs of others also exist but are not expected. More generally, we find coexisting clusters of peace ableness and aggression. Each society develops its pattern of balancing the twin needs for bonding and autonomy (Afkhani & Women's Learning Partnership for Rights, 2002).

Boulding (2001) describes three critical processes in building a peace culture;

Firstly, he calls for intensive demonstration of what women are actually doing because you do not read about it in the New York Times or the Boston Globe; you do not hear about it on television. He argues that women are naturally good peacemakers, citing that women have traditionally been peacemakers. In all the African countries that now have experienced genocide, who are

the people who are bringing the genocide perpetrators and the genocide victims together? They are circles of women. He then reflects on various women groups that contributed to bringing peace, for example, Africa-wide federations of women peacemakers, not forgetting the peaceful experience of women in making peaceful family roles.

The second process is to mobilize a public peace process to change the paradigm inside people's heads that maintains that security comes through power over others. It never did, and it never will. An intense dialogue about what peace entails could challenge this paradigm: village by village, community by community, state by state, country, and world.

The third and last strategy is to intensify the special peacemaking programs now found in many schools: peer mediation, conflict resolution, and conflict transformation. These skills need to be developed from kindergarten on.

Peace Culture, Learning lessons from Rwanda after 1994 Genocide

In Rwandan politics, prior to the 1994 ethnic genocide, ethnicity remains an essential factor in the exercise of power by ruling hegemonic groups. It was a determining political factor and a significant source of power in the competition for control of natural and state economic resources such as land which was essential for settlement, grazing and agriculture yet increasingly becoming inaccessible for the minority group. It was out of this ethnocentric politics that the October 1990 conflict erupted (Peace & Gasana, 1995).

The purely ethnic – politically motivated genocide where a radical faction from the majority Hutu ethnic group launched a campaign to eradicate the ethnic Tutsi minority and other opponents, said by some experts to have been fueled by the legacy of Belgian colonial policies of ethnic identification, fragmented Rwanda grievously that destroyed social-political relations among the Rwandese beside substantial death tolls, displacement and loss of properties (Mcnamee, 1994).

The conflict reached its peak in 1994 in what is globally recognized as genocide that left over 800,000 people dead in a one-hundred-day massacre. The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) ended the civilian and military authority massacre; however, recognizing the valuable role of peace ableness using harmony, diversity, national unity, and identity, Rwanda restyled and sought peace culture by seeking to rebuild society by focusing on reconciliation and economic development, especially with the rise of the current leader President Paul Kagame who took up power in 2000 through a military coup (Ouafaa, 2021).

Rwanda made intentional focus and regard for peace and security through demilitarization initiative, harmony, and reconciliation, respect for diversity, justice and equity for all, the rule of law, and economic development while building strong institutions that prioritize the national interest of Rwanda (Ouafaa, 2021).

Today, no country in Africa, arguably the world, divides opinion among scholars and commentators as fiercely as Rwanda. It has become a cause célèbre for billionaires, ex-statesmen, and celebrities. Rwanda today stands as a remarkable development success, having risen from the ashes of mass ethnic slaughter, steered and safeguarded by a visionary leader. In terms of reduced poverty, improvements in public safety and security, sustained economic growth, less corruption, better health care, and vastly more women in government and politics, Rwanda is a leading example thus presenting a potential symbol of peace culture in achieving lasting political and socio – economic development (Celestin, 2023).

Policy Recommendations

Specific Recommendations for Stakeholders

Government and Government Institutions in Peace Culture

Recommendations for Government, Government Institutions, and Peace Culture

Political Will for Peace

The governments should demonstrate a strong commitment to promoting a culture of peace. As the primary entity responsible for fostering unity, the government should prioritize the peace agreement's implementation by avoiding delays and working collaboratively with all parties, including the SPLA/M, opposition groups, and former detainees (De Waal *et al.*, 2019). It is crucial to cultivate mutual respect, acknowledging that the well-being of the nation impacts all citizens. Whether in government or opposition, fostering national unity and prioritizing collective interests are vital for advancing South Sudan toward a middle-class or first-class status. Leaders should embrace humility, love, and a sense of responsibility for the country they have fought to protect, while respecting each other's political rights.

