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Abstract

South Sudan became independent from Sudan in 2011 after a long history of ethnic and political conflict. Despite being rich in oil resources, the country continues to be caught in turmoil and violence fueled by ethnic strife, particularly between the Dinka group led by President Kiir and the Nuer group led by former Vice President Machar. Peace agreements signed in 2015 and 2018 failed to stop the violence. This has led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people and millions of refugees. The UN's implementation of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) faces various financial, logistical, and immature understanding of the peace process. Regardless of international efforts, the situation in South Sudan remains fragile, and R2P implementation requires a more comprehensive and adaptive strategy. Therefore, the author seeks to analyze the implementation of R2P in the South Sudan conflict by considering the concept of international organization and Responsibility to Protect (R2P). The author employs a qualitative research method with a descriptive and analytical approach to this article.

Key Words
South Sudan, International Organization, Conflict, Responsibility to Protect

1. Introduction

Conflict is an event involving disputes or disagreements between individuals or groups. Conflict is strongly associated with violence, particularly when the involved parties are unable to resolve the issues at hand. According to Susan (2009), one form of conflict is cultural violence, which stems from structural and direct violence manifested through religious, ideological, or ethnic values. Etymologically, the term 'ethnic' originates from the Greek word ethnos, meaning a community of common origin. Anthony D. Smith (2018) states that the term 'ethnic' refers to a community that shares a common historical background, experiences, culture, and language. However, one form of violence that frequently occurs within a nation is ethnic-based violence (Reuter, 2021).

From the perspective of international relations, ethnic-based violence is considered a threat to international security and peace. This is because such violence often arises in the context of civil wars within a region or country, leading to severe human rights violations such as genocide, crimes against humanity, economic decline, environmental issues, and the failure of a state to

fulfill the basic needs of its citizens (Dvornichenko, 2020; Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2023).

One of the largest incidents of ethnic-based violence in the world was the civil war in South Sudan, which began in 2013 and continues to the present day. According to a 2018 report by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, funded by the U.S. State Department, the civil war in South Sudan resulted in more than 383,000 deaths, largely caused by political conflict between ethnic groups within the country (Specia, 2018; Center for Preventive Action, 2022). With hundreds of thousands of casualties and millions displaced from their homes, the United Nations Special Adviser emphasized the UN's commitment to implementing the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) as a preventive measure against genocide in South Sudan since 2014 (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2023b).

The Responsibility to Protect, commonly referred to as R2P, is an international norm adopted in the UN World Summit Outcome Document in 2005. R2P represents the United Nations Security Council's commitment to preventing atrocities such as genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. Therefore, the ethnic-based violence against humanity in South Sudan as a result of the civil war has become a primary mission for R2P in revitalizing the human rights of every individual in South Sudan (Dvornichenko, 2020; Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2023). This article aims to examine the process of implementing the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) by the United Nations Security Council in addressing ethnic-based violence during the civil war in South Sudan, as well as to explore the challenges faced in comprehensively applying this norm. The research questions are as follows: 1) How do Historical Development influences South Sudan's Civil Conflict? and 2) What strategies has been implemented to implement Responsibility to Protect (R2P) in South Sudan's Civil Conflict? This study is expected to provide practical contributions in formulating most effective policies to address similar conflicts in the future.

2. Analytical Framework
2.1. International Organization
The dynamic nature of the international system, shaped by various global dynamics involving both state and non-state actors, has led to the establishment of integrated international bodies responsible for regulating interactions among their members. The integration of these actors grants international bodies the authority to manage and make significant decisions with broad influence. In the study of International Relations, these international bodies are often conceptualized as international organizations, as reflected in the growing body of academic literature (Mingst, 2023; Klabbers, 2005).

International organizations can be regarded as extensions of states, functioning to undertake tasks that individual states are unable to accomplish independently. This perspective is evident in scholarly works and international legal texts, which emphasize the necessity of international organizations in empowering states while highlighting the interdependence that exists among them (Koremenos, Lipson, & Snidal, 2001; Lipson, 1991).

Furthermore, an organization can be classified as an international organization if it meets several characteristics recognized by scholars of International Relations. These characteristics include having at least three members that are international actors, operating across national borders or conducting activities in multiple countries, and being established through a formal agreement among its members (Mingst, 2023). According to the Union of International Associations, there are currently more than 250 international governmental organizations (IGOs) formed through various multilateral agreements, with states as their members. Additionally, the

international system is now populated by approximately 6,000 non-governmental organizations (NGOs), whose memberships range from individuals and groups to associations of states.

