Edited Collection - South Sudan's Independence

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ALASDAIR MCKAY, DEC 12 2012

The birth of South Sudan in July 2011 was met with jubilation by its citizens. Amidst the celebrations, there was a glimmering sense of hope that the sundering of North and South might act as a beginning from which to establish a prosperous nation.

This compendium draws together E-IR's coverage of the independence of South Sudan, spanning initial reactions in July 2011 to reflections offered a year later.

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Introductory notes to the collection:

Like so many modern African states, the future of Sudan may have already been written in its past. Since gaining independence from Egyptian and British colonial rule in 1956, Sudan has been characterized by internal conflict and tensions. Ethnic, cultural and religious divisions have coincided with unequal political and economic relations between North and South. The divisions and imbalances led to the first North-South civil war (1955-1972), followed

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by the second North-South civil war (1983-2005) and the Darfur conflict which began in 2003, continuing to this day. The human cost of the latter two wars was particularly great with around 1-2.5 million, mostly civilians, left dead from the fighting.[1]

The Second Sudanese Civil War, fought between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM)[2] of the South and the Northern government based in the capital Khartoum, was brought to a conclusion by the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).[3] The CPA sought to address many issues, but an important stipulation of the treaty was that a referendum be held to decide whether South Sudan would attain self-determination from the North. The referendum was scheduled for 2011.

In January 2011 and under close international scrutiny, the referendum on the South's independence was conducted, and the people of the South voted for secession with a 99% majority. On July 9, 2011, Africa's largest country split in two, formalising the long-awaited independence of South Sudan. The Republic of South Sudan was born and became the world's youngest state.

South Sudan has much fertile land, a young population, and plentiful natural resources, which means that it has the raw materials to build a successful nation, in the long-term at least. In the short-team, however, the priority for the South will be to achieve a sense of pacification, not only with its Northern neighbours, but also amongst its own people. After making an initial choice for separation, the task is to move on into a peaceful future of unity amongst the South Sudanese people.

Some of the initial signs were positive as the referendum passed relatively peacefully in many areas of the South, which, however superficial, was at least a start. The rhetoric from political leaders also injected a spirit of optimism. Salva Kiir Mayardit, the South's first president, seemed to position himself as a reformer, using his inaugural address to call for the South Sudanese people to forgive, though not forget, perceived injustices at the hands of the northern Sudanese over the preceding decades and announced a general amnesty for South Sudanese groups that had warred against the SPLM in the past.[4]

In spite of such proclamations, however, the inception of the Republic of South Sudan has been gradually maligned by violent clashes which have been spreading, like wildfire, in areas around the North-South border and elsewhere. Abyei – an oil-rich region along the North-South border – has seen violent conflict devastate its landscape and inhabitants since January 2011, and this has become worse as time has progressed. Abyei was due to hold a separate referendum at the same time as the South's, when its inhabitants would also decide whether to become part of the North or South. Unfortunately, progress on that vote still remains deadlocked. The settled populations of the area, the more southern-oriented Ngok Dinka, assert that they alone should have that right to vote. But the nomadic Misseriya people, who migrate to Abyei for several months of the year from the North, are equally adamant that they should also have the right to vote. In the past, there have been major tensions between the two groups and thousands have died on account of feuds over water and land.

Due to the oil reserves and geostrategic importance of the region, the Abyei dispute has assumed broader political dimensions and been used as a bargaining chip between North and South. In May 2011, Sudan Armed Forces from the North and their allied civil militias stormed Abyei, set homes on fire, looted stores and forced anybody healthy enough to flee for their lives. More than 100,000 people have been displaced.[5] The dispute over Abyei is becoming one of the most intractable in Sudan.

Elsewhere along the border, hostilities have surfaced in South Kordofan and Blue Nile. Instead of having their own referendum, both areas were granted more vague 'popular consultations' to decide whether or not the CPA had met the aspirations of the people, but the findings placed little or no obligation on the central government in Khartoum to fulfil those expectations. Both the regions were heavily contested during the Second Sudanese Civil War, and fears that the regions would be areas of continued instability and insecurity well beyond the South's independence are unfortunately being realised.

