



United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and the Challenge of Communal Violence in Host Communities: The Case of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA)

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the effectiveness of the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations in addressing communal violence in host communities, using the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) as a case study. Despite UNISFA's presence, the Abyei region has experienced tragic events, such as the death murder of the Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief by Messiriya militia, which occurred in the presence of peacekeeping forces. The paper draws on opinions accounts from the local communities and the vast literature on the interventions that UNISFA undertook to curb the violence in host communities. It also takes accounts of community leaders who claim that UN peace keepers are at the core of local disputes in Abyei. This article adds to the existing literature by showing that is that the UNISFA has faced challenges in tackling conflicts at the boundaries. This was seen clear in the conflict between Nogk and Twic over Aneet and also in the case of the 14-Mile in Aweil North County between Dinka Malual and Riziegat tribe. Hence, the paper examines the issue of disputes over boundaries by the host communities. The paper presents policy recommendations to improve the performance of the UN peacekeeping missions in addressing communal conflicts in areas where they are deployed.

Keywords: violence, conflict, peace, communities, security, mission and mandate.

INTRODUCTION

Peacekeeping operations, empowered by Chapters VI, VII, VIII, and XII of the United Nations (UN) Charter, serve as a mechanism for maintaining international peace and security. These missions aim to build and promote stability in conflict-torn areas. In some African countries, peacekeeping missions are often linked to the implementation of peace accords brokered after armed conflicts to consolidate peace and stability.

The mandates of peacekeeping operations are authorised by United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions, tailored to the nature of each particular mission. However, accurately assessing the conditions under which peacekeepers operate remains a challenge for the international organization. Since these resolutions are based on such assessments, there is a need for continuous follow-ups and evaluations of each mission's performance through regular monthly reports. Whereas the ideal situation that would warrant the deployment of peace keeping missions is usually armed conflict of a certain scale, communal violence many times can escalate to the level that would require the expansion of the mission's mandate. .

Such was the case with the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA)'s mandate, which was initially to provide protection to civilians as a result of violence, escalating tensions and population displacement in the Abyei region.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Communal armed conflicts quite potentially create instability often cause unrest that threatens international peace and security. This is so because these conflicts can result trigger mass violation of international human rights laws such as in genocide and mass rape and human rights violations, all acts that violate international human rights laws. Moreover, these acts can potentially happen in the presence of UN peace keeping operations as was the case in 2023, Rwanda in 1994, Darfur between 2003 and 2005, South Sudan in 2013 and 2016, and Abyei in 2022 which is the subject of this study.

OBJECTIVES

- 3.1: To highlights the challenges faced by UN peacekeeping mission in Abyei and the 14 Mile areas.
- 3.2: To examines the root causes of the conflict between the Twic and Ngok communities in the area.
- 3.3: To offers policy recommendations to improve the operation of the UN peacekeeping missions in conflict areas.

METHODOLOGY

This paper depends largely on the rich literature that has been published about the United Nations Peace keeping operations especially in Africa. The document paper also makes reference to the Aneet Investigation Committee Report on violence between Ngok and Twic communities in 2022. In the report, the committee adopted conducted interviews from randomly selected members of the warring communities. More than 300 people participated in the interviews. However, the respondents chose to remain anonymous because of the sensitive nature of the study.

The committee also met and discussed the violence in the area with the UNISFA staff in Juba and Abyei. Moreoverso, the committee had an opportunity to engage with civil society in the conflict areas. Finally, the committee met with state and local authorities in Abyei Administrative Area, Twic County, Warap State, and Northern Bahr el Ghazal State to coordinate efforts of enforcing cessation of hostilities in the area.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Failing to Keep Peace: The Case of UNISFA in Abyei

Abyei is a disputed territory between South Sudan and Sudan, transferred from Bahr el Ghazal to Kordofan in 1905 for administrative purposes. It remained part of Kordofan until the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, which granted Abyei autonomous status pending a referendum to decide its final status. According to the Abyei protocol, the area was supposed to conduct a referendum concurrently with Southern Sudan to determine whether it would remain part of Sudan or secede with South Sudan. Despite numerous international and regional attempts to implement the Abyei protocol, including efforts by the African Union

High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) led by former South African President Thabo Mbeki, these efforts failed.

