

EXILE DIPLOMACY IN SOUTH SUDAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

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ABSTRACT

Since 2013, South Sudan has been grappling to contain the political crisis that continues to threaten its existence. Citizens have seen the horrors of war and are enduring lifetime experiences that make them regret the cause of their liberation struggle. The conflict has tainted the country's image, obscured political direction, created a crack in foreign policy, and shattered hopes and optimism for peace and development. The most prominent political formations have exhibited a high trust deficit, making the country a space for experimentation in peace-building and post-war reconstruction strategies. As a result, many actors outside the State's authority have claimed responsibility for appointing and assigning diplomats abroad. In modern literature, foreign policy is defined as a strategy of statecraft that guides external relations between states and entities. States are the primary actors in international relations. However, several non-state actors have emerged, particularly after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. These actors are shaping international relations by influencing the decisions and actions of states and entities. They include international organizations, civil society organizations, media organizations, academia, multinational corporations, rebel movements, non-armed opposition groups, and secessionist organizations. The rebel movements, non-armed opposition groups, and secessionist organizations have deployed diplomats to foreign capitals to counter the activities of diplomats from their countries. Their diplomats live in exile and are referred to as "exiled diplomats." They comprise former state officials, military officers, and people living in the diaspora who are dissatisfied with the systems of governance in their home countries. States have expanded counter diplomacy to include countering the activities of exiled diplomats. Exile diplomacy is a form of counter diplomacy used by non-state actors, particularly agents of rebel movements, non-armed opposition groups, and secessionist organizations, to influence international decisions and actions to force regime change and fundamental reforms in their home countries or to achieve secession or independence. This study explores the influence of exiled diplomacy in South Sudan's foreign policy. Thematic areas include the philosophy of exile diplomacy, the influence of exile diplomacy in the consolidation of peace, and exile diplomacy in economic cooperation. It

argues that non-state actors such as rebel movements, non-armed opposition groups, and secessionist organizations are parallel centers of power in foreign policy. In South Sudan, the influence of exile diplomacy has limited the government's ability to finance the war or maintain the status quo. South Sudan's government, on its part, has used counter diplomacy as a strategic approach to curtail the opposition's ability to force regime change or achieve outright military victory on the battlefield. It further argues that exile diplomacy in intrastate conflict invites external interest that constrains all parties from controlling the outcomes.

1. Introduction

Foreign policy is a strategy of statecraft used to guide external relations between states and entities.¹ It originated as a consequence of democratization when the State was challenged by the free press and had to find a strategy that engages both the State and Civil Society in an open public sphere.² In implementing foreign policy, the states are the primary actors, the centers of power, and the appointing authorities.³ The goal of foreign policy is to promote and protect the national interests in political, economic, social, and cultural spheres.⁴ However, the status quo changed after the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, when several non-state actors emerged with significant influence to shape international relations.⁵ These include international organizations, non-governmental organizations, multinational corporations, civil society, academia, rebel movements, non-armed opposition groups, and secessionist organizations. Following this development, foreign policy became either a collective coping strategy for states to achieve common interests, or a defensive strategy by states and entities, or an offensive strategy by non-state actors to achieve regime change, fundamental reforms, or independence.⁶

Governments have the sovereign mandates to protect their citizens from internal and external threats, maintain territorial integrity, and accelerate social and economic development.⁷ States vary in their approaches to international affairs.⁸ This is due to differences in philosophies, ideologies, systems of governance, capacities, cultures, and traditions.⁹ These differences influence states' internal political formations and their decisions and actions when assuming international responsibilities or meeting the internationally required standards of governance and accompanying obligations.¹⁰ Some states are peaceful, while others are in protracted intrastate conflicts, dealing with internal revolts or involved in interstate conflicts.¹¹ Peace or conflict influences the behaviors of states in international relations.¹² Foreign policy is a continuously evolving strategy due to changes in the political leadership of states, which cause institutional adjustments and deployment of personnel in strategic institutions to deliver on new priorities.¹³ The types and character of leaders in power affect the development and implementation of foreign policy's instruments, such as diplomacy, sanctions, and media.¹⁴

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, international relations became a network of interdependence between states and non-state actors.¹⁵ The entry of non-state actors had widened the scope and objectives of international relations to include the economy, communication, technology, democratic governance, peace and security, human rights, and fundamental freedoms.¹⁶ Because of the emergence of non-state actors, the international community reaffirmed its international commitment to the social contract between the State and citizens.¹⁷ Democratic governance became the primary standard for measuring international best practices.¹⁸ Intrastate or interstate conflicts emerged primarily due to

citizens' dissatisfaction with political leadership or the governance system in their countries, or the promotion and protection of democracy.¹⁹ These are the bases for international support and recognition of exile diplomacy, and the chief cause of counter-diplomacy by the incumbent regimes.

