

continued armed conflict in South Sudan, President Kenyatta declared at the summit that there is “a very small window of opportunity to secure peace.”

According to reports from the summit, the government of South Sudan has agreed to stop fighting. Riak Machar has so far refused, telling BBC News that he is waiting “until mechanisms for monitoring are established.” He has demanded the release of the 11 former government officials who were arrested on charges related to allegations of an attempted coup. The government freed two of the 11 in response.

The United Nations has approved a doubling of its troops to 12,500 in South Sudan, plus additional international police, and the United States has 150 Marines standing by to enter the country if necessary, for further evacuation of U.S. citizens and protection of its embassy.

Who Is Responsible?

It is unclear what precisely happened with the Tiger Battalion—the Republican Guard of President Kiir—which set off the initial fighting; but within hours, the bloodletting had spread to half of the country’s ten states. There are conflicting accounts of what actually occurred—whether it was a coup, a mutiny, or a purge. In any case, it should be strongly emphasized that this conflict was not caused by ethnic-tribal differences, but rather ethnicity became the fault line in an extremely impoverished country, where people become so desperate they are willing to attack and murder their fellow citizens, whom they see as their “enemies” in fighting to obtain water, food, and land, just to live.

Governments like that of South Sudan are often formed out of coalitions of rival groups attempting to get at least some “share of the pie” of wealth and power. The more fundamental cause of the outbreak of ugly inter-ethnic violence between the Dinka and the Nuer tribes, is South Sudan’s failure to make sufficient progress in becoming a unified, sovereign nation, capable of feeding and providing for its citizens. This is the result of the ulterior motives involved in the creation of South Sudan, and the lack of a strong national identity resulting from decades of subjugation to British colonial rule, which imposed political, cultural, and economic backwardness on southern Sudan.

In an effort to overthrow the government of Suda-

nese President Omar al-Bashir, in Khartoum in the North, fanatical regime-change zealots in the West (with the United States more out in front than its sly British ally), cynically campaigned since the 1980s for the break-up of Sudan, intending to use South Sudan as a tool in their campaign against Khartoum. This anti-Khartoum cabal, which includes current U.S. National Security Advisor Susan Rice, hoped that loss of the large southern portion of Sudan, where the majority of oil reserves are located, would help to spark a revolt in Khartoum, leading to regime change; they care nothing about the future of the people of the nation of South Sudan.

This author wrote and spoke out about the lack of any genuine commitment or intention to improve the deplorable conditions of life in the “backward” South, and warned that the lack of a genuine development policy for the new nation could lead to rebellious attacks against the government in Juba, fraught with all the consequences we are witnessing today.¹

Once South Sudan became an independent nation, the mission of the government and its allies, should have been a “brute force” effort to build the vital infrastructure that was so lacking. This would have put South Sudan on the path to develop its 58 million acres of prime arable land to feed its own people, and even to become a bread-basket for Africa. Instead, the government allowed itself to be invaded by hordes of financial predators, buying up valuable land and resources, whose primary interest is “money,” and not development of the physical economy for the welfare of the people.

With outside manipulation by its “friends”—Ted Dagne, Roger Winter, and John Prendergast, among others—Juba has made disastrous decisions, such as shutting down its own oil production from 2012 to 2013, which forced the fledging nation to go into debt to make up for billions of dollars in lost oil revenues, while simultaneously imposing harsh austerity measures against its own already very poor citizens.

Strife Inside the SPLM

Beginning in the Spring of 2013, as accusations grew louder of corruption and mismanagement in the

1. Lawrence Freeman, “Blair Sinks His Fangs into South Sudan, Which Is Struggling to Survive,” *EIR*, Aug. 17, 2012.

Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), which is the ruling party of South Sudan, splits in the SPLM deepened between its Chairman, President Kiir, and First Deputy Chairman Riak Machar. This resulted in late July 2013 in the dismissal by President Kiir of his entire cabinet, including Vice President Machar. He also suspended Pagan Amum, General Secretary of the party, on charges of insubordination. Amum, who was a hardliner as his country's chief negotiator with Sudan, was one of the members of the inner circle of the SPLM who advocated shutting down South Sudan's oil production beginning in 2012, which further bankrupted the country. Many of those dismissed by President Kiir had been involved in the struggle of the SPLM over decades.

It was at the meeting of the SPLM's National Leadership Council on Dec. 14-15, that the power struggle and distrust inside the party spilled over to armed conflict, when Riak Machar's delegation refused to attend the second day of the conference (even though he was still First Deputy Chairman of the party), and Amum was kicked out of the party.

According to African leaders intimately familiar with the complexities of the crisis in South Sudan, President Kiir's stature has been weakened, but he remains the only leader who can presently be a unifying figure for this young nation. Kiir's enhanced working relationship with President Bashir is recognized as important for the two countries and the region. If the goal of two viable Sudans at peace with each other is to be achieved, it will depend on continuing the encouraging dialogue between Presidents Kiir and Bashir. This much is understood by true friends and allies of both countries. A further diminishing of President Kiir's national status or his removal from office would undermine relations with Khartoum, jeopardizing the future of both Sudan and South Sudan.

Sudan is also facing severe economic hardships, and a portion of its budget is dependent on revenue from fees for transporting oil from its land-locked southern neighbor to Port Sudan for export. Thus control of two of South Sudan's main oil-producing states, Upper Nile and Unity, is of critical concern for both countries. As of Dec. 27, press reports indicate that the South Sudan government is in the process of retaking, from forces allied with Machar, the capital cities of Malakal (Upper Nile) and Bentiu (Unity),

after having already recaptured Bor, the capital of Jonglei state, the largest in South Sudan. However the situation is fluid, with fighting continuing in these cities.

Economic Development: The Only Path to Peace

Inside South Sudan, there are numerous armed militias with thousands of alienated, nihilistic youths prepared for mortal combat. The immediate danger of violence continuing and expanding, threatening the Horn of Africa and the whole continent, is frightening to those who know this region and care about Africa.

At the IGAD Summit, the Ethiopian Foreign Minister, Tedros Adhanom, declared, "If hostilities do not cease within four days of this communiqué, the Summit will consider taking further measures."

Importantly, China, which has large financial interests in South Sudan's oil production, is actively involved in "negotiating with both sides in the conflict in various ways," according to Zhong Jianhua, China's Special Representative on African Affairs.

Bringing the fighting to an end is imperative, but it is not enough. There needs to be a robust discussion in South Sudan and among its friends and allies on charting a new pathway for economic development, to address the underlying cause of the violence; alleviating the miserable, horrible conditions of life for the citizens of South Sudan. This discussion must go beyond the pro forma fixation on how best to attract foreign investment, or how to market the country's oil according to the free-trade mantra. It has to embrace a new paradigm of thinking: using government credit for infrastructure with an urgent focus on realizing the country's rich agricultural potential.² Physical economic growth that benefits the lives of the population, lifting them out of abject poverty, should have been the core policy of the government when the country was formed.

Today, we are witnessing the effect of the failure to take this course of action. Dare we wait any longer?

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2. Lawrence Freeman, "So, Sudan Must Become a Net Food Exporter," *EIR*, Jan. 6, 2012.