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## SOUTHERN SUDAN BEFORE INDEPENDENCE

### LOCAL CELEBRATIONS, DISAPPOINTMENT IN NORTHERN SUDAN AND INTERNATIONAL CONCERN

*Martin Pabst*

After the people of Southern Sudan voted overwhelmingly in favour of an independent state in the recent referendum, the new state is expected to be established on July 9, 2011. 55 years after independence, Sudan is now to be split in two, and the regional balance of power must be established all over again.

The decolonisation of Sub-Saharan Africa began with Sudan being granted independence on January 1, 1956. The number of new countries grew rapidly. The Organisation of African Unity, founded in 1963, was at pains to avoid the continent becoming a plethora of tiny states and one year after being established it spoke out in favour of retaining the old colonial borders. Both the superpowers and the old colonial powers feared there would be uncontrolled destabilisation, so they supported the territorial integrity of the new states, even when they were ruled by dictatorial regimes, and discriminated against particular ethnic groups and outlying regions.<sup>1</sup> Until 1990 there were no successful attempts at secession. In this year the process of decolonisation was completed with the acceptance of Namibia as the 151<sup>st</sup> member of the United Nations.

The stability which was largely maintained externally during the East-West conflict was now clearly a thing of

1 | There are few exceptions to the rule. From 1960-1963 Belgium made significant efforts to help Katanga split away from the Congo, and France provided clandestine military support to Biafra when it broke away from Nigeria between 1967-1970. Both these secessions were driven by European support, but in the end were put down by the central governments.

the past. Today the international community has to deal with a Sub-Saharan Africa characterized by “failed states”, insurrections and civil wars, the plundering of resources, massive human rights abuse, piracy and secessions. In 1991 Somaliland declared its independence from Somalia and today is a de-facto state which is waiting for diplomatic recognition. In 1993 Eritrea split away from Ethiopia after a referendum which was recognized by the international community. Now the first country to gain independence, Sudan, is itself the subject of secession.

**Now the first African country to gain independence, is the subject of secession. After a long conflict, Christian Southern Sudan is splitting away from the Islamic North.**

After a long conflict, Christian/Animist black African Southern Sudan is splitting away from the Arab/Islamic North. The biggest country in Africa (2,5 million km<sup>2</sup> and 39 million inhabitants) will lose 620,000 km<sup>2</sup> of its territory, around 9 million inhabitants, three-quarters of its oil reserves and large areas of fertile agricultural and grazing land.

The international community is watching developments in Sudan with some concern. In the short term it is feared that the North will resort to force to prevent a secession which is so detrimental to its interests. In the medium term there is the threat of destabilisation in both of the new states, with a worst-case scenario of further territorial disintegration. The international community is also wary of the long-term effects of Southern Sudan’s secession. Will it encourage secession movements in the north-east and other areas of Africa? Will the dividing lines between black Africa and Arab/Muslim Africa become even more pronounced? Will Jihadists use the developments in Sudan to their own ends and make Sub-Saharan Africa a favoured field of operation?

#### **NORTH VERSUS SOUTH – THE PERENNIAL CONFLICT IN SUDAN’S HISTORY**

In Khartoum there is disappointment about the South’s “secession”. Many Northern Sudanese suspect it is part of a Western-led conspiracy – hardly anyone is prepared to accept that they may themselves bear some responsibility for the situation. In contrast, the Southern Sudanese are celebrating their “independence” from Khartoum, which they consider to be a foreign and autocratic regime. For

them, the process of decolonisation is only now coming to an end, a view which is echoed by many Africans from Nairobi to Cape Town.

The rift between North and South is far deeper than many international observers ever realised. The Southern Sudanese suffered greatly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Under the rule of the Egyptian-Ottoman Khedive (1821-81), slave hunters made forays into their villages. The Mahdi regime which ruled from Khartoum from 1881-99 introduced Sharia law into Southern Sudan and tried to forcibly convert the "infidel" to Islam.

During the Anglo-Egypt Condominium (1899-1955) Southern Sudan was administered separately from the North and largely isolated. Northern Sudanese and foreigners needed special permits to enter the "closed districts" of the South. English, rather than Arabic, was the language of administration and schools, and Christian missionaries were encouraged, while the advance of Islam was halted. London invested in strategic regions of the North and shielded the Southern Sudanese population, who still lived in their traditional ways, from the encroachment of the modern world. Although it was not the

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sole administrative power in Sudan, Great Britain planned to add Southern Sudan to its East African colonies, in line with a 1930 directive.