Similar to the situations regarding autonomous regions in Western Sahara in 1991 and Kashmir in 1948, the UN Security Council resolution 1990 established the Abyei peacekeeping mission, UNISFA, to maintain peace and security along the borders with Sudan following South Sudan's secession. However, this was done without conducting the crucial referendum in Abyei.

The regime of former Sudanese President Omer Al-Bashir derailed the implementation of the Abyei Protocol, leaving the region in limbo between the two neighboring countries. The failure to conduct the referendum denied the Ngok Dinka and other Abyei residents their right to choose whether to remain part of Kordofan in Sudan or join Bahr el Ghazal in the newly founded state of South Sudan. UAs would be expected, upon separation of the two countries, tensions along the borders escalated, exacerbated by pastoralists searching for water and pastures in the area. Abyei faced attacks from the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and its tribal militia, the Messiriya nomads, leading to repeated clashes between SAF and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) over control of the oil-rich region. These conflicts caused significant displacement, with many fleeing to neighboring cities such as Mualad, Miam, Aweil, and Wau.

Consequently, the UNSC deployed UNISFA to maintain peace and security in the area. However, the mission faced significant challenges, particularly during the eruption of communal conflicts between the Ngok and Twic Dinka sub-sections. This reflects the broader difficulties faced by many peacekeeping operations in Africa and other conflict zones worldwide. Therefore, finding a permanent solution to these hindrances during peacekeeping operations is essential.

Relocate Your Headquarters Northwards and Enjoy Peace

Throughout the investigation of the Aneet Investigation Committee, the central message of the Twic community to the Ngok Dinka and UNISFA was that they should "relocate to the north of River Kiir for peace to prevail.". This message from the Twic community leaders sparked violence that claimed the lives of innocent people from both communities.

As established by the investigation committee, the conflict started in 2017 when the Abyei Administration initiated a survey of Aneet Town. This was perceived by the, Twic community as provocation and an intrusion onto their ancestral land. Thus, the survey was resisted and violence erupted on 10th February 2022.

Two weeks later, on 24th February, 2022, President Salva Kiir Mayardit of the Republic of South Sudan formed a committee chaired by the Vice President Hussein Abdelbagi Akol and comprising of 11 other members, tasked with investigating the conflict between the Ngok and Twic subsections of the Dinka tribe and broker cessation of hostilities.

Before travelling to the conflict areas, the committee met with leaders of the warring communities in Juba, the capital of South Sudan. However, in Juba, the committee was accused

of prejudice on grounds that its membership included leaders from the warring communities. The appointment of Deng Alor Kuol, Aisha Abbas Akuei, Charles Majak Aleer and Nyendeng Malek Deliech to the committee was received with mixed-feelings. The first two members are from the Ngok Dinka community meanwhile the last two members represent Twic Mayardit.

Deng Alor was among the Ngok intellectuals alleged to have attempted to annex the southern boundaries of the River Kiir to Abyei. Meanwhile, Majak and Nyendeng were accused of instigating violence by releasing statements with other members of Parliament requesting the Abyei administration to relocate its headquarters to the north of River Kiir.

The committee's meetings to strategize on ending the violence were mostly divisive and confrontational, as the four members appointed to represent the warring communities were always at odds. This internal discord made it difficult to resolve matters related to the violence in Aneet and resulted in a significant amount of time being spent trying to reconcile committee members instead of devising solutions on the ground to reconcile the warring communities. The decision to consult Ngok and Twic community leaders in Juba to relay peace messages to citizens in rural areas was a good one, especially since the root cause of the conflict in Aneet was alleged to be in Juba. However, the meetings with these leaders were unproductive, as they devolved into quarrels and traded accusations among themselves. Twic leaders demanded that the Abyei headquarters be relocated north of River Kiir but the Ngok insisted that the area was their ancestral land and the Twic have never occupied the southern bank of River Kiir, but rather migrated to Aneet, Anthony and other highland villages of the Ngok as a result of repeated floods that had plagued areas previously occupied by the Twic.

