

# Analysis of the Effects of the Sino-Troika Interests on the South Sudan Peace Process

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## Abstract

Since sporadic gunfire erupted in Juba in December 2013, South Sudan has been in conflict. Several ceasefire agreements and a Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU) have, so far, failed to deliver lasting peace. The study sought to investigate the effects of the Sino-Troika rivalries on the South Sudan peace process. The specific objective was to examine the effects of the Sino-Troika diplomatic interests on the peace process in South Sudan. The study was informed by the Marxist theory. The research design was a mixed approach, using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The research was conducted in Juba through interviews, questionnaires, and focus group discussions with 40 respondents including experts, civil society groups, faith-based groups, political leaders and opinion leaders as well as the common South Sudanese people. Both quantitative, qualitative, and content analysis mechanisms were used in presenting the data. The research found that the trend in diplomatic relations between South Sudan and Troika countries on one hand and China on the other shows a nexus of Sino-Troika interests and the peace process. Troika countries are clearly interested in a reliable ally in South Sudan that would use its diplomatic capacity to support other interests of Troika inside South Sudan and the region.

**Key words:** *Sino-Troika Interests, South Sudan, Peace Process, Conflict, Diplomacy*

## **Introduction**

Realists contend that relations among states are dictated by “national interests” and not the will to do good for others. Thus, the international system is anarchic, dominated by powerful states that use the “end” but not the “means” to judge their actions; an approach that promotes amorality. The U.S and the U.K, which led the triumphant block of states after the Cold War, craft their foreign policies out of their national interests (Ohaegbulam, 1992). Joined by Norway, they form a trio with closer interests they are pursuing abroad.

The interests of Troika members have influenced stability and peace in Africa for many decades. During the Cold War, the main objective of the U.S. relations with African states was the containment of communism and an ideological shift against its rival, the Soviet Union. The U.S. supported African states or insurgencies that were anti-communist, even if that meant misery and death of the common men (Obama, 2006). Even after the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, followed by the ultimate disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the eventual end of the Cold War, that strategy based on interests abroad continued on a new theme: western democracy and liberalism.

That is why the U.S. supported the rogue regime of Mobutu Sese Seko in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Stearns, 2012). In southern Africa, the U.S., and the UK impliedly endorsed apartheid in South Africa, leading to the disenfranchisement of the African population under a white minority rule (Mandela, 1994). When this heavy-handed approach of the apartheid era wasn't supporting the evolving geopolitical and trade interests, a shift in the diplomatic position ensued, partly culminating to the support of negotiations between the regime and the Mandela's team of inmates. Eventually, Mandela was released from prison in 1994 and later elected that same year as the President. At the time, a wave of democratization was sweeping across Africa, dislodging tyrant regimes.

Even where the interests of the U.S. and the states it relates with intersect, the world's superpower and her allies in the Troika have never fallen short of pulling back if their own interests are threatened the most. In 1992, for instance, the U.S. authorized the deployment of its mission in Somalia, coded Operation Restore Hope, to help fight regional and international terrorism. But the servicemen were prematurely withdrawn in 1994 after losing 18 men in a terrorist attack in Mogadishu, known now as the Black Hawk Incident. The incident accelerated an existing view to withdraw partly because Somalia was now of little strategic significance in the post-Cold War era (Delaney, 2004)

While Russia, the heir of the Soviet Union, still struggles to regain her global position, and although the world under the U.S. leadership is tilting towards globalization, not much has changed in the international order. The rise of China in Africa and the need for continued expansion of western liberalism and democracy, along with economic and geopolitical interests, have maintained Africa as a zone for strategic clashes of superpowers as it was during the Cold War. This time, it is between the U.S., the Troika's leader, and China.

This could even be worse for South Sudan, which suffers from both internal and external predicaments, all of which are woven into a web of conflicts that plague the new nation. While much scholarly focus has been in examining the internal dynamics, little attention, if any, has been paid to the impact of the rivalry between China and the Troika on the peace and stability of the nascent country.

This research set out to examine how anarchy among the global power blocks has contributed, or aided, political crisis and civil strife in South Sudan. The study focused on the period between the end (in 2005) of the war of independence, through the outbreak of violence first in 2013 and later in 2016, and the present.