However, at the Juba Conference in 1947 the British government made a momentous U-turn: from now on they would advance Sudan's independence as a single political entity. And the less-developed South was now taken in hand. The lack of qualified local people meant that civil servants were sent in from the North, which encouraged the spread of Arab language and culture.

The Southern Sudanese were not represented at the Juba Conference and were not asked for their opinion. Many of them feared the North would take control and soon outnumber them. They placed their hopes in a federal structure, which was promised by the British, but when Sudan was granted independence on January 1, 1956 Northern Sudan set about building a centralised government. Over

the next five decades the rulers in Khartoum constantly tried to foist a single identity upon the country, first Arab nationalist, then Arab socialist and finally Arab Islamist.

They also broke the promise made at independence that all areas of the country would be developed equally. Today there are immense differences, as can be seen in the following example. In 2006 86.3 per cent of all children in the state of Khartoum attended primary school, in Sinnar 66.6 per cent, in South Kordofan 53.3 per cent, and in West Darfur 46.4 per cent. The figures are even worse for the South: Central Equatoria, which contains Juba, the capital of Southern Sudan, had 43.0 per cent, with neighbouring East Equatoria at only 13.9 per cent. Bringing up the rear were Northern Bahr el-Ghazal and Unity with 5.7 per cent and 4.3 per cent respectively (country average: 53.7 per cent).<sup>2</sup>

Just like in the period of the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, investment and development projects were focused on the Dongola/Sinnar/Kosti triangle with the Khartoum-Omdurman conurbation at its centre. In 2005, in a paper delivered to the ruling National Congress Party (NCP), Finance Minister Abdul Rahim Hamdi proposed to continue with this strategy.

Since independence, the ranks of Sudan's political and economic elite have been drawn from three ethnic groups based to the north of Khartoum: the Ja'aliyyin, Shaiqiya and Danagla, which together make up five per cent of the Sudanese population. General Umar al-Bashir, who took over the country's presidency following a military coup in 1989, is a Ja'aliyyin, and Vice-President Ali Osman Taha is a Shaiqiya. The long-standing leaders of the opposition parties in Khartoum are also members of these ethnic groups. The political and economic elite justify their pre-eminence by stressing their "pure Arab ancestry", with the Ja'aliyyin even claiming they belong to the tribe of the Prophet Mohammed, the Quraysh.<sup>3</sup> However, it is clearly

2 | Summary Table of Findings. Sudan Household Health Survey (SHHS) and Millennium Development Goals (MDG) indicators, Sudan, 2006, [http://www.irinnews.org/pdf/pn/SHHS\\_report.pdf](http://www.irinnews.org/pdf/pn/SHHS_report.pdf) (accessed January 20, 2011).

3 | The Southern Sudanese call the unpopular Northern elite "jellaba" after their traditional Arab robes.

visible that most Arab-speaking ethnic groups in Northern Sudan are of mixed Arab-African descent.

In Sudan, skin colour and religion are factors which determine access to prestige, power and resources. At the top of the pyramid are light-skinned, Arabic-speaking Muslims, in the middle come black African Muslims, and right at the bottom of the pile are the black African Christians and Animists. Even today it happens that the Northern Sudanese inflame their black African compatriots by using discriminatory terms such as "kufr" (infidel) or "abid" (slave).

The power of the small central elite was consolidated by building alliances with local leaders in the outlying regions and through the co-option or corruption of representatives from other ethnic groups. If necessary, Khartoum stirred up unrest and recruited auxiliary forces in the outlying regions. It made little difference whether power was in the hands of democrats, single party rulers or generals.

As sceptical British administrators had prophesied, resistance broke out in Southern Sudan against the single state, even before independence in 1955. At first the rebels demanded a federal system, then later independence for Southern Sudan which they called "Azania", the Latin name for East Africa. The Anya Nya ("snake poison") were left to wage a fierce war against the greatly-superior forces of the North. In 1972 a peace treaty was agreed in Addis Ababa which granted Southern Sudan autonomy and self-government. The Anya Nya were incorporated into the army.

The people of Southern Sudan enjoyed a short period of peace and development during the 1970s, and the University of Juba was established. But

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when the socialist head of state General Jaafar Mohammed al-Nimeiri reconciled with the conservative Islamist Umma Party and the Islamist Muslim Brothers in 1977 it was another nail in Southern Sudan's coffin. The cancellation of Southern Sudanese autonomy in 1983 and the rollout of Sharia law across the whole country brought a new outbreak of resistance. Sharia law also extended to non-Muslims, bringing with it not only an alcohol ban,

corporal punishment and a strictly-enforced dress code but it also affected the education system, the allocation of land, the economy and banking systems.

