



# **The Power of Readiness Theory and the Success of Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Peace Process in South Sudan**

**Timothy T. Kulang**

Department of Development Studies, Peace and Conflict,  
Kampala International University, Uganda

## **ABSTRACT**

In this article, the South Sudan conflict will be analyzed by examining the IGAD mediation process between the Government of South Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A IO). The study will look into factors that prompted the IGAD states to call for an emergency meeting and initiate peace talk just few days after the outbreak of the conflict in December 2013. The study will use the Readiness Theory to examine the factors that pushed the parties to the negotiation table and enable the IGAD to succeed or failed. Although the mediation was somehow shaky characterized with mistrust and suspicion among the parties, The IGAD mediators was also questionable since some of the IGAD states were already perceived has taken part in one way or other. The study will explore two major factors; first the factor that led to the agreement between the parties and the second one will be looking into assumption of readiness theory applicable to this case study. In conclusion, the study will investigate the level of mistrust and suspicion which was very high through out the negotiation and almost failed the talk to the level of parties being coerced to sign an agreement against their will of which government presented number of reservations to the mediator and went unaddressed will in many observers' opinion was the cause of the July 2016 J1 dog-fight. But the IGAD continue pushing for peaceful settlement of the conflict and initiated handshake and face-to-face meetings between the leaders which eventually resulted into the Khartoum revitalized agreement in September 2018. Other arrangements also followed such as the spiritual retreat in Vatican in April 2019, which was attended by almost all leaders, but despite all these, still the motivation is in question and the time will prove this wrong.

**Keywords;**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The protracted social conflict has been the subject of studies in the current with focus on the conditions that always led to the negotiation and end the conflict. Therefore, this article will conduct in-depth analysis of the conflict resolution processes applied in the peace talks between the Government of South Sudan and the Sudan People Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A IO) and other Opposition Groups after eruption of the deadly conflict in Mid December 2013. The outcome though was not very much appreciable by the people of South in term of not addressing their aspiration, it was able to pave way forward and kept hope alive for genuine peace if the mediators continue pushing the parties to negotiate. And again, the study will look into factor, which contributed to the success or failure of the negotiation in Addis Ababa and Khartoum respectively. In doing so, the following questions will be considered; (a) what force the parties to negotiate? (b) Which factor played major role in reaching an agreement? And (c) what is the relationship between the two?

The study in another hand will be looking onto the assumption of readiness theory critically and its application in South Sudan situation. The study is basically made up of three main sections;

First will be thorough explanation of the theory including the question of assumption and methodology. Secondly, the factors that enable the IGAD to convince an emergency meeting to initiate the negotiation using the readiness theory and evaluating the outcome of the negotiation online with the theory's variable of motivation and optimism. Then, the last part will examine the assumption and limitations.

### **THEORETICAL REVIEW AND METHODOLOGICAL OVERVIEW**

Many studies were conducted in relations to the resolution of protracted social conflict but there is still a room of doing more to explain some aspect of such conflicts. The researches on enduring international rivalries were very much limited to conflict involving states while the theory has limited understanding of its dynamics. To answer of the question such as why the parties choose to negotiate, readiness theory can be use even if the conflicts are not necessarily inter-state, intra-state or non-violent.

Readiness theory explores the conditions that enable the parties to go for negotiation and possible reach an agreement at the end no matter how long the process goes but only the that the parties has that commitment of continuing the talks. But there has been no study that systematically examines the factors that motivate the parties to negotiate and reach settlement to their conflict.

Readiness theory always investigates conditions suitable for the negotiation to take place. It further explains some of the factors that contributed to the keeping the parties in the negotiation table and if possible could lead to the agreement and ready to implement the agreed terms in letter and spirit. In layman language, readiness refers to the conditions that the leaders think about the conflict itself, which can vary according to the conciliatory behavior scale. When the level of readiness is low, this means that low conciliatory gesture and rise in the readiness level make the opposite, which can significantly lead to possible ceasefire, and good start of negotiation.