## **Literature Review**

The strategic rivalry between the United States and China risks spiraling into a multi-layered world conflict that presents economic and military dangers (Rudolf, 2020). In diplomacy, military and economic means are used as tools for state to exert pressure on another to extract its interests (Pfaltzgraff, 2001). Thus, the Sino-Troika diplomatic relations have proven more central to global peace over the past decades. China has become increasingly important in politics, development and security in Africa; it has prioritized strong diplomatic relations and political ties with African states with an ideological aspiration anchored on the solidarity among the third world countries and mutual benefits to both sides (Yun, 2013). This has often resulted in a steep rivalry with the U.S. and her allies in the Troika, who see China's involvement in Africa as indiscipline and unprincipled. As Yun argues, China's enhanced role in Africa is the reality that the U.S. is being increasingly edged out of the continent politically – and economically - entailing that for the Troika to maintain her position in Africa it must remain engaged with effective strategies.

The tactics have often come in the form of dismantling governments that are anti-Troika and pro-China. Sudan, for example, shifted its diplomatic relations to China of the discovery of oil in the 1980s (Large, 2008) and followed through with anti-U.S. diplomatic engagements that included hosting the U.S.-wanted Osama Bin Laden in the Gezira area in the mid-1990s (AP, 2016). While the China continued exploring Sudan's oil, the U.S. reacted by imposing crippling sanctions. An aggressive attempt to stave off economic collapse caused by the sanctions provoked protests which resulted into the ouster of Sudan's president Omar al-Bashir in April 2020 (BBC, 2019).

In Zimbabwe, the U.S., and her western allies, shocked by the combative pro-African stance of Robert Mugabe, imposed sanctions in 2008, resulting in rapid devaluation of the national currency. Mugabe later became a pro-China leader, and this resulted into his ouster through the military in 2017 (Guardian, Nov 2017). The Guardian, however, contends that the ouster of Mugabe could have been conceived and executed with the tacit support of China, citing a visit of a military general to Beijing days before the ouster. However, the fact that this ouster is being attributed to external power is a clear demonstration of meddling, basically a rivalry between China and the Troika's leading partner, the U.S. And in their trail of clashes, they leave behind a murky environment of subjective democracy.

There are indications that South Sudan is treading the same trajectory as Sudan and Zimbabwe in the context of the Sino-troika rivalry. First, internal wrangles are rekindled and resulting weaknesses promoted by proxy to grow wider. Then the rivals take sides in the same proxy style. Ironically, South Sudan, 'through its own abuses and corruption – and after just seven years of existence' - went 'from being a poor but hopeful nation to something close to a failed state led by a corrupt, oppressive military elite' (FP, 2018).

However, South Sudan is not operating in the vacuum, nor is it an island, and so its internal dynamics are partly influenced by the international system, as realists argue. So 'neither IGAD, the AU, nor the Troika can now walk away from South Sudan' (Hilde, 2016 p300). China is also challenged to demonstrate its peace building in South Sudan. The relations among states are in an anarchical system that's dominated by states that do not always desire to cooperate - and even when they cooperate it is because of their own interests (Pfaltzgraff, 2001).

For the U.S., billions of U.S. dollars – estimated at \$14 billion - have flowed into South Sudan in the past, along with a great deal of tender American attention (Foreign Policy, 2018). But the mood in Washington, FP reported, is much different now. That's because South Sudan has not lived to the expectations of the United States: setting up a viable state that would contribute to the fight against terrorism and act as a barrier to expansion of Arabism and Islamism to the rest of East Africa. The U.S. also wanted to see an honest ally craved out of the dishonest Sudan that even sheltered Osama Bin Laden in 1997. 'The other concern by America is that under Kiir's watch, her rival China has managed to grab eight lucrative oil deposits while

her companies, Exxonmobil and Haliburton are taking over only four deposits, tilting the balance of power in influencing issues in the newest country in favor of Beijing' (Africa Confidential [AC], 2014). As the AC reported,