When international actors recognize a group in exile as the "legitimate" government or an actor in international affairs, it grants them access to State assets, diplomatic privileges, and the capacity to conclude international agreements.²⁰ The classical literature defines diplomacy as the conduct of relations between sovereign states through the medium of officials based at home or abroad.²¹ States use diplomatic agents to establish and maintain regular communication. Sovereign states and their governments hold the power to deploy diplomats to foreign countries to represent their interests, promote trade, and protect their citizens abroad.²² States use diplomacy as a fundamental instrument of foreign policy to advance their national interests and apply power in the international system, ranging from persuasive dialogue to coercive measures.²³

In modern literature, diplomacy is defined as the management of international relations through negotiation, communication, and representation.²⁴ The changing nature of diplomacy in the 21st century has shifted from a solely state-centric, closed-door model to a blended approach that combines traditional methods with digital tools and the active participation of non-state actors.²⁵ Exiled diplomats often act as a critical, albeit non-traditional, component of international relations, particularly when powerful states or the United Nations recognize them as the legitimate representatives of their home country rather than the in-situ government.²⁶ This recognition allows them to continue engaging in bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, serving as an alternative avenue for communication.

The changing nature of diplomacy brought dynamism among actors in international affairs. The widespread adoption of international communication technologies has significantly undermined the state's monopoly on information, media, and, in some cases, critical infrastructure.²⁷ The proliferation of the internet, social media, satellite communication, and encrypted messaging apps has decentralized control, allowing information to bypass state-controlled channels.²⁸ The actors in international affairs had to rethink the place of foreign affairs institutions and their linkages with new non-state actors.²⁹ This is to enhance information access, communication, and negotiation methods, marking a shift from traditional, secret, and slow-paced interactions to a faster, more open, and digitalized landscape.³⁰ Exiled diplomats are beneficiaries of the changing nature of diplomacy. They have acquired recognition that enables them to influence the international policy agenda and decisions of states by controlling issue areas such as peace and security, economic cooperation, human rights, and fundamental freedoms.³¹

Another aspect of the changing nature of diplomacy is summit diplomacy. World leaders make decisions and outsource them to other actors with technical knowledge, institutional credibility, influence, and resources to enhance results.³² Such decisions affect international political, economic, social, and security interests. Summits have narrowed the space for routine activities of career diplomats, who are losing responsibilities to political appointees, trade officials, and officials from finance and defence ministries.³³ The exiled

diplomats, on the other hand, are gaining influence in international affairs.³⁴ States and non-state actors have to find new means of interaction to deal with international problems. This is because of the complex nature of the global agenda.³⁵ International decisions, actions, and policies are not limited to ending wars and maintaining peace. The focus has shifted from national development priorities, typically moving away from foundational political conflicts or basic infrastructure establishment towards long-term modernization and human capital development.³⁶ All actors in international relations have access to a robust yet complex framework of international and national instruments designed to protect fundamental human rights and freedoms and resolve disputes.³⁷

Rebel movements and non-armed opposition groups are key players in exile diplomacy. Their strengths and influence depend on recognition of continuity and change over time in their leadership, political objectives, organisational cohesion, and the management of internal factions by host countries or third-party states.³⁸ The challenges facing rebel movements, non-armed opposition groups, and secessionist organizations are complex, ranging from obscurity, structural barriers, and fragmentation.³⁹ They include questions of legitimacy and credibility, internal revolts, and post-war demobilization and disarmament challenges.⁴⁰ The complex nature of this category of non-state actors shapes their success and motivations in war or diplomacy. The diaspora community is a critical component of exile diplomacy. They have the power to influence the decisions and actions of their host governments.⁴¹ This is because they are legitimate voters in the domestic politics of their host countries. In exile diplomacy, the diasporas are equally engaged by non-state actors and their home governments.⁴² Their roles include advocacy, mediation, representation, and negotiation with multiple stakeholders on behalf of their home governments or non-state actors.⁴³ They have produced seasoned and quintessential diplomats, with the capacity to mediate and broker peace between their homelands and host countries or influence the decisions of their host countries against their home governments.⁴⁴

