

**Elizabeth Lang**

## **Reframing our knowledge's: the formation of Africa's newest State, the Republic of Southern Sudan**

### **ABSTRACT**

With the formation of Africa's newest State, the Republic of Southern Sudan, we are challenged to believe that our knowledge of Africa needs to be fluid, ever changing and dynamic in nature. The formation of Africa's newest State, the Republic of Southern Sudan has come after decades of civil war, bloodshed and oppression under many tyrannical rulers, ranging from the ancient times to the present. The country has been witness to decades of war and instability under many dictatorships. With the birth of this new nation come many hopes and aspirations for the development of the country. Many challenges lie ahead to the 'nation building project' of the Republic of Southern Sudan, including continuing conflict with the Khartoum administration over oil rich areas such as Abyei and other areas also experiencing mass conflicts such as Darfur. It is these barriers to development and peace that the paper seeks to highlight and explore possible approaches for addressing the challenges.

**Key words: national development; peace; comprehensive peace agreement; conflict; reconstruction; colonisation; Islamisation; resources; sovereignty; Southern Sudan Referendum.**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Sudan's civil war, well known for being Africa's longest as well as one of the worlds longest civil wars spanned from 1983 and officially ended with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 (Apsel, 2008, Jooma, 2005, Maitre, 2009, Natsios, 2008, Shanmugartnam, 2008) between the late John Garang of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the government of Sudan (GOS) (Jooma, 2005). The war claimed the lives of over two million and displacing a further four million people into exile as refugees all over the world (Jooma, 2005). The root causes of the civil war may be attributed to a number of issues including disagreements over power sharing, linked closely with natural resources (water, oil and land) and religious and racial differences all taking their claim (Metelits, 2004, South Sudanese Profile, n.d). The civil war has had and continues to have serious consequences for people that have been displaced, particularly those who have lived or are stilling living in harsh conditions in refugee camps and those still internally displaced within the borders of North and South Sudan (Jaekle & Georgakopoulos, 2010). The North South civil war of Sudan is the central driving force for the longing for independence and sovereignty for Southern Sudanese people (Jauhari, 2010). The move by the Khartoum administration towards Islamisation was met with great resistance from Southern Sudanese people (An-Na'im, 1998) and hence the twenty-one years of civil war.

The referendum of South Sudan which was one of the main conditions stipulated in the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) following six years of relative autonomy for South Sudan was held January 2011 (Bredlid, 2010, Woodward, 2011, Shanmugartnam, 2008). The referendum voting allowed Indigenous people of South Sudan (both living within the Sudan and in exile) the right of self-determination to vote in an international referendum that would result in the separation of North and South Sudan as two distinct countries (Terlinden, 2004,

Woodward, 2011). South Sudan's independence was announced internationally in July 9th 2011 after close to 99% of Southern Sudanese (who voted worldwide) determined that secession is the way forward (Nedelcheva, 2011, Salman, 2011). The referendum voting was held in Sudan and eight other countries all over the world including Australia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, the United States of America, Canada and the United Kingdom (Sudan Tribune, 2011). The referendum put the right of vote directly in the hands of Southern Sudanese people in Sudan and in exile as they determined the fate of their country and futures (Jaeckle, 2010, Terlinden, 2004, Woodward, 2011). South Sudan is officially recognised as a sovereign nation, becoming 193rd member of the nations of the world and the 54th State in Africa (Salman, 2011).

Though the birth of this new nation has come with much optimism from Southern Sudanese people, the greatest challenge of national development now lays ahead (Jooma, 2005). Other challenges that may threaten the peace and national development of South Sudan include civil unrest in areas such as Abyei, South Kordofan, Darfur and Blue Nile which the GOS continue to attack (Jauhari, 2010). Such conflicts could potentially hinder advances for development and maintaining peace in South Sudan, particularly as conflicts become heightened, spilling into neighbouring communities of South Sudan. While the independence of Southern Sudan has been achieved with great optimism, the government of South Sudan must consider the other regions whose fate has yet to be determined and the fact that any conflict within such regions has the potential of disrupting the peace in neighbouring communities of South Sudan and hence national development plans.

