

DETERMINANTS OF SUCCESSFUL SECESSIONS IN POST-COLONIAL AFRICA: THE CASE OF SOUTH SUDAN

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Introduction

On July 9th, 2011 an exceptional political event took place in the African continent: the birth of a new state bearing the official name of Republic of South Sudan. The newborn state became Africa's 54th state by formally withdrawing from Republic of Sudan as a result of the phased implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)². South Sudan's accession to statehood represents an extraordinary political development in post-colonial Africa considering the fact that – with the exception of Eritrea in 1993 – no other secessionist movement on the continent has seceded, resulting in the establishment of new independent states.

South Sudan's secession is all the more exceptional in post-colonial Africa if one brings to the fore the fact that the policies of the African Union (AU) and its predecessor, the Organization of African Union (OAU), uphold the sacrosanct character of the inherited colonial borders. The fact that the international community shows preference for the status quo regarding the emergence of new states, thus making the recognition of secessionist claims outside the colonial context an extremely difficult affair (McNamee 2012, 3).

This development started an intense debate in the literature regarding the factors that better explain the partition of Sudan. One group of scholars has suggested that external factors played a decisive role in the secession of South

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² The CPA was a settlement signed between the Government of Sudan (GoS) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) in 2005, making provisions for the exercise of the right of self-determination through referendum by the people of Sudan's Southern provinces.

Sudan (Mamdani 2011; Medani 2012; Sterio 2013);³ while others advocate instead that domestic factors played the conclusive role in determining the break-up of the Sudan (Huliaras 2012; Salman 2013; Christopher 2011)⁴.

This study adopts an alternative view, positing that both external and domestic factors played a decisive role in determining the successful outcome of South Sudan's secession. The paper draws upon qualitative secondary data sources and is structured as follows: section one presents a theoretical perspective on secession; section two examines the root-causes of secessionist conflicts in post-colonial Africa; section three analyzes the process of the secession of South Sudan; while section four advances the factors that explain the successful outcome of South Sudan's secession.

Theoretical perspectives on secession

There is little consensus amongst scholars on the definition of secession⁵. Nonetheless, different definitions of secession share the common assumption that the concept is synonymous with the idea of moving apart or

3 For instance, Mamdani (2011) claims that "in the case of South Sudan, the external factor was more decisive. That external factor was the 9/11 and, following it, US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq". This view has also been complemented by Medani (2012, 290) who asserts that "the U.S.-led compromise agreement between essentially two elite factions in northern and southern Sudan played a crucial role in preventing the reorganization of a unified Sudanese state". This is in agreement with Milena Sterio (2013, 161) who contends that, "the great powers were instrumental in ensuring that South Sudan remained a part of Sudan, and then over the last decade, the great powers played a dominant role in paving the south Sudanese way toward independence".

4 In particular, Huliaras (2012, 21) argues that "while both domestic and external factors explain the largely unanticipated outcome, domestic factors were far more important than external ones". Similarly, Salman (2013, 345) who contends that "the secession of South Sudan ensued from the failure of Northern Sudanese Political leaders to deal with South Sudan's social, political, economic, and cultural differences seriously". The failure of the central government to make the "unity of Sudan" attractive to the people of Southern Sudan in the interim period contributed to the massive vote in favor of secession in the referendum for self-determination (Christopher 2011, 128).

5 For instance, Anderson (2013, 344) includes all cases of state formation resulting from the decolonization process. According to this view, the vast majority of former colonies in Africa and Asia would be considered cases of secession. Crawford (1979, 247) sets the limits of secession on the use or threat of force by the secessionists, and opposition of the parent state. His definition reduces secession to a few cases such as Bangladesh. For Bartkus (1999, 3), Kohen (2006, 1), and Pavikovic and Radan (2007, 1), secession includes only states formed outside the colonial context, with Bartkus stressing the role of recognition by other states as an essential criterion for statehood.

withdrawing (Anderson 2013, 345). This notion emanates from the etymology of the word, the Latin verb *secede*, meaning, “to go apart” (Pavikovic and Radan 2007, 5). From this perspective, secession is commonly understood to be “the creation of a new independent state entity through the separation of part of the territory and population of an existing state” (Kohen 2006, 1).