To some extent, the parties come to the negotiation table with different positions and interests. As a result, the level of readiness can determine the type of agreement to be reached. In some situation where the level of readiness is equal, the party that has higher level of readiness makes more compromises and will be in less desirable position. As stated earlier, readiness theory has two variables; namely Motivation and Optimism. These variables play crucial role in making the condition favorable to the negotiating teams to accept the terms of the mediation and possibly reach an agreement. Motivation which is basically about the desire to end the conflict has some elements; first the party must have a sense that the conflict is generates high cost and risks, second, the parties must accept the fact that the conflict is unwinnable and destructive and again, the parties must equally acknowledge the pressure from the stronger their party which will allow them to demonstrate a gesture of willingness to end the conflict. This is what is termed as motivation to end the conflict using the diplomatic approach of conflict resolution.

Optimism in the other hand is about the possibility of coming out with an agreement after the negotiation. This requires certain level of confidence that the agreement will ne SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bond) At the early stage of the negotiation, the optimism is about the level of trust and mistrust between the parties in the negotiation table. If the gap is not narrowed, the level of optimism is very low.

Optimism always comes from three things, first lower aspiration, then working trust and a state of mind that perceives “light at the end of the tunnel” meaning that an acceptable agreement is taking shape and that the other side is prepared to make the necessary compromises. According to the theory, the later must exist in order for the peace process to be successful.

In actual sense, both motivation and optimism must possess following characteristics for meaningful negotiation to take place;

- (a) Must be necessary and exist to some extent for negotiation to move on.
- (b) They must be linked somewhere. Optimism always determines the motivation to end the conflict. Motivation can foster optimism, which in turn can generate trust leading to meaningful negotiation and to make compromises upon the commencement of the negotiation. In addition, Motivation is more related to wishful thinking. This plays very important role in the conflict resolution processes and is all about tendency of the other side logic or motivation to find amicable solution to the conflict.

When one party is interesting in finding solution to the conflict, it sends conciliatory signals and if the other side is motivating, it will respond and thus, increasing the parties’ optimism and making them more cooperative. In such situation, the result is an exchange of conciliatory gestures and an increased optimism. As well, the third party must also exhibit motivation to continue the process by bringing the parties to the negotiation table. By doing so, this encourages optimism and generates new thinking about the rivals reaching agreement at the end.

Parties Optimism can also develop in different ways. This can be shown when the parties are having direct contact through workshops on trust building and problem solving and even face-to-face between their leaders. This can be noted that the South Sudan parties missed a golden opportunity when they were invited for spiritual retreat in Vatican in April 2019 where Pope Francis, in a dramatic gesture after an unprecedented retreat knelt to kiss their feet as he urged them to not return to a civil war. But to surprise of many observers, the leaders upon their return submitted request for the extension of the pre-transitional period for six months till November 2019 that initially should elapse by May 12, 2019 and form the new government according to the term of the revitalized peace agreement. To this date, the parties are still in dilemma of mistrust and suspicion over the implementation of the agreement, which left many people including the mediators confused because the failure to meet the deadline by November 12, the extension of the pre-transitional period for the second time seems complicate if not impossible.

The only different between the August 2015 and the revitalized agreement of September 2018 is only in the security arrangement. Under the revitalized agreement, the security sector is in full cooperation and willing to implement their part by cantoning the opposition forces into the agreed sites and address their integration requirement. So far, the ceasefire still holding between the signatories to the agreement, but the big question remain about the fate of the non-signatories and how they could be engaged to participate in the peace process otherwise, the CPA mistake is repeating itself.

### **Methodological Overview**

This study employs case study methodology for interpretive and analytical purposes (Bercovitch, 1997; Druckman, 2005; George & Bennett, 2005). Thus, the IGAD peace process in South Sudan will be analyzed in applying the readiness theory variables to help determine the readiness of the parties to the conflict and identify the factors that enable them to go for direct

negotiation and their motivation to end the conflict. As well, the article will discuss the IGAD motivation and their interest in taking the mediation role in this with enthusiasm and optimistic.

The study will first pick some the factors from the pre-negotiation period and the initiation of the talks after the breakout of the conflict in mid December 2013 and focuses on the readiness that was required for the negotiation to take place. In this capacity, Here, the study will look into the variables that brought the decision of the parties to start official negotiations in January 2014 just few days after the start of the conflict. The second dependent variable will focus on the outcome of negotiations by identifying the factors that affected the readiness of the parties to sign an agreement in August 2015 in Addis Ababa and Juba respectively and revitalized in Khartoum in September 2018 after everything almost fall apart in July 2018 after the J1 dog-fight.

