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South Sudan, Food Shortage
South Sudan: Hunger and Civil War

Imagine a place where there is constant hunger, rape, murder, and the displacement of nearly four million people. For many in the developed world, this is the very definition of a catastrophic crisis. For South Sudanese people, this is another regular day. Another regular day that causes havoc, hunger, unspeakable sexual abuse, and death. To the South Sudanese people, this is another day that mothers wonder what they can feed their children, where more young men and women are brainwashed and killed by governmental factions, and where millions of people don't have a place to call home. Many Americans have no idea that this crisis is even going on, and this lack of attention is allowing these atrocities and victims to become little more than whispers in the wind. This crisis, which is being caused by the ongoing South Sudanese Civil War between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), which is the government, and Sudan People's Liberation Movement - in opposition (SPLM-IO), has caused nearly 300,000 people to perish, including many from food shortages that were caused because of fighting in the Equatorial region of the country, where significant amounts of Sorghum and Millet, which are essential in South Sudanese diet, are grown ("Clashes break out near South Sudan capital in truce violation", 2018). This food crisis could possibly lead to the death of 50,000 children before it ends, and it is estimated by UNICEF that a two-thirds of the population is at risk of starvation ("South Sudan", N/A). This food crisis is so horrific that the United Nations Security Council has deemed it "the worst in the world" ("Ceasefire in South Sudan 'a Distant Prospect', Peacekeeping Chief Tells Security Council, Citing Disagreements among Warring Parties", N/A). Thankfully, organizations, such as UNICEF and Oxfam, have been helping to mitigate the impact of this food shortage by providing food, money, and food-gathering resources to nearly 500,000 people ("Hunger crisis in South Sudan", 2017). However, this crisis will not end without an end to the fighting between the SPLM and SPLM-IO. This fighting has disturbed the farmers by destroying their crops, their methods of transportation of their products to the market, and the overall economic conditions are too awful to engage in economic activities. In addition, foreign governments need to do more to provide aid to South Sudan, and there needs to be more awareness outside the country. Until then, millions of South Sudanese people will be speaking the language of hunger and death.

To understand this brutal food shortage crisis, it is critical to comprehend the modern history and culture of South Sudan. Before 1956, Sudan was under the control of the British and Egyptians. During this era, what was known as Sudan until 2011, consisted of people from very different ethnic groups, such as the Dinka-Christians, Arab-Muslims, and ethnic groups practicing traditional religions ("South Sudan country profile", 2017). These ethnic groups never got along too well, so when Sudan became an independent country, the southern part of the country, which was more Christian and traditional religion based, revolted from the Arab-dominated Muslim north, where the center of power was. In addition, the southern part of the country was more lush and agricultural, with plenty of precipitation, while the northern part of the country was very dry, arid, and contained parts of the Sahara Desert. These climatic differences led to different lifestyles, which further entrenched the differences. In addition, due to the British policy of investing in infrastructure, healthcare, and the economy in mostly the Arab North, the southern part of the country had less access to healthcare, infrastructure, and fewer educational opportunities. These differences built up animosity and cultural unfamiliarity between the two regions. Although there were multiple peace accords that tried to unify the country by granting South Sudan autonomy, the Muslim north still had more control, and the cultural differences were too big to be bridged by paper. Eventually, another civil war in the 2000s led to a peace accord which began the process of bifurcating Sudan. In 2011, South Sudan became an independent country. However, the newly formed country would be devastated by political conflict. There are about 60 different ethnic groups in South Sudan, and these ethnic groups began to fight over the usual items, such as control of territory. ("World Population

Prospects - Population Division”, N/A). There was some hope that the South Sudanese government would step in to stop this fighting, however, President Salva Kiir, who is a Dinka, and the Vice President, Rick Makar, who is a Nuer, had a falling out because the President fired the Vice President. The Vice President had support from many Nuer military members, who vowed to help him gain control of the country. The President had support from Dinka military members. This falling out, combined with the heavy ethnic tensions and conflict caused the South Sudanese Civil War. Each side wants to control more territory, more of the significant oil industry in South Sudan, and they are willing to use whatever tactics necessary, such as rape, murder, burning villages, displacing millions of people, and destroying enemy controlled agricultural fields, to win. This political conflict has displaced around four million people, has put nearly two-thirds of the country at risk of hunger, and has destroyed the lives, dignity, and future of many South Sudanese people.