'It's for this and other many factors earlier identified that America prefers Kiir to be out of power' and 'he is either replaced by Ms. Garang or Riek Machar.' 'At worst, Garang's son, Mabior Garang can be the other alternative.' As if to confirm this anger in the U.S., there were reports that Riek Machar had been sheltered at the U.S., embassy and at the UN base in Juba after the outbreak of violence on 15 Dec 2013 (Hilde, 2017), although these reports were denied. After Riek fled Juba to Bor (in Jonglei State), Daily Nation newspaper reported that Riek Machar was accommodated at the UN compound, at the Korean section of the camp. While the U.S., has been supporting the peace processes, it had been harsher on the government, seeking sanctions at the UN Security Council. Another move that was seen as a tool for regime change – which the government sees as the ultimate goal of the U.S.'s new foreign policy in South Sudan – was the deployment of a Regional Protection Force at the request of the U.S. and approval by the UNSC. The force of 4000 men was in addition to the 12000-strong UNMISS.

The new men were mandated to protect key installations in Juba, such as the airport, and the main routes in and out of Juba. "Having additional troops means we can carry out more tasks related to our mandate to protect civilians and build durable peace," the Secretary General's Special Representative and the head UNMISS, David Shearer, said at the time. Yet this is the same mission that had been accused of partisanship by hosting and supporting Riek Machar. Even in the weeks following the outbreak of fighting in Juba, weapons were impounded in UN trucks enroute to Bentiu, where rebels were in large numbers. This fed into the government's view that the U.S., through its partners and UNMISS, was supporting Riek Machar in pursuit of regime change (Mabior, 2016 p204). The previous head of the mission, Hilde F. Johnson, had been accused of even being Riek's girlfriend (Hilde, 2016) and mocked of pretending to be a co-president (Mabior, 2016 p204).

Since 2013, peace agreements in South Sudan have been collapsing. The current one is hanging in a balance. In a conflict and region where peace agreements and ceasefires are notorious for being short-lived, it is apparent that there is a missing link in the negotiation processes and agreements that come from these negotiations (ISS, 2010). Before finally signing the Aug 2015 peace agreement, President Kiir had complained that he was made to sign ceasefires under duress. He also signed the overall agreement under strenuous international pressure. Dr. Riek also had to make some corrections in the agreement by handwriting, because he was not afforded the opportunity to correct even the name of his armed organization. 'Evidence from numerous peace processes shows that there is a high risk that agreements sign under external pressure will' (Hilde, 2016 p300). In fact, the Aug 2015 agreement, signed under pressure, resulted into another outbreak of fighting at the Presidential Palace in Juba on July 7, while President Kiir and Dr. Machar, along with other senior government officials, were in a meeting room discussing security issues.

It should be noted that 'in the Cold War era, interference in the internal affairs of African governments was commonplace for superpowers' (Museveni1992, p244). Today, external interests continue to play a large and sometimes decisive role both in suppressing and in sustaining conflict (ZIMBABWE: A GROWING POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CRISIS, supra note 9, at 1.). As things stand, and as Kachuol argued above, political leaders in South Sudan are known for pretending to be opposition leaders or warlords when they lose political positions. Yet all they need seem to be a statement from the superpowers calling for peace talks that rewards them with even senior political positions or more ranks in the army. It is therefore commonplace for these leaders to become rebels at the slightest opportunity. Politics in South Sudan is

therefore determined by international support instead of an endorsement of the people. Yet this rising “politics of opportunism” has not been examined as a key factor in the South Sudan’s peace process. Nevertheless, just stating the interests of China and the Troika countries in South Sudan does not necessarily explain the impact of their relations on the South Sudan peace process. Africa Confidential magazine took it further by explaining how angered the Troika countries, led by the U.S., are with South Sudan. It also stated how jolly China could be in its rise as an economic partner for South Sudan. But this reporting is both superficial in approach and shallow in context. Apart from the usual diplomatic gambits of “we need peace”, there is no available evidence of what each of these countries is doing behind the curtains to secure peace in its own terms. When two elephants are fighting the grass suffers, as saying goes. It’s critical to understand how the rivalry between these superpower blocks is playing out especially in their relations with the South Sudanese political leaders and how these relate to achieving or spoiling peace.