More than chance is involved in the analytical study of secession. A set of patterns can often be discerned from the analysis of individual cases. In this context, various theories have been constructed to explain when and why secessions or attempts at secession occur. These theories reflect the subject’s multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary character. Theories of secession have been categorized into three distinct groups: explanatory, normative and legal (Pavikovic and Radan 2011, 171). Explanatory theories of secession are concerned with the social, political and economic factors leading to (or causing) secession. Normative theories of secession speculate on the moral and ethical justifications of the phenomenon, while legal theories weigh up the rights of peoples to self-determination against the preservation of the territorial integrity of states based on a variety of legal documents such as constitutional laws and Resolutions from the United Nations.

This paper favors explanatory theories of secessions because they engage relevant structural factors such as the social, political and economic context in which secessions or attempts at secession take place. Wood’s (1980) comparative analytical model on secession is representative of this set of theories viewing secession as a dynamic process occurring in successive stages.

The analytical model begins with the understanding that secessions do not occur in the vacuum. Demography, geography and history play a decisive role in separatist endeavors, since the desire to create a new independent and sovereign political entity presupposes the existence of a population group united by primordial identities or other aggregative elements, inhabiting a particular territory and experiencing a sense of marginalization and frustration within an existing state. Unaddressed grievances lead to the adoption of nationalist ideologies and the formation of secessionist organizations to advance the group’s interests. Failure of the central government to suppress the secessionists through coercive means including assimilation; or accommodation through constitutional and political reforms often leads to the development of all-out wars where the strategic and tactical advantage of the belligerents and external involvement are two factors that can influence decisively on the outcome.

Finally, a process of secession is only complete and successful once the secessionists control a territory and their movement becomes

“institutionalized in a new government, legitimate at home and recognized abroad” (Wood 1980, 133). Recognition by other states is important in this process since an entity is treated as a state only if the outside world recognizes it to be one (Sterio 2009, 8). In the words of Dugard and Raic (2006, 94), “recognition provides the imprimatur of statehood to seceding entities”.

The root-causes of secession in Africa

Secessionist conflicts have been observed in Africa since the dawn of independence in the 1960s as a number of countries experienced rebellions involving ethno-linguistic groups or marginalized communities demanding territorial separation from existing states in order to establish new independent nations. The list includes countries such as Angola (Cabinda), Comoros (Anjouan and Mohedi), the Democratic Republic of Congo (Katanga) Ethiopia (Eritrea, Ogaden, and Oromia, Afar), Mali (Tuaregs), Niger (Tuaregs), Nigeria (Biafra, Niger Delta), Senegal (Casamance), Somalia (Somaliland) and Sudan (South Sudan). The vast majority of these conflicts are rooted in the specificity of interstate boundaries and issues of governance.

In general, boundaries in Africa were demarcated at the Berlin conference in 1884 and have remained virtually unchanged since then. These boundaries are known to be “artificial and arbitrary on the basis that they do not respond to what people believe to be rational demographic, ethnographic, and topographic boundaries” (Herbst 1989, 693); and for their “propensity for bringing together peoples that historically lived under different, if not inimical systems” (Engelbert et al. 2001, 1093). However, the fathers of African independence decided to maintain the inherited colonial borders, transforming them into international boundaries between the emerging post-independent states (Hughes 2004, 834). Respect for the territorial integrity of the inherited colonial borders became the official view of the OAU and its successor the AU. These borders have often been contested by different groups in the post-colonial state.

Issues of governance have also been at the center of secessionist conflicts in Africa. Indeed, the dynamics of marginalization lead groups to challenge the state (Ylonen 2013, 131). In this regard, Ndulo (2013) notes, “failure of governance leads minority groups to believe that they are not included in running the affairs of the state”. Frustration with the state often leads to mobilization under ethnic or territory-based identity with the belief that the group’s rights will be adequately protected in a self-governed territory.

Similarly, Bamfo (2012, 37) indicates that ideological and policy differences between a region or ethnic group and the central government might lead to the emergence of separatist sentiment, which might or might not develop into a secessionist war.

The process of South Sudan's secession

The Republic of South Sudan is a landlocked country situated in East-Central Africa sharing borders with six sovereign states: Ethiopia to the east, Kenya and Uganda to the south, the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the southwest, the Central African Republic to the west, and the Sudan to the North.