The current conditions of this food crisis are devastating. Although exact numbers vary, there are at least 1.25 million people that are facing starvation, according to latest food and security analysis update by the UN and South Sudan’s National Bureau of Statistics, with at least four to seven million facing food insecurities that leave them vulnerable to starvation (“Crisis in South Sudan”, N/A). Although there is not an official declaration of famine, many organizations such as the UN and South Sudan Health Association, state that this is one of the worst humanitarian crises in history. There are some signs that conditions are improving, especially with the new deal the South Sudanese Government made with China, which will help increase the food availability to the people (“Famine Early Warning Systems Network”, 2017). However, the continuing civil war, the atrocities committed by soldiers, such as stealing of food at gunpoint, and the lack of international help, is preventing any efforts to solve the food shortage crisis from succeeding. In addition, people are afraid to cultivate food because they fear that government soldiers or rebels will steal it or kill them for helping feed the “enemy” (“Hunger is killing me’: starvation as a weapon of war in South Sudan”, 2018). In addition, women, who play a critical role in African agriculture, fear being raped by soldiers, so they are not farming. Men fear being killed for farming because soldiers often kill people who supply food to the “enemy”. Finally, parts of South Sudan, where agriculture plays a critical role in the economy, have not had rain for nearly two years, which further reduces the ability and incentive for people to farm. When these factors are combined, it is very hard for any efforts to mitigate this food crisis to succeed.

Thankfully, there are still many organizations and some countries that are doing what they can to relieve some of the suffering. United Nations agencies reached four million people with 265,000 metric tons of food supplies, and they also gave 13.8 million dollars in monetary sums for the people in South Sudan (“Famine declared in parts of South Sudan”, N/A). There has also been help from individual governments, such as the United Kingdom, where the government sent one hundred million pounds (“Somalia and South Sudan to receive £100 million each in UK aid”, 2017). The European Union sent forty-five million euros for South Sudan to help with the food insecurities, shelter conditions, and sanitation insecurities in the region (“Humanitarian Aid: EU releases €68 million for Sudan and South Sudan”, N/A). Private organizations, such as Oxfam, have been providing food for 415,000 people, along with monetary vouchers and resources, such as livestock, seeds, and fishing gear, to help them survive. However, there are some significant problems with these solutions. Firstly, the South Sudanese Government has increased the cost of bringing aid workers to the country by increasing the visa fees. This makes it more expensive and harder for organizations to bring more assistance directly to the people. Furthermore, the South Sudanese Government is refusing to let aid into areas controlled by the rebel forces, and there have been credible reports stating that rebel forces, and even some governmental forces, are stealing food that was given to the people. In addition, the money that has been sent is nowhere enough to end the food crisis. According to the UN, they need about 4.4 billion dollars to prevent a famine catastrophe in South Sudan, Nigeria, Somalia and Yemen (“UN: \$4.4bn needed to prevent

'catastrophe' of famine", 2017). Roughly speaking, they would need somewhere near a billion dollars for South Sudan, which means there needs to be more monetary aid coming in. Despite the aid being subpar, without it, there is no doubt that the food situation would be much worse. The only way to provide long term food security for this region is to provide long-term political stability to this region, and to provide investment in agriculture, infrastructure, and education. This is how an awful famine in Ethiopia was resolved. In addition to a significant amount of foreign aid and international attention, which South Sudan is comparatively not getting, Ethiopia also had a return to a stable government with the establishment of a democratic government led to the growth of the economy, infrastructure, education, which in turn increased food supplies. Throwing money at a famine will not entirely work, especially if the famine or food shortage is caused due to political reasons. With that in mind, these following proposed solutions will likely put an end to the South Sudanese Civil War, increase the flow of aid into the country, and allow for investment in agricultural infrastructure, such as irrigation or seed money for farmers.

Firstly, to end the significant food shortages and famine-like conditions in South Sudan, there needs to be a political peace treaty. Through a neutral mediator, perhaps the United States or a European nation, all parties involved in the Civil War should attend a peace convention to strike an accord. The United Nations could help host this peace talk. To solve the ethnic tensions of South Sudan, each ethnic group would be given their own state within the country, excluding the federal capital of Juba. The exact location of these states shall be determined by the majority ethnic group in a specific municipality. If a municipality is a majority one ethnic group, that ethnic group will add the municipality to their territorial domains. The maps will be drawn by a task-force with members agreed to by all the parties involved in the peace talks. In addition, the states will have autonomous powers, which will allow them to see to their own domestic affairs. At the national level, the country should have a proportional-parliamentary system, where a party gets the same number of seats in a parliament, as they get as a percentage of the total vote in the country. Since these parties are likely to be based on ethnicity, it will provide minority and majority ethnic groups with representation. The system will not lead to a single ruler in charge forever, and it has proven to work in European, Asian, and in some African countries, including Ethiopia. The Parliament will have control over the states, foreign relations, the capital city of Juba, and all oil field locations. The money received from the oil fields shall be distributed equally among the states. This nationalization of the oil industry will prevent ethnic fighting over control of oil territory. Finally, there will be a Supreme Court, where justices will have to be confirmed by $\frac{3}{4}$ of Parliament. This would mean that there needs to be support for confirmation of justices from various ethnic groups/parties for them to be on the court. The Parliament will elect a Prime Minister, who will need to be approved by $\frac{3}{4}$ of Parliament to take the office. To guarantee the representation of smaller ethnic groups or ethnic groups that are nomadic or are spread out more evenly, a proportional parliamentary system of government will be established at the state levels as well. In addition, the government can consider instituting a reservation system, where smaller ethnic group members or nomadic tribe members have a guaranteed percentage of government jobs. Next, all factions will have to lay down their arms, and they will be confiscated by the United Nations, as done with some chemical weapons in Syria. The new federal government of South Sudan will remove visa fee restrictions for foreign aid workers, will oblige not to hamper aid efforts, and must pay compensation for war crime victims or families. In addition, the military of the country will be kept under the control of the Prime Minister, however, a Prime Minister may not be able to use it without $\frac{4}{5}$ vote in Parliament. Furthermore, there will be a new constitution that will be written in South Sudan to codify freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of expression, freedom of petition, freedom of assembly, equal voting rights for women and men, a ban on ethnic discrimination, a ban on slavery, an equal rights amendment, and protections for citizens against the federal government, such as Habeas Corpus. To make sure respective parties don't break the peace agreement, there will be international watchdogs, the threat of economic sanctions, and military intervention by willing countries and United Nations Troops. Finally, to help start this new government, there will be international watchdogs from the United Nations and a respectable foreign government overseeing the transition. After twenty-five years, the international

