

The Impact of the 2011 – 2018 Dinka and Murle Inter-Ethnic Conflict on Child Rights Protection: Case Study Boma and Jonglei States in South Sudan

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Abstract: The objectives of this study is to address the lethal impacts of the gross violations of child rights on the lives of the Murle and Dinka children in Jonglei State and Boma State in South Sudan, by shedding light on the adverse effects of the deadly violence between the two neighbouring communities from 2011 to 2018 upon the livelihood of the pastoral communities in the two said states. Also, it delves into the determining main indicators of the root causes of the said disastrous inter-ethnic armed conflicts that are still partially going on with inter-tribal banditry. The study presents the contagious consequences of the detrimental inter-tribal disputes which resulted in many deaths, displacement and livelihood devastation of the susceptible nomadic community in Jonglei State and in Boma State from 2011 to 2018, where the recurrent situation of the above mentioned communities is still volatile due to abject poverty and underdevelopment that resulted in socio-economic depression which made these poor nomads and agro-pastoralists extremely destitute because of the weak institutions of South Sudan, as a nation. The study extensively investigates the regrettable magnitude and lethal intensity of the chronic inter-tribal armed conflicts in the two above mentioned states which were badly destroyed by tribal clashes and inter-ethnic battles that ensued in the abuse and abduction of innocent children from there. In conclusion, this study presents preventive methods and strategic plan for the mitigation of the tribal disputes and management of the wider conflicts in this country by analysing the factors, actors and drivers of the destructive inter-ethnic armed conflict with violence between the Dinka ethnic group and Murle ethnic group that are hostile to each other due to their tribal hostility.

Keywords: Dinka, Murle, inter-ethnic, conflict, child, rights, protection, Boma, Jonglei and South-Sudan.

I. INTRODUCTION

According to the country profile information on www.wikipedia.org, the Republic of South Sudan (ROSS) is a landlocked country which is located in the East-central of Africa. South Sudan is bordered by Ethiopia to the East, Kenya to the South-East, Uganda to the South, the Democratic Republic of Congo to the South-west, the Central Republic of Africa to the West and Sudan to the Northward. The geographical areas which this paper covers and which I am very familiar with, having lived in Sudan for 13 years as an undergraduate and postgraduate student, are: Boma State and Jonglei State in the fragile Republic of South Sudan which is the youngest nation in the African continent that is notoriously war-ravaged due to chronic violence. By the year 2016, the total population of South Sudan was approximately 12, 230,730 which is in contrast to the disputed Sudanese national census in 2008 that recorded the population of South Sudan to be 8,260,490. With longer periods of civil unrest, inter-ethnic armed conflicts and political crisis, it is not clear how many people are living in South Sudan today.

The total geographical and territorial land area of the currently conflict-engulfed Republic of South Sudan is 619,745 square kilometres, 239,285 square miles. As the Transitional Constitution of South Sudan stipulates, 'The territory of the Republic of South Sudan comprises all lands and air space that constituted the three former Southern Provinces of Bahr el Ghazal, Equatoria and Upper Nile in their boundaries as they stood on January 1, 1956, and the Abyei Area, the territory of the nine Ngok Dinka chiefdoms transferred from Bahr el Ghazal to Kordofan Province in 1905 as defined by the Abyei Arbitration Tribunal Award of July 2009.' (www.ilo.org). It is worth giving attention to that the Republic of Sudan also constitutionally believes that Abyei is part and parcel of Sudan. While I, the researcher, was in Sudan, there were inter-ethnic armed clashes between the Dinka Ngok and the Arab Misseriya in Southern Kordofan Province, because of their territorial disputes.

In 2012, Sudanese troops and South Sudanese troops clashed in this disputed territory, as I, the researcher, was in Sudan. The escalation was caused by disagreement over payment of oil fees that South Sudan was paying to Sudan for using the Sudan-owned pipelines for the export of its oil. 'Sudan began taking oil unilaterally supposedly as payment for the use of these facilities. South Sudan claimed that this action was amounted to theft in broad day light. In January 2012. Thus; ...

closing the entire production of 350,000 barrels per day from its oil wells. A few months later, in April 2012, the disputes escalated to armed clashes in the oil-rich Heglig, an area commonly called Panthou by South Sudanese. In effect, Sudan lost a half of the 115,000 barrels per day oil it was producing after the split, with the effect of weakening its economy (Moro 2017, p. 34).

This is an indicator of the territorial dispute between the two nations that can result in destructive future irredentism. Conflict is an altercation between two or more actors which results from factors that are triggered by underlying negative drivers.