Tensions in South Kordofan intensified ahead of the gubernatorial and state assembly elections, held on May 2,

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2011. The National Congress Party [6] candidate Abdul Aziz al-Hilu narrowly beat the SPLM candidate, but the SPLM alleged the voting was rigged. The tensions exacerbated, and fighting commenced in early June 2011 when SAF moved into South Kordofan's capital Kadugli and initiated aerial attacks, triggering clashes with SPLA units in the region and causing mass displacement. Some 50,000 people have fled from South Kordofan and Blue Nile state to Ethiopia.[7]

Violence has reached a particularly intense pitch in Jonglei, the largest state in the South which is bordered by Ethiopia. The incidence of fighting between the Luo-Nuer and Murle tribes has rapidly increased since December 2011 when 8,000 armed men from the Luo-Nuer attacked the Murle's home of Pibor County. Over 1,000 people were killed in fighting between the Luo-Nuer and Murle tribes between June and December 2011.[8]

The conflicts in Sudan have caught the attention of the international community and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) was established on July 8, 2011 to support peace-building measures in the state. However, the UN peacekeeping missions have been widely criticized. In June 2011, deployments in Abyei were accused of deliberately failing to fulfil their mission to protect civilians in the region.[9] UNMISS has also recently faced criticism for its response to the ongoing conflict in South Kordofan. The SPLA has suggested that the UN has not only been largely ineffective to its response to South Kordofan's conflict, but has also been far too silent on the North Army's continued aerial bombardment of the region.[10] Also, although UN peacekeepers, community leaders and the South Sudanese government are maximizing their efforts to try and quell ethnic violence in Jonglei, new warnings and a lack of resources have analysts fearing that the violence will continue.[11] Overall, the escalation of inter-communal violence has tested the resolve of South Sudan and that of the UNMISS.

Continued border clashes brought the neighbouring states of North and South to the brink of war in April 2012. The two countries faced sanctions from the U.N. Security Council unless they thrash out a comprehensive deal resolving all their conflicts by August 2012. An agreement was reached in September 2012 which did just enough for the Sudans to avoid sanctions being implemented. The agreements allow South Sudan to resume exporting its oil through Sudan and created a demilitarized buffer zone along the border. The two sides also agreed to allow citizens of each country "four freedoms" in the other nation – freedom of residence, freedom of movement, freedom to undertake economic activity and freedom to acquire and dispose property. However, a permanent border between the Sudans has yet to be drawn. Also, leaders could not agree on the final status of Abyei; the North rejected a compromise proposed by mediators under the auspices of the African Union. The leaders also failed to find a way of ending the armed rebellions in both countries.[12]

As such, it is unlikely that the agreements will produce the period of peace which many hope for. Ultimately, it may be an uncomfortable reality that many of the flashpoints in Sudan are gradually becoming rapidly ticking time-bombs to even larger conflicts and more severe humanitarian emergencies.

These emerging crises in these two countries sharply highlight the need for discussion and reflection on South Sudan's independence and pathway into statehood so far. In consequence, this compendium of articles expounds the key issues surrounding South Sudan after its separation from the North. The articles in this collection were written for e-International Relations between June 2011 and July 2012 by experts on Sudan. This collection should be essential reading for those interested in Sudan, and the broader conceptual issues of state building, international development, humanitarian emergencies, conflict resolution and intrastate violence.

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[1] U.S. Committee for Refugees, Sudan: Nearly 2 million dead as a result of the world's longest running civil war, 2001.

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[2] This is a political party of South Sudan. It was initially founded as a rebel political movement with a military wing known as the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

[3] For a copy of the document see: http://www.aec-sudan.org/docs/cpa/cpa-en.pdf

[4] Sudan Tribune, Salva Kiir takes oath, grants amnesty to rebels; July 10, 2011

[5] UN News Centre, Sudan: Number of people displaced from Abyei rises to nearly 100,000;

[6] The National Congress or National Congress Party (NCP) is the governing official political party of Sudan. It is headed by Omar al-Bashir, who has been President of Sudan since he seized power in a military coup on 30 June 1989, and began institutionalizing Sharia law at a national level.

[7] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Sudan – South Kordofan and Blue Nile Situation Report No. 17 06/09/2011;

[8] IRIN, AllAfrica (18 March 2011). "Sudan: Timeline since the Referendum". allAfrica.com.

[9] Amnesty International, Sudan-South Sudan: Destruction and Desolation in Abyei, 2011

[10] Sudan Radio Service, Education Development Centre, SPLM in Sudan Criticize UN Over Conflicts in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States; 28 October 2011.

[11] ReliefWeb, Briefing Kit for South Sudan (Republic of): Republic of South Sudan: Humanitarian access constraints in 2011 (as of 8 Feb 2012) Compiled on 02 Mar 2012, p3-4.

[12] *The full text of the protocols of the Addis Ababa Peace Agreements 2012 is available online at http://sites.tufts.edu/reinventingpeace/2012/09/27/sudan-and-south-sudan-full-text-of-agreements/*

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Alasdair McKay is Senior Editor at Oxford Research Group. He holds undergraduate and postgraduate degrees from the universities of Manchester and Aberystwyth. He has edited several books for E-International Relations, including *Nations under God: The Geopolitics of Faith in the Twenty-First Century* (2015) and *Into the Eleventh Hour: R2P, Syria and Humanitarianism in Crisis* (2014).