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South Sudan: Peace and Security Challenges

The Extent of Unrest

Since its independence in 2011, the South Sudanese President Salva Kiir Mayardit (Salva Kiir) has been striving for reconciliation with various ethnic, tribal, armed groups and communities in the country. As part of his efforts for the country's political stability, he has pardoned several leaders who even led rebellions against the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) – the political organisation that brought independence for the country. In the process, the factional leaders also got incorporated into the Kiir government or his armed forces. Unfortunately, these rebel leaders brought their own armed forces with them in the political and military compositions of the country, which in turn, posed a great challenge to the government in the form of downsizing, reforming and “right-sizing” the increasingly bloated political and defense sector.¹ In 2013, President Kiir made major changes in his government to downsize and address governance concerns because of perceived threat to his government and pressure from international donors to crack down corruption. He replaced two state governors and dismissed two senior cabinet ministers on corruption charges and conducted a major cabinet reshuffle, with removal of Vice President Riek Machar and his entire group of ministers. The President also dismissed the ruling party secretary-general Pagan Amum, who had been publicly critical of the dismissals and Rebecca Garang, the widow of the late SPLA (Sudan People's Liberation Army) leader, John Garang.²

On the other hand, his notable appointments included Kuol Manyang, the powerful Dinka governor of the volatile Jonglei state, as defense minister, and John Kong Nyuon, the previous defense minister, a Nuer and loyal to Kiir, to the position of Jonglei governorship. Reacting to this radical changes, Riek Machar and his political allies contend that President Kiir has become

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increasingly dictatorial, using “corruption” allegations to sideline perceived rivals, and letting “regional and ethnic lobbies” override collective decision making.³ On the other side, for Kiir and those loyal to him, charges were seen as politically motivated, and part of a long personal quest for power.

Apart from the immediate cause of conflict between government and other forces, there were many factors responsible for this negative development in the country. Firstly, ethnic identities particularly, Dinka and Nuer ethnic communities have been at loggerheads on the issue of power sharing. Secondly, during the freedom struggle, the ruling party was the SPLM with its military wing, the SPLA. But, undisciplined members and officials, within SPLM and SPLA, demanded a sizeable share in the ministry and government formation. Thirdly, there are strong circumstantial evidences that the forces of Peter Gadet and George Athor, the Greater Upper Nile’s insurgencies’ commanders, have received logistical and material support, including small arms and ammunition, from Khartoum and other external sources.⁴ Fourthly, due to mass defections within the SPLA, the army and army personnel got divided on ethnic lines. And with the split of party leadership, the split of armed force turned imminent, and in-fighting in the army gradually spread to civilians on ethnic lines such as Bor, Bentiu, Malakal, Shilluka, Dinka and Nuer.⁵ Owing to the ongoing conflict on ethnic, military and leadership lines, seven out of the 10 states in South Sudan are affected with civil war and the worst affected territories include Jonglei⁶, Unity and Upper Nile.

A Failed State?

South Sudan’s return to war in 2013 has torn the communities apart, left thousands dead, and turned millions homeless and refugees. As on September 2014, 1.8 million people were still too scared to return to their homes. Although humanitarian assistance facilitated to over 3.1 million people in South Sudan, the international agencies estimate that at least 2.2 million are still facing either crisis or food insecurity. This situation develops a situation just below the levels of “famine” or “humanitarian catastrophe”, as referred by international agencies and analysts. Of the estimated 1.8 million people who have been displaced, about 1.35 million are within South Sudan and 4,53,600 have fled to neighbouring countries such as Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia and Kenya. About 1,00,000 civilians are currently sheltering on UN bases in South Sudan⁷ and over 2,00,000 Sudanese refugees are seeking refugees across the border in South Sudan, who have been trapped between two war zones.⁸ All these offshoots of migration have strained the scarce resources of South Sudan, spread of illegal activities in the country and ethnic antagonism.⁹

