

The Underlying Paradoxes of the National Anthem of the Republic of South Sudan

Benard Odoyo Okal^{1*}, Adams Yakub², Benard Otieno Kodak³

¹Assistant Lecturer & PhD candidate, Department of Kiswahili, Maseno University, Kenya

²Lecturer, Department of Linguistics, Maseno University, Kenya

³Lecturer, Department of Languages, Linguistics, Journalism and Communication, Maasai Mara University, Kenya

*Corresponding Author:

Benard Odoyo Okal

Email: benardodoyo@yahoo.com

Abstract: National symbols are very instrumental items for a country's peace, unity and prosperity. The national symbol for instance the national anthem is always sung at the learning institutions and or during the country's special occasions. Though national anthems just like any other national symbols have a noble role in the country, some countries tend to disregard its letter and spirit. One such country is the Republic of South Sudan (RoSS). Being the newest country in Africa and probably the state that experienced a longer period of civil wars and with the bigger number of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), it has been the wishes of the citizens and the people the world over to have a lasting peace and unity. However, since independence in 2011, there have been intermittent ethnic clashes resulting into deaths of many South Sudanese civilians and also loss of property. This is happening despite the fact that its national anthem possesses elements of peace and harmony. In this regard, the paper intends to expose the underlying paradoxes inherent in the national anthem of the RoSS.

Keywords: national symbol, national anthem, RoSS, paradoxes

INTRODUCTION

Every time we listen to songs we feel moved and to some extent psychologically and emotionally affected either positively or negatively. This normally happens depending on the perlocutionary effects the song evokes in the listener's mind. Perlocutionary effects simply refer to the influence of texts on the receiver's state of mind and knowledge [1]. Generally songs that appeal to the humans tend to be regarded as music. The term music refers to sounds that are arranged in a pleasant way especially to incite people in order to listen to it [2].

In fact as music continues to incite the humans, it therefore plays some key roles in the society some of which include educating, entertaining, motivating, praising, sympathizing and even empathizing with those with misfortunes. However, the significance of music tends to vary contextually. For instance, music from a Biblical perspective serves as a weapon against discouragement, impresses spiritual truth, makes work pleasant, and also drives an enemy away [3]. National anthems just like any other well composed songs also have the significance of uniting individuals and the country in entirety.

Any music of whatever kind produces emotional effects in humans that even go beyond what the cognitive inference of what the particular music can be

said to express [4]. This cognitive inference of the music concerned cannot be easily explained even by the listener. It is therefore evident that the intentions of the musically composed songs, well executed and with relevant meaning will always purely evoke emotions more than the intentions of the musical piece itself. These emotions form the perlocutionary effect that would therefore herald exhibition of behaviours such as crying, wailing, clapping hands, dancing to the tune and also singing with the composer among others.

Songs that are euphonic to the listener's ear will always be repeated every now and then. Some of them include the sacred, secular and traditional or rather cultural songs. However, it has become apparent that besides these categories of songs, there is another that is normally aimed at capturing the aspirations of all the nationals of a particular country. This is normally referred to as a national anthem. An anthem is a song with a special significance to a country, organization or a particular group of people that is basically sung during special functions [2]. Any national anthem should always be anthemic. That is to say that it makes one happy and enthusiastic.

Generally, a national anthem belongs to a country and is sung during important occasions. If it is sung at the learning institutions from the early years of learning then it is well inculcated in the learner for his

day to day activities thus all the citizens should be able to master and sing it at the required times and occasions. Taking Kenya as an example, national anthem is sung at the assembly of pupils or students on Mondays and Fridays when the flag is being raised. We normally tend to enjoy the words, tune and themes in the Kenya's national anthem. We could also witness the perlocutionary effects it evokes when it is sung or we listen to it. The Kenya's national anthem has the following stanzas as indicated in [5]:

Oh God of all creation
Bless this our land and nation
Justice be our shield and defender
May we dwell in unity
Peace and liberty
Plenty be found within our borders.