To fully understand the theoretical perspective applicable to this study, the following questions must be in consideration; (i) what factors brought the parties to the negotiating table? (ii) What was the role of the third party during the pre-negotiations stage? (iii) What were the factors that forced the parties to agreement or failure?

However, the following questions will be used to generate in-depth case-based generalizations to get clear picture about the conflict resolution processes:

- (a) Whether the factors that motivated the parties were sufficient to indeed to start the negotiation?
- (b) To start negotiation, is optimism a necessary condition as claimed by the theory?
- (c) Whether a high level of motivation during the pre-negotiations stage be equated to a low level of optimism?
- (d) What expected outcome looking into the various sources of motivation?
- (e) What were the other factors that could affect the pre-negotiations process and the negotiations, which readiness theory did not bring out?

### **THE INTER-GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY ON DEVELOPMENT (IGAD) PEACE PROCESS**

Following the outbreak of the conflict in Juba in mid December 2013, IGAD hurriedly called for Heads of State and Government on December 27, 2013 in Nairobi. As expected, this meeting helped in forging what was initially regarded, and rightly so, as a critical regional response to the crisis, essentially showing its commitment to mediate between South Sudan's warring parties. To immediately start the envisaged mediation process, the summit ensured that the three-man team comprises of Seyoum Mesfin of Ethiopia, Lazarus Sumbeiywo of Kenya and Mohammed El Dhabi of Sudan should be assigned to take the task as special envoys. The summit also highlighted the need to have an inclusive peace process, a position that each summit ever since convened has consistently maintained. The government in Juba unconditionally agreed to mediation, but opposition in the other hand demanded the release of their comrades held in Juba before any such mediation. Several things must occur for this scenario to succeed: the two parties must agree to sit at the negotiating table together and to a cease fire; an acceptable constitutional foundation with power rotations must be laid; and tribes cannot be left out of the equation given their social leverage and military fuel in the conflict. Time is of the essence – any extension of the conflict will bring a higher risk of fighting along tribal lines and identity killing.

After the official start of the mediation, the parties were forced to signed first cessation of Hostilities in February 2014 which did not hold and sign the second ceasefire agreement in May 2014 in Addis Ababa, which promptly disintegrated within hours of coming into effect.

Later, in June 2014, the parties agreed to begin talks on the formation of a transitional government. The talks are scheduled to last 60 days, and the parties are required to refrain from combat during this period. Surprisingly, both sides have boycotted the talks and the ceasefire violated.

### **READINESS TO NEGOTIATE, MOTIVATION AND OPTIMISM**

In actual fact, the negotiations for South Sudan conflict could only resolve the conflict through a genuine and inclusive political dialogue, according to the then Ethiopia's Foreign Minister, Tedros Adhanom who was speaking on behalf of the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD). This statement echoes international thinking within the talks in Addis Ababa that inclusivity is only one factor necessary for achieving a successful settlement. The observers also took note to the type of peace, which the IGAD talks might deliver depends on the motivation at the negotiation table. For serious negotiation to take place, there is a need of stalemate. A situation whereby all parties have little to win but more to lose. More concerns have been in place about the potential regionalization of the conflict with tension increased among the neighboring states. IGAD tried what it could but the rivalries between the regional actors mainly Sudan and Uganda, Ethiopia and Eritrea have shown some sort of undermining the efforts of IGAD mediation. Warning the region that any unilateral military intervention of any of the member states would lead not only to an increasingly complex situation on the battlefield but complicate the processes more and make the parties not interesting in continuation of the mediation.

Intensified efforts to negotiate a settlement make it clear that important international players have lost patience with the warring factions. The recommitment to the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement in May 2014 was a result of the rapidly mounting regional and international pressures, including visits by the then US Secretary of State John Kerry, and the UN General Secretary Ban Ki Moon to Juba, and the threat of sanctions against the key protagonists of the crisis. Those pressures were also meant for an effort to reduce the humanitarian impact of the crisis. Only through an immediate cessation of hostilities, could humanitarian access be improved, and the risk of famine be reduced.