watchdogs and the foreign government(s) may stop the oversight measures, if there are no signs of a breakdown. A similar proposal has been tried in Ethiopia, which also experienced a famine, partly caused by political turmoil, and a new stable democratic government helped lead to the overall eradication of that famine. Although critics can argue that proportional parliamentary system leads to unstable coalition governments, according to Fair Vote, this fact is way over-exaggerated since many European governments, which have proportional parliamentary system, have stable governments, with very few exceptions (“Common Criticisms of PR and Responses to Them”, N/A). In addition, a valid concern is that a proportional parliamentary system can lead to extremists getting in office, as seen in the case of Nazi Germany. However, I think in South Sudan, that will be less of a concern as to get elected Prime Minister, an individual must get the support of 75% of the parliament, which means many parties need to confirm him or her. In this situation, even a minority coalition can block an extremist from taking the office of Prime Minister, which therefore ensures to a fair degree that an extremist doesn’t get much influence in the government. Finally, in the worst case that this deal fails, and the governmental system fails, it would still give organizations and other countries time to get aid into South Sudan. This could potentially be a win-win situation.

After a peace deal or a transition government has been established, aid workers will be able to come easier into the country. In addition, aid will reach all areas, no matter the ethnic affiliation. This is because there are two points in the agreement which prevent the federal government of South Sudan from hampering aid efforts to individual states or regions. Furthermore, the United Nations or foreign governments should provide at least another 50 million dollars in aid, in form of food and monetary cash. This amount will prevent the situation from becoming worse and considering the UN budget is only 5.4 billion dollars, the amount is also in the acceptable range for the United Nations (“General Assembly approves \$5.4 billion UN budget for next two years | UN News”, N/A). Foreign countries would have more of an incentive to provide aid now that there is a stable government, and they have a guarantee that aid will reach the intended destination. Regarding aid, there are critics, especially in the United States, that will argue that their country has its own problems and that they cannot afford to help. However, we live in a globalized society, where an incident in one place can harm another. If countries, like the United States, don’t step up and provide more aid, such as food, cash for locals to buy food, sheltering and education assistance, etc., the problem may get much worse and spread to even more areas. It will cost more later to solve than it will now because complexity only increases with time, as seen with the Israel-Palestine conflict. Therefore, it isn’t just a morally correct choice to increase aid to South Sudan, it is also likely a more economical one.

Finally, the World Bank should loan South Sudan’s Government three billion dollars to spend on famine eradication and agricultural investment, specifically providing farmers with seed money and irrigation projects, especially in areas that have been hit by drought. This specific amount of money is required to overcome the impacts of the current food crisis, as South Sudan has very limited sources of revenue, and the current government structure allows tax corruption to run rampant. In addition, around one billion dollars is needed to eradicate the famine according to statistics provided by the UN, and the irrigation projects, agricultural investment, and seed money for farmers will be covered by the remaining two billion. To ensure this required money gets spent where it is supposed to, the World Bank should have qualified and respected observers throughout the process, until they money gets to the farmers. Finally, international banks or companies should have microcredit programs that will lend money directly to farmers, business people, and skilled workers. The South Sudanese Government will be able to attract these companies into the region by providing stability, tax-incentives, and access to untapped markets.

In conclusion, the best chance to achieve long term food security, peace, and hopefully economic prosperity in South Sudan is to enact these following proposed solutions that have been proven effective

in the case of nearby Ethiopia. This includes solving the root of the governmental dysfunction causing the famine by enacting a peace deal and creating a new form of government that gives minority ethnic groups a say. In addition, the funds from the UN, World Bank, and individual foreign governments will help spur the agricultural industry in South Sudan, increase investment in agricultural infrastructure, and provide for food stability. These initiatives will not only solve the root problems of the ongoing food crisis, but will also provide for long-term stability, so that the future generations of South Sudanese people can't speak the language of hunger and death.

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