Let one and all arise
With hearts both strong and true
Service be our earnest endeavour
And our homeland of Kenya
Heritage of splendour
Firm may we stand to defend.

Let all with one accord
In common bond united
Build this our nation together
And the glory of Kenya
The fruit of our labour
Fill every heart with thanksgiving.

The first stanza of this anthem asks God the creator to bless the land and the nation at large, ensure that justice prevails both as a shield and a defender, encouraging people within it to live in unity, peace and liberty so as to enjoy the plenty within Kenya's borders. The second stanza encourages all Kenyans to rise up with strong hearts truly devoted in order to serve our homeland of Kenya, our heritage and firmly we need to stand to defend it. The third stanza talks of being together in one accord, have common bond in unity, build a nation together and the glory of Kenya, realise fruits of our labour and fill every heart in the country with a lot of thanksgiving. This national anthem has indeed tried to keep Kenya at peace and harmony despite political disagreements always realised immediately after general elections. However, the citizens normally became peaceful after realizing that they have to uphold the letter and the spirit of the national symbols, national anthem being one of them.

Other bigger democracies like USA also have very good national anthems. According to [6], USA has a very unique national anthem in that though it has four stanzas, only the first stanza is usually sung. The USA's national anthem basically referred to as the Star Spangled Banner got its lyrics from Francis Scott Key in 1814 from his poem titled 'The Defense of Fort McHenry' crafted in the war of 1812, however, its tune

was copied from John Stafford Smith's British song and later adopted as the national anthem in 1931 [6]. The first stanza of this anthem goes like this:

O say can you see by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming,
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming?
And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there;
O say does that Star - Spangled Banner yet wave,
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?
(HSP, 2012)

This song is simply interpreted by [6] as follows:

Hey, can you see this morning. What we saw and were so amazed by and proud of last night. The flag that, through all the dangerous fighting. We could still see standing strong and waving? Last night, as the sun was setting, we could still see the flag waving. We were so proud of this! Is it still there this morning? Throughout the fighting bombs, guns and cannons are going off and their explosions are lighting the night sky. The light from the explosions showed us that indeed, our flag was still standing! Yes, our flag is still standing. Over our land, the land of free willing to fight bravely for their freedom: The United States of America! The bombs, guns and cannons exploded in the night, giving off enough light to see that the flag was still standing. Our flag which stands for our country, the home of free people willing to fight for that freedom bravely. The United States of America.

From this anthem we can gather many themes about USA. The anthem talks of the significance of having the national flag flying as a sign of victory. It is also urging the citizens to be brave and willingly fight for their country despite the strong sounds of bombs, guns and cannons. In fact, this is a strong anthem that generally evokes various perlocutionary effects on the people of USA thus uniting them for a common goal, for peace and harmony.

Though Kenya's national anthem talks of peace and liberty and the America's anthem talking of the same, seemingly the people of the Republic of South Sudan (RoSS) do not tend to follow very keenly the aspirations of their national anthem. The local populace especially the majority who are governed may be to some extent keeping the spirit and the letter of the

anthem unless incited by their leaders to engage in interethnic wars. Thus the paper analyses the underlying paradoxes in the letter, spirit and aspirations of the South Sudan's national anthem.

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH SUDAN

The RoSS was carved from the Republic of Sudan and got its independence on 9th July, 2011 [7, 8] following an overwhelming voting of 98.83% in support of secession from Sudan [8]. This automatically marked the beginning of internal governance totally divorced from the apparent discriminatory and political tutelage from the Sudanese government. Watching from our television sets from Kenya, it was evident that RoSS went through all the assumed procedures of ushering in a new government in a new nation state.

The procedures included the declaration of the state, presentation of a certificate endorsing the republic signed by the speaker, singing of the national anthem, promulgation of the country's constitution and signing by the president, and finally the president taking the oath of office. In the oath, the President is expected to discharge his or her duties faithfully, diligently, honestly and shall always ensure that things are done in a consultative manner [9]. The contents of this oath of office seem to give the president supreme authority to govern the country as per the law established.