Inter-ethnic conflicts have been globally pronounced to violate the human rights of children. Evidence discloses that, the state of Yugoslavia disintegrated because of competing identities within the state (Center for European Studies (CES), 2004: 2 -3). Children, women and the elderly suffered the consequences of the war. In Africa, the decolonisation and the end of the Cold War left behind bifurcated states, with different identities within the state competing for control of state power (Mamdani, 1996: 15, Schwab, 2001:12). Much of the world still recalls the 1994 Rwanda genocide that led to the brutal killing of children, men and women in tens of thousands. Decolonisation is believed to have left a void that was filled by competing identities between Hutu and Tutsis. Tutsis, having been the privileged ethnic group under the colonial rule were viewed as enemies by Hutus in both countries (Mamdani, *ibid*, p. 60). This shows the lethal negativity of ethnic conflicts.

A critical analysis of the ongoing South Sudan reveals that the crisis as being similar to the challenges faced by a majority of the post-independent states in Africa. Apparently, this a challenge imposed politicised and militarised ethnic-identities. For instance, in the course of the protracted civil war, (Anyanya & Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army SPLM/A struggles) there were increased episodes of political alignments and realignments as a result of political interests and actions that molded interethnic relations (Hutchinson, 1996:9). Subsequently, this impacted negatively on the traditional animosities between Dinka, Murle and Nuer children as Rands and Le Rich aptly observe (2012 cited in Kachuol 2012).

Natural resource-based disputes acerbated inter-ethnic armed between Dinka tribe and Murle tribe, each one protecting its own resource-based interest. Inter-ethnic armed confrontation became the order of the day that resulted in grave human or child rights violations such as indiscriminate abductions, child soldiering and forced child sex by the tribal militias.

The impact of inter-ethnic armed conflicts on the protection of child rights is one of the main concerns for all human rights advocates and child rights activists in many parts of the world. Without any respect however, the Dinka tribe in Jonglei State and the Murle tribe in Boma State in South Sudan abused the 1989 Convention of the Rights of the Child through the ill actions of the conflict actors. Most of the child rights violations resulted from the deadly attacks launched by the militias.

The 2011 – 2018 Dinka-Murle inter-ethnic armed conflict is a widespread problem against the rights of the South Sudanese children from the two ethnic groups in Boma and Jonglei States in South Sudan. Abduction of innocent children and abuse of their basic rights have been rampant since the inception of this chronic inter-ethnic armed conflict which resulted in gross violations of basic child rights. The poor children from the two above ethnic groups suffer from unprecedented emotional torture, physical harm, psychological trauma and sexual abuse due to their ethnicity since they are abducted and abused by hostile tribal combatants/bandits. The deleterious ethnic-based violence denuded the value of human life in the said states.

Abductions and kidnappings of children and their mothers is worsened when any of the warring ethnic group goes for cattle wrestling to the enemy group. Consequently, innocent mothers and children from each ethnic group are targeted during this time due to their tribal affiliation for tit-for-tat inter-ethnic revenging. Thus, rights of children are gravely abused in the offensives and counter-offensives between the two warring sides who are the participants in the abduction and enslaving of the blameless children for psychological warfare in Jonglei State and Boma State that are victimised by inter-ethnic armed banditry. Abducted children are deprived of cognitive, or their conscious progress, physical (height, shape and weight) as well as their social-emotional development. They are emotionally mistreated and physically tortured by their hostile kidnapers, in times of intermittent tribal wars. This inhumanity has been rampant in the war-impacted states for many years.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of the bloody inter-ethnic conflict between Murle and Dinka on the lives of children in the civil-strife-prone Jonglei State and Boma State in the Republic of South Sudan, identify and describe the gross violations of child rights and state the possible strategies that can address the child rights violations. Specifically, it aims at stating the root causes of this wanton inter-ethnic armed conflict and analyse the psychological trauma that the blameless Murle children and Dinka children suffer from the abduction and enslavement, appraising the magnitude of the child rights abuse and; determining the possible child rights protection measures. I, the researcher, intend in this paper to contribute to the protection of the rights of Murle and Dinka children in South Sudan, on the basis of International Human Rights Law, for their own safety and survival. Protection of the above mentioned children is an international moral duty.

2. METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

2.1 Study Area:

This academic study was carried out in Jonglei State and Boma States in South Sudan. The tense economic and political relations between these states have been described below by the author who has been observing the situation for years.

2.1.1 Jonglei State:

The now troubled Jonglei State which was 'the largest state in South Sudan' McKay (2012) is one of the new 32 states of the Republic South Sudan that president Salva Kiir Mayardit created with presidential decree on 2nd October 2015. Previously, Jonglei State consisted of three main counties: Bor County, Duk County and Twic East County. Prior to the re-creation of the new Jonglei State, it was 'the most populous and the largest state by area, with approximately 122,581 square kilometres. With Bor being the current capital city of Jonglei State.' It is one of the strongholds of the Dinka ethnic group.

