

Powers Behind ARCSS's HLRF and Gunboat Diplomacy

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The Addis Ababa High-Level Revitalization Forum (HLRF) on the August 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS) has thrown a ponderable political bomb into the field of embattled South Sudan. Interestingly, the hardcore of that bomb has been assembled by the leadership of the Eastern African Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the connected International Partners Forum (i.e., USA, UK, Norway, a number of European countries, China, Japan, India, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Brazil, Russia, Turkey, UN, AU, EU, and League of Arab States).

The move seems to be a last attempt aimed at pressuring the giant political leaders of South Sudan to give peace a chance by compromising accordingly and reconciling on establishment of an inclusive Collegial Presidency, Council of Ministers, Bicameral Legislature, States Governments and Diplomatic Foreign Missions. Such bloated revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU), though it emanates from the ARCSS itself, is supposed to reflect the political diversity of South Sudan and share the responsibility of discharging the following revisited transitional mandate:

1. Commit to full and timely implementation of the revitalized ARCSS with oversight by reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC) and its Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM);
2. Consolidate the restored security and peace in collaboration with IGAD and Partners;
3. Promote Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties for Preservation of Dignity;
4. Fast-track and Provide Protection for Humanitarian Relief, Repatriation, Resettlement and Rehabilitation of IDPs and Refugees;
5. Recover the Economy and Manage it Effectively with Prudence, Transparency and Accountability for the Welfare of the People;

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6. Rebuild the Destroyed Infrastructure and Construct new Public Facilities;
7. Provide Services for Human Development and Stable Livelihoods;
8. Expedite Public Service Reforms and Transformation for Civil and Armed Sectors;
9. Facilitate Transitional Justice, Reconciliation and Healing;
10. Devolve Powers and Allocate Development Resources to States and Counties;
11. Initiate and Finalize Permanent Constitution-making Process;
12. Facilitate the Conduct of National Population Census and Household Survey;
13. Facilitate Credible Conduct of Elections Before the end of Transitional Period; and
14. Perform the normal Functions of Government, Horizontally and Vertically.

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The paralysis or detonation of that fiddly political bomb shall be determined by the upcoming Final Round of the HLRF Peace Talks. The Parties, Stakeholders, Mediators, Guarantors, Witnesses and other involved Actors in this Process shall be expected to build on the positive side of the adjourned First and Second Rounds (i.e., November 2017 Pre-Forum Consultations Report by IGAD’s Special Envoy for HLRF; December 2017 Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access; February 2018 Agreement on the Declaration of the Principles of the HLRF Peace Talks; February 2018 Initialed Provisions on ARCSS Chapters I and II; Proposed Drafts on Revitalized Articles on Governance and Security in Chapter I and II Security respectively; and Report by the IGAD’s Special Envoy on the Outcome of Shuttle Diplomacy for the Final Private Consultations of the Parties to the HLRF).

Having treated the leaders of South Sudan leniently for their admirable liberation legacy (1983 – 2011), the USA and other IGAD’s Partners were caught unaware by the surprising insensitive civil war that emerged from South Sudan in 2013 and again in 2016. They had to shake their heads in disgust and throw up their hands in despair from the disturbing horrors and resultant massive displacement of the population; some seeking neutral protection for survival as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and others migrating abroad as refugees. This ‘man-made’ situation has come with undignified assortments of problems, including threats of famine and risks taken by South Sudanese youth to illegally cross overseas in search for opportunities. Since then South Sudan has been put under scrutiny of meaningful statehood: stable population, demarcated territory, and legitimate government with capability of promotion of recognizable international relations, including honest commitment to the respect of humanitarian and human rights laws and adherence to the values of conventional cooperation.

The borne burden of humanitarian assistance for such huge sector of the suffering South Sudanese population and other foreign policy calculations, have mostly driven the Troika and their allies to come out aggressively in search for regionally guaranteed peace-making, peace-keeping, peace-building and constructive conflict transformation in South Sudan. Since they did it successfully for Germany, Japan, South Africa, Namibia and Rwanda in the past, it looks probable that this could be replicated for making South Sudan ‘good again’. Nevertheless, it shouldn’t be astounding that the powers that have spent more resources and time on this endeavor would levy greater

influence on the agenda and outcome of the HLRF Process. The USA has been the biggest spender on the cost of consolidation of peace, security, governance and development in South Sudan. Its declared audit has put the cost to over 11 billion USD with additional spending on emergency humanitarian response.

As the plaguing civil war has proven unsustainable but destructive in blazing down South Sudan into regrettable ruins, the USA and other IGAD's Partners have firmly become more determined to sustain intense pressure on the government and its opposition groups. They have been sending strong messages to the Parties and other Stakeholders of South Sudan, telling and showing them that the HLRF is 'too-big-to-fail'. Even with the meaningless delay tactics of intransigence, the war must stop and peace should come finally. Otherwise, more rigorous gunboat diplomacy shall be applied for the success of ARCSS's HLRF.