### **Methods and Materials**

This study used both quantitative and qualitative research approaches, including observation - ensuring that both data and contextual understanding and analysis of the issues are used. A non-experimental research design was employed to explore the impact of Sino-Troika relations on the peace process in South Sudan. This study was conducted in the South Sudan’s capital, Juba.

The target population comprised TGoNU officials, SPLMIO leaders, foreign diplomats, academic staff, students, civil society activists, women groups and faith-based groups. These various groups were targeted because they make up both the informed section of the society and those involved in the actual interactions with China and Troika. Given the diverse composition of the people who live in Juba and the specificity of the research objectives, stratified sampling was used. The stratified groups that had a stake in the topic of study included faith leaders, foreign diplomats, current TGoNU officials and SPLM-IO. An additional sample of 20 was drawn from South Sudan senior government officials and academic staff. To provide proper reflection of all views in the research, purposive sampling was also used to select respondents from the civil society, women groups, religious leaders and the youth to form key informants.

Twenty (20) questionnaires were used to collect primary data from the civil society, academic staff, students, youth, women and religious leaders. Interviews were arranged with the 15 respondents (drawn from the academia, foreign diplomats, government officials, IO and R-TGoNU), each separately, to gauge the views of the individuals. Two focus group discussions were organized for civil society members, students, academic, religious leaders and academic staff.

The pilot study was done in Juba. For interviews and questionnaires, pilot testing involved the first three respondents. The validity of this research’s findings was tested by rating the findings against the objectives. Where the findings deviated from the objectives, then the conclusion were considered invalid. Three types of consistency: over time (test-retest reliability), across items (internal consistency), and across different researchers (inter-rater reliability) were assessed. The three tests state above were used to assess the reliability of this research’s findings: relevance of the findings to the findings, consistency of the views and arguments, and applicability of the conclusions in terms of representing generalized views of the respondents.

Data was collected from both the primary and secondary sources. Content analysis mechanisms were used to group the data into themes. These themes were further analyzed using descriptive analysis. Data was presented in form of tables, charts and graphs, followed by interpretations for purposes of clarity.

## Results

In examining the effects of the Sino-Troika diplomatic interests on the South Sudan peace process, the trend in diplomatic relations with these two power centers was studied in relation to the emergence of the conflict and the progress of the peace agreements.

### *Before 2011*

During interviews and Focus Group Discussions, respondents retraced the path South Sudan has taken since the independence of Sudan in 1956 to explain the trend in diplomatic relations between South Sudan and Troika on one hand and China on the other. Sudan was colonized by the British (1890s – 1953), a member of the Troika. The colonizers filled administrative positions of the government with their own nationals and imposed their own cultures and policies while exploiting natural resources for the benefit of their home countries.

This led to development of anti-colonialist sentiments that gained momentum after World War II and led to independence of the Sudan in 1956. One colonial legacy that remained to haunt Sudan for the next half a decade was the preferential treatment of northerners to southerners, which meant that at independence, only the northerners were the majority in parliament. The dissatisfaction with the southerners led to the Anya movement that began in 1955, well ahead of independence.

The years that followed were characterized by war and suffering in Southern Sudan. Driven by its own national interests, the U.S, a key member of the Troika, sided with the Khartoum government in the Cold War era, with U.S companies setting up agriculture schemes that displaced southerners in the now contested Abyei region in favor of resettling the Arab Misseriya tribesmen, who now claim being part of the disputed region. This prompted the Abyei Ngok Dinka to go to the bush to fight for their own rights even before the 1983 rebellion by the SPLA that eventually culminated into independence of South Sudan. Historian Douglas Johnson corroborates this view of the respondents in his paper, *The Road back from Abyei* (Douglas, 2011):

*At this time (1980s) the U.S. government supported Khartoum, a U.S. oil company helped supply the Misseriya militia, and western aid agencies collaborated with the government to settle Misseriya on former Ngok territory by drilling bore-hole wells to provide year-round water.*