These efforts also provide a starting point to resolving the conflict politically, through the resumption of peace talks. However, while the regional and international pressure has sufficed to bring the parties to the negotiation table, a successful settlement depends on getting the relations of power between them right.

### **CHALLENGES OF INCLUSIVITY AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM COMPREHENSIVE PEACE AGREEMENT (CPA) 2005**

The IGAD mediation team should look back into the factors that led to the success and failure of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) to provide the grounds for a peaceful political order in South Sudan. The CPA was primarily meant to address the conflict between the North and the South. However, the transitional governance arrangements in Southern Sudan, which crumbled as the crisis unfolded in late 2013, were also derived from the provisions of the CPA. The CPA negotiations paid too little attention to frictions between the various South Sudanese factions. As a consequence, the exclusivity of the CPA negotiations which focused only between the regime in Khartoum and the SPLM/A in the South led to a transitional order not robust enough to accommodate and regulate the competing demands of the South Sudanese leadership, nor able to address the distrust between the different factions of the SPLM/A. Nearly 10 years after the signing of the CPA, this has had its cost.

The negotiation in its preceding was very much untarnished by personal power struggles which were difficult to realize, given the military capabilities of those involved on the battlefield. While not a party to the armed conflict, the position of the high-ranking members of the SPLM known as the “former detainees” is of central importance. While there is no doubt that they also have an interest in restoring their own political power, their role in the negotiations could change the dynamics of negotiation. Joining the negotiations as an independent political party, the group would push the talks towards a multi-party process. If, however, they were co-opted by either of the two sides, the risk that a settlement would primarily feed a power sharing deal between the parties would increase. While the latter provides the opportunity for simple trade offs, a multi-party process does this to a lesser extent and requires the parties to accommodate their demands through institutional arrangements.

There were indications that South Sudan government prefers clear fault-lines to complexity. Some other developments in Jonglei Region were indicative that co-opting rivals through local deals might be a strategy of the government. Parallel to the first face-to-face meeting in Addis Ababa, the government negotiated and signed a peace agreement with David Yau Yau’s South Sudan Democratic Movement/Army (SSDM/A) – Cobra Faction in May 2014. The deal calls for the establishment of the Greater Pibor Area and concedes greater autonomy to the region. These developments will lead to a reform of the governance arrangements in Jonglei state and are thus encouraging for a political settlement to the crisis in the state. The signing of the deal however also has the effect of effacing the underlying causes of the insurgency in Jonglei State from the current negotiations in Addis. Revisiting the dynamics in the new area of “Greater Pibor” and including stakeholders such as the SSDM/A – Cobra Faction would have made for a deeper and more comprehensive analysis of South Sudan’s underlying governance challenges.

Indeed, local deals may even reduce the chances for a comprehensive peace. This is because by conceding authority in specific regions while making only limited changes to the system of government. Some reports suggest that as a result of the agreement signed with the SSDM/A, the SPLA might be able to use the territory around Pibor as an additional corridor to fight the SPLA-In Opposition (SPLM-IO). Blurring the lines between a negotiated and a victor’s peace, South Sudan government seems to have limited willingness to win peace through political reforms so long as this can be done through tilting the balance of power through paying off and appeasing individual factions.

For the mediators and other international actors, their delicate task is to make sure that not only those who have the greatest capacity to wreak havoc will have a say at the negotiation table. It is pivotal for a successful settlement that third parties are willing and able to take an independent position, and in this vein encourage a discussion about transitional arrangements as independent as possible from the increasingly polarized struggle between rivals.