The newly-formed Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) also fought against large-scale economic projects which served the interests of the centre but which threatened the homes and livelihoods of local people and were environmentally damaging, such as the exploitation of Southern Sudanese oil and the construction of the Jonglei canal through the vast swamps of the White Nile (the Sudd).

After the Islamist military coup led by General Umar al-Bashir and chief ideologist Sheikh Hasan al-Turabi in 1989, the North/South civil war became increasingly brutal. The rulers in Khartoum tightened up Sharia law, declared "Holy War" on the "infidels" in 1992 and recruited fanaticised young men to their newly-created militia, the "Popular Defence Forces" (PDF). They also escalated the war to include the Nuba mountains in South Kordofan, north of the North/South divide. This area was settled by the black African, mainly Muslim Nuba. As some of the Nuba sympathised with the insurgents in Southern Sudan, Khartoum declared war on them as a whole, using the same methods of attack in the Nuba mountains and Southern Sudan as they were later to use in Darfur: violent evictions and expulsions, air force bombing of civilians, the systematic starvation of whole regions, and the recruitment of militias with orders to plunder and rape.

The SPLM/A were not fighting for independence, but for a reformed "New Sudan" – which is why the freedom movement's name did not include the word "South". The SPLM/A

**SPLM/A leader John Garang de Mabior, a Dinka from Southern Sudan, fought for a socialist, secular and united Sudan.**

leader John Garang de Mabior, a Dinka from Southern Sudan, became interested in Marxism during his time as a lecturer in Tanzania and he fought for a socialist, secular Sudan which guaranteed all its citizens equal access to power and resources. He had no time for nationalism based along ethnic and cultural lines, and as a former colonel in the Sudanese army his thinking was rooted in the idea of a united Sudan. He led the liberation movement with a rod of iron, allowing no different opinions. But many of

his followers still wanted independence, as did other rival liberation movements in Southern Sudan.

In 1995 the SPLM joined with the banned Northern Sudan opposition parties and became part of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). This meant they were also a factor in Northern Sudanese politics, and they garnered support among Southern Sudanese living in the North and among reform-minded Northerners. From 1997 the SPLM/A put pressure on the government by opening up a second front in the east. They joined with Northern Sudanese resistance groups and Eritrean troops to fight against the Khartoum government.

Despite its oil income, Sudan had huge debts and by the end of the 1990s it could no longer sustain the enormous cost of the war, which was running at one to two million U.S. dollars per day. The SPLA were also constantly making successful guerrilla strikes on oilfields, pipelines and roads. In 1999 President Umar al-Bashir offered the

rebels peace talks and even dangled the possibility of secession. Peace negotiations

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started in Kenya in 2002 under the auspices of the regional organisation, the Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Led by the USA, the international community strongly promoted peace, as the humanitarian consequences of the war had

been catastrophic. Between 1983 and 2005 more than two million people were killed and four million were driven from their homes. A series of protocols on specific issues finally resulted in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) on January 9, 2005. The UN Security Council had shown their support for the agreement in a unique meeting in Nairobi (UNSR-Resolution 1574 dated November 19, 2004). The UN, the African Union, the Arab League, the IGAD, the EU, Egypt, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Great Britain and the USA signed the Agreement as guarantors. A military and civil peacekeeping mission, the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) was sent to offer support during the transition period from 2005 to 2011.

## HOW NATIONAL UNITY WAS FRITTERED AWAY

At the commencement of peace talks in 2002, the notion of national unity was still a promising possibility. Both sides, Garang's SPLM and the NCP of President al-Bashir, were in favour of this goal, which also took into account economic realities. Negotiations were based on the IGAD Declaration of Principles of July 20, 1994, which was accepted by both parties and which granted the people of Southern Sudan the right to determine their future political status through a referendum. However its declared priority was the unity of Sudan and there was no mention of the right to secede.

After 2002, a variety of factors led to the goal of national unity fading more and more into the background and to developments focusing increasingly on the secession of Southern Sudan. The refusal of the NCP government to give up Sharia law in Northern Sudan – in contravention of the IGAD Declaration of Principles which it had ratified in 1997 – had the most far-reaching consequences. The Declaration stated: "Sudan is a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural society.