However, China reevaluated its position and rooted for an economic relationship with Southern Sudan, which had a semi-autonomous government that was battling its own internal violent conflicts and accusations of human rights violations. China's foreign policy approach of non-interference was now convenient for the new government. Knowing that the vast of Sudan's oil deposits and operational wells were in the South and would secede with Southern Sudan, China improved its diplomatic contacts with Juba. These views from the respondents have also been corroborated by the *Diplomat* magazine:

*As early as 2011 — the year of South Sudanese independence — the China National Petroleum Corporation, or CNPC, established an office in the South Sudanese capital of Juba. While the outbreak of the South Sudanese Civil War in 2013 forced CNPC to evacuate the office, the company was operating there again just one year later.*

China's diplomatic gimmicks agree with both realist and Marxist postulates. While China had the grand opportunity to work towards humanity in the Sudan by supporting democratic rights and dignity of the marginalized people, it opted for who wielded power and control over natural resources. Khartoum and China ultimately were good friends. Later, China's focus flowed to the direction of resources, to Southern

Sudan. This confirms the principle of interaction of equal economic classes. Khartoum, with power and resources, shared the same wants with China, which needed resources and had the technical expertise to explore oil. China and the Sudanese ruling clique of the day were the bourgeoisies with common interests and the marginalized people were the proletariat, who, in the words of Dr. John Garang, were making wealth but had no wealth – and proceeds from their natural resources were being used to purchase weapons to kill them.

### ***After 2011***

When South Sudan was now finally independent, it was time to rise to the challenge of observing, respecting and protecting human rights and punishing violations, at least in the view of Troika. It's time to pay back for all the support South Sudan received and for the new country to demonstrate that it's becoming a reliable ally in the region. The Troika thought time had come for South Sudan to address corruption issues and deliver services to its own people. Setting up independent democratic institutions and financial systems would be a priority. The push for all these raised eyebrows among the government elites, who felt it was time to pay back to themselves for their sacrifices during the war by continuing to loot national resources, silencing freedom of expression and media, employing their kin and kith in critical government positions and running the country with pervasive impunity.

Another issue raised here was the public emergence of presidential ambitions among many of the top brass of the ruling party, all of whom had condoned corruption and impunity but now jostled for control of the patronage networks. Having become skeptical with the leadership of President Salva Kiir, the Troika favored change in the hope that it would eventually contribute to resolution of South Sudan's predicaments. In this complicated tread, Troika countries were perceived as actually trying to orchestrate a regime change in pursuit of a 'blind change'. This contributed to a dip in relations with South Sudan.

The diplomatic relations with Troika countries were also spoilt by the continued political and military relations between the government in Juba and the Sudan's SPLM-North rebels. The SPLM-N fought alongside South Sudanese since 1983 but were left inside Sudan under an oppressive regime when South Sudan seceded in 2011. They thus maintained close political and military relations with South Sudan. After secession, the government in Juba did not reclaim the military machinery that were with the SPLM-N but instead continued to pay their salaries and provided military support. Respondents contend that the inability of the Juba government to discuss these issues openly with Troika made it appear like an unreliable diplomatic partner and this contributed to the soaring of relations at this time.

Another thaw in diplomatic relations with the Troika countries came during negotiations of the disputed Abyei region. The Khartoum government had rejected the recommendations of the Abyei Boundaries Commission that was mandated under the 2005 peace agreement to delimit the boundaries of Abyei in preparation for a referendum on whether to remain part of northern Sudan or join the South regardless of the outcome of the South Sudan independence referendum. This necessitated international arbitration. The Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague issued its verdict, but the Khartoum government backtracked on its commitment to respect the ruling. In the negotiations that ensued between Juba and Khartoum ahead of declaration of secession on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July 2011, the U.S. came with a maddening proposal: the PCA ruling should be trashed and Abyei divided into two through a decree by President Omar al-Bashir in Khartoum.

One half would remain in the Sudan and the second half would be transferred administratively to South Sudan even without a referendum. The proposal came at a time the UK had declined to share the 1956 colonial maps showing the boundaries between northern and southern Sudan, which would then become the borders of the two independent states. South Sudan failed to understand the actions of the supposed friends

in trying to route for injustice over Abyei by advocating for sidestepping court rulings and in refusing to share the truth about the boundaries between the North and the South. Up to today, the borders have not been demarcated as both sides contest, dispute and claim many locations as their own, often citing the 1956 colonial maps that the UK is reluctant to provide.