Although the government’s delegation did quickly become a leading vocal critic against the issue of inclusivity, this does not mean that the Opposition’s side fared any better. On its part, the negotiating delegation representing the SPLM in Opposition initially chose not to publicly reject the involvement of the other third parties in the peace talks. As it later became abundantly clear, this however did not necessarily mean that the opposition embraced the invitation of the said stakeholders to the negotiating table. On the contrary, the initial stance the opposition took with respect to this matter seemed to have been a calculated move designed to evaluate the environment and respond accordingly. Given the fact that rebellion was predicated on unseating the government from power, the opposition probably wanted to survey positions of other forces in the country in order to figure out the possibility of building

alliances. Like the representatives of the government who feel obligated to defend the status quo by all means, the opposition delegates seem to harbor a strange view that they are duty bound to allow others to take part only when that helps them to advance their narrowly defined interests. Using this understanding to project a better public posture, the SPLM-IO delegation through its statements appeared open to the representatives of civil society organizations joining the talks, and this ostensibly set a disparity between them and the government. Of course, the contrast between the two warring camps was just in style but not substance. The government's team understandably seemed set to defend the status quo that it deemed favorable in terms of its grip on power. The opposition on the other hand saw the inclusion of others as not necessarily a drag on their interests but an opportunity to pressure the government they desperately want to replace. Like the government's negotiating team, which as alluded to earlier, was adamant that the talks be essentially restricted to the warring parties alone, a position that certainly does not seem to factor in the necessity of achieving a durable peace that could enjoy the popular support, the opposition had to publicly confirm the notion that only those with guns are allowed to negotiate.

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

Use of the Readiness theory in this case of South Sudan conflict can be very much appropriate. The theory explanation includes many factors affecting the willingness of parties to negotiate and reach an agreement. In this study, readiness theory is used to explain the success and failure of the IGAD peace process in South Sudan regarding efforts to bring an end to the over 5-year armed conflict. The theory as well has its strengths and limits in identifying the factors that encourage parties to enter into direct negotiations and potentially reaches an agreement. The study demonstrates that the readiness theory, compared to any other theory in the field, may support Pruitt's aim to present a full picture of the different dimensions that play a role in bringing parties to reach an agreement. Still, the analysis raises a number of questions with regard to the theory's hypotheses and scientific status.

Pruitt's analysis applying readiness theory (Pruitt, 1997, 2007) can be using to enrich the argument that the peace process in South Sudan was characterized by an increase in the parties' level of mistrust and suspicions – to the point of being coerced to sign an agreement in Addis Ababa and Juba in August 2015 where government submitted a list of reservation to the mediators but went unaddressed. In the beginning of the mediation, the motivation of both parties decreased significantly, while government's level of optimism did not increase and SPLM/A IO's optimism increased. During the negotiations, however, both motivation and optimism increased significantly between both parties in the conflict. On the SPLM/A IO's side, motivation increased from 2014 and was galvanized after the acceptant of the government to the most issues raised in the negotiation including withdrawal of all foreign troops and comprehensive reform of security sector, as a result of the leadership's perception that a continued military struggle would not lead to victory and its appreciation of the high cost of continuing the struggle under the circumstances. The increase in government's motivation developed at a later stage, towards the end of 2016 after the J1 dog-fight and making the August 2015 peace agreement to remain in question though SPLA IO divided itself into two with some remained with government and claims to be illegible and willing to continue implementation of the agreement, as it realized that the risks and costs of continued fighting were too high. These perceptions on the part of both parties served as fertile ground that made it possible, immediately after the change of the venue to Khartoum, for regional and international pressure to effect changes in the parties' positions and perceptions of the opportunity to benefit from management of the process and from the outcome of an agreement.

After the initiation of the face-to-face talk and handshake between the two leaders, SPLM/A IO's optimism increased somewhat but remained limited, whereas government's level of optimism did not change during this time. Although the SPLM/A IO side came to the negotiating table with a certain level of optimism, which derived from the mechanism of wishful thinking, it was still not clear to IGAD that it would have to work hard to persuade government to compromise. Given the government's conduct on the ground, SPLM/A IO was skeptical about the government's willingness to compromise. At the start of negotiations, neither side was certain that the other was prepared to compromise on its official position in order to reach an agreement. The intervention and conduct of various regional and international actors played a significant part in increasing the motivation and optimism of the parties during negotiations specially Sudan taking over the direct talk between the parties; that is, they influenced the parties' level of readiness to sign the revitalized agreement in September 2018 in Khartoum. During the negotiations that took place between the handshake initiation and August of 2018, the parties' increased motivation was further reinforced as a result of third-party pressure on both sides, particularly on government, as well as the pressure applied to SPLM/A IO and realizing that the alternative to the talks would be a return to the path of war, which had already proved to be expensive and useless. It appears that the parties' readiness to compromise led to warmer relations and, together with the mediator's tactics for increasing mutual trust and the willingness of the IGAD States and AU to oversee the agreement, boosted the parties' optimism during the negotiations in Khartoum.