Based on the structure of international governmental organizations, three main types can be identified. First are those with a large membership base that operate globally and represent diverse geographical regions. An example of this type is the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which consists of 190 member states from around the world. Second are international governmental organizations established to achieve specific goals or missions, such as the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), which is tasked with protecting intellectual property across borders. Third are international governmental organizations that serve multiple purposes to fulfill the collective plans of their members. An example is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which functions as a coalition of allied countries led by the United States, cooperating in various fields including defense, economic matters, and socio-political issues (Mingst, 2023).

Although modern international organizations as we know them today only took shape toward the end of the 19th century, the concept of international organizations in a simpler form had already emerged during the era of Greek city-states and was later developed by European thinkers such as Pierre Dubois (1250) and Émeric Crucé (1648). Following the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the leaders of Europe's major powers began meeting regularly through a consultative system known as the Concert of Europe. The purpose of this system was to maintain the status quo and protect their governments from internal uprisings.

In the 19th century, various international organizations were established to provide specific services and perform certain tasks, such as the International Telegraph Union in 1865. Additionally, in 1899 and 1907, both European and non-European countries convened to develop rules regulating military equipment and conduct during wartime. These meetings resulted in the Hague Conventions, which included agreements on the peaceful resolution of conflicts, the treatment of prisoners of war, and the rights of neutral states. These conferences and agreements served as precursors to 20th-century international organizations such as the League of Nations and the United Nations (UN) (Mingst, 2023).

International organizations have also been conceptualized through the classical notion of the classical agora, which views these bodies as platforms for discussing international issues, engaging in debates, and making decisions when necessary. This concept emphasizes the role of international organizations as forums for dialogue among international actors to resolve global problems or address urgent matters. However, this classical perspective is often seen as less progressive and modern, as it opposes the view that international organizations serve specific goals. Instead, it argues that states or other actors establish international organizations primarily as meeting places to exchange ideas (Klabbers, 2005).

Dag Hammarskjöld, a notable scholar, once stated that an international organization like the United Nations is not designed to bring peace, but rather to preserve the status quo and prevent a return to war through continuous dialogue. Over the past few decades, international organizations have undergone significant transformation. Since the establishment of the League of Nations in the 1920s and later the United Nations in 1945, international organizations have played an increasingly important role in promoting peace and cooperation among nations worldwide. Nevertheless, despite this growth and evolution, international organizations continue to face numerous challenges and criticisms. An international organization is a formal institution created by a group of states or governments to promote cooperation, coordinate actions, and address global challenges. These organizations may pursue various missions and objectives,

including promoting peace and security, advancing economic development, protecting human rights, or combating climate change (Mingst, 2023).

One of the most pressing challenges faced by international organizations today is resolving global conflicts. Despite their efforts to promote peace and manage conflicts through diplomacy, mediation, and peacekeeping operations, many conflicts remain unresolved. For instance, the ongoing conflicts in Syria and Yemen have persisted for years without a definitive resolution. This demonstrates that international organizations' efforts to resolve conflicts are still far from complete (Dvornichenko, 2020).

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) serves as an example of an international organization. As one of the six principal organs of the United Nations, the UNSC was established in 1945 following the end of World War II. Its primary responsibility is to maintain international peace and security, which it carries out by authorizing and overseeing military operations and peacekeeping missions, imposing sanctions, and mediating conflicts between states (Mingst, 2023).

In addition, international organizations also face significant challenges in ensuring global security and stability. Although the UN has created the UNSC to address threats to international peace and security, unresolved security threats persist, including international terrorism, nuclear weapons proliferation, and regional conflicts. As a result, international organizations must continuously adapt and innovate to confront these evolving challenges. International organizations have also received widespread criticism. One of the most common criticisms is that they are often ineffective in resolving global issues. Some international organizations have been criticized for their inability to tackle global environmental problems or to protect human rights, especially in failed states. Nevertheless, international organizations continue to intensify their efforts to combat human rights violations. A notable example is the United Nations Security Council's attempt to uphold human rights through the implementation of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle during the civil war in South Sudan (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2023a; Dvornichenko, 2020).

2.2. Responsibility to Protect

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) is an international regime recognized by many countries with the primary objective of safeguarding human rights (HR). Historically, the concept of human rights was first addressed by the Dutch legal scholar Hugo Grotius in 1625. In his work On the Law of War and Peace, Grotius argued that intervention to assist civilians against oppressive rulers is a form of justice aimed at ensuring their fundamental rights. In 1807, Britain took a significant step by banning the slave trade, marking the first instance of a nation upholding human rights principles.