South Sudan is in social disharmony and violence, characterised with inter and intra-communal hostility and tribal strife. The uneducated teenage boys and unemployed youth are fatally susceptible to recruitment by rebel commanders and opportunistic politicians who use them for their own purpose. The easy access to weapons and ammunition is responsible for much of the violence, and the decades-old fighting for access to water and grazing land between pastoralist communities also fuels the tension. Under these circumstances the weak state security apparatus finds it extremely difficult to provide protection to civilians and illicit flow of arms. In addition, the extrajudicial killings, custodial and targeted deaths in police stations generate questions over the integrity and neutrality of government machinery for the restoration and enhancement of peace in the country. All these prove that South Sudan is in horrific state of affairs and most people are living in constant threat of violence.¹⁰

After almost five years of self-rule, the South Sudanese government is still failing to meet the basic needs of its people. Despite claims that vast sums have been spent on investment in infrastructure, there has been very little expenditure on medical services and education. The country is one of the poorest countries in Africa with the second-worst literacy rate in the world after Mali's literacy rate of 26.2 per cent. South Sudan has a literacy rate of just 27 per cent for the total population and 16 per cent for the female population.¹¹ Only 10 per cent of children complete primary schooling and 64 per cent of children reach the last stage of school education in the country.¹²

South Sudan is one of the HIV/AIDS affected zones in the world with adult prevalence rate of 3.1 per cent.¹³ Besides, dengue fever, meningococcal meningitis, bacterial and protozoal diarrhea, sleeping sickness, rabies, hepatitis A and E, typhoid fever, etc., continue to threaten lives in South Sudan today.¹⁴ The country has the world's worst maternal mortality rate, one-fifth of all children are acutely malnourished,¹⁵ about 28 per cent of them under the age of five in South Sudan are moderately or severely underweight, and the Unity state has the highest proportion of children suffering malnourishment (46 per cent) in the country.¹⁶ The health problem is aggravated more with water crisis and drinking water problems. In Sudan, only 69 per cent households have access to clean water and just two per cent households have water on the premises.¹⁷

Economic Hardships and Mismanagement

South Sudan's economic management is at dismay and the 90 per cent of South Sudan's revenue, which accrued from natural oil and gas, is disturbed due to damage to some of the fields, caused by air strikes and shutdown process

in January 2012.¹⁸ There is expectation that there could be return to pre-shutdown levels of production and profit at least by the end of 2016. However, experts warn that future shutdowns, particularly if they last for more than six months, may cause lasting damage to the economy.¹⁹ Since independence, the government has signed oil and gas deals; unfortunately the government is not transparent on the trade and transactions on these resources and the oil revenues are largely unaccounted for in the country due to corrupt practices.²⁰ Alongside corruption, insecurity, uncertainty and risks in the country have resulted in disinterest of the investors in the energy sector and those who have already invested in the country, particularly in the energy sector, have started or withdrawn their shares and assets, evacuated staff and workers from the oil and gas fields. A crucial challenge the government of South Sudan faces today includes the management of oilfields of the Greater Upper Nile region. Although the region is a massive exporter of crude, yet there has been no discernible benefit that reaches to the local communities. As a consequence, the unemployed youth turns vulnerable to recruitment by pro or anti-government forces in South Sudan.²¹

Like oil and gas, there is the dismal management of aid and contributions contributed by the donor agencies for the purpose of rehabilitation and reconstruction in the war-ravaged economy. Due to lack of trained personnel capable of project making, donors' money has been utilised little for the development of the region during the interim period and beyond. Spent money mainly covers government officials' salaries, in addition to the rehabilitation of destroyed infrastructure. Unfortunately, government expenditure is huge in providing salary and facilities to its jumbo army and large cabinet. Thus, donor money and aid that would have been used for removal of poverty, economic restructuring and development has been diverted for armed forces, ministers and officials. Moreover, alongside corruption, lack of qualified financial personnel, financial regulations and poor management, put together, adversely affected successful implementation of developmental plans and programmes. This can justify why old projects and industries initiated and developed in the last few years have failed to resolve problems in sectors or industries like Nzara Agro-Industry, Wau Canning Factory, Sugar Melut project and Mongala, Sugar, textile industry in Bor and tea and coffee plantation in Eastern Equatoria. Moreover, most of the revenue generated from these sectors did not reach the government treasury but went to individuals' pockets.²²