South Sudan has a population estimated at around 11.5 million inhabitants, distributed among three main ethno-linguistic groups: Nilotic, Nilo-Hamitic, and Sudanic groups (World Fact Book 2014). Nilotic groups (comprising the Dinka, the Nuer, and the Shilluk constitute the majority), with the Dinka being the biggest and leading group economically and politically (Heraclides 1987, 216). The environment in which the people of South Sudan inhabit shapes their pattern of life with most groups living as sedentary farmers, agro-pastoralists and seasonal fishermen. In terms of religious belief, many Southern Sudanese adhere to indigenous religion, Christianity and Islam (Salman 2013, 346).

The documented history of South Sudan is intrinsically linked to the emergence of modern Sudan nearly two centuries ago. This history began with the southward expansion of the northern Turco-Egyptian regime of Mohamed Ali Pasha in 1821 in its quest for ivory, slaves and the source of the Nile Basin (Salman 2013, 347). The Turco-Egyptian regime was succeeded by the Mahdist regime (1881-1898), which built on the exploitative practices of the previous regime – such as slave raiding and slave trading – against the Southern communities (Salman 2013, 347). In 1899 British and Egyptian forces defeated the Mahdist regime, asserting their authority over Sudan, which became an Anglo-Egyptian colony until 1947⁶.

During the Anglo-Egyptian condominium, the northern and the southern regions of the Sudan were administered as two separate entities through the Southern Policy. The policy provided for the establishment of different rules regarding administration, law, religion and education in the

6 Between 1899 and 1947 the Sudan was officially an Egyptian possession administered by British officials on behalf of the King of Egypt.

two parts of the country; closure of borders and restriction of movements between the two regions through the Passports and Permits Ordinances (Ali et al. 2005, 167). In the words of the British Civil Secretary (cited in Johnson 2004, 11), “the administration of South Sudan was to be developed along ‘African’, rather than ‘Arab’ lines, and that the future of Southern Sudan might ultimately lie with the countries of British East Africa, rather than with the Middle East”.

The establishment of Anglo-Egyptian colonial rule in the Sudan exacerbated a regional gap between the North and the South. There was little educational investment in the South and no major economic schemes were attempted in the region. The South was socially, economically and politically disadvantaged in relation to the North during the colonial period (Wassara 2015, 64). However, the Southern Policy was reversed in 1947 after the British Foreign Office decided to grant independence to the North and the South as a unified country. This quest was accomplished on January 1st 1956.

Despite its pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial roots, the most recent manifestations of Southern separatist estrangement in the Sudan rest on the politics leading to the country’s independence including Southern fears of Northern domination and internal colonization in post-independent Sudan. Tensions between the two regional groups were aggravated by Northern refusal of a bi-state federal constitution, policies of “Arabisation” and “Islamisation” and Southern underrepresentation in government structures, as a result of the “Sudanisation Policy” (Rogier 2005, 10).

For instance, in early 1952, Northern representatives, which constituted the majority in the Legislative Assembly, rejected provisions in the draft constitution of the Sudan concerning demands for certain safeguards for the South. These included a bi-federal secular state and the appointment of a minister for southern affairs responsible for the social and economic empowerment of Southerners (Oromo 2015, 70). Later that year, Southerners were excluded from crucial constitutional discussions concerning the future of the country on the grounds that they were not organized in political parties. The talks took place in Cairo and involved Northern political parties the two colonial powers: Britain and Egypt (Wassara 2015, 64).

In addition, the “Sudanisation” process (the replacement of foreign civil service workers for Sudanese servants) confirmed Southern fears of Northern domination, as only six out of 800 senior posts in the administration were accorded to Southerners (Heraclides 1987, 217). Southerners also complained about being underrepresented in the country’s first elected government: the cabinet included only three Southerners in the junior posts

of state rather than full ministers; and just three out of 46 members in the Constitutional Assembly were Southerners (Salman 2013, 351).

Issues concerning the nature of the post-independent state also played a role in fuelling tensions between the two ethno-regional groups. The Sudan was granted independence with a temporary constitution. The mission of defining the character of the post-colonial state was left to the first elected government. Decisions were to be made between a federal or unitary state, and between a secular and an Islamic constitution. Southerners favoured federalism as a mean of escaping Northern domination while Northerners argued that federalism was the first step towards separatism. In the end, the Sudan failed to achieve a federal and secular constitution as Northern ideas of a unitary Islamic state prevailed (Johnson 2004, 30).

Besides, the political elite in the North held the view that the South was culturally void and should be filled with Arab-Islamic culture (Heraclides 1987, 218). In line with this view, the military government of general Abbud pursued an aggressive policy of Islamisation and Arabisation in the South, focusing on education: mission schools were placed under government control; Arabic became the official medium of instruction; conversions to Islam were encouraged; and the activities of missionaries were intensely restricted until they were finally expelled in 1964 (Johnson 2004, 30).