The differences between diaspora diplomacy, counter diplomacy, and exile diplomacy are that the agents of diaspora diplomacy are selected from the spontaneous formations of diaspora communities made up of people already resettled in foreign countries, and are capable of representing their home governments or non-state actors.⁴⁵ Counter diplomacy is an instrument of statecraft used to promote peace or continuation of wars or conflicts to evade or frustrate political solutions or international rules.⁴⁶ The agents of counter diplomacy comprise officials from national governments, rebel movements, non-armed opposition groups, and secessionist organizations.⁴⁷ Exiled diplomats conduct offensive exile diplomacy to undermine the foreign policy of their home governments while building international legitimacy for their own movements.⁴⁸ State actors implement counter-diplomacy as a defensive strategy to curtail the activities of non-state actors or counter-diplomacy against the diplomatic activities of other states or entities.⁴⁹

Exile diplomacy is a form of counter-diplomacy used by non-state actors, particularly agents of rebel movements, non-armed opposition groups, and secessionist organizations, to influence international decisions and actions to force regime change and fundamental reforms in their home countries or to achieve secession or independence. It is an informal diplomacy,

primarily conducted by political dissidents, including former government officials or activists who have fled their home countries due to political persecution, political violence, lack of political space, bad governance, insecurity, civil war, and denial of political independence.⁵⁰ Exile diplomacy is often accelerated by the actions of powerful states that use their authority and influence to impose sanctions, restrict movement, and access to international markets on individuals and companies working for or associated with oppressive regimes.⁵¹ This type of diplomacy serves as a response to the forced removal of individuals or groups, who then use foreign bases to navigate the loss of rights and attempt to influence politics at home from abroad.⁵²

The basic activities of exile diplomats include, first, sending envoys; second, sending a small delegation of refugees to plead for help and refuge in the host countries; and third, dispatching representatives to friendly countries to seek support for military and economic aid.⁵³ Exile diplomats often act as proactive representatives for rebel movements or non-armed opposition groups, and in some contexts, their primary objective is to obtain foreign military and economic support to regain control of their homeland, especially when peaceful diplomatic negotiations fail.⁵⁴ An exile is a person compelled to leave or remain outside his/her country of origin on account of a well-founded fear of race, religion, nationality, or political opinion; a person who considers his/her exile temporary, hoping to return to his or her fatherland when circumstances permit.⁵⁵

On 9 July 2011, South Sudan declared its independence from Sudan following a 98.83 percent vote for separation on 9 January 2011 after twenty-one years of liberation struggle.⁵⁶ On 15 December 2013, South Sudan descended into one of the deadliest civil wars, altering prospects and optimism for peace and development.⁵⁷ The immediate consequences of this conflict included: loss of human lives; wanton destruction of property; massive displacement of the civilian population; an influx of refugees to neighbouring countries; and the arrest of dissenting politicians.⁵⁸ Following the December 2013 political crisis in Juba, violence rapidly spread to the Greater Upper Nile region.⁵⁹ Riek Machar and allied commanders subsequently formed the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) to launch an armed rebellion, to overthrow President Kiir's government, or introduce fundamental reforms.⁶⁰

The politicians, military figures, civil servants, and civil society leaders who fled South Sudan received refugee status and political asylum abroad. The SPLM/A-IO consolidated its leadership after the 15 April 2014 Nasir consultative conference, where Dr. Riek Machar became its provisional leader with powers not only to appoint military administrators, but also to appoint and assign diplomats to represent his political-military movement abroad.⁶¹ Following his endorsement, Machar appointed and assigned eight secretaries to various countries and permanent missions to counter the activities of South Sudan's diplomats abroad.⁶² In the period preceding the Revitalized Peace Agreement in 2018, several other armed and non-armed opposition groups emerged in South Sudan with the power to appoint and assign diplomats to counter the activities of South Sudan's diplomats in the international arena.⁶³