With respect to the theory-based questions, we can draw a number of conclusions from the analysis. First, we sought to examine whether each of the factors the theory cites as creating motivation to come to the negotiating table is indeed a sufficient condition, as the theory holds. The importance of strong motivation to end the conflict where mutual trust is low and a wide gap still exists between the parties' positions and the implications of the their motivation regarding the outcome of negotiations. In South Sudan, the motivation for the parties' readiness during negotiations remained questionable throughout the process. The pressure applied by a third party backing its strategies was a significant factor in both sides' realization that the alternative to talks was a return to war that had proven to be costly and ineffective. Throughout the South Sudan peace process, the parties' motivation to end the conflict was not so strong to some extent and compensated for their mutual mistrust and the gap between their positions and interests when negotiations began. About the compensatory ability of the variables and whether an increase in motivation can be equated for a low level of optimism during negotiation in pushing the parties to reach an agreement, it appears that the South Sudan case confirms the compensatory part of the theory implies that with stronger motivation, less optimism is required to create a given level of vigor and compromise making and to reach and adhere to an agreement

Interesting conclusions can be drawn from the South Sudan case in regard to the question about the theory's argument that optimism is a necessary condition for starting negotiation and the question about the compensatory potential of the variables – that is, whether increased motivation can compensate for a low level of optimism or even the absence of it during the pre-negotiation stage and negotiations. In the pre-negotiation stage that took place in the South Sudan conflict, the parties' strong motivation compensated for the low level of optimism on the part of the SPLM/A IO and, even more so, for the lack of optimism on the part of government. This compensatory trait led both parties to seize the opportunity to examine the possibility of reaching agreement. Thus, motivation did successfully compensate for little or no optimism with respect to the parties' readiness to begin negotiations. In the opposition's case, the strong motivation compensated for the lack of optimism in persuading the government to agree to negotiate.



However, the dynamics of the negotiation process demonstrated that a certain level of optimism is a necessary condition for reaching an agreement. Despite having agreed to negotiations, government was very skeptical about the possibility of reaching an agreement with the SPLM/A IO when they sat down at the negotiation table. Any change in optimism on the SPLM/A IO's part that occurred in the pre-negotiation stage was minimal. During the negotiations, government's optimism increased as a result of its realization that, in light of the changing reality and both regional and international pressure, negotiations could produce an agreement that would serve its interests better than the military option could. A similar change took place in SPLM/A IO's level of optimism only during the negotiations.

IN this situation, at least one of the parties came to the negotiating table with no optimism about the possibility of reaching an agreement or about the ability of the other party to implement an agreement if any, which is not exceptional. A similar situation was the agreement between Israel, under the leadership of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, and the Palestinians, led by Chairman Mahmoud Abbas in October 2007 (Schiff, 2013). Again, another case was the process that led to negotiations in the Cyprus conflict between the Republic of Cyprus and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in February 2004 (Schiff, 2008). In both scenarios, the parties came to the negotiating table with low optimism or no optimism at all. The dynamics of the South Sudan negotiations illustrate that during negotiations, an increase in the level of optimism and an understanding by both parties that differences can be overcome are necessary to move forward and achieve an agreement.

In regard to the interaction of motivation and optimism, during the pre-negotiation stage, SPLM/A IO's strong motivation fueled a wishful thinking mechanism regarding the possibility of reaching an agreement with government. The theory holds that one of the mechanisms by which a strong motivation to end a conflict can foster optimism is the mechanism of wishful thinking. However, the theory does not offer details about the significance of this mechanism in terms of its influence or the role it plays in relation to other variables during negotiations. In the case of South Sudan, strong motivation during the negotiations successfully led to a spiral of compromises by the parties, which ultimately also resulted in increased government optimism regarding the success of the process, beyond the mechanism of wishful thinking that originally motivated the SPLM/A IO to enter into negotiations.