According to [10], when RoSS became independent in July, 2011, along process of this attainment was seemingly closed with the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in January 2005, thus ending the long civil war. Its capital city was declared to be Juba and the main political party the Sudanese People Liberation Movement (SPLM) [8]. According to the Refugees International report of 2012 on the population estimates, RoSS had a population of over eight million then [8] but the number could have increased due to more people returning home from the diaspora since the end of the long civil war.

The RoSS is number 54 in Africa and number 193 in the whole world [7]. [9] states that the country comprises lands and air space of the three former Southern Provinces of Bahr el Ghazal, Equatoria and Upper Nile, and also the Abyei Area. According to [11], this landlocked country borders Sudan in the north, Ethiopia in the east, Kenya and Uganda in the south, the Democratic Republic of Congo in the southwest, and the Central African Republic in the west. Besides the nation upholding the decentralized democratic system of governance, it is also multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-racial where such diversities peacefully co-exist [9]. Generally, the Southern Sudanese people are Africans [12, 11]. The religion is predominantly Christianity though there are

also Islam and Animism [8]. The [13] recorded that Christianity is the largest religion with 58.1% adherents.

Different reports give different numbers of tribes, languages and dialects in the RoSS. According to BBC 2012 as cited in [8], some tribes in the RoSS include the Nubian, Beja, Fur, Zaghawa, Dinka, Nuer, Azande, Bari and also Shilluk/Anwak. Though [8] talks of over 60 cultural groups with a very strong sense of tribal citizenship, on the other hand [13] gives a comprehensive list of 73 tribes with the biggest tribe being Dinka followed by Nuer. Dinka has the highest number of people totalling to about 1.36 Millions including North-eastern Dinka, North-western Dinka, South Central Dinka, South-eastern Dinka and South-western Dinka [14]. Other bigger tribes besides Dinka and Nuer are the Nuba and Shilluk [11].

Though [8], [11] and [13] look at many tribes or ethnic groups based on cultural and dialectical differentiation, and probably environmental placements, [15] tends to categorize the people of RoSS by considering belief, character trait of fighting and also diaspora. In terms of belief, there are people who remained in the Khartoum – controlled areas especially Juba, Malakal and Wau. These people remained in the country even during the long civil wars therefore tend to believe that they deserve bigger share in the government. There were also fighters who believed that they are the ones who redeemed the new state from Sudan and therefore should be given positions in the government. The last category is that of the diaspora who ran away during civil war. The diaspora population seems to be well educated and therefore tends to demand key positions in the government. This mix of people gives the nation a hard time to completely satisfy its people socially, politically and economically [15].

The RoSS has many indigenous languages constitutionally regarded as national which are also proposed to be respected, developed and promoted [9]. There is also English as the official language as well as the language of instruction in all the levels of education [9]. According to [7], there are over 62 indigenous languages in the RoSS. Some of these languages include the Dinka, Nuer, Bari, Azande, Arab Sudanese, Jur Modo among others [13].

The RoSS tends to exhibit two unique scenarios both in the world and Africa in particular. According to Johnson, Phillips and Maclean as cited in [8], RoSS has the largest number of refugees and the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the whole world and in comparison with other fragile states it has also been the only country with the recorded longest running conflict in Africa. These running conflicts occurred in two distinct epochs. The first conflict took place between 1955 –1972 and the second one between 1983 –2005 [8]. During these periods of conflicts, perhaps 2.5

million peoples were reported dead probably due to starvation and drought [11]. The long hostility with the Sudan has been due to a clash of cultures thus inhibiting nation building [12].

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NATIONAL SYMBOLS

Generally, national symbols are very essential instruments for national identity and unity. These national symbols include the flags, coats of arms and also the national anthems [16] among others. In many occasions these symbols tend to play a key role of nation building and also nation maintenance [16]. For example, Kenya has in its constitution the following four essential national symbols: the national flag, the national anthem, the coat of arms and public seal [5]. These are symbols aimed at building the country economically, socially and politically and also used to enhance national unity thus maintaining peace in the country. All these roles of national symbols in Kenya may not be witnessed in the RoSS due to political upheavals.