Full recognition and accommodation of these diversities must be affirmed. [...] A secular and democratic state must be established in the Sudan. Freedom of belief and worship and religious practice shall be guaranteed in full to all Sudanese citizens. State and

religion shall be separated. The basis of personal and family laws can be religion and customs."<sup>4</sup> Despite this, the NCP asserted in the CPA that Sharia was still the most important legal basis in Northern Sudan and any Christian or Animist Southern Sudanese people who lived there were merely exempted from it during the interim phase. Without a separation of religion and state, national unity ceased to be an attractive option for the Southern Sudanese people.

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Garang had previously had the right to secession enshrined in the first agreement in 2002 – not because this was his preferred solution but because he wanted to keep it as a fall-back position. Garang did not trust Khartoum after their earlier broken promises, and he insisted on retaining

4 | Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought (former name of the IGAD, MP): Declaration of Principles, July 20, 1994.

two effective bargaining chips in the CPA: the continuance of his military arm the SPLA until the end of the transition phase, and the right to secession subsequent to a referendum on self-determination. However the first item 1.1 of the CPA made national unity the priority for the two parties, in line with the IGAD Declaration of Principles, and in item 1.5 they agreed an undertaking to sweep aside historical differences in the way growth and resources were distributed in order to make unity more attractive.<sup>5</sup>

When John Garang was killed in a helicopter accident on July 30, 2005 the Southern Sudanese lost their strongest advocate for national unity. His successor and former deputy Salva Kiir Mayardit was more inclined towards secession. As the interim Vice President of Sudan he hardly appeared in public but instead concentrated on his job as President of autonomous Southern Sudan. The SPLM sent their B-team to sit in the multi-party transitional government in Khartoum, and their performance was correspondingly bland. In contrast to the weak Northern

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Sudanese opposition, the SPLM-North led by the Arabic-speaking Muslim Yasir Arman could have proved to be a dynamic force. An alliance between the Southern Sudanese, marginalised areas of Northern Sudan and the opposition in Khartoum would create a political heavyweight. Garang's triumphant reception in Khartoum on July 9, 2005 was unforgettable – after so many years away he was welcomed by hundreds of thousands of people from both South and North.

The NCP's policies during the transition period between 2005 and 2011 finally put paid to all hopes of national unity. The democratic reforms stipulated in the CPA failed to materialise, as did the development projects promised for the whole country. Clearly the NCP felt it was more important to hold onto power in Northern Sudan than to win the people of Southern Sudan over to the idea of national unity. Even neighbouring Egypt, strong supporter

5 | The Comprehensive Peace Agreement Between The Government Of The Republic Of The Sudan And The Sudan People's Liberation Movement/ Sudan People's Liberation Army, Naivasha January 9, 2005. These framework conditions had already been agreed on 26.5.2002 in the Machakos Protocol, which formed part of the CPA.

of Khartoum and advocate of Sudanese unity, criticized the al-Bashir government for its failure to make unity attractive.

Against this backdrop, the Southern Sudanese can hardly be blamed for voting for secession in huge numbers. This vote cannot only be explained in terms of the desire for prestige among SPLM politicians, nationalist hysteria and (unrealistic) expectations of rapid economic improvements, though of course these factors played their part. Over the last six years Khartoum had finally frittered away the trust of the people of Southern Sudan. Their desire for their own nation reflected their existential need for respect and dignity, which had been denied them for decades by the North. This is what fired up the Southern Sudanese people to cast their votes in the referendum.<sup>6</sup>

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## THE PROGRESS AND OUTCOME OF THE REFERENDUM

The referendum was organised by the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC), a body which is independent of both the Sudanese government and the autonomous government of Southern Sudan. All citizens who had reached the age of 18 and were “of sound mind” were eligible to vote, as set out in the Southern Sudan Referendum Act of 2009. Voters had to prove that one of their parents came from one of Southern Sudan’s native ethnic groups which had been domiciled in Southern Sudan before or on January 1, 1956, or that their ancestors could be traced back to these ethnic groups. People were also allowed to vote if they, their parents or grandparents had lived continuously in Southern Sudan since January 1, 1956.

Polling stations were set up in Southern Sudan, Northern Sudan and in eight countries with appreciable Southern Sudanese populations (Egypt, Ethiopia, Australia, Canada, Kenya, Uganda, USA, UK). The choice was between unity

6 | In Juba a story went round that an illiterate man had confused the symbols on the voting slip and inadvertently voted for unity. It was said that he was so upset that he committed suicide the next day.

and secession. For the result to be valid there had to be a 60 per cent turnout of registered voters and one of the two alternatives had to win more than 50 per cent of the vote. During voter registration from November 15 to December 8, 2010, more than 3.7 million people were found to be eligible to vote in Southern Sudan, 116,000 in Northern Sudan and 60,000 overseas. In view of the fact that 1.5 to 2 million Southern Sudanese live in Northern Sudan, the number of registered voters was astonishingly low. It seems that most people decided to travel to Southern Sudan for the vote because they were afraid of government pressure. It is also clear that there was no attempt to inflate the numbers of eligible voters in Northern Sudan. It was feared that the government in Khartoum would try various tricks including falsifying documents in order to increase the numbers of unity supporters who did not come from Southern Sudan.