This sequence of events and measures galvanized the Southern Sudanese political elite to engage on organized political and military opposition against the government in Khartoum. The process began in earnest in 1962 with the foundation of the Sudan African National Union (SANU). In subsequent years, several other separatist organizations emerged, which were instrumental in conducting the Southern struggle for independence including the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM) established in 1971, and the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) in 1983. These organizations opposed militarily successive governments in Khartoum in a conflict that lasted for nearly five decades and was fought in two rounds: between 1955 and 1972; and between 1983 and 2002.

The first round of the war started on August 18th 1955 after Southern officers from the Equatorial Corps stationed in Torit mutinied over fears that they would be disarmed and transferred to the North. Similar insurrections within the army, police and prison services broke-out throughout the South (Johnson 2011, 208). The Sudanese Army suppressed these uprisings driving Southern survivors into hiding in neighbouring Uganda, where they established military camps and operational centres.

Attempts to solve the Southern problem were made at the Round Table Conference in 1965. The warring parties failed to reach a compromise leading to the escalation of the war. Between 1967 and 1972 Sudan's first civil war became internationalized as an extension of conflicts in the Middle East and the politics of the Cold War: the military government of general Jaafar Nimeiri aligned itself with the Arab bloc and the socialist states receiving substantial military aid from Egypt, Libya and the Soviet Union (Johnson 2011, 212); while Israel developed a network of financial and training support to Southern guerrillas and the SSLM through Uganda and Ethiopia (Rogier 2005, 11).

These developments had serious impacts on the course of the war in the South, as the improved position of the Southern guerrilla forces demanded a diplomatic solution to the conflict. In this context, the Sudanese government and the SSLM negotiated a peace agreement that was signed by President Nimeiri and Joseph Lagu in Addis Ababa in February 1972. The Addis Ababa agreement not only brought peace to the Sudan but also "guaranteed Southern Sudan regional self-government status within the Republic of Sudan" (Dersso 2013, 7). However, Southern regional autonomy came to an end in 1983, after Nimeiri's regime took a series of decisions that amounted to unilateral abrogation of the Addis Ababa Agreement including the abolition of the Southern region, declaration of Arabic as the official language in the South, and the imposition of sharia law all over the country (Rogier 2005, 16-17).

The second round of Sudan's civil war started in 1983 with a mutiny of Southern soldiers in the Sudanese army. The rebellion was motivated by "Northern promotion of Islamic law, a shortfall in the implementation of the Addis Ababa Agreement and the continued marginalization of the South" (Schafer 2007, 4). These mutineers formed the core of the SPLA, which received external support from the Dergue's regime in Ethiopia.

In 1989 the SPLA managed to capture all the major towns in the South forcing peace negotiations with the government of Sadiq al-Mahdi and demanding the establishment of a secular state. The National Islamic Front of general Omar al-Bashir reacted by staging a coup that overthrew the government of Sadiq al-Mahdi, thus suspending the peace negotiations. In 1991 the war became internationalized as neighbouring countries began to align themselves with the parties to the conflict (Schafer 2007, 4). For instance, with the intensification of the civil wars in Ethiopia, Khartoum backed the revolutionary forces (the Eritrea People's Liberation Front, the Tigray People's Liberation Front and the Oromo Liberation Front), while the SPLA gave armed support to Mengistu's regime (Johnson 2011, 219).

The war continued intermittently until it was brought to an end through diplomatic means in 2002. Negotiations began with the signing of the Machakos Protocol on July 20, 2002. The document established the framework of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which was signed in 2005. The CPA committed the SPLA and the Khartoum government to work for the unity of the country “granting the South the option of an independence referendum after an interim period” (Johnson 2011, 221). As a result, in January 2011 the people of Southern Sudan voted for independence from the Sudan, and on July 9th 2011, South Sudan emerged officially as Africa’s 54th state.

Explaining the determinants of South Sudan’s successful secession

It should be reiterated that South Sudan achieved statehood within a hostile international normative framework governing the emergence of new states⁷. Eritrea’s independence in 1993 came in the middle of a series of state partitions, set off with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The OAU/AU in particular maintained its views on secession as the antithesis of African statehood. Hence, Eritrea’s achievement was considered to be an exception to the rule. For instance, Somaliland’s demands for statehood remain unresolved while Anjouan and Mohedi’s withdrawal from the Comoros in 1997 was reversed after the harsh sanctions imposed by the OAU. Furthermore, the North-South conflict did not end with a military victory; rather it was settled on the diplomatic table through the CPA.