The SPLM-IO and other armed and non-armed opposition groups received recognition from members of the international community.⁶⁴ Representatives of the SPLM/A-IO have occasionally addressed the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).⁶⁵ Participating in international meetings allows exiled diplomats to gain access to and influence political decisions and actions against the Government of South Sudan.⁶⁶ Currently, the world is dealing with two diplomatic fronts comprising official diplomats from South Sudan and exiled diplomats from the SPLM/A-IO and other opposition groups.⁶⁷ The international community's acceptance of exiled diplomats and third-party states' recognition serves as a basis for political and legal justifications for the emergence of two centers of power in foreign policy.⁶⁸ While the incumbent government in South Sudan maintains physical control of the territory, the recognized opposition in exile enters into bilateral military and logistics contracts and diplomatic engagement with foreign nations to pressure South Sudan to accept regime change or fundamental reforms.

2. Methodology

This study has adopted hermeneutic phenomenology to understand, interpret, and describe the behavior of states and exiled diplomats and to make meaning of their experiences, decisions, and activities. This qualitative approach has made it possible to convey a subjective understanding of South Sudan's conflict and to describe human experiences about the impact of war and the influence of exile diplomacy on peace and economic stability. The data collection instruments included an interview guide, an online questionnaire, and documents. Data was collected through face-to-face interviews, email submissions, an online-administered questionnaire, and secondary data obtained in physical and electronic documents. Respondents include exiled diplomats, government officials, military officers, and civil society representatives. Hermeneutic phenomenological procedure applied reflexive thematic analysis to generate themes and codes, and inductive coding to explore the meanings and issues raised by participants. Content analysis was applied to physical and electronic documents.

3. Philosophy of Exile Diplomacy

The ground of philosophy is the sum of human experience, detailing the systems, ideologies, values, principles, and ideas that guide human actions.⁶⁹ State or non-state actors have philosophies that define and distinguish their aspirations and direction from other political societies regarding power, sovereignty, and the nature of law.⁷⁰ Philosophy defines the acceptable limits of the State's actions, the basis of a State's political obligation, the virtues of citizenship, social justice, and political prudence.⁷¹ People at the apex of power are required to make domestic or international decisions that promote and protect the common good. It does not matter whether a decision-maker is a State or a non-state actor; their decisions and actions must conform to the principles of good governance in public and private organizations.⁷² Exile diplomats and governments in exile act as significant non-state actors in contemporary international relations, particularly when the State they claim to represent fails to adhere to international standards of governance, human rights, or democratic principles.⁷³

To gain international recognition, opposition groups, governments in exile, or alternative leadership structures typically must demonstrate that the existing regime has lost its

legitimacy by failing to meet international standards of governance, while concurrently proving themselves as viable, democratic, and effective alternatives.⁷⁴ Operating outside their home territory due to foreign military invasion, civil war, or authoritarian repression, opposition groups in South Sudan seek to overthrow the incumbent regime or force it to accept fundamental reforms and provide an alternative, internationally recognized government.⁷⁵ They prefer the federal democratic system of governance as the bedrock for good governance, rule of law, peace, respect for human rights, and fundamental freedom.⁷⁶ When guaranteed international recognition, the exile diplomats, alongside their political-military organizations, engage in counter-diplomatic activities to undermine, discredit, block, or destroy ideas, weaken, or take over territories or overthrow regimes by supporting clandestine operations or using military force other than self-defence.⁷⁷ The basic methods of counter-diplomacy include lobbying to undermine a State's agency, institutions, or organizations through international financial pressure, takeover, or promotion of instability within a foreign State through cyberattacks and mainstream media propaganda.⁷⁸

Exile diplomacy is a form of counter diplomacy. There is no free ride in counter diplomacy. Exile diplomacy is a specialized form of international engagement where recognized or de facto governments in exile, or organized opposition groups residing outside their home country, use diplomatic tools to address threats posed by dangerous regimes or non-state actors.⁷⁹ This form of diplomacy counters the actions of regimes that challenge international norms, ensures the survival of political alternatives, and restores normalcy, often working toward reintegration, peace-building, or the lawful apprehension of criminal actors and delivery of justice.⁸⁰ Country-specific threats, such as rebellion or liberation wars by secessionist or reformist organizations, require internationally coordinated solutions because they interfere with the strategic or national interests of other states or entities.⁸¹ In dealing with oppressive regimes, exiled diplomats advocate for human rights, the delivery of humanitarian aid, or share information during peace negotiations to sabotage progress or promote resolutions.⁸²