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The referendum took place between January 9 and 15, 2011 and went off peacefully. Internal and external observer missions judged the process to be "free and fair". A turnout of 60 per cent was hit within three days; indeed 97.6 per cent of registered voters cast their vote.

There was a landslide majority of 98.8 per cent in favour of secession. An exception to this was the partial result in Northern Sudan, where 57.65 per cent voted for secession and 42.35 for unity. The split was probably between those Southern Sudanese who were planning to return home and those who wanted to stay in the North and who feared they would be personally disadvantaged by secession. In fact they are in danger of discrimination, and possibly even violence and expulsion, as happened to the Ibos in Northern Nigeria during Biafra's secession.

In accordance with the Southern Sudan Referendum Act, the parties have to clear up all disputed issues relating to their bilateral existence before the expiry of the CPA. Then the independent state of Southern Sudan can be established on July 9, 2011.

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

There is much international speculation as to whether Northern Sudan will accept the South's secession or whether it will try to prevent it by force. Khartoum made a contractual agreement to accept secession in the event of a valid referendum result, but secession will mean the loss of three-quarters of its oil reserves. According to the IMF, in 2008 oil made up 95 per cent of Sudanese exports and 60 per cent of the state's income. There are fears that Khartoum will use military force to prevent the South's secession or at least to seize control of the lucrative oilfields south of the North/South dividing line.

But Khartoum has already missed its best opportunity for military intervention – it should have prevented the referendum taking place. In view of the huge majority which has legitimised demands for secession, military intervention would now leave the North in total political isolation. At the moment Sudan is attracting a great deal of international attention. The USA is keen to prevent any escalation of the situation and is wooing Khartoum with a mixture of incentives and threats. In 2009 U.S. President Barack Obama sent General (Ret.) Scott Gration as Special Envoy and Nathan Princeton Lyman as Ambassador. Lyman had already accompanied South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy between 1992 and 1995 and played a significant role in working out a compromise between black and white South Africans. The African Union assigned its African Union High-Implementation Panel (AUHIP), which had actually been set up to deal with Darfur, to work out a sustainable post-referendum arrangement, under the leadership of former South African President Thabo Mbeki and with the support of the two sides involved. The UN sent a three-person panel headed up by former Tanzanian President Benjamin William Mkapa to observe the referendum. Since July 2010 all the international players involved have been coordinating their activities under the umbrella of the Sudan Consultative Forum.

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President Omar al-Bashir and other high-ranking NCP politicians have repeatedly emphasised over the last few months that they would indeed be sorry if the South voted

in favour of secession, but that they would accept it. They know that they cannot win another civil war. Military intervention would endanger oil production, as the SPLA would be sure to counter by immediately attacking wells and pipelines. Even though there are projects afoot for a pipeline to Kenya and a refinery in Uganda, Southern Sudan will still be reliant on Northern Sudan to refine and ship the oil for many years to come. A negotiated share in the oil business would seem to present a more attractive option for Khartoum.

It seems likely that the NCP have decided that the South has been lost and that they should concentrate on holding on to power in the North. And the USA has offered some tempting incentives: removal from the terror list, lifting of sanctions, generous debt relief. The Islamic wing of the party also sees the South's secession as an opportunity to exercise Sharia law more intensively in Northern Sudan.

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Khartoum will be negotiating hard over the next few months and will not be afraid to use bargaining chips such as the unresolved conflict in the Abyei region in order to wring out maximum concessions from the secession talks. There is much to agree, including the distribution of state assets and liabilities, international agreements, the exact demarcation of the border, the distribution of economic resources, questions of citizenship, the rights of minorities and freedom of movement.

Once international involvement has receded, Khartoum may once again try to put pressure on the South in the usual way, e.g. through targeted destabilisation. On the day before the referendum began, President al-Bashir said in an interview with *al-Jazeera*, that Southern Sudan had neither the capacity to look after its citizens nor the ability to establish and administer a state.<sup>7</sup> In Juba these words were viewed as a blatant threat.