In this case, in order to increase the parties' readiness to reach an agreement, the mechanism of wishful thinking must be replaced during negotiations with a solid understanding that a final agreement is expected to be reached and that the other side can commit and adhere to the agreement. Analysis of the case study also reveals a significant element the theory overlooks: the influence of the asymmetry between the parties on their readiness to reach an agreement. This dynamic revealed in the analysis raises questions the theory should address, but does not: Does the status of the parties need to be perceived as equal, and how does inequality influence their level of readiness throughout the peace process? What is the role of a third party in a process characterized by asymmetric levels of readiness? In the case of the South Sudan negotiations, where asymmetry between the parties was clear to all, in order to minimize the significance of the blatant asymmetry, the third party adopted certain tactics (such as the detention of the SPLM/A IO leader) that influenced the weaker party's level of optimism regarding the potential of the proposed formulation for addressing its interests.

An additional point regarding the asymmetry issues that arise from the analysis of the South Sudan case relates to the theory's assertion that when the parties' level of readiness is unequal, the side whose readiness level is higher needs to make more compromises and is therefore in a less desirable position when preparing the final agreement. Indeed, the case of South Sudan

demonstrates that SPLM/A IO's strong motivation at the start of negotiations, the opportunity to realize its interests in light of the difficult military situation, government's threat of continued military operations, and both regional and international pressure to end the conflict all combined to bring about opposition's first meaningful compromise as well as the turning point to continue. Although the parties' level of readiness increased during the process specially after the revitalization processes started smoothly in Khartoum under auspices of President Basher of Sudan, and both were required to make compromises, Opposition was in some crucial respects a relatively weak even in the last round of peace process in Khartoum, which was largely concluded according to the government's agenda.

Regarding the questions that arise from examining the hypotheses of the theory. The analysis notes some methodological issues concerning the application of the theory to the case study and challenges the scientific status of the theory by questioning whether its hypotheses are what Popper calls "conclusively decidable" and whether the theory itself meets the criterion of falsifiability. For example, the theory holds that the parties' level of readiness influences the extent to which they engage in conciliatory behavior. However, beyond Pruitt's observations that *Some* readiness is needed on both sides of a conflict for negotiation to start and agreement to be reached while both [motivation and optimism] must be present, in *some degree*, for any conciliatory behavior to be enacted it is entirely unclear what level of readiness is needed in order for negotiations to start and agreement to be reached, or how fluctuations in the variables that represent readiness are to be measured.

The case of South Sudan proves that it is difficult to know with certainty whether optimism exists at the low level required by the theory for negotiations to begin. The question we need to ask when applying the theory is whether appreciation of the window of opportunity for initiating peace talks after the detention of the opposition leader in South Africa led to a perception of the light at the end of the tunnel and to the "certain degree" of change in government's optimism that is required by the theory for the parties to agree to begin negotiations, or whether another factor was at work. For indeed, it is clear that the parties came to the negotiating table without a relationship of mutual trust, and not until when the whole file of mediation was taken to Khartoum and there they have a sense that it would be possible to reach an agreement.

Pruitt indicates that in the context of the Northern Ireland conflict resolution process, the parties' dynamic of a conciliatory spiral and their sitting down to the negotiating table is what led Pruitt to conclude that their optimism had indeed increased. Apparently, the distance from the difficulty of operationalizing the variable of optimism to falling into the trap of tautology is short. Moreover, it appears that the inclusiveness of the theory and the complexity of the variables it embodies burden their operationalization and the ability to refute its hypotheses (Popper, 1963a, 1963b). In an effort to address some of the limitations of the theory, Pruitt (2005, 2007) presents two variables, motivation and optimism, each one of which may depend on a number of factors. What happens, however, when one of the factors influencing motivation or optimism decreases while another increase? How then the change is measured in the level of motivation or optimism?

In conclusion, Pruitt holds that readiness theory is more heuristic in part because it allows use of a compensatory model and in part because it can be extended to make predictions about more outcomes, including compromise making making, agreement, compliance and third-party intervention (Pruitt, 2005.). The analysis of the IGAD peace process in South Sudan conflict demonstrates that readiness theory can be use to identify and map many more factors that influence conflict resolution processes than any other theory in the field. However, the analysis

also highlights the shortcomings of readiness theory, which in fact derive from its comprehensiveness and complexity.

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