Exile diplomacy operates through the divide-and-rule concept.⁸³ Opposition or civil society groups direct their messaging to local populations in their home countries or territories to convince them to abandon the regime or overthrow it through mass action.⁸⁴ The regime, on the other hand, acts to counter the activities of opposition groups by creating disinformation and propaganda machines to ensure its survival.⁸⁵ Powerful states support newly established governments of weaker states to win the support of their populations when challenged with insurgency, or support local populations to launch insurgencies against their governments when their governments fail to adhere to internationally accepted principles of governance.⁸⁶ The political landscape in South Sudan exhibits a high degree of fragmentation, particularly where opposition to the incumbent regime comprises armed and unarmed groups, often shifting objectives from armed confrontation to peaceful resolution of the conflict, depending on the government's behavior or pressure from the international community.⁸⁷

The history of exile diplomacy in South Sudan is deeply embedded in its six-decade struggle for independence (1955–2011), evolving from fragmented regional lobbying into a sophisticated international campaign that secured statehood.⁸⁸ Exile diplomacy allowed

Southern political leaders and armed movements, primarily the Anya Nya and later the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) to maintain pressure on Khartoum, secure military aid, and gain legitimacy when internal resistance was severely constrained.⁸⁹ South Sudanese in exile who paid allegiance to the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) were instrumental in conducting exile diplomacy during the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983–2005). The diaspora network, particularly based in neighboring countries such as Kenya, Uganda, and Ethiopia, as well as in the Western World, operated as an extension of the movement to bolster its legitimacy and support.⁹⁰ They were instrumental in mobilizing political support, military logistics, and humanitarian assistance from their host countries.

Throughout the liberation struggle, the guiding principles of the SPLM/A were to liberate individuals and society from all forms of political, economic, social, and natural constraints, to freedom, development, and the pursuit of happiness, self-fulfilment, social justice, democracy, human rights, and equality for all irrespective of ethnicity, religion, or gender.⁹¹ The SPLM/A's foreign policy strategy aimed to promote human rights, support national liberation struggles against oppressive regimes, and continuously work with like-minded forces to promote the transformation of global order away from unilateralism, conflict, and confrontation to cooperation, human solidarity, and peace.⁹²

The current stalemate in South Sudan's political dispensation is a result of the failure of the SPLM government to implement the philosophical ideals of the SPLM/A.⁹³ Two orientations have significantly contributed to widening differences between different political camps in the country.⁹⁴ First, the pro-liberation idealists who believe in the founding principles of the SPLM/A, and second, the pro-post-independence opportunists whose views have overshadowed the original founding principles of liberation to impose the old Sudan's system of political dispensation, which is incapable of uniting the people of South Sudan and incompatible with internationally accepted principles of governance. This dichotomy continues to shape South Sudan's political landscape before and after the 2013 crisis. It is the root cause of the division in the SPLM party and the sole disposer of many liberators to the opposition in exile.⁹⁵ Exiled diplomats who originate from South Sudan are mainly seasoned politicians and high-ranking military officers with a rich history in the liberation struggle.⁹⁶ They feel disenfranchised and relegated from the center of power due to the influence of the pro-post-independence opportunists whose objectives are not in conformity with the founding liberation principles.⁹⁷

Exiled diplomats and officials from South Sudan often leverage the historical legacy of the SPLM/A to maintain international recognition, despite ongoing internal conflicts and governance failures. The leaders at the apex of political power often prioritize their past successes over the current performance, allowing them to retain international standing despite the erosion of democratic principles at home. Both the opposition groups and South Sudan's Government receive equal treatment among the members of the international community.⁹⁸ This is a mockery of the ideals of the liberation struggle. South Sudan's political landscape is heavily fractured by the ongoing power struggle between President Salva Kiir and First Vice President Riek Machar, effectively creating competing centers of power in foreign policy.⁹⁹