Jonglei State 'is a multi-ethnic state inhabited by several ethnic groups, such as Dinka, Nuer, and Murle...most communities depend on agriculture, including agro-pastoralism and pastoralism, which provide 80 percent of domestic employment... Jonglei is also known as one of the least developed regions of the world, lacking basic infrastructure due to decades of civil war' (see, Yoshida 2013, p. 45). While I was in Sudan, the inter-ethnic armed conflicts in Jonglei State were boiling and there was wide media coverage about child rights abuses, including child abduction, child soldiering and enslavement.

After the decisive secession of the Republic of South Sudan from Sudan, Jonglei State witnessed some of the bloodiest inter-ethnic armed conflicts in the history of the troubled state. In 2011, Luo-Nuer ethnic group and Murle ethnic group fought bitter and brutal battles in this region. The period between June and December 2011 was marked by 1000 in Jonglei State'... In December 2011, 8000 tribal combatants from Luo-Nuer tribe attacked the Murle tribe's home town of Pibor waging the deadliest inter-tribal confrontations (McKay, 2012). Many prime lives, including children's from there, were lost in the inter-ethnic offensives and counter-offensives. Also, they forced countless civilians to flee from their homes.

2.1.2 Boma State:

According to (www.wikipedia.org), Boma State is located in Upper Nile region of the Republic of South Sudan and its capital is the Murle-populated Pibor which is the largest and the most important city in this state, and its main occupants being the Murle tribe. Thus, Pibor city is the most urbanized epicentre of the now embattled Murle tribe in South Sudan.

Boma State shares borders with Jonglei State to the Westward, Kapoeta State to the Southeastward, Imatong State to the Southwestward direction and Akobo State to the Northwestward direction. Also, it borders Ethiopia to the Eastward direction, connecting the Murle communities in South Sudan to those in Ethiopia that they share etymological blood with.

This state which is among the 32 states of South Sudan was formerly part of Jonglei State and it was established with presidential decree by President Salva Kiir on October the 2nd 2015. Currently, Boma State consists of Pibor county and Pochalla county. The Murle ethnic group in Boma State has been at war with both the more numerous and dominant Dinka tribe and the Luo-Nuer in Jonglei State since 2011. Their conflict with them is resource-based and interest-based conflict.

I, the researcher, do think that the main cause of the ongoing animosity or hostility of this small tribe, Murle, with the larger and predominant tribes in the state is because of tribal struggle for political and economic power since this tribe suffers from political marginalisation from the side of the Dinka tribe which is the political and economic baron in South Sudan as well as Nuer tribe that is the second largest and most powerful tribe in South Sudan, politically. Both of the above mentioned tribes ethnically marginalise their brotherly Murle tribe because of political contention between the South Sudanese tribes.

2.2 Research Design:

Qualitative research was the analytical method that was based on the historical data analysis written about the impact of the Dinka-Murle inter-ethnic armed conflict (2011 – 2018); on the innocent children in the above mentioned two neighbouring states in the Republic of South Sudan; which has been in in civil war since the Republic of South Sudan got its independence in 2011, after protracted struggle. Secondary sources such on the chronic South Sudanese inter-ethnic armed conflict were consulted and critiqued. Primary sources were obtained from few Sudanese that have been victims of the said conflict.

2.3 Sample Size:

The sampled respondents for this academic study are 20 persons. Of these sampled respondents, 15 respondents were interviewed to obtain accurate and reliable primary data from all the interviewed convenient respondents. The warring political situation at the time of the study was the major reason for purposively selecting a small number of participants.

2.4 Data Collection Methods:

2.4.1 Telephone and Email Interviews:

In some cases, telephone interviews were applied to connect with distant respondents. The high cost of telephoning as well as network problems propelled the researcher to use email interviews as well. The latter was more secure as it was viewed convenient and more secure than the former for the participants to share their information with the researcher, confidently.

2.4.2 Social Media Interaction:

Social Media such as the Messenger and the WhatsApp were so helpful in engaging participants' conversation. A lot of child rights related and political information was shared freely on these platforms which are widely used by the people.