The Kenya's national flag has three major strips of equal width coloured from top black, red and green at the bottom with narrow white strips separating them. The central part of the flag has asymmetrical shield with a superimposed white spear at the centre. The national anthem has three stanzas written both in Kiswahili and English. Its coat of arms has a shield, two spears, two lions, a cockerel with an axe and the word HARAMBEE inscribed underneath. The term HARAMBEE means joining together with other people in order to achieve a given task [2]. In fact this is a call for the citizens of Kenya to pull together in building the nation.

In the other most developed democracies, national symbols are greatly revered. In the USA, there is a pledge of allegiance to the national flag carried out in schools and recited every morning and throughout the entire school life of a person in order to uphold identity [16]. This pledge goes as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the flag,
of the United States of America,
and for the Republic for which it stands,
one nation under God, indivisible,
with liberty and justice for all.
[Source: 16: 2]

This pledge of allegiance to the national flag praises the USA as a republic. It also calls for unity amongst its citizens and never shall they be divided. Lastly, the pledge talks of the USA where liberty and justice for all forever prevail.

The national anthem together with the national flag show the nation's sovereignty and patriotism [16]. Generally through the national anthem, citizens tend to

get inspired, express cry for freedom and even affirmation of what they have been yearning for. These were also witnessed even in the Negro National Anthem named 'Lift Every Voice and Sing' adopted by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1919 in the USA [17].

This anthem has the following first and last stanzas as here below:

Lift every voice and sing,
till earth and heaven ring.
Ring with the harmonies of liberty.
Let our rejoicing rise high as the listening skies.
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has
taught us.
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has
brought us.
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,
Let us march on till victory is won.

God of our weary years, God of our silent tears,
Thou who has brought us thus far on the way.
Thou who has by thy might led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God,
where we met thee.
Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the
world, we forget thee.
Shadowed beneath thy hand, may we forever
stand
True to our God, True to our native land!
[Source: 17: 1]

According to [17], this Negro National Anthem was sung by the people who were misused and abused because of their colour hence had to cry for liberation. They therefore became strong and motivated because of the song. In fact, from this song, we gather that it is clear that national anthems serve as a unifying factor in any given country, showing cultures, aspirations, pledges and even peace and harmony in the country. Though the national symbols are geared towards unifying the nation, we may also have to remember that 'symbols that are rooted in a cultural past will more often than not be more divisive than unifying since different ethnic and political groups often hark back to different pasts' [16: 5]. This is the scenario witnessed in the RoSS whereby though symbols that are supposed to unite people tend to exist and the national anthem always sung, there are other personalities imbued with egocentric values that tend to derail the gains recorded since independence.

The RoSS has its national symbols that include: the flag, emblem, national anthem, coat of arms, public seal, medals, festivals, and commemorations of the State prescribed by law [9]. According to [18], the flag

was adopted on 9th July, 2005 and this was the flag used by the SPLM. The [19] explains that the flag of the RoSS has the Pan-African colours: black, red and green and also a blue triangle with a yellow star. Black represents black African people of South Sudan. Red represents blood of freedom fighters. Green colour means agricultural potential of the country and the blue indicates River Nile. The yellow star symbolizes Nile River and the unity of the country. On the other hand, the white lines indicate a celebration of peace after years of struggling for liberty. The coat of arms has the African Eagle with a shield and crossed spears. The eagle symbolizes strength, resilience and vision, and the shield and spears represent protection of the new state [19].

Though the new state has many national symbols, the study has purposively singled out one symbol especially the national anthem. The reason being that national anthem is normally and frequently sung during official occasions and also routinely sung in the learning institutions. Because of this, the national anthem is assumed to be known by every citizen of a country especially those of sound minds. Thus its letter and spirit should always be upheld and practiced to herald national unity rather than being a smoking gas for fuelling untold conflicts with very severe repercussions.