The independence of South Sudan has paved the way for new opportunities and challenges to this new and young nation (Jooma, 2005). The greatest challenge, one that one may term as 'the nation building project' of the Republic of South Sudan now lays ahead (Jooma, 2005). Peace and development are intrinsic features of the reconstruction of this war torn country. Addressing the impacts of war, which are in themselves diverse and complex is key to moving forward (Jooma, 2005). Reconstruction of Southern Sudan does not refer solely to the building of basic infrastructure such as roads, hospitals and schools which indeed is fundamental and whom are lacking, but encompasses a wide range of areas, key to this is the provision of welfare and community services to the heavily militarised communities of South Sudan (Jooma, 2005). Addressing issues of the very welfare of the citizens who have experienced and or witnessed torture and trauma in the course of war is also a fundamental aspect of national development as the civil displaced population within the South have been deprived of the opportunities for education, training and employment, and therefore a significantly large population of Southern Sudanese are illiterate and lacking basic skills (Jooma, 2005). Lack of proper and functioning educational institutions, legal institutions and other welfare institutions such as the healthcare system have meant that for those internally displaced, with whom survival was key, have been largely disadvantaged, with many living in entrenched poverty (Shanmugartnam, 2008). Between 1995 and 2006, a staggering 90% of the population of Southern Sudan lived on less than \$1.00 a day (United Nations, n.d). The South Sudanese government have a great task ahead in ensuring that universal primary education is made available for all children, and the provision of health care services as South Sudan has the record lowest health and education indicators in the world.

## **THE SUDAN'S HISTORY IN PERSPECTIVE**

The history of the Sudan is one coloured by invasions, foreign occupancy and rule, resistance and conflict (Deng, 1995). Sudan's contact with the Arab Islamic world, primarily through Egypt, is one that dates back thousands of years before Christ, beginning through the avenue of trade in ivory, gold and other commodities (Deng, 1995, Shanmugartnam, 2008). Most scholars generally describe the modern history of the Sudan as beginning around the time when the joint Turkish and Egyptian forces invaded the northern regions of the country between 1820-1821 (Deng, 1995, Shanmugartnam, 2008). The settling Arab traders had the advantage of wealth that appealed to the Indigenous communities with which they settled and began to have gradual acceptance (Deng, 1995). The slow integration of Arab traders into Indigenous communities of the Sudan paved the way for greater Arab influence and eventual control of the Sudan (Deng, 1995). The desire to seize control of Sudan was made strikingly clear with the advent of Islam in the seventeenth century when Sudan was invaded with many of its regions falling under immeasurable control of the Arabs (Deng, 1995). Following peace accords with the people of northern Nubia and Beja secured greater Arab control, opening the communication channels with the Islamic world, while protecting Arab trade, allowing greater freedom of mobility and aiding their greater settlement, this however left the Sudanese with little independence and sovereignty over the country (Deng, 1995).

The increasing occupation of Sudan through the Arab Islamic world continued and greater control of Sudan's regions began to fall in the hands of the settling Arabs (Deng, 1995). Sudan was under the joint control of the British and the Egyptian empire after the two signed a condominium agreement in 1899 to seize control of the Sudan (South Sudanese Profile, n.d.). The British treated the three Southern provinces of Bahr al Ghazal, Equatoria and Upper Nile as a separate region and prevented the North from entering South Sudan, defending their 'closed door' policy with the claim that South Sudan was not yet ready to be exposed to the rest of the world and to be modernised (South Sudanese Profile, n.d.). This policy ensured that Southern Sudanese were deprived from advancing and as a result remained largely isolated and disadvantaged from the modern advances of the world (South Sudanese Profile, n.d.). The result of this 'closed door' policy was that when the British and Egyptians left Sudan in 1953 after signing an accord ending the condominium agreement (of 1899), that the Arabs who settled in North Sudan quickly seized control and power when Sudan was granted independence from Britain and Egypt in 1956 (Makris, 1996, South Sudanese Profile, n.d.). In 1955, just five months before independence, the first civil war broke out, lasting for 17 years and ending with the signing of the peace agreement in 1972 between the South Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM) and the Sudanese government in Addis Ababa (South Sudanese Profile, n.d.). The next 11 years the Sudan experienced relative peace before the second war broke out in 1983, lasting for 21 years and officially ended with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005 (Shanmugartnam, 2008).

The CPA 2005 contained within it a number of conditions including wealth sharing, specifically pointing out that 50% of the oil revenues made in the South must be given to South Sudan, that South Sudan would have relative autonomy with the vice president of the Sudan being an Indigenous Sudanese who would also head the leadership of South Sudan for the next six years (Jauhari, 2010). The CPA also included a condition which stated that after six years following the agreement (in 2011), Southern Sudanese people would have the right of self determination and hold a referendum to determine whether South Sudan would remain with the North or become

an autonomous nation, completely separate from North Sudan (Jauhari, 2010, Shanmugartnam, 2008).