Role of Authorities and Institutions

Government authorities, legal professionals, and activists should lead the change in promoting justice and human rights rather than using their power against individuals or communities. By acting as champions of justice, they can help create a sense of security that is essential for peace. Responsible use of authority is needed to confront practices that endanger lives and individual freedoms. For example, the National Security Service (NSS) Act of 2015, enacted amidst conflict, granted excessive powers that have led to numerous human rights violations (Tamborini *et al.*, 2016). To build lasting peace in South Sudan, power must be exercised in accordance with the law, with all legislative actions focused on promoting peace.

Institutional Integrity

Institutions should be managed effectively and embody a culture of peace. Each institution is a national asset that should serve the public good, not facilitate exploitation or manipulation of vulnerable groups. Fairness in policy-

making, respectful communication, and a commitment to nation-building are essential. Law enforcement agencies, including the police, should actively promote peace without conditions. All public institutions such as the military, judiciary, parliament, ministries, and electoral commission—should operate with a mindset oriented toward fostering peace.

Dismantling Structures of Violence

It is essential to address social structures that perpetuate violence and discrimination. No individual should face contempt due to their age, gender, religion, educational background, ethnic identity, or political beliefs. Embracing diversity and valuing those who are different can help cultivate a culture of peace and coexistence. Social exclusion serves as a form of structural violence that undermines peace efforts. Although democratic ideals promote equality, differences are often met with hostility. People desire love, respect, and recognition; social exclusion or violence inflicts deep emotional wounds and hinders peace. Marginalized groups may seek validation through various means, including seeking asylum or demanding rights through advocacy or conflict. Many of the nation's factions and violence stem from feelings of exclusion. Addressing these grievances is critical to preventing violence and fostering peace.

Importance of Information

Information is essential and must be rooted in evidence, kindness, and a commitment to peace. Media content that harms relationships is detrimental; regardless of its perceived benefits, if it jeopardizes peace, it is unworthy for the nation.

Diverse Media Landscape

South Sudan has a variety of media outlets, including national newspapers like *The Dawn*, *The Citizen*, *Number One*, and *The City Review*, with the *Juba Monitor* being the oldest and most popular (though suspended in April 2022 due to ownership disputes). There are numerous radio stations in Juba, such as *Radio Bakhita*, *Radio Miraya*, *Eye Radio*, *Capital FM*, *City FM*, and *Advance FM*, while the South Sudan Broadcasting Corporation (SSBC) serves as the only television station. International media, including *Voice of America (VOA)*, *BBC*, *Al Jazeera*, and *CNN*, also cover South Sudan extensively. Social media platforms like *Facebook*, *WhatsApp*, *LinkedIn*, *Twitter*, and *TikTok* are widely used for sharing information by individuals and institutions alike.

Media Influence

The media plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions and behaviors. While it serves to inform about local and global issues and facilitates learning, it can also either incite violence or foster peaceful coexistence. Many violent behaviors are propagated through media channels, especially social media, which lacks stringent controls over published content. Hate speech, misinformation,

and threats often dominate these platforms, undermining the promotion of peace (Shajema, 2020).

Responsibility of Media Practitioners

Individuals and organizations engaged with media must be conscious of their impact on the country's future. Once harmful information is disseminated, it cannot be retracted, regardless of subsequent apologies. Similar to a bullet that can cause unintended damage, harmful information can affect many. Media professionals should prioritize using their platforms to advocate for peace rather than violence.

