

South Sudan's Faulty Start
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12 July 2012

The 54th African nation, South Sudan, came into being on July 9, 2011. This was as a result of the referendum that was contained in the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed between the government of Sudan and the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement (SPLM) which had been fighting a bitter war since 1983.

In many ways, that referendum had wider implications for the rest of the continent since it was the first real attempt to redraw the colonial boundaries of African countries. One year on, it is time to take stock and see how the journey of Juba to nationhood has been.

Very few countries have been through such harrowing experience in an eventful history as South Sudan. Internally, there have been inter-ethnic conflicts even after the successful separation with Khartoum. Internationally, Juba ended its first year as a country with condemnations from the African Union Peace and Security Council, the United Nations and powerful countries like the United Kingdom and the United States for its April 10 illegal occupation of Heglig, which they call Panthou, an oil field that is part of the Republic of Sudan.

When South Sudan seceded a year ago, the exact location of the border with its northern neighbour was still a matter of dispute.

Both sides agreed that the line separating north from south when Sudan became independent on July 1, 1956, should be used, but there is still much debate about where that line is on ground. Consequently, and given the deteriorating relationship between Juba and Khartoum, border troubles are not surprising. But the April fighting took both countries to the verge of an all-out war.

Economic conditions have worsened since South Sudan shut off oil production of 350,000 barrels per day in January in protest at what it sees as Khartoum's unfair demands for transit fees for the use of the pipeline that runs across its territory to Port Sudan on the Red Sea. As rainy season began, food became scarce.

The World Food Programme reckons that a million people face starvation, with 4-5 million seriously at risk. Although South Sudan's President Salva Kiir and his government were buoyed up by a brief trip to Beijing in April that yielded some pledges to finance infrastructure, economic troubles are multiplying in the South.

Many diplomats and some previous supporters of the southern cause, rattled by the high stakes of the resumption of full-scale war, have voiced impatience with Juba. The SPLA occupation of Heglig had damaging diplomatic consequences on the South.

Within hours, UN secretary-general Ban Ki-Moon called President Kiir ordering him to withdraw his troops immediately. But Kiir went to the South Sudan's parliament to announce that he was not answerable to any UN secretary-general, being a president.

Obviously, Mr. Kiir does not know that he is now running a government and not a liberation movement!

Because of its oil wealth -- it produces about 70% of Khartoum's 130,000 barrels per day - Heglig is one of the most valuable possessions for the North. A formal delineation of boundaries along the new border - at 1,800km - had not been conducted by the time of South Sudan's secession and independence last July.

Talks between the two countries are expected to resume but until issues of security, the borders and oil revenues are sorted out, there are likely to be more clashes.

The SPLA government even feels that war raises patriotism among its citizens and that is why it is so belligerent by trying to defy both the AU through the Mbeki panel as well as the UN through the Security Council rebuff. A nation that came into being as a result of armed struggle is finding it difficult to lay down arms and embrace peace for development.

With no oil revenues coming in as a result of South Sudan's oil production shut-down, now in its fifth month, and international financial institutions giving Juba only a few months before the new republic runs out of cash, President Kiir has taken some drastic measures.

At the beginning of June, he announced that \$4bn was missing from the government coffers as a result of corruption. The president drew up a list of 75 government officials who needed to account for their wealth and announced an amnesty for those who voluntarily came forward. Within a week, \$60m had been returned, and more is expected.

Sadly, the secession of South Sudan from the Sudan on July 9, 2011, has resulted in dashed hopes and miserable failure to live up to the expectations of the longsuffering people of that unfortunate country. One year on, the verdict is that its internal contradictions and external problems are combining to make an infant country with retarded growth.

Secession has not ended the bitter conflicts between the two Sudans and it has not brought the much-needed reconciliation among the South Sudanese themselves.

The internal challenges facing South Sudan revolve around the issues of corruption as confirmed by President Kirr himself, insecurity and the failure of leadership among South Sudanese ruling party, the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement (SPLM).

Externally, the issues confronting the newest African nation include the unresolved border demarcations between the North and South, the contested region of Abyei, the disputes over oil, and the accusations of harbouring and supporting each other's rebel groups.

Since the separation, the government of South Sudan has done little in the area of striving to diversify the economy so that the country has a mono-product economy now with 98% of the national budget depending on oil revenue.

South Sudan still requires Khartoum's oil facilities and port in order to export it to the international market, but the two countries have not been able to agree on transit fees.

The efforts by South Sudan to establish another transit route via Lamu in Kenya will take a few more years to materialize; thus, this landlocked country has to come to terms with the fact that it needs peace and good neighbourliness to survive and thrive, at least in the short to medium terms.

After years of bitter conflicts between the South and North mainly fueled by external actors using internal factors, South Sudan ought to embark on the path of much-needed, economic development and political inclusion. Unfortunately, there is so much anxiety and uncertainty across the country leading to bitterness and disillusionment. It is time for genuine reconciliation, much hard work and great sacrifice. Those who live by the gun need not die by the gun. The future belongs to the just.