The recognition of human rights continued to grow stronger in the 20th century, particularly through major events such as the establishment of the League of Nations and the prosecution of Nazi leaders for war crimes, including genocide. However, gross violations of human rights persisted into the early 21st century, which further legitimized the need for the United Nations (UN) to create a legal framework that would serve as a shield to protect human rights.

In 2000, Canada submitted a report to the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), addressing the issue of humanitarian intervention. Subsequently, in December 2001, the commission released a report entitled "The Responsibility to Protect". Building on this, in 2005, then-UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan declared that the Responsibility to Protect is a UN initiative aimed at responding to the threats of genocide and severe human rights violations within the international community. This declaration was formalized in the UN

World Summit Outcome Document, marking the official adoption of the Responsibility to Protect principle (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2023).

As an international regime, the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) is built upon three main pillars, namely:

a. First Pillar: Every state holds the primary responsibility to protect its population from four specific crimes: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing.

b. Second Pillar: The broader international community has the responsibility to support and assist a state in fulfilling its obligation to protect its population from these crimes.

c. Third Pillar: When a state fails to protect its population, the international community must intervene through coercive measures in accordance with the United Nations Charter (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2023b).

Responsibility to Protect (R2P) has served as the foundation for more than 80 draft resolutions of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) addressing crises in the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. It has also been referenced in resolutions concerning the prevention of genocide, armed conflict, and the regulation of small arms and light weapons trade. Moreover, this regime has influenced over 50 draft resolutions of the Human Rights Council and 13 resolutions of the General Assembly. Among these is the implementation of the Responsibility to Protect in the context of the South Sudanese Civil War, driven by ethnic conflict (Dvornichenko & Bobrovnikov, 2020; Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2023a; Center for Preventive Action, 2022; Reuter, 2021).

2.3. Framework Design

The international organization concept will explain the effectiveness of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as the operator of R2P. Additionally, the ideation and development of R2P can be used to examine its role on South Sudan's case.
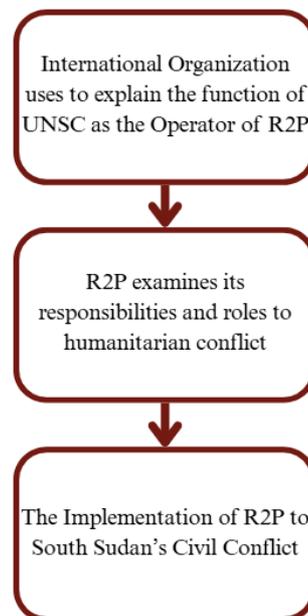
Figure 1. Analytical Framework
Source: Own elaboration

3. Research Method

This article employs a qualitative research method with a descriptive and analytical approach. The study aims to illustrate the causal relationships of specific phenomena, ideas, or symptoms. It also objectively presents the data and facts obtained during the research process. The technique used for data collection in this article is a literature review, drawing from theses, journals, online news sources, articles, and reports. The data are gathered from reference materials relevant to the research topic. The research steps include identifying the problem and analyzing the collected data and factual findings.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. The Historical Development of Ethnic Conflict in the South Sudanese Civil War

South Sudan gained its independence in 2011. Previously, South Sudan was part of the Republic of Sudan. When Sudan gained independence from British colonial rule in 1956, South Sudan automatically became one of Sudan's regions, despite significant cultural and ethnic differences from the northern part of the country. The population of South Sudan consists predominantly of farmers from various ethnic groups (Reuter, 2021).

Conflicts between the Sudanese government and the people of South Sudan had been ongoing for decades. In 2005, a peace agreement was signed; however, establishing a new government proved challenging due to the failure of the former regime to coordinate effective governance. Moreover, the government of South Sudan was compelled to follow policies set by the central Sudanese government, which were often difficult to comprehend and implement (Rolandsen, 2015).

Additionally, South Sudan's economy was heavily reliant on oil revenues. However, the government's weak position opened opportunities for criminal groups to dominate the market. Violence frequently became the primary tool used by these groups to gain power and profit from the government. This situation worsened over time, rendering South Sudan a region plagued by continuous conflict and violence (Center for Preventive Action, 2022).

In December 2013, the conflict escalated when tensions erupted between ethnic militias—specifically the Dinka and Nuer groups—each allied with President Salva Kiir and former Vice President Riek Machar, respectively. This conflict intensified after Machar was dismissed from his position following a political dispute with President Kiir. Since the outbreak of violence, armed groups have targeted civilians based on ethnic lines, committed acts of rape and sexual violence, destroyed property, looted villages, and forcibly recruited children (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2023).