In this context, it is reasonable to explore the determinants of South Sudan’s successful ascent to the heights of statehood. This section argues that the partition of the Sudan was the result of a combination of domestic and external factors including: the antagonistic historical relations between the northern and southern parts of the Sudan; the international search for peace and stability in the Sudan; the impacts of “9/11” and the war on terror on the Sudanese peace process; and the flaws in the drafting and implementation of the CPA.

⁷ States tend to emerge in waves creating an international context favorable to the admission of new members into the global community nations. For instance, a number of nations attained statehood through the process of decolonization as empires shed their colonial holdings from the end of World War II through the 1970s. In addition, the collapse of the Yugoslavian Federation and the Soviet Union in the early 1990s created more than 20 new.

Antagonistic historical relations between northern and southern Sudan

The first determining factor for the partition of the Sudan lies on the unfriendly historical nature of North-South relations. Prior to Southern secession, the country was described as a “microcosm” with a fundamental division between North and South (Heraclides 1987, 219). It has been reported how “the North is, with certain important exceptions, Arabic in speech, and its people are universally Muslim” (Holt and Daly 1988, 3); while the South comprises diverse communities, racially akin to tropical Africa and adherents to indigenous religions as well as Christianity (Dersso 2012, 6).

For centuries, the North centered on Khartoum sought to expand its dominance to the periphery of the Sudan. However, early contacts between the people of the North and the inhabitants of the South were marked by extreme hostility and brutality. During the Turkiyya (1820-1881) and Mahdiyya (1881-1898) northerners viewed the South as a source of slaves, ivory, gold and other natural resources to be pillaged for the benefit of the North (Johnson 2004, 7-9). Although the Anglo-Egyptian colonial rule (1899-1956) ended the assault on the people of the South, it reinforced the gulf between the two regions through the implementation of dual administrative and developmental policies.

This legacy of pre-colonial conquest, slave-raiding and resource plundering as well as unequal development during the colonial period, informed Southern Sudan’s demands for special safeguards within a united post-colonial Sudan. However, in post-independent Sudan, the North consistently refused to take Southern demands seriously through what Salman (2013, 345) termed “a series of broken promises and lost opportunities for resolving the problem of South Sudan”. In this regard, it was not a mistake to describe the South as an internal colony from 1956 to 1972 (Heraclides 1987, 217). Northern attitudes towards Southerners attest to this view: underrepresentation and exclusion from the negotiations leading to the country’s independence; inequitable participation in the affairs of the state; dismissal of claims for a federal constitution; and forced assimilation through the policies of Islamization and Arabization.

Khartoum recognized the right of the people of South Sudan to develop their cultures within a unified Sudan in the Addis Ababa Agreements of 1972. Southern Sudan was granted a regional self-government status under Sudan’s 1973 Constitution (Dersso 2012, 7). However, Nimeiri’s unilateral abrogation of the peace agreement, the declaration of the Islamic state, declaration of Arabic as the official language in the South and the imposition of sharia law all over the country added to the long list of broken promises to

the South. The takeover of government by the National Islamic Front (NIF) of general Omar al-Bashir and Hassan al-Turabi in 1989 further alienated the South. The NIF regime referred to the North-South conflict, which lasted until 2002, as a Jihad, a holy war against Southern “pagans” (Rogier 2005, 21).

This long history of violations of democratic processes, socio-economic, political and cultural oppression and marginalization made it clear to local, regional and international peace-brokers that the solution to the North-South conflict in the Sudan lied on the acceptance of Southern claims for self-determination (Dersso 2012, 7).

International search for peace and stability in the Sudan

The success of South Sudan’s withdrawal from the Sudan was also facilitated by the efforts of numerous external actors to find a diplomatic settlement to the conflict. From 1992 to 2001 African countries and organizations (driven by various interests) launched successive peace initiatives: Nigeria (1992-1993), IGAD (1994-1997), and Egypt and Libya (1999-2001). This “traffic jam of regional peace initiatives” not only provided the foundations for the final settlement in 2005, but also complicated the resolution of Africa’s long running conflict (Rogier 2005, 36).