Cultural Development through Media

Culture is formed through repeated actions and interactions (Swidler, 1986). If the media consistently promotes messages of violence, those narratives will take root. Individuals are exposed to media on a daily basis, whether through mobile applications, television, radio, or print. Therefore, the media must intentionally share positive messages about diversity, peaceful coexistence, love, and reconciliation. A steady influx of constructive information will help to embed a culture of peace in the public consciousness, as people will naturally act according to what they have internalized. The media has the power to shape mindsets and behaviours significantly, making it vital for them to foster a peace-oriented narrative.

Unique Role of Religious Groups

Religious groups play a crucial role in fostering a culture of peace. They provide platforms for interactions among individuals of diverse genders, ages, ideologies, educational backgrounds, and tribal identities, all of whom can contribute to promoting peace in the country.

Promoting Peaceful Doctrines

These groups should leverage their teachings to encourage a culture of peace rather than fostering division. Religion holds significant influence, and adherents are often deeply committed to their beliefs. Their desire for harmony with a higher power, motivated by the aspiration for a favorable afterlife, is a vital step in cultivating a peaceful culture (Swidler, 1986). There are few limits to what a devoted follower will do in the name of their faith, as evidenced by acts of profound sacrifice.

Impact of Religion on Conflict and Unity

Throughout history, many devastating conflicts have been ignited by religious differences; however, religion has also served as a unifying force among people (Finke & Harris, 2012). Followers are inclined to heed the guidance of their religious leaders, which gives these leaders a powerful platform to influence their congregations.

Utilizing Worship as a Tool for Peace

Religious gatherings often involve communal activities that reinforce shared values, such as singing love songs, reciting poetry, or meditating on sacred texts. When

religious teachings advocate for peace, it becomes much easier for individuals who may initially be hostile to adopt a more peaceful mindset. By consistently promoting messages of love and reconciliation, religious groups can effectively transform attitudes and behaviors within their communities.

Critical Role of the Business Sector

The business sector is essential in fostering a culture of peace within society. It significantly influences political dynamics and is a key driver of economic stability, affecting living standards and the overall cost of living. By shaping opportunities that enhance the well-being of individuals and communities, the private sector plays a vital role in job creation and poverty alleviation, generating nine out of ten jobs in South Sudan and other developing nations.

Innovation and Development

The private sector acts as a catalyst for innovation, addressing developmental challenges with solutions that are aligned with the complex issues countries face in their pursuit of self-reliance. Emerging markets offer lucrative opportunities for private businesses and investors to expand their operations (Forrer *et al.*, 2012).

Collaborative Solutions

Engaging the private sector in building a culture of peace in South Sudan can lead to market-based solutions that yield lasting impacts. The private sector serves as a convergence point for government entities, citizens, institutions, and foreign investors, fulfilling diverse needs and fostering interdependence.

Addressing Harmful Practices

It is crucial to address instances where the private sector engages in unfair trade practices, as these undermine peace efforts. Businesses are often implicated in supporting government initiatives, opposition agendas, and social events that may contribute to instability (James, 2015). In South Sudan, there are ongoing concerns about business involving in violence, corruption, and tribalism, which threaten peace sustainability.

Promoting Ethical Conduct

Businesses should adopt honest practices and foster a peaceful environment by using respectful language and treating clients fairly, regardless of their tribal affiliations, political beliefs, gender, or economic status. The private sector can enhance peace development in South Sudan by cultivating a culture that values diversity in hiring, promotes kindness, empathy, love, care, integrity, and transparency, and actively avoids hate speech, inflated prices, and corrupt practices.

Role of Civil Societies

The contributions of civil societies in fostering peace values in South Sudan are significant, especially given

the security, economic, and information-sensitive landscape. Civil society organizations (CSOs) have been instrumental in advocating for peace, human rights, and good governance, helping to shape the country's future and promote inclusivity, justice, and fair living conditions for citizens in collaboration with authorities and other developmental institutions (Ginanjar, 2022).

