

## POLICY ANALYSIS

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# SOUTH SUDAN FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST FROM MISTRUST TO CONFIDENCE

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## INTRODUCTION

Foreign policy is a mirror image of the internal policy of any nation reflected on security, economic, social, cultural, and to a large extent human rights. South Sudan as an independent and sovereign state was born on July 9th 2011 and became Africa's youngest nation. It is a landlocked country with vast human and natural resources. It lies in the heart of Africa. It has border with six African countries – Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Democratic Republic Congo (DRC), and Central Africa Republic (CAR). The new country was born after many years of struggle/war fought by its people united in purpose; desire to be peaceful, tolerant, compassionate, secure, democratic, prosperous, productive, accountable, innovative and proud.

As a new nation, South Sudan needs to find itself a place in the community of nations and to be respected. To achieve this objective, South Sudan needs to pursue a comprehensive foreign policy through cooperative engagement from mistrust to confidence. A foreign policy that reflects its national aspirations and the wishes of its people. A foreign policy that aims to have close relationship with those countries that stood with it during the war of independence maintain its important historical relationships with countries such as the United States of America, Norway, Scandinavian countries, UK, China and others seen as friends of South Sudan both regionally and globally. Its priority should be to build a viable nation where freedom, justice and equality are pillars of its foundation and to protect its national interests without fear; create and maintain conducive socio-political and economic environment for development and provision of security for its people. The core of South Sudan foreign policy should be the pursuit and protection of its national interests. Its foreign policy should be based

on respect and observance of international norms such as the rule of law; human rights; protection of the environment in both human and natural resources; national security and peace; economic development; regional and international cooperation and sensitivity to issues in geographical location especially East Africa, and the Horn of Africa.

South Sudan foreign policy shall be conducted independently and transparently in accordance with the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan 2011. Any nation's foreign policy depends on what its national interests are. A nation's national interests are what the nation defines them to be. No state can tell another state what its national interest are or should be. South Sudan foreign policy should be strategically driven through cooperative engagement regionally and globally with the theme: From mistrust to confidence.

### **South Sudan foreign policy should largely be aimed at achieving the following:**

First, promotion of international cooperation, specially within the United Nations family, African Union, and other international and regional organizations for the purposes of consolidating universal peace and security, respect for international laws, treaty obligations and fostering a just world economic order. Second, achievement of African economic integration, within the ongoing regional plans as well as promoting African unity and cooperation as foreseen in those plans. Third, enhancement and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in regional and international fora. Fourth, promotion of dialogue among civilizations and establishment of international order based on justice and common human destiny. Fifth, respect for International Law and treaty obligations, as well as the seeking of the peaceful settlement of international disputes through negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and adjudication. Sixth, enhancement of economic cooperation among developing countries in the region. Seventh, non-interference in the affairs of other Sovereign State and promotion of good neighborliness and mutual cooperation with all neighbors and maintaining amicable and balanced relations with other countries globally. Eighth, combating international and trans-national organized crime, piracy and terrorism. Ninth promotion of South-South cooperation in all fields for enhancement of welfare of the peoples of the developing nations and tenth, the promotion of North-South dialogue for economic cooperation, transfer of technology and fair and transparent terms of regional and international trade and work to preserve and protect the environment and support the global engagement for sustainable peace and development.

## **NATIONAL INTERESTS OF SOUTH SUDAN: FROM MISTRUST TO CONFIDENCE**

### **Sovereignty**

Sovereignty is one of the key national interests of the Republic of South Sudan for which the people fought for many years beginning from August 1955. The concept of sovereignty is one of the most complex and contested in political science, with many definitions. Some define sovereignty as supreme public power, which has the right and, in theory, the capac-

ity to impose its authority. Others refer to sovereignty as the holder of legitimate power, who is recognized to have authority. However, in most cases when national sovereignty is being discussed, reference is often made to independence, understood as the freedom of a collective entity to act without interference from outside. Also, there is reference to popular sovereignty which is associated with power and legitimacy. With reference to sovereignty as a national interest of South Sudan in its foreign policy all the above concepts and definitions apply and should be pursued.