Under the threat of international sanctions and following several rounds of negotiations facilitated by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), President Kiir signed a peace agreement with Machar in August 2015. The first significant step towards ending the civil war was Machar's return to Juba in April 2016, where he was reinstated as Vice President after spending more than two years in exile. However, violence erupted once again between government forces and opposition factions, forcing Machar to flee the country (Center for Preventive Action, 2022). Throughout 2017 and 2018, a series of ceasefires were negotiated, but both parties, along with other factions, repeatedly violated these agreements.

After nearly five years of civil war, President Salva Kiir and former Vice President Riek Machar participated in negotiations mediated by the governments of Uganda and Sudan in June 2018. By the end of that month, both leaders signed the Khartoum Declaration of Agreement, which included a ceasefire and a commitment to negotiate a power-sharing deal to end the civil war. Despite sporadic violations in the following weeks, Kiir and Machar officially signed a ceasefire and power-sharing agreement in August 2018. This agreement was further strengthened by the

signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan by the government, Machar's opposition party, and several other rebel factions. The agreement included a new power-sharing structure and reinstated Machar as Vice President (Darina Dvornichenko, 2020).

However, reports of ongoing attacks and repeated violations, coupled with the collapse of previous peace deals, indicated that peace remained fragile. Although it was difficult to confirm the exact number of casualties, an April 2018 report estimated that nearly 400,000 people had been killed over five years of war, and nearly four million others were displaced or forced to flee the country (Specia, 2018).

In late December 2013, the United Nations Security Council authorized the deployment of an additional 6,000 security personnel to assist the 7,600 peacekeepers already present in the country, as part of efforts to support state-building. However, in May 2014, the Security Council revised the mission's objective, shifting the focus from state-building to civilian protection under the UN's authority (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2023).

As the security situation continued to deteriorate and relations with the South Sudanese government became increasingly complex, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) faced extreme challenges in fulfilling its mandate. In 2016, the UN approved the deployment of an additional 4,000 peacekeepers as part of a regional protection force, although their arrival was delayed until 2017.

The ongoing conflict severely disrupted agriculture, leading to a major food crisis in the country. In July 2014, the UN Security Council declared South Sudan's food crisis the worst in the world at that time. Famine struck the country in early 2017, placing nearly five million people at risk of food insecurity. The critical food shortage persisted, with UN officials warning that 2021 could be the worst year yet, as more than eight million people in South Sudan required humanitarian assistance (Center for Preventive Action, 2022).

4.2. Implementation Strategies of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) in the Ethnic Conflict of the South Sudanese Civil War

The situation in South Sudan following its independence from Sudan has been extremely dire. Chaos and conflict have continued to erupt across various regions of the newly established country. International organizations such as the United Nations Human Rights Council and Amnesty International have reported numerous human rights violations. With the ongoing armed ethnic conflict showing no signs of resolution, it has been reported that two million people have been displaced and seven million are facing severe hunger. As a result, the situation in South Sudan has become one of the major humanitarian tragedies in the world today (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2023a).

Experts remain skeptical about the possibility of a smooth transition toward a democratic state in South Sudan. Although the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) provides a detailed roadmap, the country's extreme poverty hampers its capacity to implement comprehensive solutions. Despite being rich in natural resources, South Sudan is home to some of the poorest people in the world (Darina Dvornichenko, 2020). Its population is fragmented by decades of conflict, and the country itself has experienced war for 42 out of the past 60 years.

Half of the population lives on less than one dollar per day, over 90% of women are illiterate, less than 2% of children complete primary education, and three-quarters of the approximately 12 million people lack access to healthcare services. The economy is heavily dependent on oil exports, and national revenue has drastically decreased due to the global decline in oil prices.

Apart from the oil sector, the livelihoods of South Sudan's population rely heavily on agriculture and pastoral work, with 85% of the population earning no wages. According to the

World Food Programme, South Sudan is considered one of the most food-insecure countries in the world (Center for Preventive Action, 2022). Severe ethnic violence in the border regions of South Kordofan and Blue Nile highlights the political and humanitarian challenges that emerged during the formation of South Sudan. Prior to its independence, United Nations peacekeepers—specifically the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA)—were deployed to the oil-rich and fertile Abyei region to implement the Responsibility to Protect by safeguarding the rights of civilians (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2023a).