Advocacy and Lobbying

CSOs have been leaders in advocating for peace agreements and human rights protection, as well as demanding accountability for atrocities. Organizations such as the Community Empowerment Network (CEN), South Sudan Law Society, Civil Society Alliance (CSA), and Community Initiatives for Development (CID) frequently issue press statements on human rights issues and engage with conflicting parties to facilitate peacebuilding and reconciliation. Their efforts aim to foster dialogue, build trust, and promote reconciliation among communities affected by conflict.

Capacity Building

CSOs empower communities through training and capacity-building initiatives, enhancing their ability to engage in peacebuilding processes effectively.

Monitoring and Documentation

CSOs play a crucial role in monitoring human rights abuses, documenting atrocities, and holding perpetrators accountable (Mulyani, 2013).

Neutrality and Objectivity

Acknowledging that the path to a peaceful state is long, civil society groups should maintain neutrality and avoid conflicts of interest. Objectivity and realism are essential in their efforts, emphasizing the need to sow seeds of hope and love responsibly, given the fragile state of the country.

Promoting Dialogue

Civil societies should create platforms for open and inclusive dialogue among different communities, focusing on peaceful attributes and fostering mutual understanding. Building trust: After decades of conflict, communities have lost trust in one another. CSOs should implement reconciliation programs that foster trust and understanding, breaking down inter-communal barriers to peaceful coexistence.

Education for Peace

Integrating peace education into school curricula is vital for instilling a culture of peace in the younger generation. This can be supplemented by documenting and circulating knowledge about peace culture through various media platforms, including social media and websites.

Women's Empowerment

Empowering women as peace builders and change agents is essential for achieving sustainable peace.

Youth Engagement

Involving young people in peacebuilding initiatives will help prevent their involvement in violence and promote a culture of peace among future generations.

Interdependence of States

Recognize that no state exists in isolation; global and international forces significantly influence domestic affairs. Understanding the interdependencies among states is crucial for addressing issues in South Sudan (Brown, 2015).

International Involvement

Acknowledge that South Sudan is a member of various international organizations and partnerships that affect its domestic politics. Engagements with neighbouring countries as well as multilaterally through organizations are essential for political and economic development.

Comprehensive Engagement

The international community's involvement in South Sudan is multifaceted, encompassing diplomatic efforts, humanitarian aid, and peacekeeping missions. This influence extends to economic interactions and development agreements that shape the country's infrastructure (Rossi, 2016).

Roles in Political Stability

The international community plays a critical role in promoting political stability and peace restoration through:

Diplomatic Engagement

Mediating peace agreements and supporting their implementation.

Humanitarian Assistance

Providing essential aid to vulnerable populations and addressing the root causes of conflict, such as poverty and inequality.

Peacekeeping and Security

Deploying peacekeeping forces to protect civilians and support disarmament and reintegration efforts.

Capacity Building

Strengthening civil society organizations, promoting human rights, and enhancing democratic institutions.

Need for Transformation

Despite extensive involvement, ongoing crises in South Sudan raise questions about the effectiveness of international communities' efforts. A transformation is needed, focusing on peace-oriented interests while fostering political stability. This approach will help align mutual interests and support sustainable peace in South Sudan.

CONCLUSION

The role of peace in promoting national development

cannot be over emphasized. Addressing violence, conflicts and disputes is to create environment for sustainable development however the sad story is that peace often is not sustainable especially in South Sudan because of the numerous factors that perpetrate it. Peace in most of the world communities is irregular, behaving like a visitor which does not stay for long. History shows that Violence has woven itself into human culture thus naturally practiced by individuals, societies, nations etc. This is so alarming scenario that makes an exigency for development of peace culture.

South Sudan, eroded by the culture of violence, is an explicit example of states distorted by war culture. Therefore, the development of peace culture is crucial for the future of the country. The factors perpetrating peace in South Sudan are deep seated in history of conflicts, political and power struggle, ethnicity, social and economic arenas. These factors require commensurate counter measures thus this article proposes potential practices by all actors mentioned, government, private sector, media, religious groups and international communities in ensuring development of peace culture in South Sudan. All the approaches for the development of the peace culture are in line with the pacifism theory.

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