7 | "Bashir doubts south's viability," *al-Jazeera*, January 8, 2011, <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/africa/2011/01/2011171839053529> (accessed January 20, 2011).

The most dangerous trouble spot at the moment is the region of Abyei which lies north of the North/South dividing line. In line with the CPA, it was planned that the region should hold a separate referendum on January 9, 2011 to decide whether it should be part of Northern or Southern Sudan. The people of Abyei had been promised this opportunity to decide for many years. However, the sides have not been able to reach an agreement on who is eligible to vote, which meant that the parallel referendum has been postponed indefinitely. The majority of the population in Abyei are black African Ngok Dinka, who support the SPLM and lean towards the South. At certain times of the year Arab-speaking Misserya nomads come to Abyei for grazing. Many Misserya believe that they will lose this right if the region becomes part of Southern Sudan, a belief that is encouraged by Khartoum. The governing NCP supports the Misserya's demand to be able to vote in the referendum in large numbers, something which the Ngok Dinka are vehemently opposed to.

Both sides sought arbitration from The Hague, and a ruling was made on Abyei's borders in July 2009. It was relatively favourable for Khartoum – the North was awarded a strip of land which included two profitable oilfields (Heglig and Bamboo). The remaining contested territory contains another oilfield (Diffra). But NCP representatives soon distanced themselves from this ruling, apparently wanting to keep the whole region within Northern Sudan. In May 2008 there were fierce battles in Abyei

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between the army and the SPLA, resulting in dozens of people being killed and 60,000 being driven from their homes. Abyei's eponymous capital was totally destroyed. This was the most serious breach yet of the ceasefire agreement. During the turn of the year 2010/2011 and even during the referendum there were armed skirmishes between Ngok Dinka and Misserya. It took a hastily-brokered peace agreement to restore some calm. It is possible that the two sides will now seek a compromise solution in Abyei rather than hold a referendum. But this emotionally-charged dispute could ignite a new North-South conflict, especially

as the tribal groups involved are heavily armed and to some extent outside the control of Khartoum and Juba.<sup>8</sup>

The division of Sudan into two nations also means there will be a new dynamic in the medium-term. In Southern Sudan the euphoria over independence will soon evaporate, leaving everyday reality to take its place. Up to now, South Sudanese identity has been defined by resistance against the Arab-Islamist North. It is symptomatic that there was still no agreement on the new country's name at the time of the referendum. Southern Sudan is home to more than 200 different ethnic groups. In 2009 there were numerous local armed conflicts, often over land or water, which left 2,500 dead and around 350,000 refugees – more victims than in the Darfur conflict in the same year. In the 1990s

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the antagonism between the Dinka, who dominated the SPLM, and the Nuer led to a fierce civil war being fought within Southern Sudan itself. Over the last few years the SPLM leader Salva Kiir has shown considerable tactical skill in bringing rival groups and dissidents into the party. It was also a clever manoeuvre by the SPLM to make Juba the capital of Southern Sudan rather than the Dinka city of Rumbek. Juba lies in an area which is mainly settled by smaller tribes (Bari, Makaraka, Nyanwara, Pajulu). Nevertheless, it will be a difficult challenge for the government to hold the country together.

Southern Sudan is very under-developed, large areas of the country have been laid waste by civil war, and the people live in extreme poverty. The UNDP drew attention to the huge challenges ahead in its September 2010 report entitled "Scary Statistics – Southern Sudan". 50.6 per cent of the population live on less than one U.S. dollar per day and 4.3 million people are reliant on food aid. One in seven expectant mothers dies during pregnancy or during childbirth. Over 50 per cent of the population have no access to

8 | The situation is also volatile in two other regions north of the border, South Kordofan and Blue Nile. The CPA made no provisions on whether they belonged to Northern or Southern Sudan, merely stipulating non-binding "popular consultations" about their future status in Northern Sudan. The region's resident black Africans such as the Nuba largely support the SPLM and could be tempted to affiliate their regions with Southern Sudan.

clean drinking water, and only 6.4 per cent have adequate toilet facilities. 92 per cent of Southern Sudanese women are illiterate and less than 50 per cent of children complete five years of elementary schooling.<sup>9</sup>

There is still a dearth of skilled labour and civil servants from Northern Sudan will be leaving the country. Neighbouring countries are preparing to send temporary officials as a stop gap and to help with on-the-job training. Corruption has soared in Juba over recent years because of the high levels of oil income and aid. It should be remembered in this respect that Southern Sudan's autonomous government of 1972 to 1983 was a hive of conflict, inefficiency and corruption.