Despite the fact that the border disputes between the two communities have existed for years, particularly during the liberation struggle, the SPLM/A leadership managed to control the matter and prevented it from escalating. It is unfortunate, however, that the same issue resurfaced with the formation of the Abyei Boundaries Commission (ABC), which was tasked to delineate Abyei boundaries. Upon publication of its report, the ABC was criticized by the Ngok Dinka neighbouring communities of Twic, Ruweng, Malual and Messiriya of overstepping its mandate and encroaching on territories of other communities, which made its report unacceptable. The GoS, therefore requested arbitration at the Hague in the Netherlands. Many areas in the north, east and west had been described by the ABC as part of the Abyei territory including Panthou (Egilig). However, because the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) were silent about these areas, the Government of Sudan (GoS) erred in assuming that they are part of Sudan. It is worth noting that the arbitration was mainly focused on Abyei boundaries and any territory which was historically part of the area annexed to Kordofan in 1905 was excluded. Upon the arbitration award, the GoS occupied Panthou leading to a protest by Ruweng community accusing Ngok community leaders of extending their territory into areas that historically do not belong to them. All evidence indicates that this conflict was instigated by the border dispute, with citizens dividing themselves along ethnic lines. As a result, there was a complete breakdown of the rule of law in the area.

On the other hand, organized forces identified themselves with their communities. For example, in Majak Kol military barracks, where majority soldiers of the South Sudan People

Defence Forces (SSPDF) were basically of Twic Mayardit origin, troops joined and supported their community. This was the same case in Rumkoor barracks where the Abyei Independent Brigade (AIB) joined the war defending Ngok Dinka. Like previously, UNISFA failed to control the situation and this resulted in the death of many people in Aneet Town in the presence of the peace keeping forces.

During its investigations the committee found it difficult to draw a line and deploy forces to separate the warring communities since the mandate of UNISFA's mandate does not permit the deployment of government troops in territories where they are deployed. What this then meant was that UNISFA forces were seen by warring parties as being part of the conflict since the areas in which they were deployed were those hotly contested by the Twic Mayardit community.

The committee recognized that the conflict had resulted in humanitarian devastation for the two communities, such as the loss of lives and property. Houses and markets were burnt down, resulting in internal displacement in Twic and Ngok areas. The committee also observed that the presence of UNISFA limited the role of the SSPDF in providing security in the area. UNISFA failed to carry out its duties of protecting the civilians in Abyei Special Administrative Area (ASAA) as mandated by Status of Force Agreement (SOFA).

After a month of joint meetings, the committee managed to broker Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) which created temporary tranquility but could not stop the war as hundreds were reportedly killed along Kordofan-Bahr el Ghazal road that connects Abyei and Twic County. Among significant recommendations presented by the committee was the transfer of SSPDF soldiers who had taken sides in the conflict. The committee also recommended the engagement of UNISFA in deploying SSPDF to separate the two communities.

In view of the atrocities committed during the clashes, the committee recommended the formation of a special court to prosecute war-related crimes in the area. However, this recommendation faced the same challenge because UNISFA conditioned the establishment of the court to the terms of SOFA that specified the jurisdictions between governments and UNISFA.

One of the most needed recommendations was the formation of a border demarcation committee to define boundaries between the Ngok and Twic. Unfortunately, it was realized that this local body had no mandate to delineate international boundaries between South Sudan and Sudan with Abyei being part of Kordofan. Any attempt to do so meant the demarcation of Bahr el Ghazal with that of Kordofan, a task the national committee could not carry out without the involvement of the Sudan government.

The committee also met with the leadership of UNISFA at their headquarters and discussed several matters of concern. UNISFA assured the committee of their unwavering support although they noted that SOFA limits their cooperation because they are required to coordinate with the GoS in Khartoum and Kadugli.

Another important recommendation from the committee was the organization of a peace conference between the two warring communities to be held in Aweil, Northern Bahr el Ghazal. This recommendation was critical for the consolidation of peace, reconciliation, and healing between the two sisterly communities. Regrettably, all these recommendations did not come to fruition and the situation remained confrontational despite efforts of the local authorities in Kuajok and Abyei to calm tensions. According to many political analysts, for as long as UNISFA operated in the areas because of its SOFA, some of these recommendations would remain hard to implement. Although the committee tried hard to calm tensions, most members of the Twic community who were interviewed spoke bitterly against UNISFA and its presence in the southern part of River Kiir.