2.4.3 Participant Observation:

When the Dinka-Murle inter-ethnic armed conflict erupted in 2011, I, the researcher was based in Khartoum as post-graduate student of Peace and Development Studies. I interacted with some victims from the study area who were then in Khartoum as IDPs and eavesdropped on their touching stories. This past interaction with them played potential role in the study. In 2015, I witnessed mass exodus of South Sudanese refugees that were displaced by the armed conflicts in Jonglei State who were coming to the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Khartoum, while I was working for UNHCR as a community interpreter. Their stories made me seem like I was a victim of the same ethnic-based armed conflict they were running away from. I witnessed starving wounded children and heard some deaths.

2.5 Data Analysis:

Since this study is based on the qualitative method rather than the quantitative method, it uses descriptive analysis. Thus, all the compiled primary and secondary information were critically interpreted as indicated in the next section.

3. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

3.1 Introduction:

This section presents the analyses of both the collected primary data and secondary data by using descriptive analysis of the qualitative method that this dissertation employs for data anatomisation. Thus, the bulky data is descriptively dissected under this section. It discusses the nexus between inter-ethnic armed conflict and child rights violations in Boma State and in Jonglei State, on the basis of the findings of the study, which directly relate to the objectives and hypotheses of this academic study by responding to both of the said elements which are very important organs of this research project. It interprets the summary of the findings of the conducted interviews and the discussion of the main findings from intensively reviewed documents about the subject matter of this dissertation which was conducted with solidified background.

3.2 Summary of the Findings:

All of the contacted respondents told me that the Dinka-Murle inter-tribal armed conflict resulted in widespread child rights violations and human rights abuse. I found out from their responses to the interview guide, in the appendix of this dissertation, that unknown number of children were killed in the combat zones while many others were injured in the frontlines, as they were in action, as child fighters. They evinced that the impact of the Dinka-Murle inter-ethnic armed conflict includes physical impact and psychological impact, and it led to the death of children, displacement of their families and destruction of their properties in both the studied troubled states. This is according the data collected from them.

As per the findings from the interviewees, the major cause of the conflict is cattle rustling, the main actors are the tribal militias from both of the ethnic groups; the main drivers of this inter-communal armed conflict are generational illiteracy and absolute poverty while proliferation of small arms and light weapons play their role. Thus, there is abundance of light weapons and small arms in the two states. These widespread proliferation of light weapons result in dangerous insecurity.

It was discovered that the impact of the Dinka-Murle inter-ethnic armed conflict resulted in huge physical damages and psychological traumas of the poor children from the two above mentioned tribes who engaged in destructive inter-tribal battles in the Murle-peopled Boma State and in the Dinka-inhabited Jonglei State in South Sudan, where the two ethnic groups clashed with each other in 2011 which is the year that this young African nation separated from Sudan and gained its sovereignty, after the prolonged Sudanese civil war. Despite peace talks, the conflagration of conflict is still on to date.

I, the researcher, discovered that armed militias from the two tribes participated in the abductions and intimidations of innocent children from both ethnic communities for warfare techniques. These violations were involved with tribal impunity at the community level and at the militia level in front of the eyes of the government of South Sudan whose various security forces couldn't save those poor children from the said tribal bandits because of internal armed conflicts and weakness.

According to a Sudanese academician that was interviewed on 3rd of May 2018, prior to the secession of South Sudan from Sudan, Dinka tribe was anti-Sudan and was at war with the Northern Arab-dominated government of Sudan; while the Murle tribe was pro-government. This divergent tribal insights negatively contribute to the on-going inter-ethnic hostility between the Dinka and the Murle warring ethnic groups, since there is a chronic grudge between these two tribes.

The historical hostility and political divergence between the two ethnic groups became an underlying conflict driver as Murle community asserts that Dinka is fully controlling the political leadership and the decision-making of South Sudan. In contrast to this, the Dinka assumes that Murle is a problematic tribe that has been against the struggle for the liberation of South Sudan since its inception. This tribal insight creates suspicion and hatred between the two warring ethnic groups.

According to the secondary data collected from the different written sources, there are various and multiple drivers of the intertribal armed conflict between Dinka and Murle in Jonglei State and in Boma State of ROSS. The main drivers that are behind this chronic inter-ethnic armed conflict between the two Nilotic and neighbouring ethnic groups are the followings:

The widespread insecurity which engulfed South Sudan and made the situation elusive. This factor is a major driver of the protracted inter-ethnic armed conflict. The far-flung insecurity also results from the weakness of the concerned sectors.

Unequal political representation and marginalisation of Murle ethnic group in South Sudan. Since there are not strong actors of Murle men and women in the decision-making of South Sudan, as state actors and non-state actors, they believe that the government of South Sudan can't keep national peace throughout the country for collective human safety and national security. They buy that the Dinka-dominated government of South Sudan can't develop friendly relations among the South Sudanese population. They think that ROSS can't eradicate the widespread generational illiteracy and devastating poverty in Boma State. They, Murle, credit that ROSS can't be a neutral authority that can fairly resolve the armed conflict between Dinka and Murle because of political partiality per se. In contrast this, the Dinka disagree with Murle over this accusation.