The implementation of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) in South Sudan has become highly complex and challenging due to numerous factors that hinder the effective application of R2P in the country. As background, R2P is a concept that emphasizes the international community's responsibility to protect populations from crimes that violate human rights and threaten international security ((Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2023b). In the case of South Sudan, R2P is applicable in response to the humanitarian crimes committed during the conflict between government forces and opposition groups, which have triggered a large-scale humanitarian crisis and mass displacement. However, the implementation of R2P in South Sudan faces several significant obstacles.

Firstly, the international situation has placed a financial and logistical burden on aid agencies and created significant challenges for the operations of UN peacekeeping forces in the region. The United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) was originally established to facilitate peace during the six-year transitional period from July 2005 to January 2011. After South Sudan's independence in 2011, the mission was restructured as the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). However, UNMISS struggled to manage the escalating humanitarian crisis in South Sudan and was forced to increase its troop presence from seven thousand personnel to twelve thousand five hundred, focusing primarily on the protection of civilians (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2023a). In addition, other peacekeeping operations such as UNISFA, UNAMID, and MINUSCA were simultaneously active in the region, further complicating the migration situation in the area.

Secondly, challenges to R2P also stem from an inadequate understanding of the peace process itself, including external approaches to it. Proponents of South Sudan's secession fell into the trap of humanitarian moralism, failing to consider unintended consequences that ultimately contributed to the very violence they aimed to prevent through separation (Darina Dvornichenko, 2020). Diplomats from the UN, African Union, United States, and European Union neglected the voices of the opposition in both the North and South, focusing instead on the referendum process rather than on key aspects of democratic transformation. Unresolved issues remained after the referendum, and little attention was given to the exclusion of non-SPLM groups in the South from negotiation processes, or to how the peace process could naturally inspire separatist movements in other parts of Sudan.

Thirdly, international donor agencies and other contributing states exacerbated the situation by ignoring the internal divisions that limited South Sudan's capacity, offering technical solutions that failed to account for the country's deep-rooted social dynamics and long-standing internal conflicts (Darina Dvornichenko, 2020).

If the situation in South Sudan continues to deteriorate and the conflict persists, there will likely be increasing international pressure to implement the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). If the South Sudanese government is unable or unwilling to protect its citizens, the argument arises that the responsibility must be assumed by the international community (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2023a). Although diplomatic efforts and international assistance have been provided, South Sudan remains highly vulnerable to violence and conflict, primarily due to deep divisions among the country's ethnic groups. In this context, R2P can be considered a

necessary tool to ensure that protection efforts continue. International policies regarding R2P may also shift depending on the direction of policies adopted by UN member states and other international actors. At times, international policies can change, particularly influenced by national or geopolitical interests. Therefore, depending on future policy directions, it is possible that R2P will be implemented differently in the future (Darina Dvornichenko, 2020).

5. Conclusion

The conflict in South Sudan began in 2013 with clashes between the Dinka and Nuer ethnic groups' military forces. This conflict was triggered by political disputes between President Salva Kiir and former Vice President Riek Machar. It lasted nearly five years, targeting civilians based on ethnic lines, involving acts of rape, sexual violence, property destruction, and the recruitment of child soldiers. Despite several previous peace agreements, these efforts failed to sustain peace due to continued reports of attacks and violations. More than 400,000 people were killed during the conflict, and nearly four million people were displaced or fled the country.

Peace efforts in South Sudan were pursued through negotiations mediated by Uganda and Sudan in June 2018. Kiir and Machar signed the Khartoum Declaration of Agreement, which included a ceasefire and a commitment to negotiate a power-sharing arrangement to end the war. This was followed by a peace agreement signed by the government, Machar's opposition party, and several other rebel factions to end the civil war. However, this agreement has not fully succeeded in ending the conflict. The United Nations Security Council deployed peacekeeping forces in the country to assist with state-building efforts and the protection of civilians.

Human rights organizations have reported various human rights violations. Two million people have been displaced, and seven million are facing severe food insecurity. Experts remain skeptical about the possibility of a smooth transition towards democracy for South Sudan. Serious ethnic violence in the border regions of South Kordofan and Blue Nile highlights the political and humanitarian challenges that emerged during the formation of South Sudan.

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle can be applied to address the humanitarian crimes committed during the conflict between government forces and opposition groups, which triggered a massive humanitarian and refugee crisis. However, the implementation of R2P in South Sudan faces numerous obstacles, such as the complex international situation, immature understanding of the peace process, and flawed external approaches. Additionally, the country's economy is heavily reliant on oil, and revenues have declined drastically due to falling oil prices.

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