China, ironically, focused on increasing oil production and remitting the proceeds to the government without questioning corruption, mismanagement and lack of transparency. This attracted the elites towards China, seeing it as “not interfering” in internal matters of an independent country. However, the diplomatic relations couldn’t progress so steeply because of the theft in 2012 of the South Sudan’s oil by Sudan to the silence of Chinese firms. In fact, one of the respondents said Chinese companies were caught stealing South Sudan’s oil during a visit to the oilfields by journalists accompanying the Minister of Petroleum, Stephen Dhieu Dau. The government had been informed that the output was around 240,000 barrels per day, but a scrutiny by a visiting oil engineer revealed that the actual output could have been 100,000 barrels per day higher than what was reported. Such incidents continued to draw a wedge between the other otherwise best mutual friends.

### ***When conflict started in South Sudan in 2013***

This was the height of suspicion that the Troika countries were supporting former vice president Dr. Riek Machar to oust President Salva Kiir as part of the regime change agenda. Troika countries, particularly the U.S. embassy, were accused of hosting Dr. Riek for safety reasons as fighting raged in and around Juba on Dec 16, 2019. Such mistrusts widened an already weak diplomatic relationship.

One of the respondents vividly described the contribution of Troika countries towards the worsening diplomatic relations. Under the influence of Troika countries, UNMISS, he said, hosted Dr. Riek in Bor just a few days after fleeing Juba upon failing to oust the government. Dr. Riek checked in at around 6pm in the evening and was accommodated at the Korean section of the base. He had linked up with General Peter Gatdet, a military general who was based around Bor and had just switched sides in favor of Riek. Gatdet would later attack Bor, leading to exchange of control of the area with the government troops several times. Such battles were characterized by gross human rights abuses, including slaughter of women and children. At this time, the Troika countries even upped their public criticism of the government, which did not help mend the relations.

Meanwhile, China portrayed itself as the exact opposite of Troika and the West: restrained and respectful to the sovereignty of its partners. While Troika countries continued threatening the government with sanctions and cut financial aid due to the inabilities of the parties to the conflict to resolve their differences and make peace, China showed interest in further investing in South Sudan. It positioned itself as a neutral partner. All these prevailing issues and China’s strategic responses or omissions continued to shift South Sudan’s diplomatic relations towards China and away from Troika.

### ***During the 2015 peace agreement***

In August 2015, parties to the conflict in South Sudan signed a peace agreement. Respondents cited media reports and audio clips to claim that this agreement was not a result of negotiations by the parties but an imposition by the West, led by the Troika countries. Before signing this agreement, the parties, which were all in the SPLM before fighting began in Dec 2013, converged in Arusha, Tanzania, to discuss unification at the party level as a way of resolving the conflict. They signed the Arusha Agreement which provided for a return of all political leaders to the SPLM, where they would discuss democratization to rectify national problems. Dr. Riek was to be reinstated as deputy chairman after Salva Kiir and would not be in the government. All the members would be reinstated in their previous positions and eligible to contest elections



to change the status quo. Secretary General Pagan Amum returned to Juba to a warm welcome with the aim of reuniting and reorganizing the party. However, some of the respondents said Troika countries sabotaged this unity drive. “Why do you want to resurrect a dead monster,” one respondent quoted Troika diplomats as taunting the SPLM leaders.

The diplomats took the same charade to Dr. Riek, Pagan Amum and other senior party leaders both in the fold and in the opposition. Eventually, Pagan left Juba ostensibly to visit family but ended up in the peace negotiations room in Addis Ababa. Based on the Arusha Agreement, and with his return to Juba to reunite the SPLM, Pagan, a Former Detainee, shouldn't have taken sides anymore in the conflict. Dr. Riek and the government team were also expected to only formalize the Arusha Agreement ideals into a peace agreement that would end the war. But Pagan went and claimed leading his FD team at fresh negotiations. The government team protested but lacked support among the mediators. The Troika countries, who were funding the negotiations, came up with a new proposal, officially presented by IGAD, to circumvent the ideals of Arusha. The proposal created the position of the First Vice President, to be filled by Dr. Riek. “On seeing this, Dr. Riek jumped onto the proposal and abandoned Arusha,” the respondent said. This marked the journey to death of the AA.