4. Exile diplomacy in the consolidation of peace

Consolidated peace requires the engagement of all stakeholders inside the country, as well as the people in exile. This is because most people in a conflict-struck state have experienced the horrors of war directly or indirectly.¹⁰⁰ Their participation is needed in the peace process to design a peace agreement capable of ending the conflict. Peace is an outcome of decisions and actions opposed to violent conflict or war, bringing about a situation at odds with war and violence.¹⁰¹ It is not a single fixed concept. Rather, a conception and practice of political power for the interest of all people in society.¹⁰² In an intrastate conflict, both armed and non-armed opposition are stronger constituencies with class and political leverage to promote or undermine peace. This makes exiled diplomats important players throughout the peace process. This is because they act as a bridge between the people they represent and their host countries, which often have strategic interests in their home countries.¹⁰³ Peace is not the absence of war; rather, it is the maintenance of protection against violence, extortion, exploitation, or abuses of the system by the powerful.¹⁰⁴

Diplomacy to consolidate peace is a specialized, multi-layered approach to conflict resolution that moves beyond merely stopping active violence toward building a sustainable, democratic, and unified society.¹⁰⁵ Supported by third-party states, regional bodies, and international organizations, this form of diplomacy ensures that belligerent parties reach negotiated political settlements and implement reforms, including institutional restructuring. It refers to a holistic political intervention conducted under turbulent conditions to consolidate decisions made by political leaders, minority groups, and civil society to reach a political agreement between the warring parties and all stakeholders to achieve sustainable peace, democracy, accountability, effective governance, and political stability.¹⁰⁶ Exile diplomacy to consolidate peace denotes the activities undertaken by secessionist organizations, armed and non-armed opposition groups in exile, working with their host countries and international partners to bring about secession, regime change, or fundamental reforms. Their home countries equally exercise diplomatic leverage to seek a political settlement that guarantees their power or political survival.¹⁰⁷

Exile diplomacy during peace negotiations involves strategies and tactics by exiled diplomats to mobilize and influence the opinions of other stakeholders in favor of their peace proposals.¹⁰⁸ Peace proposals are a combination of home-grown solutions and ideas from international mediation experts. Exiled diplomats from South Sudan maintain influence in their constituencies at home, while also enjoying significant political leverage among the members of the international community.¹⁰⁹ This makes them a significant force to reckon with the incumbent regime. The grassroots are widely considered a critical, often primary source of internal legitimacy for exiled diplomats and governments in exile, enabling them to validate their claims for international recognition. Without the ability to hold territory, exiled diplomats rely on demonstrated support from their home population and diaspora to prove they are not merely "political tourists" but representatives of a living political community.¹¹⁰ Due to the influence of exiled diplomats, it became very difficult for the South Sudanese government to manoeuvre the 2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ACRSS), but to sign it with the opposition groups.¹¹¹

One great aspect of exile diplomacy is the promotion of inclusivity in the peace process. Inclusivity is a bedrock for a consolidated peace. Inclusivity in peace processes contributes to a more sustainable political transition from war to peace.¹¹² This is because each stakeholder has significant influence in mobilizing for peace or in providing material support for peace. Exiled diplomats are highly associated with civil society groups who help shape the agenda, mobilize resources, and carry out peace dissemination, demobilization of minors, disarmament of ex-combatants, and rehabilitation of war-affected communities and persons.¹¹³ In the South Sudan peace process, minority parties and civil society had to fight for their inclusion in the Addis Ababa peace talks (2015-2018).¹¹⁴ This was because the warring parties objected to the participation of stakeholders whom they perceived to have an insignificant stake in the war front. Experience has shown that a lack of complete inclusivity has greatly affected grassroots participation in the South Sudan peace process.¹¹⁵ However, civil society and the opposition groups are optimistic that the success of a consolidated peace depends largely on the inclusive participation of all citizens, regardless of their political affiliations, regions, or tribes.¹¹⁶

The basic principle for a successful implementation of the peace agreement is the commitment of all parties to implement the agreement in letter and spirit.¹¹⁷ Successful implementation depends on the political will of the signatories to the peace agreement. The true intentions of the principal signatories, whether to consolidate peace or buy time for tactical violations, or display intransigence and trust deficit, are best understood during the implementation phase.¹¹⁸ Exiled diplomats are an advisory category of their political parties in the peace accord. They act as intermediaries between the guarantors and their principals to consolidate peace. In South Sudan, exiled diplomats are legitimate leaders or representatives of recognized armed or non-armed rebel movements who have acquired legitimacy at home and abroad.¹¹⁹ When peace fails, exiled diplomats from South Sudan resort to undertaking protests at the venues of multilateral diplomacy, such as New York and Geneva, to express their displeasure with the behavior of their main peace partner, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-government (SPLM-IG), and plead for international intervention.¹²⁰

