Federalism; South Sudan in dilemma

BY Col. John Sunday Martin

We desire federalism in the interest of National Unity; but if we cannot achieve National Unity through federalism, then let us be as we are, to preserve our coexistence as Multi-Tribe Republic

The secession of the South from the Republic of Sudan has never addressed the problems of nepotism, discrimination and marginalization – that the Southerners have encountered from the north for the past centuries; on contrary, the secession deteriorated these problems, whereas SPLM\A’s government is dominated by almost only two ethnic groups – who held the real powers and authorities while other ethnic groups are effectively marginalized, and deprived of the full exercise of their political rights, that is the right to freely participate fully in the affairs of their governance and protect their heritages.

Marginalization in the South under the SPLM Administration has manifested itself in the tribal tensions due to discriminations on the bases of ethnocentric, as well as nepotism across the entire States – which has native effects on the national Unity and coexistence, social and human development as well socio-economic recovery. In spite of all these, SPLM still have no clear plans to re-address all these challenges, than to commit itself to acts that inspires and encourages tribalism by considering other ethnic groups as second-class citizens – while these are very acts we fought against, for the last few decades of north – south civil war.

These acts of domination, discrimination, and nepotism is creating South Sudan to be ungovernable, as the current system of decentralization is not fully as it remains dysfunctional, as per the power vested in the person of president; to dissolve the state and fire the popularly elected governor. Supplementary, the system never fully empowered or mandated the states with vested
power to govern itself free, as this was in actual sense the same game the former colonial powers in Khartoum played when it awarded the south Sudan with self-government after Anyanya War. In understandings of the major sources of the conflicts in South Sudan, we are somehow complied to believe that the solution to the problems of south Sudanese was, and will never be “Secession,” as this is evidenced by the ongoing conflicts, and socio-political turmoil and failure to govern the Country and some are now again taken on believe that, solution to our problems rests on genuine Federal system.

However, if secession that we went for could not find solutions to our problems than to lend us in more problems that is creating our national coexistence and unity, somehow impossible, how can federalism be believe as solutions to our problems while our problems has to do with ethnocentrisms caused by bad national and local leadership. Federalism and ethnocentrism cannot get married and in situation of federalism where there is tribalism like in south Sudan, then divorce must be expected at any time whenever there is that possibilities. Therefore, we cannot risk the future of our national unity with the spirit of federalism; unless in situation where solutions are already found to our pressing problems of ethnocentrisms in our nation.

We cannot plant federalism where spirit of ethnocentrism is active so as not to allow federalism in view, into formal split of south Sudan nation into factional ethnocentrism governments; that will start with rejection of those we views as trouble in our midst. As a nation, we already experiencing some indicators that we don’t want other ethnicities in our midst, we want them to leave us alone and as results, we prefer to lease our land to foreigners, but not to certain ethnic groups from within South Sudan. We cannot lease our land to other ethnicities within our society because we consider them land crabbers, troublemakers and they are not welcomed in our midst; and the only possible way that some thought to avoid these certain ethnicities through federalism and therefore, the motive is what matters in this regard of the federalism in demand. Federalism is never bad in our situation as
a nation but the motives for the call for federalism are what we need to be examined to save the national unity and coexistences.

Federal is good because it is the system where the Government is decentralized, as the power and authority to govern is vested locally in the States – rather than the broad based central governance system. In this sense, federalism becomes the building block of the national political order on territorial bases – where a political structure of Government covering particular region within the Nation. Federalism can be vital for recruitment of formal channel of equal representation, egalitarianism and the re-distribution of power and socio-economic development of every ethnicity, as well a key for the eliminations of marginalization of every indigenous group and every believes, culture, and race within our nation.

Indeed, federalism if called for with good motives, it will employ sustainable Peace, Security, and socio-economic development of every ethnic group in society that will enhance the spirit of national unity and coexistence. It is also the most complete form of Government that south Sudanese can seeks to employ to accommodate all tribes, race and religious believes in governance, as it has separate government institutions for different parts of the territory of the Country. In the ideal of federalism, the power and authority of the Nation divided to the separate Regional based Authorities to govern themselves effectively within the frameworks that fall into two pillars:

a) The autonomy of the States – that is to run their local governance affairs fully, without interference from the National Government and,

b) The deep spirit of the Unity and co-operation as well as mutual commitment of all people from different States, as each state shall seek the measures of self-government while the National Government focuses on national policies for the betterment of all.
In the situation of south Sudan we already have structure in place like states, these structures can only be transformed democratically into federal states that are self-governing, with its own Government consisting of the Legislative, Judiciary and Executive; that is upheld by its own constitutions that bonds each state to the National Government, and its functions; as it is also in the case of the National Government. In this regards, if we have to accommodate the ethnic, cultural, and religious diversities in South Sudan, and to ensure maximum participation of the people in the running of their government affairs, we have to commit ourselves to the establishment of a federal system of government, based on the geopolitical boundaries.

The federalism is the fundamental and the inalienable right of the people from different geopolitical boundaries, “the rights to the freedom to self-determination.” The ideal of federalism system in south Sudan if there is a need to be implement federalism must be based on the 'bottom-up' approach. As per the experience of the south Sudanese, calls for federalism has been there during the Juba conference held in 1947; again South Sudanese politicians asked for federalism in 1955 in Torit and then 1963 during a Khartoum meeting", and the call was as strive to resolving conflicts, problems of power and authority and the distribution of wealth, because this is the only way for the unity, stability, and sustainable development of the South Sudan as whole can be guaranteed but that was times tribalism has never taken deep roots in our heart as of now. We were not calling for federalism by then in order to divide ourselves as south Sudanese but to measure the possibilities for our self-determination with view in end.

Our problems by then was with Arab-Islamist in the north but now, our problems are amongst our very selves and therefore, the question is whether federalism is suitable for our Peaceful coexistence as Nation, or it will bring this nation into disintegrated republic on ethnocentrism? The question can only be answered correctly on the bases of the reasons why we need federalism and in this regards, the motive behind for the call for
federalism in South Sudan. Federalism can be suitable in situation where we as nation have deep love for each other, and are in high spirit of coexistences and unity but not is situation as we are total enveloped with spirit of hatred, tribalism and disunity because these that we are wrapped with, will destroy our national unity and coexistence that can split our nation into tribal factions on regional aspect.

It is most unfortunately for me to reach to the conclusion and confess that, the future of this nation to hold to each other is at risk as, those that are calling for federalism are in most cases those who are not only happy with the current system of Governance, but with some ethnicities. Therefore, if care not taken, federalism will fall into wronged purpose and it can be employed to reach designed end. That can definitely be to bring to an end the current system of governance under SPLM, but also to avoid some of those unwanted in our midst and give a try – to a bigger project of self-determination - that is disintegration on ethnocentrism if not regionalism. South Sudan is too small in actual sense to be ruined on federal system if we have good national political leadership that puts the interests of the nation first, then their individual selfish and tribal interests and therefore, our efforts should be to find good leadership for the nation first than to rush to risk our national unity and coexistence for federalism.

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