Insufficient negotiations were allowed on the new IGAD proposal. Kiir claimed he was once asked by the Ethiopian PM to sign or risk arrest. The same message, he said, was delivered to Riek, who immediately signed a document that bore a wrong name of his own rebel group. Riek and Pagan chose to correct by handwriting some elements of the agreement that they didn't like – most of these corrections were clerical. Roughly two weeks later, Kiir signed in Juba after issuing a list of reservations. The abuse of diplomatic power and threats of force to the extent of not allowing the parties to adjust what they agreed upon drained the remaining faith that the government in Juba had in Troika. The parties, of course, didn't own the agreement. They, nevertheless, tried to own it and make it work.

Although China was listed as a guarantor of this agreement, it did not play a proactive role. It deliberately chose to have a role only if the parties had agreed to a working document, and that role was often limited. Despite this, China did not provide enough money in support of the deal – it only distributed “Chinese rice” to government officials - compared to Troika and their friends who poured in most of the funds to support the implementation.

### ***In July 2016***

Lack of ownership of the ARCSS would later meet an exacting toll on the implementation. Parties saw even the smallest and less contestable of the issues with mistrust. Riek insisted on coming to Juba with sophisticated weapons and more troops that weren't authorized under the agreement. Controversy ensued, and the progress of the implementation hang in the balance. Although he came to Juba a while later, confidence building was already under fire. Tension raged. The bodyguards of the two leaders remained hostile to each other. Security deployments were uncoordinated. Political statements weren't any more reassuring. Eventually, further fighting broke out in Juba on the 7<sup>th</sup> of July. Bodyguards fought each other at close range at the gates and at various spots around the fence surrounding the Presidential Palace J1 while Kiir and Riek, along with other senior political and military leaders, were meeting to try to resolve issues surrounding hostilities of their forces as seen in a skirmish that claimed the lives of four government soldiers three days earlier.

Kiir ensured Riek was protected and chauffeured by government soldiers to his base at the outskirts of Juba. Kiir's attempt to call Riek for another confidence building meeting failed. Fighting only intensified over the next few days. Riek's soldiers were defeated. As he fled Juba, government soldiers pursued him until he was evacuated to safety by UNMISS at the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo. Some members of

his team remained in Juba and chose to name Riek's replacement – Gen. Taban Deng Gai - to continue with the implementation of the ARCSS. Riek was later taken to Khartoum for treatment and on to South Africa, where he was placed under house arrest. Although the Troika countries appeared despaired on what course of action to take, their silence and restraint in criticizing the government or the SPLM-IO did not help improve relations. It was viewed as an exercise of moral equivalence at its best.

China, on the other hand, demonstrated its tested strategy of mincing its words. Its diplomatic position with regards to South Sudan was thus unshaken. The government in Juba had wanted China to do more by countering Troika statements where possible and oppose the position of Troika countries at the UN Security Council with regards to proposals of arms embargo and targeted sanctions. Perhaps this explains why the level of diplomatic relations dropped by three percent points as compared to the time of signing the ARCSS.

### ***Now with the new peace agreement, R-ARCSS***

The R-ARCSS is a renegotiation of the ARCSS. The idea to “revitalize” the ARCSS first came from Troika countries, who felt that the absence of Riek had not contributed to a more peaceful South Sudan. The Troika countries argued that a meaningful peace would be achieved only when all parties are stakeholders in the transitional government. Shuttle diplomacy resulted into the formalization of this proposal. The renegotiation process was now duped “High Level Revitalization Forum”. The HLRF failed several times in Addis Ababa and was later transferred to Khartoum. Al-Bashir played well with his magic knowledge of the personalities of Kiir and Riek and succeeded in birthing a new agreement, the R-ARCSS.