UNISFA and “The Abyei Box”

Abyei Box is a territorial boundary demarcated by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in Hague in 2009 (See figure 1). After signing the Abyei protocol in Kenya 2004, the Government of Sudan (GoS) and the SPLM/A formed the Abyei Boundaries Commission (ABC) to demarcate the area transferred to Kordofan in 1905. Its membership comprised representatives of the parties and international experts who were tasked with rendering a final report. It was also agreed that the report, upon its delivery to the parties; (GoS and SPLM/A) becomes mandatory. However, despite the clarity of the experts’ mandate that the report was binding and final, the GoS protested, stating that the experts had exceeded their mandate by including areas that are historically not part of Abyei. The two parties agreed to go for arbitration in Hague. There, the re-delimitation of the northern, eastern and western boundaries was ordered by the court of arbitration, while the arbitral panel endorsed the experts’ conclusion with respect to the southern boundaries, grazing and other traditional rights. The re-delimitation of these three directions was based on the requirement for the court to specify the territory annexed to Kordofan in 1905. The challenge was that the southern boundaries of Abyei, which belonged to Bahr el Ghazal and included the Twic Mayardit with the Ngok Dinka of Kordofan, were not re-delimited by the Permanent Court of Arbitration. The ABC report was also vague on the southern boundaries by stating that Abyei boundaries are that of Bahr el Ghazal and Upper Nile provinces with Kordofan, but failed to give a detailed description.

According to the Twic Mayardit leaders in Juba, the southern boundaries of the Abyei Box where UNISFA operates currently, were drawn by Abyei intellectuals who were influential in the SPLM/A. As indicated by Bona Malwal in his book *“Abyei of the Ngok Dinka Not Yet South Sudan”*, the Twic Mayardit community worldwide expressed the same opinion that the river Kiir separates their land from that of the Ngok Dinka. However, the idea of the Abyei southern boundaries where UNISFA operates currently seems to give leeway to Ngok intellectuals to snatch this land according to Twic Mayardit leaders. This idea of the Ngok Dinka not living in the southern boundaries of the river Kiir was emphasised by the International Arbitral Awards in its report as one of the areas where experts exceeded their mandate. Failure to resolve this dispute over the boundaries consequently led to an armed conflict between the two communities in 2022.

As Bona Malwal’s book mentioned earlier, the local authorities in Twic County and members of the National Parliament belonging to the Twic Mayardit community in Juba started writing

letters to the Abyei administration urging for relocation of their headquarters to the northern boundaries of the river Kiir instead of Aneet, which is located in the south of Kiir. As a result of this dispute over the territorial claim, UNISFA found itself in an awkward situation, being accused of taking sides in the communal conflict.

It is unfortunate that the Ngok-Twic conflict over boundaries around river Kiir claimed many lives, properties and became a significant humanitarian catastrophe. The map below explains the boundaries of the Abyei as re-delimited by the International Arbitral Awards of 2009. The current areas occupied by UNISFA were previously occupied by the UNMISS since the former was deployed after South Sudan's independence in 2011. Therefore, they took over areas previously occupied by UNMISS.

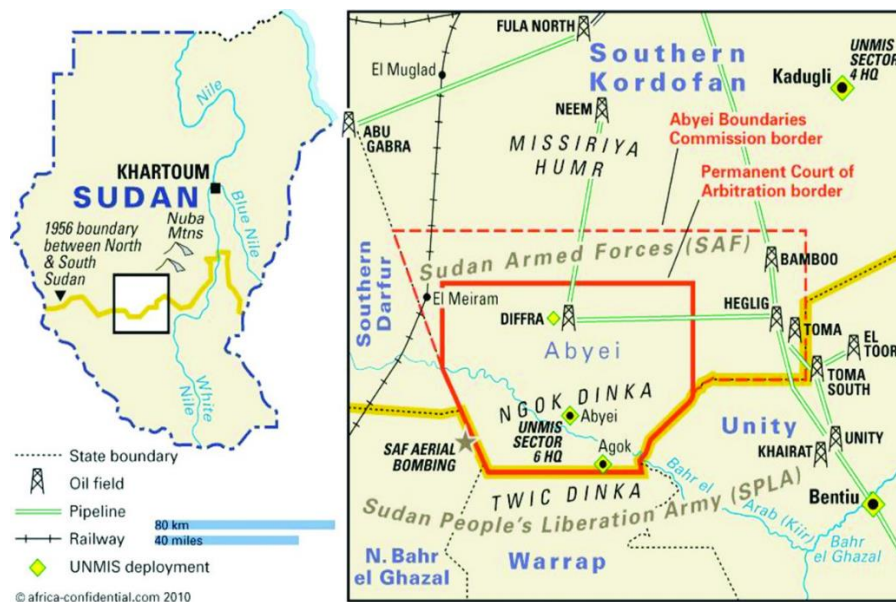


Figure 1: Map of the Abyei Box

Source: Africa-confidential .com 2010

UNISFA and “The 14 Mile”