Two major events in 1991, the fall of Mengistu’s regime in Ethiopia – the SPLA’s major external patron at the time – and the split of the movement between forces loyal to John Garang and those loyal to Riek Machar and Lam Akol, weakened the military position of the SPLA. This state of affairs was seen as an opportunity to end the conflict in the negotiation table prompting Nigerian President Ibrahim Babangida to launch the Abuja round of negotiations in the early 1992. During the negotiations Southerners called for the exercise of self-determination within a unified Sudan, while the NIF insisted on the maintenance of the Sudan as an Islamic state. The Abuja peace initiative failed as a result of the irreconcilable positions of the belligerents (Johnson 2004, 174).

In 1994 Sudan’s partners in the Intergovernmental Authority for Peace (IGAD) launched a regional peacemaking initiative for the country. IGAD member states (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Djibouti and Somalia) were concerned with the negative impacts of the war in neighboring countries. These included the inflow of refugees and the ensuing precarious humanitarian situation, loss of economic opportunities and Sudan’s political destabilization of the region through sponsorship of rebel groups in the neighboring countries (Shafer 2007, 8). In 1995 IGAD introduced a Declaration of Principles (DOP) proposing a diplomatic solution to the conflict, the unity of the country, religious pluralism and the right of self-

determination for the South through a referendum (Johnson 2004, 174). Unfortunately, the IGAD peace process collapsed as the NFI abandoned the negotiation table in exchange for alternative solutions, which included a “peace from within” process with the small SPLA breakaway factions. The IGAD peace process resumed in 1997 after Khartoum accepted the DOP as the basis for future discussions (Schafer 2007, 5).

Similarly, Libya and Egypt launched a joint peace initiative in 1999. This new initiative helped to halt the IGAD peace process. The Libyan-Egyptian initiative, which represented an Arab view of the conflict, aimed at countering a “perceived” African domination of the peace process and the exclusion of a major Arab stakeholder, Egypt⁸. By 2001, the initiative had advanced a proposal that “excluded all reference to self-determination and secularism but stressed the need to preserve the Sudan’s unity and envisaged *inter alia* ‘recognizing Sudan’s diversity’, ‘establishing a decentralized government’ and ‘forming an interim government’” (Rogier 2005, 42).

In 2001, IGAD peace process was revived as a result of political developments in the United States: George W. Bush was inaugurated president at the beginning of the year; John Danforth was appointed special envoy on Sudan on September 6; and a few days later the world witnessed the terrorist attacks of September 11th. The aftershocks of “9/11” “dramatically impacted on the bilateral relationship between the US administration and the Government of Sudan, thereby creating the environment in which a new international peace saw the light” (Rogier 2005, 45). In this regard, the US, Britain, Italy, the Netherlands and Norway pressured for renewed negotiations resulting in the signing of the Machakos protocol in 2002. The protocol was mediated by Kenya under the auspices of IGAD and constituted the foundations for subsequent negotiations culminating in the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreements (CPA).

The CPA was signed between Sudan’s central government and the SPLA in Nairobi on January 9th, 2005. According to Dersso (2012, 7), “the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, which created a democratic basis for sustainable peace, was a momentous development for the Sudan and indeed Africa, and brought to a conclusion one of Africa’s longest civil wars”. The central provision of the CPA was the right of Southerners to conduct a referendum on self-determination after an interim period of six years in which the North and the South would strive to make unity attractive. It was in accordance with this provision that a referendum was held between

⁸ Egypt’s stakes in the Sudan comprised access to the Nile’s waters and the contention of Islamic fundamentalism espoused by the NIF.

January 9th and 15th 2011. The majority of Southerners (about 98 percent) voted for independence and after six months the Republic of South Sudan emerged as the 54th African state.

The effects of the US-led War on Terror on the Sudanese peace process

The US-led war on terror was instrumental in the partition of the Sudan. In particular, the post-“9/11” environment, which intensified growing American security concerns with the Sudan. The terrorist attacks on September 11 impacted dramatically on the bilateral relationship between Washington and Khartoum, thereby creating an environment in which the CPA was signed (Rogier 2005, 52). The rationale behind this strategy was Washington’s perception that “America’s own security was linked to the outcome of conflicts like that in Sudan” (Young 2005, 104).