Both the government and opposition groups welcomed the signing of this agreement and vowed to fully implement it and restore peace. Interestingly, Troika countries criticized the agreement. They held back from funding it. Essentially, they advocated a “wait-and-see” approach. This created and perpetuated the impression that the Troika countries don't want a people-driven peace agreement in favor of its own. Meanwhile China applied what it is good at: silence. Soon, Bashir was ousted from his throne through mass protests and arrested, with support from Troika of the demonstrators, before seeing, as a freeman and leader, the results of an agreement he personally mid-wived. What this demonstrates is that China, at the time al-Bashir badly wanted its diplomatic support, adopted strategic silence as a way of not contracting the Troika and her allies in the Middle East if its undertakings in the oil exploration sector were not threatened. And after Bashir's ouster, nothing showed China's interests in oil were under threat. Diplomacy paid off. This finding conforms with Pfaltzgraff argument that relations among states are in an anarchical system that's dominated by states that do not always desire to cooperate - and even when they cooperate it is because of their own interests (Pfaltzgraff, 2001). In the South Sudan peace process, both China and Troika, despite their conflicting interests, have been guarantors on numerous occasions. That can only happen if their interests are advanced concurrently. It's the author's view that if interests of both aren't secured in any peace agreement, that agreement is destined to collapse. This has been the case for South Sudan.

### **Discussions**

The 1980s U.S. government support for Khartoum continued until early 90s, when it was clear that Sudan was supporting terrorism by harboring anti-Troika elements such as Osama Bin Laden in the geographic region of Al Jazeera. In 1993, the U.S listed Sudan among countries supporting terrorism. Although President Omar al-Bashir later expelled bin Laden in 1996 under pressure from the Troika, western focus had shifted to the SPLA. With the support of the U.S., the UK and Norway, the Government of Sudan and the SPLA signed a Declaration of Principles in 1998, paving the way for ceasefire negotiations that led to the signing of the Machakos Protocol in 2002 and the CPA in 2005. The CPA, for which the Troika were the guarantors, changed Sudan forever. During the six-year interim period, the Troika ensured that key

provisions of the deal were implemented, leading to the referendum in January 2011 and declaration of independence on July 9. This support to the peace process and to the referendum explains the cordiality of the relations between South Sudan and the Troika during this time. This also conforms to the realist perspective of Hans Morgenthau as captured in the literature review in the preceding pages of this report. Although there was a human course to support the liberation struggle for South Sudan, Troika, pursuing its own interests, initially sided with Khartoum despite its human rights records. When these interests were threatened, Troika shifted its focus to support the SPLA, although it had presented some traits of Marxism that the U.S. and her allies were fighting against during the Cold War era.

Meanwhile, China was a close ally to the Khartoum government since 1995, when it first entered the oil industry in Sudan. Khartoum used proceeds from oil to buy weapons to fight Southern Sudanese rebels, yet most of the functioning oil wells were in the South. This stirred more bitterness and resentment among South Sudanese who loathed the inability of the Chinese foreign policy to tackle human rights violations and war crimes committed in the civil war. That's why South Sudan had perceived "very bad" relations with China a few years before independence, as fears lingered that China would bolster Khartoum's determination to scuttle the referendum and impose what had been termed as a "false unity".

## Conclusion

The study established that the moral equivalence resulting from incessant clash of Sino-Troika interests has caused "politics of opportunism and the rhetoric of peace". The "politics of opportunism" emanates from elitist feelings that if the Troika countries don't meet their interests through a sitting government, any opposition to that sitting government would definitely be supported by the Troika and driven to power through the policy of "regime change" for unfriendly governments. This has deprived South Sudan's politics of reason, principles, morals and requisite popular support. This has increased the number of armed rebellions since the fall out between the government and the Troika after independence. On the other hand, rhetorical cries for peace have been prevalent, especially on occasions when the Troika threatens punitive measures against parties that want to spoil the peace process. Yet Troika countries have a trend of supporting controversial peace agreements and taking a "wait and see" approach on versions of apparent consensus among the parties. These have deprived the peace process of nobility, reasonableness and moral values. A state official shuffled out of power today would become a rebel the next day and Troika calls for inclusion into the peace agreement, which essentially means giving more power in return for rebelling over political sacking.

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