5. Exile diplomacy in economic cooperation

Exile diplomacy in economic cooperation is a form of counter diplomacy by exiled diplomats against the economic interests of their home countries.¹²¹ It thrives in two contexts. First, the global context encompasses counter-diplomatic activities between great powers and/or between great and medium powers, usually displayed in support of incumbent regimes or the alternative political organizations during the meetings of the United Nations Security Council. Second, the national context involves counter-diplomatic activities by non-state actors, particularly the exiled diplomats representing armed and non-armed opposition groups against the external economic interests of their home countries. Economic cooperation refers to a set of strategies of international political economy that primarily focus on rule-guided and norm-governed cooperative arrangements between states or entities to promote economic growth, stability, and security.¹²² It involves policy coordination to facilitate trade and investment, the development of joint venture projects, information sharing, and the establishment of institutions to implement the cooperation agreements.¹²³

Economic diplomacy, on the other hand, refers to an instrument of foreign policy that involves establishing and maintaining commercial relations between states or entities.¹²⁴ It is a science of international economic relations and a means of implementing the economic component of a State's foreign policy, used by states or entities to develop effective economic cooperation and control the behavior of others to expand their sphere of influence in international affairs.¹²⁵ It encompasses the expansion of the market economy, liberalization of national economies, and increased interaction through trade, technology, and cross-border investment.¹²⁶ The primary objectives of economic diplomacy include gathering information on the economic situation of receiving states and the activities of international organizations; facilitation of trade and investment; protection of national strategic and economic interests; improving the country's competitiveness in global markets; and creating favourable conditions for the successful integration of the national economies into the global economy.¹²⁷ The purpose of economic diplomacy is to influence policy and regulate decisions of foreign governments, as well as those of international organizations.¹²⁸ Key elements of economic diplomacy include political influence, monetary assets and relations, and the establishment of a favorable political climate and international environment that facilitates the exchange of goods and services.¹²⁹

Exile diplomacy in economic cooperation involves counteractivities between state and non-state actors. Exiled diplomats are often on the offensive to block or undermine the economic interests of their home countries.¹³⁰ Their activities are met with reciprocating strategies and actions by their home countries to protect national economic interests abroad. It is an offensive strategy to weaken and discredit incumbent regimes and a defensive strategy for the regimes to protect the status quo. States are the primary custodians of foreign policy instruments with the power to extend influence beyond national borders, to spread their values, and to negotiate national interests.¹³¹ Exiled diplomats are agents of parallel political authorities or political-military organizations mandated to counter the diplomatic activities of their home governments. In the intrastate conflict, states securitize public resources to fund the war against rebels or insurgents.¹³² Exiled diplomats and civil society often counter these actions through various strategies, including advocacy for targeted economic sanctions, arms embargoes, travel bans, and diplomatic isolation of government officials and their associates.¹³³

Exiled diplomats promote pressure tools such as economic sanctions and arms embargoes against their home countries. Sanctioned states often struggle to maintain or establish new economic relations with other states or entities.¹³⁴ Sanctions lead to states' failures in delivering public services, including governments' inability to pay civil servants, teachers, and health care workers.¹³⁵ States, on their part, undertake counter-diplomatic activities against opposition groups, rebel movements, and insurgents, to isolate them, delegitimize their causes, and sever their international support networks.¹³⁶ Because of the influence of exiled diplomats, oppressive regimes have succumbed to international pressure to accept peaceful resolutions to the conflicts.¹³⁷ South Sudan is an active case of exile diplomacy, with government and opposition groups vying to gain the upper hand in the international arena. South Sudan, guided by its sixth foreign policy objective, attempts to enhance economic cooperation with other countries. However, the exiled diplomats have been conducting exile diplomacy against South Sudan's foreign policy. Their political organizations claim to provide

an alternative government in South Sudan with democratic federalism as the preferred system of governance.¹³⁸ The influence of exiled diplomats has shaped the policies and actions of third-party states and international organizations to impose targeted economic sanctions and an arms embargo on South Sudan.¹³⁹