In contrast to the perception of the Murle over the leadership of President Salva Kiir, I ascertained that the Dinka leaders believe that South Sudan is a democratic nation and whoever that holds top position in the leadership of the country was either elected by the people of South Sudan or nominated by the leadership of the state for academic professionalism and personal merit. They believe that tested academic qualification and suitability matter, as they can result in sustainable development and transformation of the South Sudanese citizens, including the Dinka community and the Murle community.

Perception of inequitable distribution of resources. This is another exacerbating driver of this regrettable inter-ethnic armed conflict which I discovered. Since the Murle perceive that their share of the national resources is not given to them, as it was supposed to be, this driver contributes to the tension of the two communities and it makes this inter-ethnic armed conflict as both resource-based altercation and interest-based dispute because of their tribally politicised mechanisms.

Forceful disarmament of the tribal militias. This is also a disastrous driver behind the devastating inter-ethnic armed conflict between the two brotherly ethnics. Since South Sudan has been retarded by politicised civil war and the culture of cattle-rustling is deep-rooted in all over the territories of the rural communities, the forceful disarmament which the government conducted contributed to the conflict. Proliferation of unregulated small arms and light weapons (SALW) is a factor which plays negative role in the worsening insecurity in this fragile nation's society. Both tribes believe that the government lacks the writ to ensure the safety and security of every South Sudanese citizen. For this, each tribe believes that if disarmed it will be a victim for the other armed tribes and its cattle will be looted by the militiamen of the other neighbouring hostile tribes who long for the rustling of their livestock and abduction of their children because of tribal grudge and long-lasting inter-ethnic vendetta. Thus, the forceful disarmament backfired on the government instead. This big issue is a matter of great concern for both the fragile government of South Sudan and for the international peace activists and conflict experts.

The study found out that the local and national disaster management levels towards the hybrid disaster which is associated with the forceful disarmament of the hostile tribes, didn't meet the proper disaster response contingency plan (DRCP) due to multiple influencing situations which are twinned with tribal geopolitical structures and demographic statuses at the levels of the communities. This factor, with its underlying multidimensional drivers, negatively deteriorates the current situation.

3.3 Causes of Dinka-Murle Inter-ethnic Conflict:

Armed conflict in any part of the world does not occur in vacuum. The following are the main causes of the intermittent inter-ethnic animosity and violence among the Dinka and Murle brutal conflicts as I, the researcher, understand them:

Absolute poverty: Multiple families amongst these two communities have no access to the primary needs and they have no the basic food for survival, clean water for drinking and washing, healthcare for prevention of treatable diseases and proper shelter for their protection from heat, cool and other environmental phenomena. These causes force the youth and young adults from the said ethnic groups to attack the territories of other neighbouring tribes and raid their habitations. When such a risky offensive takes place in a tribal territory, the reaction to it is a counter-offensive which leads to death of human resource, destruction of properties and displacement the susceptible communities, including innocent children who are often abducted and abused by tribal bandits. Under this insight, absolute poverty is a main factor of this inter-ethnic violence.

Generational illiteracy: Numerous Dinka and Murle populations in Jonglei State and in Boma State, live with generational illiteracy which was handed over to them from the generations living in these territories before them. This generational illiteracy resulted to generational poverty and imprinted culture of conflict on the attitude and behaviour of

the two South Sudanese communities in these states. Thus, this culture of cattle-rustling contributes to the hostility and animosity between the two ethnics who are infamous for warfare of child abduction for tribal avenging and revenging. This became a lethal conflict driver. Therefore, generational illiteracy is another negative factor that worsens the current situation on the ground.

I found out from the responses of the interviewees that many abducted child girls were used as service providers for their abductors. Also, they were forced to be concubines for the leaders of the tribal militias that abducted them from their villages. One of the interviewees that I interviewed during meeting the study's objectives said me, the researcher of this study, 'Abducting young girls and using them as concubines is a new phenomenon learn from Joseph Kony of LRA.'

3.4 Actors of the Conflict:

According to the findings from both the collected primary data and the secondary data, there are various direct and indirect actors of this inter-communal armed conflict between the Dinka Bor ethnic group in Jonglei State and Murle ethnic group in Boma State. These are the real stakeholders of this inter-ethnic conflict which negatively impacted on the population.