The 14 Mile is an area demarcated as a grazing corridor for Riziegat nomads of Darfur by the colonial administration in 1924 (See figure 2). After South Sudan became independent, the GoS submitted a list of the disputed areas to the delegation of Government of South Sudan (GoSS) and the 14 Mile featured in the list as a disputed area for the first time during discussion of the post-independence issues in Addis Ababa in 2012. That was the first time the Dinka Malual community noticed that the 14 Mile is a disputed area. This is despite the fact that issues of disputed boundaries between the South and the North Sudan were highlighted during the Addis Ababa peace accord of 1972 and the 14 Mile was never mentioned as an area in contention. This new development angered the local population and upon return of the delegation's from the negotiations in Addis Ababa, the Malual Dinka community both in Juba and Aweil demonstrated against the government, accusing the delegation of giving away their land. In addition to expression of fury from the community at home and in Juba, representatives of the Aweil community in the National Parliament categorically rejected the deal and decided to vote against it despite the calls from the ruling

party, the SPLM to endorse the deal. Because of this hard stance taken by the community, the government retracted its position regarding the 14 Mile. During that time the mandate of UNISFA was confined to the protection of civilians in Abyei and its neighbourhoods. However, after the Cooperation Agreement on the post-independence issues including boundaries between the two countries, the mandate of UNISFA was extended to include monitoring of the buffer zone and offering support to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM) along the borders of South Sudan and Sudan. The mission was expanded to cover all disputed areas along the borders which were agreed upon on 27 September 2012. This also included the 14 Mile. UNISFA established its head office for Northern Bahr el Ghazal at Gok Machar Town about 45 Miles away from the river Kiir. However, the presence of the peacekeepers with information technology facilities including GPS coordinates that indicate Gok Machar as part of the Western Darfur sparked anger against UNISFA in Northern Bahr el Ghazal. This forced the local population to stage demonstrations and demand UNISFA to immediately evacuate the area. The community blocked all roads leading to and coming from the UNISFA compounds for several weeks until the mission packed and left the area. Luckily, no single life was lost during this communal uprising against UNISFA. Below is a map showing the 14 Mile grazing routes granted to Riziegat nomads in 1924.



Figure 2: Map of the 14 Mile

Source: ACCORD Occasional Paper No 1, 2021

Legend

Towns

State boundary

14-Mile area

Railway -----

Feeder roads

Abyei boundary

Common grazing

Riziegat reserved grazing area

Malual reserved cattle camps

Riziegat reserved grazing area

Toxic Elite Literature That Sparked Violence

In contemporary politics, ideas of leaders or revered personalities can spread widely and easily and many times escalate into deadly conflict. One of the root causes of the Aneet

conflict, was the publications authored by the renowned South Sudanese intellectuals and states-men Bona Malwal Madut Ring. Bona Malwal is a former Minister of Information in Sudan and currently a visiting scholar at Saint Anthony College in Oxford. His book ***ABYEI OF THE NGOK DINKA NOT YET SOUTH SUDAN*** in 2017 agitated some Abyei intellectuals including Dr. Francis Mading Deng Kuol, who responded by authorizing the publication of ***ABYEI BETWEEN THE TWO SUDANS*** in 2020. Dr Francis Deng, is a former State Minister for Foreigner Affairs in Sudan and former representative of the United Nations Secretary General on the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Also, Dr Francis served as South Sudan's Ambassador for the United Nations in New York.