### **Defense and Security interests**

South Sudan Defense and Security foreign policy according to Vision 2040 is based on the concept of a distinctive foreign policy for distinctive country. Being a new nation, its vision and priority is to build a 'viable nation where freedom, justice and equality are the pillars of its foundation'. The foreign policy of the Republic of South Sudan shall be shaped by its national interests to maintain stability and create an environment conducive to Socio-political and economic development through provision of security. The desire to advance national interests by guaranteeing a secure political environment for development through bilateral and multilateral cooperation with other countries as well as regional and international organizations. National security shall be guaranteed through a well-trained and disciplined defense force. Moreover, there is a need to establish a crime free society where all forms of crime are eliminated and training of national and local police force so the public can have confidence in law enforcement agencies to report crimes. The Security Environment will have the following tasks; (1) to ensure relative peace and stability in all parts of the country; (2) the SSPDF to undergo reorganization and restructuring to become a regular and professional military force capable of protecting the people of South Sudan as well as securing the territory of South Sudan against internal and external threats and aggression; (3) building of an effective deterrent military force; (4) law enforcement forces will be trained and deployed at all levels of government in South Sudan to maintain peace and security; (5) threats to the security of South Sudan from outside of regional dimension and international terrorism; (6) domestic threats to security such as cattle rustling, child abduction and uncontrolled proliferation of small arms in the hands of civilian population poses the greatest danger and threat to security and stability of the country and (7) traditional and administrative threats to security to be addressed through intra – and inter – ethnic conflict resolution mechanisms and traditional leaders like Kings and Chiefs.

### **Economic and Trade interests**

South Sudan economic and trade interests in its foreign policy are also based on Vision 2040. The people of South Sudan have been through economic hardship during the long period of the war for independence suffering extreme poverty. After gaining independence, the people's expectation is to have a compassionate and caring state which offers support and opportunities to those who are poor and vulnerable and guarantee equitable share in the benefits of economic growth. Through 2040 all people in South Sudan are expected to have access to productive resources as means to eradicate poverty. All vulnerable people will have access to basic quality services. Since attaining independence in 2011 there has been significant increased macroeconomic stability and utilization of natural resources,

particularly oil, that have offered a tremendous opportunity to increase broad – based economic growth and poverty reduction.

However, these gains were destroyed when the civil war broke out in 2013. There is a need to expand and diversify the non-oil revenue, based on the fact that there are other resources such as agriculture, animal resources, fisheries, mining, forest products and tourism just to mention a few. The oil has its disadvantages for the economy such as the renting of the pipe – line through Sudan territory. This has reduced the incentive for the country to undertake important fiscal reforms to ensure medium and long – term economic stability. There is also the danger of oil spill with negative effects on the environment and the health of the local people living in the areas of the oil fields. This needs to be taken care of in the foreign policy process so that foreign companies involved in the oil industry can be held accountable for any environmental damage including the health of the people living in the oil fields.

The government is also faced with the task of improving transparency in the use and management of oil revenue which is critical for financing its developmental projects as well as challenges in the fiscal decentralization process, for example, effective budget management, efficient and effective delivery of public services in addition to facing challenges in the technological development of its human resource. Public and private sector policies, strategies and programmes needs to be geared towards promoting improvement in the existing level of applied technology. South Sudan lacks behind in the field of technological know – how largely as the result of many decades of war for independence. Promoting technical advancement should be a main objective for the government. This is to be achieved by orientation of the nation’s educational system to improving the level of competence and aptitude of its human resource to technological development.

### **The government should create an enabling environment for technological transfer and development by**

making funds available for research, appropriate policies, strategies and programmes that promote and support human resource development for the advancement of technology and innovation. South Sudan is a big country with poor savannah in the north, rich savannah in central areas and thick tropical forests in the Equatoria region. Most of the areas above remain untouched and undeveloped. With good policies and appropriate technology, these areas could be exploited maximally to achieve economic growth for the country. South Sudan should aim at having a diversified economy largely driven by agriculture, industry, mining, and tourism to be a vibrant economy that is able to compete and attract investors. The government should put priority and invest in agriculture to achieve food security for the country. Promote partnership between local and foreign investors. This partnership should aim at empowering citizens and enabling them to increase their resource ownership, productivity and management capacity.

