

Why Federalism in South Sudan?

This paper is going to explain why the author argues that federalism is the best way to bring sense into South Sudan's political discourse. Citizens of South Sudan need to ask themselves some important questions that will help them identify the problems in their national politics or political system, and then work towards resolving them. Questions like; what kind of political system are we under at the moment? Are we happy with that system? Could that system be the cause of our suffering and death? Is our system failing us? Don't we need a change of some sort? Et cetera. The more they begin to ponder on such questions, the closer they would get to the solution. Now, what is the problem? Who is benefiting from it? What could be the solution to the problem and how can it be approached?

People of South Sudan are not the problem as some writers and analysts would try to argue, system of governing is the problem. J. Omuu asserted quite well in his article, A Case for Federalism in South Sudan that, 'the problem confronting our new country is a highly centralized system of government disguised as "decentralized democratic system" under a retarded one-party system: the SPLM. In this system of government, political power is centrally concentrated in the hand of one strong Big-Man: President Salvo Kiir who is holding power over all public policies affecting the citizens'. J. Omuu made a very compelling argument in his case for federalism by exploring most of the factors that makes federalism the ideal system for South Sudan.

I would like to briefly define what federalism is before we get in depths into federalism as a system of government and how it works. So what is federalism? It is a system of government in which a constitution divides the powers between the central government and other tiers of governments like states and other lower authorities such as local governments. Federalism allows unity without uniformity, in other words, federalism cherishes cultural diversity, impedes tyranny of the majority and government Paternalism. Isn't that what people of South Sudan need? Aren't you sick and tired of being divided and set against each other or one another by successive regimes? You happily choose your own governors only to be replaced by the president with the governors of his choice who will only serve his personal interest against yours. This system (federalism) is actually the best remedy to that dilemma, not only will it revolutionize our ways of thinking towards each other, but it will also enhance our fraternity. There are only three main systems of government that we have to choose from, 1) Unitary, 2) Confederation and 3) federal.

Unitary is the status quo, the very system in which people are suffering under right now; unitary is the worst of all the three systems listed above. Even though current South Sudan's political system structurally looks like a federal system, it is actually not, and it cannot be unless federal constitution is well written. Yes they have ten (10) states with their own independent constitutions, but these states are nothing other than puppets of the central government. For instance, states governors' loyalty to the president trumps their loyalty to the voters who elect them and give them the mandates. Because of the nature of the system, president is ridiculously powerful, more powerful than the law making body (parliament), and/or judiciary (court). So pretending to be loyal to either the people or state could in fact cost you your

political career as a governor, or minister, or an MP, it is just not practicable.

Confederation gives all the powers to states and non to central government which could adversely cause government shutdown, and divide the country into 10 autonomous States. It is not untrue to say that, federal system is a combination of unitary and confederate systems of government, and it borrows the good tenets from the two, which makes it the best system over the rest.

As defined above, federalism is when the federal government and the state government have certain powers reserved to them and some powers shared. Federal system limits the power of central government by delegating specific powers to other levels and/or tiers of governments. Central government would be granted the ability to make laws only over certain jurisdictions, and rest of the decisions would be left to the states.

Federalism was devised by people who did experience the harsh realities of regime oppression by their own government and wanted to drift away from that cruelty. American people after they seceded from the Britain agreed to establish a government that would not restrict their rights but respect their rights and liberties. This is exactly the aspiration people of South Sudan have now; they are following the footsteps of American people who were grappling to determine their own destiny and that of their posterity thousands years ago. Unless we get the system right in South Sudan right now, ruthless dictators will continue to oppress the innocent people of this country. Killing and arbitrary arrest for critics will not stop but grow, ethnocentrism will become a norm and those who glorify wholeheartedly will be rewarded

by the tyrant, And South Sudan's political decisions will continue to be made in Kampala.

In conclusion, people of South Sudan can only advance together, or none will advance at all, and the only system that will allow people of South Sudan to advance together is a fair and just system. Right system and right leader (visionary leader) are all we need to reach our potential. Let's get that right and never again can our differences be used to divide us, and our bitter past be used to destroy us. And never again will a leader set a tribe against another tribe for his political gain. A unifying leader must dress up our wounds caringly and let them heal with out scratching in them; our differences are actually our strength and not our weakness.