In his book, Malwal advances logic that Abyei was transferred to Kordofan in 1905, which legally makes it a Sudanese territory until the referendum agreed upon in the Abyei protocol is carried out. He compellingly argues that the Ngok Dinka should therefore continue being identified as Sudanese until they decided to join South Sudan through a referendum stipulated in the CPA. The author narrates how the area was transferred to Kordofan in 1905 and all attempts made by South Sudanese including chiefs to convince the Paramount Chief Deng Kuol Arop (Deng Majok) of the Ngok Dinka to return his people to Bahr el Ghazal in Southern Sudan failed. He states that River Kiir is the recognised boundary between the Ngok Dinka and Twic Mayardit. He insists that the UN peacekeepers intensified an already delicate situation and their presence in the southern part of River Kiir caused suspicion among the Twic Mayardit community. He further, drives his point home by linking the deployment of peacekeepers with the SPLM leaders of the Ngok Dinka. Finally, he dedicates the book to the Twic Mayardit community of the Greater Gogrial district of the Greater Bahr el Ghazal province of South Sudan. It is this dedication that sparked off the deadly conflict between the two sections of the Dinka tribe because it was interpreted as a call for voluntary evacuation of the land, otherwise forced to the northern part of River Kiir.

In their response, the Ngok Dinka intellectuals describe the events surrounding the Abyei annexation to Kordofan, highlighting the role played by the Ngok people in transferring Abyei back to Bahr el Ghazal province and their subsequent unwavering contributions in the liberation struggles of the Anyanya and the SPLM/A as means of liberating the area from Arabs. They criticize Bona Malwal for instigating violence and undermining their efforts to reconcile the two sisterly communities. The release of these two publications, combined with other grudges sparked violence and many innocent people lost their lives and properties as a result.

In their testimonies to the Aneet Investigation Committee (AIC) formed by the President of the republic of South Sudan, the two scholars pledged to work together and restore peace in their respective communities. They also released a joint statement appealing to both communities to cease fighting against each other. It is worth noting that Bona Malwal is the elder son to the Chief Madut Ring of Kuac Anganya of the Twic Mayardit. Dr Francis Mading is the elder son to Chief Deng Kuol Arop of Abyei, the paramount Chief of the Ngok Dinka. These two elderly and respected leaders contributed immensely in advancing the cause of the people of South Sudan. It is therefore unfortunate that in their old age, these childhood friends are being accused by warring communities of using their international connections to

promote war. Bona and Francis are childhood friends and went to USA together for their education.

More Needs to be Done to Empower the Peacekeepers

Since the Rwandan genocide of 1994, efforts have been made to improve the performance of peace keeping missions. According to Fortna (2008), the number, size, and scope of peacekeeping missions deployed in the aftermath of civil wars have increased exponentially. If peacekeeping missions do not change their approach, a repeat of the Rwandan situation is likely. The belief that peacekeeping troops only provide protection for those who seek refuge in UN compounds is flawed and must change. The killing of Tutsis and moderate Hutus under the watch of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) was a grave embarrassment to the UN system. Many who escaped death crossed into Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), or sought refuge inside the UNAMIR compounds.

Investigating the reasons behind UNAMIR's failure to protect civilians, the committee discovered that the mission was not allowed to use force to prevent genocide. Deploying a peace keeping mission in an armed conflict zone without a mandate to use force was a grave mistake by the international organization and doesn't demonstrate what Howard (2019) argued and termed "power in peacekeeping". There were cases where the UNSC deployed troops under Chapter seven of the UN Charter to use force when necessary, especially when protecting themselves and civilians. The concept of civilian protection by UN peacekeepers, as advanced by Hultman, Kathman and Shanon (2020) could be effective considering deployment size, its constitution and type of personnel.

In Darfur for example, the Arab militia known as *Janjaweed* would terrorize citizens in their villages and committed other atrocities until the deployment of the United Nations-African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). However, the narrative significantly changed with the deployment of the peacekeepers at least in areas they occupied in Darfur. It should be noted that Darfur's size is equivalent to that of France which makes it difficult to be covered by 20,000 military personnel. Yet this was the larger peace keeping operation deployed globally at the time.

On the contrary, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)'s initial objective was to consolidate peace and security, as well as help establish conditions for development in the new nation, the Republic of South Sudan, before it was amended to include overseeing the implementation of the Revitalized- Agreement on Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS). In light of the conflict that erupted in the country in 2013, the UNSC reprioritized the mandate of UNMISS towards protection of civilians, human rights monitoring and support for the delivery of humanitarian assistance. This shift of the mandate occurred at a time when the Government of South Sudan accused the mission of harbouring and supporting rebels of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/ Army-In Opposition (SPLM/A-IO). UNMISS had opened its premises for civilians who sought protection. However, this was also a safe haven for armed men who frequently escaped at night, carrying out roadside attacks and killing many innocent citizens in nearby residential areas. The violence that ensued, which took an ethnic line, resulted in innocent civilians losing lives in Juba, Malakal, Bantiu, Bor, Ayot and Akobo, as

the UNMISS looked on. The only survivors from the fighting tribes' members were those who sought shelter in the UN compounds or hid in their friends' houses. Others were basically members of the organized forces who decided to continue serving their mother units.