### **CHALLENGES TO PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT**

With the formation of Southern Sudan as an independent nation, there are many challenges to development and peace that this young nation must consider in order to make forward advancements in its national development strategy (Shanmugartnam, 2008). Central on the agenda, are the construction of roads and infrastructure in the major cities and towns, such as Juba which has developed rapidly, and the development plans for the other states to also follow suite (Jauhari, 2010). Sadly development in many of the major towns and other regions of South Sudan in the past couple of years (since the signing of the CPA) has been very slow; much of the development has been focused primarily in Juba (Jauhari, 2010). Little funds have been directed at the building of basic and necessary infrastructure such as roads, hospitals, schools and other public and administrative centres (Jauhari, 2010) and services.

Health indicators for Southern Sudan for its heavily malnourished population have also proven that the provision of adequate healthcare for the citizens, including maternal care must be a priority (Jauhari, 2010). Education indicators have also proven South Sudan to have the lowest literacy rates in the world, an issue which is clearly linked to the civil war which spanned for all but eleven years from 1955 to 2005 (Jauhari, 2010). Generations of children and young people have been deprived of education due to the civil wars (Jauhari, 2010). One may argue that this is clearly a major issue of concern for even the leadership of the government. In South Sudan's government, while many leaders possess great military experience, many have also been disadvantaged from accessing formal and uninterrupted education. This has serious implications for the administration of the affairs of the country as allegations of corruption are already running strife (Maitre, 2009). With the recent external review commissioned by the United States of America of corrupt ministers and government officials within the government has revealed in the report that a number of ministers and officials have been found guilty of misusing the funds intended for the development of the country for personal interests and gains (Sudan Tribune, 2011). The report revealed that the perpetrators of such dealings deposit millions of dollars into foreign bank accounts, (Sudan Tribune, 2011), funds which are intended to support and serve the impoverished communities of Southern Sudan.

With the allegations of corruption already against many government officials and ministers in the current leadership (Sudan Tribune, 2011), there are serious repercussions for development as development plans are, and will continue to be hindered if corruption is not addressed adequately and with serious consequences. If little is done to address the current culture of corruption that exist in government, very little will change for the people of Southern Sudan as the gap between rich and poor continues to increase and the civil population is left mistrusting the government. With a culture of corruption comes a lack of accountability and responsibility. Addressing such issues needs a complete overhaul in government, the removal of corrupt leaders to be replaced by an educated, experienced and equipped Southern Sudanese able to govern the country with accountability. In order to successfully challenge corruption, it is essential that institutions such as a strong legal system and a strong educational system are developed and maintained (Everett, Neu & Rahaman, 2006). Challenging the culture of corruption is not easy, as it poses many challenges to those who dare to go against the grain. It

is also important that the availability of employment opportunities through the private sector is developed to encourage a variety of career options, as the government is currently the main source of employment.

Also of particular concern is the issue of gender inequality and the cultural implications of challenging traditional beliefs and constructs of gender. The issue of gender inequality, which is complimented by traditional beliefs and practices, leave women with little autonomy over the affairs concerning their lives such as education, employment and marriage. Challenging such imbedded cultural practices, beliefs and customs is difficult as it is closely linked to the concept of identity through the tribe one belongs to. Gender inequality impedes development as the equal and fair involvement of women in all aspects of civil society is crucial for the development of a healthy and robust society (Institute for Inclusive Security, 2009, Women for Women International, 2010).

The violent conflicts that erupted in the regions of Abyei, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile regions on the borders of North and South Sudan this year, as well as the unrest in Darfur which started in 2003, have the potential of spilling into the South and threatening the fragile peace and stability in South Sudan (Apsel, 2008). As these communities on the border between the two countries become displaced from the continual attacks from the forces of the northern government of Sudan, many flee to the bordering regions of Southern Sudan in search of protection, shelter and food. While South Sudan struggles to provide the basics of living; food, water and shelter to its civilian population, a greater humanitarian disaster from these regions under attack would further exacerbate the current fragile situation in South Sudan.