However, on the other side of the aid and loan, the donors' record is already looking lamentable. Unlike other countries emerging from conflict, such as Sierra Leone and Rwanda, there are no long-term pooled funding commitments in place, which makes any strategic planning difficult in South Sudan. Current

funding is due to run out by the end of 2015 and there is still no plan for what will follow. The World Bank had a pooled fund of 800 million dollars to spend at the time of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, but less than a third has been utilised. For example, only 12 of the 114 schools it promised, have been built.²³

Neighbourhood Dispute Hindering the Peace Process

Persistent tensions between South Sudan and Sudan over the sharing of oil revenues and border and territorial disputes, particularly in the Heglig and Abyei region, pose challenge to peace and security in the region. There are references that the government of Sudan has provided support and assistance to the Southern Sudanese rebels with funds, weapons and ammunitions. Recently, rebel leader of South Sudan, David Yau Yau, accepted the amnesty deal with the Kiir government, who established a new administrative area for the Murle ethnic homeland called the Greater Pibor Administrative Area. Unfortunately, Yau Yau has been accused of being benefitted from Khartoum's support.²⁴ Although Juba and Khartoum agreed to temporary security arrangements for Abyei, including withdrawal of all the forces²⁵, the long-term viability of these arrangements and status of Abyei is still unclear. Within a few months of its independence, the Sudanese government had been accused of stealing South Sudanese oil by constructing secret pipelines and diverting the oil to its own refineries. To a counter response, Khartoum stopped the South Sudanese oil reaching international markets through its ports. The imminent result, therefore, included shutdown of oil industry for almost a year²⁶ and loss of 98 per cent of oil revenue for South Sudan. With tensions mounting, in April 2012, violence between the two countries erupted along the border i.e. over the Heglig oil installation. Through considerable international pressure, including resolutions by the African Union and United Nations, the international community helped both the countries to de-escalate confrontation and resumption of negotiations on oil supply. On 27 September 2012, Sudan and South Sudan reached a series of agreements that will, among other things, restart oil production and establish a demilitarised zone along the shared border.²⁷ Unfortunately, little progress has been made on the implementation part of the agreements.

Apart from these issues, the relationship between the two countries remains tense since most of the provisions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), signed in 2005, are yet to be implemented. The Kiir government has stressed that the revenue (oil and non-oil), which is due for the South Sudan under the CPA has not been released on time, adding that, all the institutions of the country were not taking off due to lack of money. But, on the other hand,

Khartoum refutes the charges that the Government of National Unity of South Sudan was not living up to its commitment for wealth sharing and if there was shortage of money in the Juba, it might have been due to corruption in the SPLM-led government.²⁸ Along with low intensity warfare between the two countries, suspended oil production and oil supply disruption have led to fiscal austerity measures and economic shocks in South Sudan. Yet, there exists a complex interrelationship and interdependence between the two countries. Resolution of dispute between the two countries is not possible without a peaceful South Sudan, and Sudan is the potential country that can actually claim to have understanding of South Sudan's tribal friction and geopolitical strategy and can be a strong asset to solution. Unfortunately, Sudan has ruled out any form of direct political involvement in South Sudan.²⁹

Problems on International Initiatives

South Sudanese problems have dragged the United Nations (UN), African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) for the restoration of peace and stability in the country and avoidance of humanitarian catastrophe. However, these organisations face the following problems and challenges in one form or another.

IGAD: Problems Within

The largest ever initiative for solution of South Sudan problem is taken by IGAD, a seven-country economic and trading group in Eastern Africa, that aims at enabling the parties to reach in an inclusive manner for resolution of the problem and initiation of dialogue. However, it has some limitations. Firstly, the IGAD, although a neutral mediator, is a warring party in the conflict with the South Sudanese government. It has, therefore, failed to take strict and punitive measures against the perpetrators, within and outside the government, who violate the ceasefire agreements. Secondly, since the independence of South Sudan in 2011, Uganda, the leading country of IGAD in the peace keeping force, has sought to posit itself as an influential investor in the new country by integrating road, rail and energy infrastructure with the country of South Sudan.³⁰ The country is clearly in favour of President Kiir for greater stability in the region since Juba is the strategic ally³¹ of Uganda. The question that arises: How can Uganda be an impartial actor in brokering peace in the region? More significantly, the number of Ugandan troops which have entered South Sudan are not clear on their intentions. Ugandan Foreign Minister Sam Kutesa has also made it clear that "Ugandan troops are going to stay for as long as the government of South Sudan needs us."³² Thirdly, Ethiopia, which is hosting the