Measures such as targeted economic sanctions, arms embargo, and travel restrictions have reduced South Sudan's ability to finance the war or enter into economic partnership agreements with countries in the Western Hemisphere.¹⁴⁰ To avoid mandatory economic sanctions and sustained diplomatic isolation, South Sudan's government has frequently been engaging the opposition in peace talks, sometimes signing peace agreements as a strategy to maintain legitimacy and prevent the country from total disintegration. However, the opposition has described the government's behavior in peace processes as purely tactical or reactive and lacking commitment to a genuine peace that brings about total transformation.¹⁴¹

6. Conclusion

Exile diplomacy is a double-edged sword with consequential effects on both ends. The non-state actors use it as an offensive strategy to undermine, discredit, and limit the states' ability to maintain the status quo. States, on the other hand, use counter diplomacy as a defensive strategy to delegitimize the opposition groups at home and abroad. In South Sudan, exile diplomacy has limited the government's ability to finance the war, maintain the status quo, or enter into economic partnerships with countries from the Western Hemisphere. The government, on its part, has curtailed the opposition's ability to achieve outright military victory on the battlefield. Both parties have influenced the decisions and actions of the international community, not exclusively to the disadvantage of the opponent, but also with redistributive effects. Exiled diplomats are important actors in international relations. They can influence the decisions and actions of states or entities in favor of their political organizations. Exile diplomacy thrives in national and global contexts. This is because the founding political organizations are capable of acquiring internal legitimacy at home and political recognition abroad.

The founding philosophies and principles of non-state political actors are heavily influenced by a blend of national experiences, such as local grievances, cultural identity, and a history of state failure, and international best practices of governance, which they adopt to gain legitimacy and structure their operations at home and abroad. While operating outside formal state authority, these groups of actors often replicate state-like structures and adhere to certain international norms to establish legitimacy among local populations and the international community. In South Sudan, the most popular political philosophy among exile diplomats is the promotion of liberal democracy with commitment to a political dispensation that adopts democratic federalism as the country's system of governance. This has been viewed by most countries in the Western Hemisphere as the only pathway to ending the conflict and transforming South Sudan into a viable, competitive state.

South Sudanese exiled diplomats are effective in the host countries with stronger political, economic, social, and cultural ties with South Sudan. In East Africa, they are more influential in Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Sudan than in other countries on the continent. Outside Africa, South Sudanese exiled diplomats are effective in Australia, the United States

of America, Canada, and the United Kingdom. This is because they are citizens with voting rights to influence the decisions of the executive and legislative arms of government.

Exile diplomacy is a form of counter-diplomacy used by non-state actors, particularly agents of rebel movements, non-armed opposition groups, and secessionist organizations, to influence international decisions and actions to force regime change and fundamental reforms in their home countries or to achieve secession or independence. It is a specialized form of international engagement where recognized or de facto governments in exile, or organized opposition groups residing outside their home country, use diplomatic tools to address threats posed by dangerous regimes or non-state actors.

Exile diplomacy is offensive in nature. It involves the use of counter-diplomatic activities by exiled diplomats to undermine the foreign policy of their home countries. States use counter-diplomacy to neutralize or reduce the impact of exile diplomacy in foreign policy. The most effective tools of exile diplomacy are advocacy for international sanctions, arms embargoes, diplomatic isolation, and travel restrictions against incumbent regimes, individuals, and entities associated with the regimes. Exiled diplomats understand that oppressive regimes are susceptible to economic sanctions and arms embargoes. States' counter-diplomacy relies on the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states, the use of government machinery to silence dissent, and the use of public resources to finance the war against the rebel movements.

Exiled diplomacy shapes the policies and behavior of the home countries and the policies and behavior of third-party states or international organizations. Due to the influence of exile diplomacy and the reciprocating effects of counter diplomacy by the Government of South Sudan, it has become increasingly impossible for the government to survive without a peaceful settlement of conflict, and for the opposition to overthrow the government. Exile diplomacy has invited external interests in South Sudan, making it very difficult for the Government of South Sudan to maintain allies or expand its influence in the global marketplace.

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