#### **POSSIBLE APPROACHES FOR ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES**

Addressing the challenges that may hinder development is crucial for ensuring that national development plans for South Sudan run smoothly (Jauhari, 2010). Taking a community focused approach to national development is important in ensuring that the public not only know the direction of development plans, but have a direct involvement in how the initiative may take shape. This is a crucial step to the plans for development as the population of South Sudan must be in line with the values, ideas and plans for development for its greater success. Strengthening the capacity of the government to deliver services to its people by strengthening its structures is also important (Jauhari, 2010). The establishment of law and order through the development of the legal system is an early priority (Everett, Neu & Rahaman, 2006). Central to national development is addressing the issue of corruption in government through the provision of leadership and governance training to allow good decision making and challenge the culture of corruption in government. The anti corruption commission must also be strengthened and made independent from the government to be able to carry out regular budget reviews without bias and have the power, through the courts, to be able to bring perpetrators of corruption to justice. South Sudan's increased involvement in the international arena, in being open not just to trade but also to learning from other countries through the exchange of information and ideas would also encourage greater accountability (Sandholtz & Gray, 2003). A step forward in South Sudan's involvement on the international stage is the ratification and adoption of human rights treaties and conventions, and also looking to remedy these international standards of human rights law into domestic laws.

Addressing gender inequality in all facets of society is also important in ensuring the full and fair participation of women in the public sphere (Women for Women International, 2010). It is of utmost importance to ensure that women's voices are included and that opportunities for leadership are made equally available to women, not just as tokenistic gestures of goodwill but as a display of a serious commitment to equality and justice for all citizens. The provision of educational opportunities for female students is a step forward in equality for women. Statistics have proven that only 27% of girls are enrolled in primary school and an astounding 90% of women are illiterate (Ahmed & Cleeve, 2004). Women's voices must be included from the very onset of plans for national development and construction in order for there to be real and positive outcomes for the future (Women for Women International, 2010). As the case of Rwanda has proven, women's participation in decision making processes, leadership and governance creates a more cohesive society as women bring fresh insights and are able to recognise and bring forth strategies for the inclusion of disadvantaged minority groups (Women for Women International, 2010).

The development of the private sector is also fundamental for reversing a number of issues including addressing corruption, as the government is currently the primary source of employment, providing employment opportunities for citizens to be able to live with some level of financial security and reverse the deep entrenched poverty cycle in which many individuals and families live, while also providing a means for the economy to grow. The development of the private sector would also boost employment for farmers who are able to produce agricultural goods and products.

The increased funding of universal primary education and other educational institutions would begin to see a gradual shift in South Sudan's low education indicators (Everett, Neu & Rahaman, 2006). A properly funded, functional and accessible education system is fundamental for ensuring a brighter future (Everett, Neu & Rahaman, 2006).

Addressing issues of conflict and mass murder of civilians in the border regions of Abyei, South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Darfur to the West is also crucial to South Sudan's national development and peace. The government of Southern Sudan must continue talks with the government of Northern Sudan in coming to mutual agreement over the fate of these border regions who are still subjected to mass murder, rape and displacement. The international community must also be involved in such initiatives to pressure Northern Sudan in honouring its agreements and putting an end to the mass killings taking place in these regions through increased sanctions and the denial of any financial aid. It is clear that if North Sudan does not feel the pinch, it will continue to carry out its acts of terror on the people living in these regions while making agreements that it does not honor.

## **CONCLUSION**

The formation of Africa's newest state, the Republic of Southern Sudan has challenged us to believe that as the African landscape is one that is continually and dramatically changing, our approach to the understanding and study of Africa must be fluid and dynamic, including in its approach the concept that African histories, societies, cultures, values, customs and norms are ever changing and not static. With the independence of South Sudan comes great optimism and aspirations for national development and peace. With independence also

come questions of how development and peace may be created and maintained, and how the challenges to national development may be addressed.

The independence of Southern Sudan as a sovereign nation challenges one to look at some of the African countries that have made positive strides towards development as an example from which to draw inspiration, insight and ideas. Although the task of national development is great and overwhelming, the challenges and the obstacles mounting, South Sudan's vision for freedom, equality and autonomy will see it through prosperity. While the world only sees the obstacles to development and a lack of peace, Southern Sudanese people are hopeful that that the generations of civil war, bloodshed and oppression in which generations of children and young people have been born and raised are long behind, Southern Sudanese people are optimistic in seeing the potential of what South Sudan could be. Southern Sudanese people see the potential in the rise of a strong and visionary young leadership, the potential of the country's rich natural resources in building a strong and robust economy and the desire and longing of Southern Sudanese people to live in peace, prosperity and freedom will lead South Sudan in its endeavours for peace and nation building.

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Presented at the 34<sup>th</sup> AFSAAP Conference Flinders University 2011

Verhoevan, H. (2011). The logic of war and peace in Sudan. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 49(4), 671-684.