For the time being the SPLM is basking in the aura of the successful liberation movement and enjoying landslide victories, such as Salva Kiirs' election as President of Southern Sudan with 93 per cent of the vote in April 2010. The SPLM now has to make the transition from being a liberation movement to a democratic party and provide an equal playing field for its future political rivals. If the country's domestic problems escalate, the government could be tempted to divert the tensions outwards by seeking confrontation with Northern Sudan or other neighbouring states. Southern Sudan is not "a failed state in the making" as some observers are rather prematurely suggesting, but there are certainly testing times ahead.

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In Northern Sudan, the loss of the South has put President al-Bashir and the NCP on the defensive. The CPA was negotiated exclusively by the NCP and the SPLM/A, so the opposition parties bear no responsibility. Therefore they are able to accuse the NCP of selling out. President al-Bashir is under pressure, with a warrant for his arrest being issued by the International Criminal Court. The elections of April 2010 were fraudulent, and the CPA expires. This means that al-Bashir will lose the last vestiges of international legitimacy.

9 | UNDP, "Scary Statistics – Southern Sudan September 2010," <http://unsudanig.org/docs/APPROVED%20High%20Level%20Scary%20Statistics%20-%20Southern%20Sudan.doc> (accessed January 20, 2011).

Two factions within the NCP are fighting to take control of the party's future direction. The pragmatists want to introduce economic reforms to provide a new basis for the economy and a cautious opening-up of the political system in order to make the most of the current climate of international goodwill and to remove the causes of brewing resistance. This had led to plans for development projects in Darfur to the tune of two billion U.S. dollars. Ranged against this faction are the hardliners and Islamists who want to clamp down still harder against opposition and rebel movements.

At the moment the latter seem to have the upper hand. On December 24, 2010 opposition politician Mariam Sadiq al-Mahdi and members of her Umma Party suffered severe beatings at the hands of the police, followed by her detention on February 10, 2011. On January 18, 2011 the Islamist opposition politician Sheikh Hasan al-Turabi, who had fallen out with the NCP in 1999, was arrested along with members of his Popular Congress Party (PCP), charged with plotting to overthrow the state and sabotage. President al-Bashir announced that Southern

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Sudanese remaining in the North would not be allowed to continue working in the civil service if the South seceded. They would also not be granted North Sudanese citizenship nor dual citizenship. The transitional constitution would be changed so that Islam and Sharia law would become the sole basis of the new constitution, with Arabic becoming the only official language. There would no longer be any possibility of cultural and ethnic diversity.<sup>10</sup>

Faced with these pressures, the NCP could be tempted to play the anti-Western card in order to divert attention from its own accountability. In September 2010 Foreign Minister Ahmed Ali Karti complained that the West and the USA wanted to divide up Sudan in order to inflict damage on the Arab and Islamist camp. Khartoum is filled with propaganda posters claiming that the USA and EU have caused Southern Sudan to split away from the union, with

10 | "Islamic law in Sudan if south secedes: Bashir," *Gulf Times*, Doha, December 20, 2010, [http://gulf-times.com/site/topics/article.asp?cu\\_no=2&item\\_no=405481&version=1&template\\_id=37&parent\\_id=17](http://gulf-times.com/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=405481&version=1&template_id=37&parent_id=17) (accessed January 20, 2011).

Israel conveniently being drawn into the equation. These accusations have found favour in parts of the Arab and Islamic world: the Iranian journalist Hassan Hanizadeh, a close supporter of the government, has aired his suspicion that there was a British/American conspiracy behind Southern Sudan's secession with the aim of reducing Islamic influence and establishing an Israeli presence.<sup>11</sup> There are however more moderate voices. The London-based Saudi newspaper *Asharq al-Awsat* made the following laconic comment on Karti's accusations: "Here we say that there is no hope in a solution to maintain Sudanese unity, since the wound is much bigger than the band-aid".<sup>12</sup>

The successful secession of Southern Sudan will also give new impetus to the Darfur rebels. It seems likely that they will step up their armed resistance and increase their demands, perhaps even taking up a separatist agenda. It should be remembered in this respect that there is no historical model for a Southern Sudanese state. On the contrary, between around 1650 and 1916 Darfur was an independent sultanate. Indeed, the Darfuris have always maintained strong ties with Khartoum. The strongest rebel movement, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) maintains good relations with the PCP and Umma Party. But at the moment the NCP government is taking a hard-line stance towards the Darfur conflict.

At the end of 2010 they walked away from the Doha (Qatar) peace talks and stepped up their military operations against rebel groups, including aerial bombing of villages.