3.4.1 The Direct Actors of the Conflict:

The direct actors of this armed conflict are: state actors and non-state actors. The state actors are the South Sudanese armed forces who played both positive role and negative role in the Dinka-Murle inter-ethnic conflict in Jonglei State and in Boma State. Gordon (2014). I was told by a South Sudanese man who requested not to be named, some SPLA elements participated in the escalation of this inter-ethnic armed conflict. A bloke from Jonglei State, who knows the ups and downs of it, said to me, 'SPLM played positive role in the mitigation and management of the crisis in Jonglei and Boma. Representing the national army, SPLM disarmed militias.' This accusation against SPLM/A needs intensive and extensive investigations.

Another South Sudanese respondent told me, 'In the eyes of the Murle community in Boma State, SPLA/M is considered as Dinka-and-Nuer tribal militias. The reason is that majority of the SPLA forces are from these two major tribes and both tribes have been at war with the Murle tribe since 2011. How can your enemy disarm you with national mandate and tell you he is the authority?' This is an indicator of the depths of the inter-clan animosity and hostility among the ethnic groups.

The non-state actors who played their role in this conflict are the tribal militiamen from the two warring South Sudanese tribes that live side by side in the two above states. They are the direct stakeholders in this bloody and brutal armed conflict which has been annihilating the human resources and natural resources of the South Sudanese population, including the children from these warring tribes that are badly affected by the lethal impacts of the inter-ethnic armed conflict on them. Both of the tribal combatants participated in the abduction of innocent children and rustling of countless herds of cattle.

3.4.2 The Dinka Tribal Militias:

Armed tribal militias from the Dinka Bor ethnic group participated in the victimisation of the children from agro-pastoralists and the pastoralists in Boma State where they lastly abducted large numbers of the Murle innocent children. I was told by one of the interviewees, in 2012 Dinka militiamen who were heavily armed attacked Murle-peopled village and the assault resulted in dreadful carnage. Some interviewees believe that Dinka tribal combatants that were loyal to General George Athor, who was a renegade, involved in the killing and abduction of Murle children. Also, they rustled cattle from the Murle tribe, after a large-scale offensive against them. This is a clear indicator of the degree of the inter-tribal hostility and enmity.

Another interviewee said to me, 'Lieutenant General George Athor who was killed in Morobo County in Central Equatoria State on 19th December, 2011, after clashing with SPLA troops, was known for his ignition of hatred between Dinka and Murle. Had he been alive, the conflict would have been more dreadful than it is now. His Dinka loyalists abducted many innocent children.' This interviewee who requested not to be named, told me that the rebellion of the late George Athor was not only against the SPLA; but it was also against the Murle ethnic group, as the tribal animosity between the Dinka ethnic group and the Murle ethnic group is a chronic and deep-rooted inter-ethnic rift. This interprets the politicisation of the conflict. Despite this claim, the truthfulness of the one-sided accusation needs full confirmation and further investigation.

3.4.3 *The Murle Tribal Militias:*

Armed tribal militias who belong to the Murle ethnic group, under the overall command of David Yau Yau, participated in the decimation of civilians, devastation of public properties and displacement of the population in Jonglei. This information was given to me by one of the respondents. David Yau Yaus is one of the most influential actors in this armed conflict.

David Yau Yau, who hails from the Murle in Pibor, is a tribal warlord who studied Christian theology and used to work for South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SSRRC) and he is seen as an ethnic hero by the Murle youth and combatants because of role in the defence of the Murle group. (Gordon, *ibid*, p.7). Thus, his countless tribal combatants are very loyal to him. With the support of his Murle community, David Yau Yau became a powerful minister of ROSS.

According to VOA (2013), Yau Yau was accused of killing 79 people, abduction of 20 children and rustling of 25,000 head of cattle at Twic East County in Jonglei State where his Murle militiamen participated in that inter-tribal bloody offensive which resulted in death, destruction and displacement. Thus, this armed conflict is now of more political than in the past.

Most of the writers and researchers who wrote about the inter-ethnic armed conflict between Dinka tribe and Murle tribe of South Sudan conclusively agree that the factor that caused this tribal violence is the hunger for rustling cattle and the major underlying drivers are greed and grievance. Moreover, generational illiteracy and abject poverty play negative role in the escalation of the regrettable situation that has been annihilating this new nation for years, as has been mentioned above.

3.5 *Indirect Actors:*

Since South Sudan has been facing myriad of inter-ethnic armed conflicts because of tribal schisms within the South Sudanese population, all its citizens are grappling for sustainable peace. Such worsening internal clashes have been active for the past eight years, making the government of South Sudan almost morbid. I opine that there are various indirect players and external interventions which are involving in this very violence for their own interest-based goals and resource-based reasons since all opportunists usually follow their own interests. These fifth columnists are making profit from this violence.

