

Internal Crisis Threatens South Sudan

Jan 6, 2014 By Anita Ramachandran



Gun-toting rebels in civil war torn South Sudan

1. Show evidence of a close reading and mark areas of confusion.
2. Write a written response.

It is the baby among nations, being born on July 9, 2011 - We are talking of **South Sudan**.

It was a story of hard-won independence that heralded the birth of the 54th African nation and the world's 195th country. But, an internal conflict is now threatening to destabilize this African nation.

What began as a conflict of power between two rebel leaders who have been bitter enemies, has now turned out to be a full bodied ethnic war. It has displaced many citizens and is quickly escalating into a civil war.

Escalation Of The Crisis



Displaced South Sudan refugees huddle under a tree

The recent conflict began when President Salva Kiir, belonging to the Dinka tribe, accused ex-Vice President Riek Machar, belonging to the Nuer tribe, of a *coup attempt to overthrow his government. Dinka and Nuer are the two largest ethnic tribes in South Sudan. In July 2013, Kiir fired Machar

from his Vice-Presidential duties on charges of corruption.

Conflict between the tribes is nothing new. Disagreements between them go back a long way to before the country's liberation struggle. The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), the force that led South Sudan's separation from Sudan, had included both Kiir and Machar. However both men have had a record of shifting alliances and betrayals.

*coup: a sudden and often hostile takeover

In latest developments, mass killings and other violence over the past two weeks have caused over 200,000 innocent civilians to be displaced. They are seeking shelter and protection from U.N. forces in Juba, the capital, and in other South Sudan cities.

Where Is South Sudan?



South Sudan is a landlocked country with a population of 11 million people in central Africa, bordered by Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic. The country's largely ethnic and Christian population had fought for separation from the North because of isolation and persecution.

95% of South Sudan's economy is driven by oil. However, it is one of the most impoverished economies in Africa and has made little progress since its independence. Internal conflicts have sapped the country of direction.

Meanwhile mediation talks are underway in Ethiopia to resolve the current conflict. Both sides are trying for a cease fire as a first step. However, progress has been slow and fighting continues to rage throughout the country. In order to safeguard lives of its citizens, foreign countries have evacuated many of their nationals.

Will the citizens of South Sudan get to savor their independence soon? Everybody is concerned.

Written response:

What are your thoughts on this?

- Why should Americans care about this event, even though it's so far away?
- Should other countries step in to help? Why or why not?
- Other "oil nations" are much wealthier than South Sudan. If 95% of its economy is based on oil, why do you think they are still an impoverished economy?