**With international attention focused on Southern Sudan, the opposing sides in Darfur have an opportunity to escalate the conflict.**

With international attention focused on Southern Sudan, the opposing sides in Darfur have an opportunity to escalate the conflict.

For Northern Sudan, losing the South is both a warning sign and an opportunity. It would be possible to prevent further destabilisation and disintegration by allowing the outlying regions to have their fair share of power and resources and by extending democratic participation. But if the

11 | Hassan Hanizadeh, "British hands behind Sudan referendum," Teheran, January 8, 2010, <http://mehrnews.com/en/news/detail.aspx?NewsID=1227710> (accessed January 20, 2011).

12 | Tariq Alhomayed, "Sudan: Crying over Spilt Milk," *Asharq al-Awsat*, September 28, 2010, <http://aawsat.com/english/news.asp?section=2&id=22484> (accessed January 20, 2011).

regime decides to follow hard-line policies in order to hold onto power, the country will never find peace. Northern Sudan is also not made up of a single ethnic and cultural group. Although Arabic-speakers make up the majority of the population, they in fact number only around 55 per cent. There is also a certain amount of religious diversity: although the overwhelming majority of Northern Sudanese are Muslims, not all Muslims follow the line propagated by the NCP.

As things stand, the government is still in the driving seat thanks to their control over the security forces and economic resources. The opposition is financially weak, short of ideas and divided. However, the significant drop in oil income will have an effect on this system of patronage. The government has already had to reduce its subsidies on petrol and sugar. An alliance of Northern Sudan's opposition parties – SPLM-North, PCP, Umma Party, Democratic Unionist Party, Communist Party – with rebel and opposition groups could cause the NCP problems in the medium-term. But to achieve this, the opposition parties need to develop a better understanding of the needs of the outlying regions.

At the moment we must be a little wary of trying to predict the long-term consequences of the secession. The country which has been the most important bridge between black and (Arab) Muslim Africa no longer exists. This is only likely

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to exacerbate still further the continent's division along the 12<sup>th</sup> parallel and increase tensions between population groups in other countries such as Chad, Niger, Nigeria or Mauritania.<sup>13</sup>

The secession of Christian South brings Sudan into the firing line of international Jihadists. Al-Qaeda cells and

13 | AU mediator Thabo Mbeki is trying to counter the impression that "African" Southern Sudan has split away from "Arab" Northern Sudan. In a speech at Khartoum University in January 2011 he stressed that the whole of Sudan was an African country and that Islam was a part of Africa. Speech by Thabo Mbeki, Chairperson of the AUHIP, for the University of Khartoum. Friendship Hall, Khartoum, January 5, 2011, <http://thabombekifoundation.org.za/files/downloads/speech-thabo-mbeki-friendship-hall-khartoum-january5-2011.pdf> (accessed January 20, 2011).

supporters are already active in the Sahel (Algeria, Mauritania, Mali, Niger) and in Egypt and Somalia. In the 1990s there were ties between the Khartoum government and Islamist terror groups, leading to the temporary imposition of UN sanctions. Osama bin Laden lived in exile in Khartoum from 1991 to 1996. In October 2008 a group called "Al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Niles" threatened to attack westerners in the Sudan, preceded by the killing of a U.S. diplomat in Khartoum. However, since the end of the nineties the NCP government has turned away from terrorism, and the spiritual form of Islam which is practised by the North Sudanese population does not lend itself to Jihadist ideas.

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North East Africa's precarious balance will be upset by the division of Sudan and will have to be recalibrated. If the two new states become destabilised and start to disintegrate, they have plenty of neighbours who would be keen to fill the vacuum, including Ethiopia, Eritrea, Egypt, Libya, Uganda and Kenya. This could lead to war in the region.

And the possibility of a domino effect on other secession movements in the region (Oromia, Ogaden, Somaliland) and in other parts of Africa cannot be ruled out, despite the efforts of politicians who are currently insisting that Southern Sudan is a one-off situation. The biggest threat to stability would be territorial disintegration in Nigeria, the most important regional power in Sub-Saharan Africa after South Africa.

The situation in Sudan is presenting the international community with one of its greatest challenges. It has the Herculean task of helping under-developed Southern Sudan to statehood, both politically and economically. At the same time it cannot take its eyes off Northern Sudan, where it needs to offer support to the reform-oriented actors. A UN follow-up mission is needed over the next few years. It should to patrol a demilitarised buffer zone along the newly-created border and support Sudan's process of statehood.