peace talks, is asking Uganda to withdraw its forces from South Sudan to avoid regional confrontations and suspicion. Fourthly, the SPLM as an organisation has no workable structures like other political organisations to sense, feel and restrain itself as demonstrated by its three decades of existence. Therefore, this political platform sometimes referred to as ‘pathological organisation is in a state of self destruction’.³³

UNMISS: Limited with Operations

The United Nations peacekeeping mission personnel have limited capacity to protect civilians under its existing mandate due to some specific reasons. Firstly, the United Nations Mission for South Sudan (UNMISS) in many cases is under the frequent attacks of militants. Secondly, lack of paved roads outside the capital significantly hinders the mobility of the UN peacekeepers and other forces. Thirdly, bureaucratic harassment against relief organisations, logistical challenges, and government restrictions constrain humanitarian activities and critical assistance across the country.³⁴ Fourthly, because of insistence of United States and European Union, the United Nations has issued limited sanctions, but, there is the need of punitive actions and strict measures against military commanders on both sides for mass atrocities and human rights violations.³⁵

Other Factors: Aggravating the Crisis

Firstly, the United States and other donors have invested considerable resources in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programs and security sector transformation initiatives. However, inter-communal mistrust, massive underdevelopment, and few near-term prospects for employment hinder the very purpose of DDR.³⁶ Secondly, without the political support of the international community such as the United States, UK, Norway and Italy, the people of South Sudan would not have achieved independence. Unfortunately, in the current crisis, these actors have shown little interest for early resolution of conflicts. Thirdly, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), 2005, meant for ceasefire and framework or roadmap for eventual peace, fails to address past human rights violations and war crimes committed against humanity and restoration of peace, security and stability in the country.³⁷

Fourthly, progress in the process of peace-keeping and peace-making is limited since both the rebel and government sides wage tough fights to gain and consolidate ground, so as to maximise bargaining power prior to any meaningful ceasefire agreement that takes place and constructive talks go on. Fifthly, disarming different factions is a contentious issue because of the prevalence of ethnic loyalty and political leader-military personnel nexus.

Sixthly, many local communities in the country have retained their weapons to justify their claim for self-defense and thwart off armed cattle raids. Hence, the disarmament efforts could not reach up to expectations. Seventhly, the United States and other countries have urged Juba for immediate release of the “political detainees,” as key to discussions of political issues, but, the government is slow in releasing several detainees, and finds it tough to release those charged with corruption.³⁸ Eighthly, Egypt, not a member of IGAD, has offered to contribute to the proposed Peace Enforcement Forces. However, it is being alleged that in lieu of its contributions, Egypt will seek South Sudan’s diplomatic and political support against Ethiopia regarding the Great Ethiopian Renaissance dam.³⁹ Ninthly, the Transnational Constitution in South Sudan maximises the powers of the President and limits the opposition, which poses direct threats to the principles of democratic governance and constitutionalism.⁴⁰

Roadmap

The problems in South Sudan are matters of serious concern within and outside the country. However, containing the challenges or eliminating the issue is not impossible, although a difficult challenge for the national government and international community. Eliminating group fighting and repairing the damages done to the relationship between various sections and communities in society are the two most important issues the government has to address and resolve. Looking into all these potential challenges and problems, some of the important and effective measures can be resorted to bring lasting solution to the country and restoration of peace in the region.

Firstly, the erring parties to conflict should realise that mudslinging with one another is a burden to their national interest and not a solution to the national problem, not even to their long-term personal objectives. Hence, they should effectively participate in the inclusive participation process with their rational objectives and genuine intentions.