From a post-Cold War perspective, US security interests in the Sudan began with the assumption of power of the NIF in 1989. The US expressed great concerns at Sudan’s adoption of an aggressive Islamist foreign policy (Young 2005, 104), and its pledge to “spread the Islamic revival throughout the Arab and African worlds” (Medani 2012, 284). Washington’s relations with Khartoum became overtly antagonistic between 1991 and 1993 as a result of a number of actions and policies followed by the Sudanese government including: providing safe haven for terrorists, support for Iraq during the Gulf war, increasing relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, etc. (Rogier 2005, 46).

In response, the US included the Sudan in its 1993 list of states that sponsor acts of international terrorism (Medani 2012, 284). Furthermore, in November 1996 the US provided USD 20 million worth of military hardware to neighboring countries for protection against Sudanese Islamic aggression. A year later the US imposed unilateral sanctions against Sudan. In August 1998 the US launched cruise missile attacks on pharmaceutical plants in Khartoum (Young 2005, 104). The Sudan remained a pariah state throughout the tenure of the Clinton administration between 1993 and 2000.

The US resumed diplomatic engagements with Khartoum under President George W. Bush. The Bush administration’s continued interests in the Sudan were informed by domestic public pressure, oil exploration and terrorism (Rogier 2005, 51). These three parameters triggered American involvement in the peace process. In early 2000, the US began talks with Sudan on security issues later establishing a counterterrorism bureau in Khartoum. In May 2001 the US appointed a Special humanitarian Coordinator

for the Sudan and on September 6th, Senator John Danforth was nominated special envoy to the Sudan, with the mandate of brokering a peace settlement.

The events of “9/11” strengthened America’s engagements with the Sudan. A more proactive foreign policy was adopted towards the former “terror state” strategically located on the intersections of the Middle East and East Africa. The US took a leading role in the peace process applying sticks and carrots to the warring parties. The US required the Sudanese government to “cooperate actively on terrorism” while Khartoum responded positively fearing “possible American retaliation action” or international integration (Rogier 2005, 52).

In this regard, Young (2005, 104) observes that “as American engagements in Sudan intensified, the participation of countries from the region, apart from Kenya, in the peace process declined and broader geopolitical and security issues came to the fore”. The US influenced the Sudanese peace process through IGAD and a troika of partners (the UK, Netherlands, Norway, Italy, etc.). These actors negotiated the signing of the Machakos Protocol in 2002 and the CPA three years later.

Flaws in the drafting and implementation of the CPA

Although the CPA brought Sudan’s civil wars to a conclusion, the peace agreement was beset by numerous shortcomings (both in terms of planning and implementation), which contributed to the abandonment of the promise of a united country. The CPA was marred with two main limitations: the exclusivist narrow approach of the peace process; and the lack of credibility associated with the national elections held during the interim period in April 2010.

In terms of planning, the CPA emerged out of an exclusivist approach to peacemaking: a bilateral deal between two formerly warring parties without the participation of other political-military and civil society groups. In the words of Medani (2012, 288) the CPA was “a negotiated agreement among ethnic and military elites, brokered by external parties, who accept a minimal form of elite participation designed to achieve political stability while avoiding opposition from other forces in society”. The demands for participation by other political forces – such as the South Sudan Defense Force (SSDF), the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) – were rejected by IGAD and other actors involved in brokering the peace settlement (Young 2005, 102).

Indeed, the CPA installed a coalition government between the SPLA and al-Bashir’s National Congress Party (NCP); creating two polities

in one country; and establishing an evenly division of oil revenues between Khartoum and Juba. The SPLA's failure to incorporate the grievances of other marginalized groups and regions posed serious threats for achieving sustainable peace and stability in the Sudan. It should be observed that by the time the "traffic jam of peace initiatives" began in the early 1990s, the conflict in the Sudan had already transcended the North-South divide (as acknowledged in the SPLA's vision of a "New Sudan"). The eruption of the Darfur conflict in 2003 was an attempt by the insurgents of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) to have their voices and grievances heard just like those of Southerners (Young 2005, 102).

Another flaw, this time related to the implementation of the CPA, with special relevance to the argument being advanced (the flaws in the nature and execution of the CPA contributed to the partition of Sudan) was the lack of credibility of the electoral process held during the interim period between April 11th and 15th 2010. The process was marred by massive manipulations and vote rigging from the start (Medani 2012, 288). Both the SPLA and al-Bashir's NCP were driven by different objectives. After the death of the pro-unity leader John Garang in 2005, the SPLA began to concentrate on governing the South in order to create the necessary conditions for a successful referendum⁹. The NCP, on the other hand, focused on maintaining the status quo in the North.