THEMES OF THE NATIONAL ANTHEM OF THE RoSS

Though the Negro National Anthem was sung by misused and abused people who therefore became strong, motivated and united in one accord [17], the RoSS does not seem to adhere to its core values in its national anthem but instead exhibiting untold underlying paradoxes. The following are the three stanzas of the national anthem of the RoSS:

Oh God!
We praise and glorify you
For your grace on South Sudan
Land of great abundance
Uphold us united in peace and harmony.

Oh motherland!
We rise raising flag with the guiding star
And sing songs of freedom with joy
For justice, liberty and prosperity
Shall forevermore reign.

Oh great patriots!
Let us stand up in silence and respect
Saluting our martyrs whose blood
Cemented our national foundation
We vow to protect our nation
Oh God, bless South Sudan!
[Source: 20, 7:3, 8]

In the first stanza of the national anthem, the people of South Sudan are praising God for being kind to them. They ask God to keep them united both in peace and harmony. The second stanza, the South Sudanese people are now referring to their country as motherland with a flag with a rising star. They talk of singing songs of freedom when happy. In this stanza, the citizens seem to be optimistic that as they get their freedom, justice, liberty and prosperity will be prevailing not only just now but also in future and forever. The third stanza, talks of the people of South Sudan who are referred to as patriots. These patriots should always remember in silence and respect especially the martyrs who devoted themselves to uniting the nation. They claim to vow to protect South Sudan and ask God to bless their nation. This is a wonderful national anthem of the newest state however we are surprised to hear the negative deeds manifested in the RoSS.

THE PARADOXES OF THE NATIONAL ANTHEM OF THE RoSS

Analysis of the underlying paradoxes of the national anthem of the RoSS is premised on the belief that being the youngest nation in Africa and probably the country that saw the longest civil war, there could always be a prevailing peace and unity. However, these have not come to the fore to many southerners both within and also in the diaspora. Though the RoSS 'is founded on justice, equality, respect for human dignity and advancement of human rights and fundamental freedoms' [9: 2], there seems to be some kind of mistrust between its leaders hence threatening the gains scored from 2011 when the state was officially declared independent. Despite the fact that the national anthem of RoSS talks of many achievable wishes notably unity in peace and harmony (stanza 1), freedom, justice, liberty and prosperity (stanza 2), and protection of the nation (stanza 3), we can notice a myriad of underlying paradoxes.

In the first stanza, unity in peace and harmony that is always sung tends to be a mirage in the RoSS. Since attaining independence in July, 2011, peace and harmony just prevailed for a short period. For instance, on 23rd April, 2014, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) reported that more than 200 civilians were killed and over 400 wounded, there were also massacres in the churches and hospitals [15]. Some of these conflicts tend to be fuelled by hate speeches dispensed by the leaders. For example, after signing a ceasefire deal in Ethiopia, the president Salva Kiir claimed that some countries like USA, UK, Norway and even Italy that helped the RoSS to attain independence are seeking for a reward without which they have opted to fuel conflicts in the country [15].

The statement by the president caused conflicts that almost tore the county a part. In fact, the glue that

held together the ethnic groups in RoSS was the common enemy that was Sudan. However, as blowing wind of independence calmed, the Dinka which is regarded as the largest tribe has tended to fuel intertribal conflicts with the Nuer over the resource distribution [8]. This conflict has interfered with peace and harmony that should be the hallmark of the national anthem of the RoSS.

The second stanza talks of freedom, justice, liberty and prosperity that should prevail in the new state. However, since independence, leaders in the RoSS have tended to abrogate the wishes of having freedom, justice, liberty and prosperity. For instance, it could have been a just move to have equity in appointing personalities to various positions from different ethnic groups. Unfortunately, the president who is a Dinka has tended to favour his own tribe doing injustice to the other ethnic groups. [21] confirms this in the following quote:

‘When South Sudan became an independent state last July, many people had hoped that the newly independent country would be built on principles of ethnic equality, democracy, rule of law and federalism. There was a reason for people to be optimistic about the future of South Sudan. Those who had hoped that South Sudan would become a paradise of equality justified their argument on the belief that the people of South Sudan had bitterly struggled for equality in the old Sudan for over fifty years’.