The key resources and assets of the country should be equitably distributed between its people. It is projected that by 2040 all South Sudanese will have obtained access to good quality basic shelter, either in the urban or rural areas. The strategic goal to achieve the country's economic and trade interests is to focus on the following: (1) Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector. (2) Promote partnership between the public sector and private sector. (3) Promote private sector development. (4) Improve the tax base of the country. (5) Promote industrialization. (6) Increase agricultural productivity to achieve food security. (7) Improve livestock and fish production. (8) Improve the national marketing system for all national products in the country. (9) Establish and develop the mining industry (10) Establish and develop the tourism industry (11) Promote sustainable development. (12) Ensure balanced, integrated, equitable and strict adherence to the annual approved budget and building efficient and transparent public financial management system. (13) Institutionalize a culture of fiscal discipline and strict adherence to the annual approved budget and building efficient and transparent public financial management system. (14) Attract investment through appropriate investment policies. (15) Promote research and development through provision of funds and (16) Promote trade with neighboring countries.

## **Vulnerability of South Sudan Foreign Policy to developments in the region and internationally**

As mentioned above, national interests are those interests that a state defines what they are. No state can tell another state what its national interests are. The main factors of a legitimate modern state/nation state including South Sudan are:

- Sovereign authority to manage its own internal and external affairs
- A permanent population
- A well-defined territory and
- A government which can exercise authority

In the case of South Sudan, it has not yet resolve conflicts in terms of a well-defined territory or its borders with neighbouring countries. This is a matter that South Sudan should urgently address because it is a source of weakness or vulnerability in its foreign policy that other countries are taking advantage of or using it to undermine the sovereign authority of South Sudan in those border areas. Examples are the Issue of Abyei with Sudan and the Ilemi triangle with Kenya, Ethiopia or even Uganda.

The main factors in foreign policy of any country which determine how states behave towards each other lie beyond its boundaries, or combination of the two domains. In the case of South Sudan: (1) Its location and its physical characteristics; (2) Its economic and military capabilities; (3) The kind of government it possesses (i.e., its political system).

The capacity for South Sudan in its foreign policy to influence regional and international affairs depends on how it uses the following factors: (1) Economic power; (2) Political influence; (3) Geopolitical concerns such as size and location; (4) Availability of natural re-

sources which South Sudan has in comparison to neighbouring countries; (5) Military power if it can use its abundant natural resources to enhance and develop its military power and capability in the region and (6) The will to exercise leadership based on the above factors.

In any nation's foreign policy, the above factors determine the impact and influence that a state has in regional and international affairs and South Sudan needs to develop these capabilities particularly its economic power which is critical in the current world climate and may continue to dominate in influencing the state's power to contribute in regional and international affairs. This is because following the end of the Cold – War, ideology, military power, and alliances have declined and are no longer attractive nor effective as sources of global influence in any nation's foreign policy.

Under the present World Order following the end of the Cold War, the capacity for smaller states including South Sudan to influence regional and international affair is almost non – existent. There are factors that impede or hinder smaller states in influencing regional and international affairs. Among these factors are:

- Smaller states are both economically and politically vulnerable either to organized internal armed rebellion like the situation in South Sudan or externally vulnerable to large states or international corporations, which can constrain the independence of smaller states to act.
- This vulnerability can induce competitive intervention by large powers, thus raising the possibility of widening an internal conflict and this is the case in point for South Sudan in its current civil war.

## **Strategies in the pursuit of the national interests of South Sudan foreign policy regionally and globally**

Possible strategies that the Republic of South Sudan could consider among others in the pursuit and achievement of its National interests through its foreign policy should include: Active engagements in regional forums such as EAC, IGAD, and AU; Enact domestic legislation which incorporate principles enshrined in international laws; Establishing diplomatic missions abroad; Establishing cultural and trade centers abroad to promote South Sudan's unique cultures and natural resources; Seek leadership position in regional and international bodies and participate in commissions and committees both regionally and globally; Seek agreement with the industrialized North in the context of South-North and South-South dialogue; Seek access to technology such as renewable energy and solicit foreign capital and investment from countries such as USA, China, EU countries; Gulf States and others.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, South Sudan needs to pay attention to the new world order of unipolarity. The United States of America is the only super power that shapes the world under the conditions

of this order. In the pursuit of its national interests regionally and internationally, South Sudan needs to use in its foreign policy towards the U.S. using the concept of constructive engagement. With other countries of the region and the world it should use multilateralism because as pointed out above smaller countries have no incentives to offer to other states in order to get what they want or influence decisions on regional and international issues. Bilateral approach in foreign policy although still being used by smaller countries is no longer effective. In the case of South Sudan, application of bilateralism in its foreign policy will put it in a disadvantage position when negotiating with other states to get what it wants because it has yet nothing to offer on the regional and international stage. This does not mean that it should not use bilateralism in its foreign policy. However, it must be used selectively and carefully.

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