As the collected primary data and the secondary data prove, there are countless indirect actors that benefit from the inter-ethnic armed conflicts in Jonglei State and Boma State. Of them, the following indirect actors are in the frontline for their own interest-based goals and objectives and they play negative roles in the escalation of this inter-ethnic armed conflict:

3.5.1 *Nuer Tribal Militias:*

Since Nuer ethnic group has been at war with the Dinka for political competition because of their tribal support for Dr. Riek Machar and as well at war with Murle ethnic group for territorial dispute and cattle rustling, they do play their part in this conflict in one way or another. When they see their two tribal foes fighting with each other, they make use of this golden opportunity and worsen the boiling situation. They indirectly do trigger this inter-ethnic conflict for their gains thus far.

According to Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (2014), Nuer militiamen are well-organised and ready for any inter-clan and inter-group conflicts in the states. 'The White Army' is the most feared Nuer tribal militiamen that are infamous for the abduction and execution of any POWs – prisoners of war - that they capture. One of the interviewees that the researcher interviewed on 27th June, 2018, said to the researcher, 'Nuer tribal warriors have a predictable negative role in the Dinka-Murle inter-ethnic armed conflicts because of interest-based tribal interest and military strategy as the violence between their two arch-enemies is a chance to be employed for the interest of Nuer tribe.' This is an indicator of violence.

3.5.2 *Arms Traffickers:*

The other indirect actors that involve in the ethnic militarisation of this inter-ethnic armed conflict are the weapon traders from the close neighbours of South Sudan. The said arms traffickers usually sell small arms and light weapons to the belligerent tribal militias for financial gains that they make by proliferating the intensification of these deadly weapons in the two states. One of the South Sudanese respondents that I interviewed on June the 28th 2018, said to me, 'There are

Sudanese and Congolese arms traffickers who infiltrate contraband small arms and light weapons into South Sudan. These elements are dangerous enemies of my people since they sell these rifles to us for killing our brothers.' This is another main conflict driver. I opine that the proliferation of the above said deadly weapons intensify this lethal inter-ethnic conflict.

4. CONCLUSION

The main factor of the South Sudanese chronic inter-ethnic armed conflict is inter-tribal animosity and the main driver of this specific conflict is resource-based and it can be analysed through the insight of 'The Organic Theory' by the renowned German ethnographer and geographer, Friedrich Ratzel (August the 30th 1844 – August the 9th 1904) who theorized that 'A state is an organism attached to the earth and thus it competes with other states in order to strive, because it needs a living space.' Thus, the Murle ethnic group needs a space of land for survival and political competition with their numerous neighbours, the Dinka ethnic group, which they have been at war since 2011 and they are still fighting with them to date.

In terms of the geopolitical demographic factor, Dinka are many in terms of population than Murle and for this reason they have better political position in the national politics of the country because of their powerful tribal domination of the decision-making statuses. This factor plays negative role in the escalation of this armed conflict between the two tribes.

In terms of geopolitical economic factor, Dinka is economically better than Murle because they dominate the economic and financial outlets of the nation, South Sudan, because of their numerous and modern-minded business barons in the lucrative business industry of the conflict-prone South Sudan which they sacrificed for its liberation from the Northern Sudan.

In regard to geopolitical geographic factor, the Dinka clans and sub-clans live in larger locations than the location of the Murle clans and sub-clans in South Sudan. This geographical diversity of the Dinkaland as well as its natural barriers give Dinka the upper hand of the management of the national resources and leadership because of their resistance against Arabs.

In connection to geopolitical military factor, Dinka has formidable armed forces in the national army of the Republic of South Sudan due to the quantity of the Dinka ethnic group when compared and contrasted with the smaller Murle ethnic group. This factor gives Dinka more access to the commandship of the armed forces as well as the top leadership of this war-weakened nation in East Africa. In contrast to this, the Murle tribe lacks such potential factor in the history of ROSS.

Concerning the geopolitical strategic factor, the Dinka ethnic groups dwell in the Eastern parts of the Nile banks, the Western parts of the Nile banks as well as in the disputed and oil-rich Abyei Area in South Kordofan province in North Sudan. This factors gives Dinka more access to small arms and light weapons for deadly battles. Thus, the Dinka tribal fighters are armed to the teeth and combat-ready. They are have reliable quantity and formidable quality at their own level.