It is very unfortunate that injustices and tribalism have been practiced by Salva Kiir that in August 2011 he formed a cabinet made up of 42% Dinka and giving them key positions regardless of their academic qualifications and relevant experience [21]. This was in fact an injustice to other tribes bearing in mind that the RoSS has a list of 73 tribes [13] that should equitably get jobs in the new nation. As Buay [21] overtly puts it, it is indeed true that RoSS could be a paradise of peace, equality and true democracy, however, the Dinka domination tends to derail the gains of independence especially in the ministerial and ambassadorial positions among others.

The third stanza talks of protection that should be of the people and the country at large. Indeed protecting the nation should not be a preserve of the leader only but also a concern of every citizen. The RoSS has the duty to protect the nation from outside aggression and also internal civil unrests. Though the national anthem of the RoSS talks of protection, nothing of substance is taking place.

The president is expected to protect the nation and people however the following are witnessed as [15] gathered from the horse’s mouth in Juba that: the

interim constitution gives the president more powers in that he cannot be impeached. This means that instead he is protecting himself in power and not the nation. The dominant SPLM is run through military principles without democracy therefore their bosses tend to protect their egos and positions. There are many arms in the wrong hands and tendency to use them at the slightest provocation. This means that any ethnic group will always protect themselves from other aggressors rather than protecting the whole country. Sometimes indiscipline of the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) is exhibited. There is also unwritten power sharing agreements that has incidentally favoured and protected the bigger ethnic groups. This has caused the marginalisation of non-Dinkas in plum jobs in the government.

The paradox of protecting the nation in the RoSS is a common phenomenon in most African states. Thus the scenario in the RoSS is not new to many Africans but tends to be a regular occurrence. This is because egocentric leaders tend to defy the aspirations, the spirit and the letter of the constitution and the other national symbols. When quoting

David Lamb, a veteran journalist, [22:10] recorded the attitude of African presidents towards ethnicity as here below:

‘African leaders deplore ethnocentrism. They call it the cancer that threatens to eat out the very fabric of the nation. Yet almost every African politician practices it. Most African presidents are more ethnic chief than national statesman, and it remains perhaps the most potent force in day – to – day African life. It is a big factor in political struggles and distribution of resources’.

It is indeed true that ethnocentrism, high handedness and even corruption are normally perpetuated by many African leaders in their countries especially those who have forcefully remained in power [23]. Some of the countries with such tendencies include Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Uganda and Burkina Faso [23]. These countries have leaders with traits that entangle true democracy ranging from forced re-election into and abuse of office, have sweeping executive and legislative powers, no record of democracy, appalling human rights, a bad military – run state and also turning against close allies.

CONCLUSION

Seemingly the national anthem of the RoSS is of no use both to the leadership and the followers. This tendency of disregarding the letter and the spirit of the national anthem is also a passing cloud without meaning at all to both the citizens and the leadership as witnessed even in the oath of the president. This oath of office talks of unity, consultation, promotion of

decentralised system and also preservation of integrity and dignity. All these are not followed at all by the leadership of the RoSS.

In order to sustain peace and tranquillity in the RoSS, the leadership has to uphold the letter and the spirit of the constitution and ensure that its content is practiced in every corner of the country. In fact, this is why [21] candidly stated that it is his considered opinion that the sure way to correct the malaise lies with the patriotic Dinka elites who should always speak out clearly and publicly against the malpractices championed in the name of their tribe. By doing this, the nation may heal hence fostering sustainable peace and harmony.

In general, the national symbols especially the national anthem should be sung by every citizen. Its theme should be upheld and practiced in the country concerned or else it will never be considered euphonic item but rather a cacophonous piece that nobody bothers to listen to or practice its contents as can be exhibited in the RoSS.

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