Secondly, a comprehensive national reconciliatory approach, with a Constituent Assembly and provisional government representing different sections and communities of the society, would be a successive approach to establish a permanent constitution that addresses and resolves the claims of all citizens.

Thirdly, the Kiir government should allow all the ethnic, tribal, political and military leaders, not convicted with serious charges, to participate in the peace process and talks, which have been held in Addis Ababa under the initiatives of AU, UN and IGAD.

Fourthly, changes must be adopted in the national leadership style which could demonstrate better governance and which could owe the confidence of all the stake holders of society.

Fifthly, establishment of Truth and Reconciliation Commission to prosecute those responsible for mass atrocities, human rights violations and serious crimes committed by all groups and individuals since the independence of South Sudan. This will be a way forward for much-needed justice and reconciliation in the country.

Sixthly, people-to-people appeal for peace by the government, tribal, ethnic, popular and faith leaders will reconcile the people to heal the wounds of citizens, infected with the trauma of the civil war. This will ultimately develop a sense of national belonging and nationhood in the country.⁴¹

Seventhly, involvement of civil society institutions in the negotiation process and peace monitoring could effectively motivate the rebels, South Sudanese government and international community for a lasting solution in the region.

Eighthly, there must be immediate and effective implementation of Cessation of Hostilities (CoH) by all the parties in conflict. They should cooperate with IGAD and its enforcement mechanisms in facilitating and providing security to the people of South Sudan and smooth monitoring of peace resolutions. Meanwhile, IGAD should prove its neutrality to win confidence of all the sections of society.

Ninthly, the administration of South Sudan is indeed handed over to inexperienced, corrupt and semi-literate bureaucrats. The harmonisation of the two administrations (CANS and SSCC)⁴² has proven to be a bad start in the course of time. Therefore, qualified, trained and efficient bureaucracy with neutrality, commitment and determination could make the administration more viable for better governance.

Tenth, government institutions in Sudan, such as office of the President, are not yet properly structured except for bureaucratic advisors and legal experts. There is, hence, the need of a team of researchers and experts in various fields (think tanks) to guide the President and government on matters of governance.

Eleventh, there is the need for strong determination of the Kiir government to contain corruption in the country. In the process, President Salva Kiir needs to be strong enough to rid over unwanted developments in the country. By doing so, he could refute the charges of 'selective targets' and 'ethnic favouritism' under his government.

Conclusion

Ravaged by civil war, South Sudan is in constant threat of insecurity, displacement, migration, returnee integration and poverty. The problems are accentuated and complicated with infrastructural inadequacies and shortage or mismanagement of fund. President Salva Kiir although has shown his commitment for peace, yet, must prove his neutrality and sincerity on some issues. On the other side, rebel groups have not maintained restraint to give peace a chance; also, the President must be supported by all, irrespective of ethnic or group identities, for a lasting solution. It is extremely important that all the stakeholders become high priority in the negotiation process and the government give due weightage to all sections of society. International and regional players and leaders have demonstrated their interest to contain the rebels and militants. However, they have not been able to achieve the feat as was expected due to internal problems and external limitations. In some instances the neutrality and genuine interests of the organisations or countries have been questioned owing to their own agenda and intentions.