As for the Murle ethnic group, their tribes live in Boma State which was previously part of Jonglei State as well as in the Western part of the Neighbouring Ethiopia. Being small in quantity, they are politically marginalised by the Dinka tribe.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

As an observer of the South Sudanese inter-ethnic armed conflicts, I see that the warring tribes in the study area act like an irritated skunk, whenever there is an ethnic violence. They get aggressive and kill innocent children and mothers who are themselves brittle victims that are traumatised by the chronic armed conflicts. The government of South Sudan acts as a tortoise because it doesn't keep the conflict at bay as immediately as it arises. This worsens the volatile situation and escalates the deadly and murderous inter-ethnic conflicts between the two Nilotic South Sudanese tribes in the two states.

The leadership of the troubled nation should come up with comprehensive peace strategy for conflict prevention, conflict mitigation, conflict management, conflict resolution, post-conflict development and positive human mentality transformation in the states. Doing so will contribute to the collective stability and peace of the South Sudanese community.

Conflict prevention will save the lives of the citizens in the war-ravaged states in this young nation. It will pre-empt tribal confrontations that would result in loss of human life, devastation of valuable public or private properties, destruction of

the virgin environment and human displacement. The most important mechanism for conflict prevention is the creation of comprehensive culture of peace at the community level and at the government level for the public safety of all the people.

Conflict mitigation will lessen the conflict hypertension among the Dinka ethnic group and Murle ethnic group in the study areas as well as the other warring tribes in South Sudan. Moreover, it will reduce the impacts of the inter-ethnic armed conflicts on the livelihood of the population that has been suffering from the civil wars and violence, including emotional violence, physical violence, psychological violence and sexual violence which the citizens of this nation face every day.

I advise the government of South Sudan to prioritise primary prevention of all kinds of conflicts before they break out for public peace. Secondary prevention for instantaneous response to any active armed conflict for national stability and tertiary prevention for long term community reintegration. If the government prioritises them, South Sudan will be a peaceful place.

Proactive conflict management with collaborative approaches will improve the situation and strengthen the social interactions and communal interrelations between the Dinka community in Jonglei State and the Murle community in Boma State. Since the two communities are neighbours, this is an opportunity for their well-being and peaceful interrelation for the sake of communal harmony. Therefore, the leadership of the country should be proactive in such a trying time of war.

Peaceful conflict resolution with integrative negotiation will end the outstanding disagreement, the resource-based altercation, the interest-based misconception and territorial disputes or tribal dissensions between these two said brotherly and neighbouring communities. This will narrow the gap between the two groups and it will enrich peace in South Sudan.

Positive post-conflict development will pacify the situations of the disputing states in South Sudan, as absolute poverty and generational illiteracy are the main factors that trigger the rampant cattle rustling in Jonglei State and in Boma State, dependable post-conflict development will contribute to the sustainable peace, political stability and food security of the two impoverished communities in both these adjacent states. The government should consider this factor and plan for it.

Since life is peace and peace is life, I recommend the planning, implementation and evaluation of culture of peace for the protection of the rights of the South Sudanese children in general and the children of Dinka in Jonglei State and the children of Murle in Boma State in particular, in order to assure public safety. If this is prioritised by the wider South Sudanese citizens, the immediate result will be a win-win situation. Thus, I do recommend the prioritisation of culture of peace.

The two warring ethnic groups should abstain from their culture of conflict and implement culture of peace and brotherhood for the common interest of their children. They should initiate peace orientations and public awareness of the lethal consequences of civil war and the significance of sustainable peace, bilateral harmony and nation-wide stability. This will improve the situation of the nation. It will improve the livelihood of the two neighbouring Nilotic communities in ROSS.

Since human rights respect is a core value in the creation of culture of peace, the government of South Sudan should empower its legal system and law enforcing agencies in order to assure justice and equality for all the citizens in South Sudan. I think if the law is enforced for the sake of the public safety and security of the people the payoff will be positive.

As peace education is the bedrock of culture of peace, South Sudan should initiate peace education as a major subject in its primary education. Doing so will imprint peace and stability on the minds and mentalities of the primary pupils from the bellicose communities. As these children will be their community leaders and statesmen of tomorrow, constructive coaching, integrative learning and assimilation of harmony into the current curriculum and syllabus of the country will contribute to the immediate social interaction and community interrelation of the South Sudanese population. It will equip the young children with the culture of dialogue. This should be prioritised by all the South Sudanese people and authority.

As generational poverty plays harmful role in the ignition of inter-ethnic clashes and triggers violation of child rights in the two states, economic empowerment and educational improvement should be put to use for the mitigation of the tribal crisis. Finally, CRC should be translated into action for the protection of all these children. Doing so will transform the localised society into globalised society. Therefore, I strongly recommend the reduction of poverty and eradication of illiteracy.

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