In Abyei, where this case study is drawn, UNISFA was primarily deployed under Chapter Seven to protect civilians and the entire area from incursions by unauthorized elements and ensure security. Unfortunately, the mission faced challenges (described below) and could not implement its mandate as stipulated in the UNSC resolution 1990. Evidence of its failure, was when UNISFA soldiers negotiated with Messiriya armed criminals to spare the life of Ngok Dinka paramount chief Kuol Deng Kuol Arop (Kuol Adol). However, even after six hours of negotiations the criminals went on to kill the paramount chief. Moreso, members of the Twic Mayardit community who were working with NGOs in Abyei were targeted in Aneet under the watch of the mission. As if this was not enough, the Aneet investigation committee formed by the President of the Republic of South Sudan Salva Kiir Mayardit, documented attacks against the Ngok Dinka by Twic Mayardit and vice versa at Aneet town and there was still no adequate response from UNISFA. The conflict between the two sisterly communities of the Dinka tribe subsections was over boundaries around river Kiir that separates Bahr el Ghazal from Kordofan. In a separate instance, the mission was accused of overstepping its mandate and encroaching on issues of communal boundaries and borders. The Malual Dinka at Gok-Machar town demonstrated against UNISFA accusing the mission of meddling in border disputes between South Sudan and Sudan specifically at the Mile 14 area. The demonstrations resulted in the mission evacuating its forces from the site and returning to its original headquarters at Abyei and Kadugli in Southern Kordofan.

Policy Recommendations and Future Direction

Conflict areas are known for devastation, absence of infrastructure, lack of social services and lack of trust between the host communities and UN peacekeeping missions. Therefore, the following perquisites are important for tranquility in the armed conflict areas.

Clear Mandate That Preserves the Right to Protection:

The deployment of peace missions in the armed conflict zones must be granted a clear mandate to protect themselves and civilians. The Rwanda incident happened because peacekeepers were not mandated to use power to prevent genocide. For this reason, proper assessment before the deployment of peacekeeping missions is mandatory.

Assessment for the Host Community:

Assessment of living conditions for host communities should be a perquisite for deployment of UN peacekeeping forces. Provision of basic services like education, health, clean drinking water, access roads and airstrips are critically important for winning the trust of host communities. With these basic services in place nobody would think of violence anymore. The availability of these services also creates employment opportunities for the youth who are sometimes used as fuel for these deadly conflicts.

Field Visits:

Another crucial aspect is the need for continuous field visits by UN headquarters in New York to inspect the performance of peacekeeping missions and interact with local leaders on the

ground. While there have been visits by senior UN personnel, the long intervals between these visits make them less effective. Receiving periodic reports from missions in the field doesn't reflect reality on the ground. Field officers sometimes write what advances their interests and not issues affecting communities. Therefore, their reports need cross-checking.

Invitation of Leaders of Host Community to Attend Review Meetings in New York:

The last aspect which has the same importance as the above mentioned aspect in 7.2 is the periodic reports that are presented to UNSC. The presentation of these reports requires leaders of host communities to attend sittings that are meant to review missions' mandate, reports and presentations. This is important to create collaboration and a harmonious working relationship between missions and host communities.

CONCLUSION

Understanding issues underpinning relationships of the United Nations peace keeping operations with their host communities at the armed conflict zones is very significant for international peace and security since most of these conflicts always result in genocide, rape and human rights violations. Explanations and debating the challenges faced by peace keeping missions during their operations minimizes chances of running into risk of genocide. This is not only important for UNISFA but all other UN missions operating in the armed conflict zones. Their harmonious cooperation with host communities for smooth running of the mission is what could facilitate the UN's primary objective; prevalence of international peace and security. This also could allow the peace keeping missions to embark on their mandate without hindrances. The prerequisites in section 7 are not completely new to the UN system but only exist in its literatures. These however, need to be put into practice and with time people will notice the difference.

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