The USA has been regarding itself with high esteem for having pulled the rugs of the making of the Republic of South Sudan. It also shoulders the top international responsibility for keeping this new country safe on good path of dignified humanity. This superpower is not oblivious of the unique opportunities available from the abundance raw natural resources and goodwill from development partners, an optimism that has put South Sudan on spotlights internationally. The missing link is the absence of peace and political will, which is possible to reset. This could be part of the motivation of the Troika and other connected Partners to support the IGAD-Led Mediation, financially and politically. The other drivers are the traditional pursuit of their interests in South Sudan, directly or indirectly, but challenged by the alarming threat to international peace and security in the region that has been revealed by the South Sudanese civil war. The displaced population (about 4 million) and the wrath of the tattered economy on the resilient common citizens who remained at their homes (about 8 million) has pricked the conscience of the world leader (USA) and its allies and other partners.

Thus, the main power and other related powers behind the ARCSS had to intensify their pressure, collectively and individually, to push the staggering peace talks to fruition in 2015 and again for its revitalization in 2018. They do not see any other alternative that is detached from involvement of the immediate neighboring countries, covertly or overtly, for one reason or another. That is why they could not waver in throwing their heavy weight behind the IGAD-Led HLRF to put the new country back on the right track of good governance and assuring security. They have been moving in unison to support with one voice in proposed new structure and composition of Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU).

The powers behind the HLRF seem to have gotten convinced that the successful implementation of the revitalized ARCSS to its logical end would depend on collective strong top-down centralized TGoNU's Leadership. This is where they see the idea of Four Strong Vice Presidents relevant, especially when the heavyweights are brought in to surround the President of the Republic and make joint collegial supreme decisions with him based on the mandate and consensus procedures as stipulated in the revitalized ARCSS. Their clustered supervisory roles, functions and responsibilities over the Ministers (e.g., on governance, economy, infrastructure and services) are rationalized to be crucial for portraying unity of South Sudan without prejudice to gender balance. Nonetheless, it would have been more balanced if participation of a male youth representative was made a condition too in the composition of the Revitalized Presidency like it was done for female representation.

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However, the awaited breakthrough in favor of the planned outcome of the ARCSS's HLRF Peace Talks would depend very much on close-doors consultations with the South Sudanese Political Giants before the kick-off of the Concluding Round in March 2018. This might be the relevant context in which the gunboat diplomacy could add pressure on the political leaders of South Sudan so as to induce them for a compromised peace deal quickly with guaranteed assurances of their physical security and other gains attached with implementation of the revitalized ARCSS. Such gunboat diplomacy is defined by anachronism of strong states that seek to compel weaker states to act in certain dictated direction. It also implies indirect application of mandate/trusteeship for protectorate-ism or patronage on the surrogating client states, especially those whose fragile statehood got fragmented by the causes/effects the civil war. The coercive pressure used by powerful states___to induce compliance___include arms controls and economic restrictions against the embattled states.

In 19th Century the Great Britain used to send out gunboats regularly to compel its antagonists (e.g., in Ottoman Empire, Balkan Republics, China, Africa and Latin America) to follow the superpower lead desire in international arena. The move was aimed to signal a step closer to direct military intervention in the affairs of the pressured states, especially when the declared ultimatums had fail to garner the expected results. It was attached with concurrent conduct of crises conferences and adoption of certain policies/doctrines (e.g., appeasement, containment, deterrence, détente, isolation, cordon sanitaire and rollback) with manifest destiny for 'civilizing mission' or lifting the burdens caused by lesser power on the great power. Similar gunboat approach has been utilized by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) when they pressured and intervened to oust President Lawrence Gbagbo from power in Ivory Coast and Yahya Jammeh in Gambia. It was also applied trickily on Jonas Savimbi, the rebel leader of Angola National Movement for Total Independence (UNITA).

As the IGAD-Led Mediation commence its close-doors consultations with the Giant Political Leaders of South Sudan, especially those manning the un-revitalized TGoNU and also those controlling the Loose Coalition of Opposition Groups, it would be interesting to observe the extent of gunboat diplomacy that shall be utilized by the powers behind the ARCSS's HLRF. The fact that the HLRF Mediation Team has been composed from renowned experts from the Five Regions of Africa is already an indication that the whole process is no longer in the hands of the IGAD Member Countries alone. It is not business as usual, particularly, when influential Mediation Experts from Ghana and Angola have been brought in for inputs of experience of their respective regions in dealing with power transition, using effective gunboat diplomacy.

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Further, the Rwandan President Paul Kagame has been elected as the African Union Chairperson for the Year 2018, which is a defining moment for the top leaders of South Sudan. He is one of the East African Leaders who would want to adopt the ECOWAS' Gunboat Diplomacy Approach for resolving the nagging power transition problems in Africa. President Kagame is also on records for his proposal of establishment of East African Intervention Brigade for Protection of Civilians and Restoration of Sanity to Embattled African States. He has contributed significantly to the troops of the Regional Protection Force (RPF) and also for peacekeeping forces of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

In conclusion, whether there are powers behind ARCSS's HLRF using gunboat

diplomacy or not, the keen thing to watch in the Third Round of the South Sudanese Peace Talks in Addis Ababa is how the Politicians will play their Game Smartly. If they are granted a legitimacy to rule South Sudan for almost Four Years of transitional period without fever of elections, why squander the opportunity of the free term of office with its immunities and privileges? I hope they will strike the final peace deal and enjoy themselves but while allowing the common people to get secured space to go about their livelihood businesses normally.

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