Notes

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2. Mahmood Mamdani, 'South Sudan: The problem and the way forward', *Saturday Monitor*, 06 January 2014.
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4. 'Armed Insurgencies in Greater Upper Nile: New Sudan', *HSBA Issue Brief*, <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/about-us/highlights/highlight-hsba-ib18.html>, accessed on 28 September 2015.
5. *Saturday Monitor*, 06 January 2014; *The Guardian*, 26 November 2014.
6. Historically, Jonglei is a disturbed territory because of longstanding inter-ethnic and group fighting, and its capital Bor is highly insecure and volatile.
7. 'Conflicts in South Sudan', <http://www.enoughproject.org/conflicts/sudans/conflicts-south-sudan>, 01 October 2014, accessed on 09 September 2015.
8. North of the river Kirr, Abyei, Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan have refugee flows into South Sudan. And 'South Sudan's Crisis Ripples Across Region', 13 February 2014, <http://www.irinnews.org/report/99642/south-sudan-s-crisis-ripples-across-region>, accessed on 09 March 2015.
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12. n. 10.
13. South Sudan is one of the top 25 countries in the world with regard to HIV/AIDS cases.
14. n. 11.
15. 'South Sudan: 2000+ acutely malnourished kids in one week', *Radio Tamazuj*, 30 August 2015, <https://radiotamazuj.org/en/article/south-sudan-2000-acutely-malnourished-kids-one-week>, accessed on 25 September 2015.
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18. After the 2012 shutdown, oil production in South Sudan restarted in April 2013, following revenue sharing negotiations between Sudan and South Sudan.
19. Luke Patey, 'South Sudan: Fighting Could Cripple Oil Industry for Decades', *African Arguments*, 10 January 2014.
20. The government of South Sudan is perceived with 90 per cent corruptions. Corrupt practices and mismanagement of funds have made many South Sudanese extremely difficult to meet both the ends possible and discontent has grown inside and outside the government, in, Jacob K. Lupai, 'Search for Indigenous Solution to South Sudan Problem', *The South Sudan News Agency*, 2014, <http://www.southsudannewsagency.com/opinion/articles/solution-to-south-sudan-problem>, accessed on 22 August 2015.
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23. *The Guardian*, 18 July 2011.
24. 'Conflicts in South Sudan', 01 October 2014, <http://www.enoughproject.org/conflicts/sudans/conflicts-south-sudan>, accessed on 09 September 2015.
25. Although there is the deployment of Ethiopian peacekeepers across the border regions and demilitarised zone has been established in the disputed regions under the UN initiative, yet the progress is slow.
26. Prior to the 2012 shutdown of oil wells, South Sudan produced 350,000 barrels per day (bpd)
27. 'Sudan and South Sudan: The Current Situation', <http://www.usip.org/two-sudans-current-situation>, United States Institute of Peace, accessed on 26 September 2015.
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29. Sufyan bin Uzayr, 'The Solution to South Sudan's Problems', 05 June 2014, <http://fpif.org/solution-south-sudans-problems-sudan/>, accessed on 16 November 2014.
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31. Given Ugandan oil fields situated within 200 miles of the South Sudanese border, Uganda's emerging economy has much to lose from any spillover effects of the conflict in the region and it is important for Kampala to secure its critical infrastructures and installations in South Sudan. *The Huffington Post*, 09 March 2014.
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33. Elhag Paul, 'The solution to South Sudan's political problems lies in new blood', 02 April 2014, <http://www.southsudannewsagency.com/opinion/articles/the-solution-to-south-sudans-political-problems>, accessed on 12 April 2015.
34. 'South Sudan: Key Developments', 16 June 2015, <http://www.usaid.gov/crisis/south-sudan>, accessed on 16 September 2015.
35. This has already been advocated by UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon.
36. Blanchard, n. 1.
37. Beny Gideon Mabor, 'South Sudan: A power struggle and implications for state and nation building', 10 February 2014, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article49895>, accessed on 23 November 2014.
38. Leaders like Alor, Manibe and Amum are much in debate for their release but the Kiir government is not ready to release them because of serious charges of corruption. Blanchard, n. 1.
39. Egypt is against the Great Ethiopian Renaissance dam since it would worsen its water shortage problem in the country; whereas, Ethiopia demands that the dam will give it a fair share of Nile river water. South Sudan is one of the stake holders of river Nile water.
40. Because of the excessive powers of the president, the South Sudanese politics is largely interpreted as zero-sum game between government and oppositions.
41. Two religious leaders – Thomas Chalgor Paul, a Nuer, and John Alier Maluk, a Dinka, working hard to ensure peace, particularly from their own communities.
42. The Civil Administration in New Sudan (CANS) is mainly composed of people who largely focused on the liberation of their country. When the war ended, the members of CANS with very little knowledge about the mechanics of civil administration got recruited in civil services. Another constituent of civil servants include South Sudan Coordination Council (SSCC), which is composed of people who were handpicked by the National Islamic Front (NIF) establishment, since they were either anti SPLM/ SPLA or have embraced Islamic Religion. Madut, n. 22.