⁹ John Garang de Mabior led the SPLA/M from its foundation in 1983 until his untimely death on July 30th 2005 in a helicopter crash in South Sudan. He championed the idea of creating a "New Sudan", a polity that would "reflect the diversity of the population and ensure all groups equal access to economic and political power" (Rogier 2005, 18). The vision of a "New Sudan" entailed the establishment of a secular and representative government within the borders of a united Sudan. This audacious goal not only represented a discontinuity with the secessionist agenda of most Southern organizations but also required the overthrowing of the government in Khartoum.

Garang's vision of the "New Sudan" was well received by other marginalized groups and regions in the Sudan animating the fight against the government in Khartoum. However, it also found strong opposition amongst staunch Southern nationalists within his own movement and other Southern organizations who advocated for the separation of the South. In the end, the vision of the "New Sudan" appear to have been reflected in the CPA, particularly in its provision of power split between Al-Bashir's National Congress Party (NCP) and Garang's SPLM, with the leader of the NCP taking up the presidency and the SPLM taking up the vice-presidency of the Sudan.

Since Garang was highly respected as a military commander and a charismatic leader in the South and in the Sudan as a whole, it has often been speculated that if it was not for his premature death his vision of a "New Sudan" would probably have influenced the outcome of the referendum.

Consequently, the SPLA and al-Bashir's regime forged a strategic partnership to ensure that their objectives were achieved. This prompted Medani (2012, 289) to observe that "the elections of April 2010 were not only unrepresentative of Sudanese society; their ultimate purpose was to pave the way for the referendum the following year". In the end both parties achieved their objectives: the SPLA won the election in the South with 93 percent; while al-Bashir's National Congress Party (NCP) held on to power in the North with 68 percent of the vote despite a boycott by all the major opposition parties.

Conclusion

South Sudan achieved independence through the political phenomenon of secession in an environment that was particularly hostile to the emergence of new states. This paper has argued that the partition of the Sudan was the result of a combination of both domestic and external factors. Domestically, the antagonistic historical relations between the northern and southern parts of Sudan as well as the flaws in the drafting and implementation of the CPA played an important role. Externally, the role of foreign actors in the quest for peace and stability in the Sudan as well as the impacts of "9/11" and the war on terror on the Sudanese peace process contributed to South Sudan's independence on July 11th, 2011.

Nevertheless, the independence of South Sudan has not translated into peace and stability for the newborn state. The post-independent trajectory of the country has been characterized by successive wars. Military confrontations with the parent state (Sudan) erupted in March 2012, as a result of disputes over border demarcations and sharing in the profits of oil exploration. In addition, the country has been experiencing a civil war since December 2013. The conflict opposes forces loyal to President Salva Kiir and forces loyal to former Vice-President Riek Machar. This situation has led to the increased suffering of a people that was once thought to have finished its tortuous ascent to the heights of peace.

The successful secession of South Sudan has engendered renewed academic interest on Africa's latent and active secessionist movements. It has become clear that South Sudan's secession has not led to a domino effect on other secessionist movements in the continent. Although there are some secessionist groups operating in Africa, no movement seems to have enough military power to force the central government to acquiesce to their demands.

This situation is likely to remain unchanged since the African Union has not reformed its predecessor's position on the sacrosanct character of African borders, and the international community shows predilection for the status quo regarding the emergence of new states.

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ABSTRACT

Since the dawn of independence in the 1960s, a number of African countries have experienced rebellions involving ethno-linguistic groups or marginalized communities demanding territorial separation from existing states in order to establish new independent nations. Despite the high incidence of secessionist conflicts in the continent only two cases have succeeded resulting in the establishment of two new states in post-colonial Africa: Eritrea in 1993 and South Sudan in 2011. The secession of South Sudan took place in a continental and global context hostile to the emergence of new states. This event started an intense debate in the literature regarding the factors that better explain the partition of the Sudan. One group of scholars has suggested that domestic factors were crucial in the process, while another group advocates that external factors played the decisive role in determining the break-up of Sudan. This study adds a new perspective to the debate contending that a tight combination of both domestic and external factors were decisive in determining the successful outcome of Southern Sudan's secessionist struggle. The study draws upon qualitative secondary data sources and represents a unique contribution to the debate on the determinants of successful secessions in post-colonial Africa.

KEYWORDS

Secession; Secessionist Movements; Self-determination; South Sudan; Post-colonial Africa.

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