

Conclusion

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The Council for the Development of Social Sciences Research in Africa (CODESRIA) did well to organise a well-attended conference in Nairobi from 28 February to 1 March 2011 under the theme: 'Post-Referendum Sudan Conference 2011'. That was not its first function on the problem of Southern Sudan; previously the Council organised a workshop in Juba on 17-18 May 2010 on the subject of 'Political Process in the Sudan', so that the participants could discuss in depth the options of unity and separation in Sudan. It is logical that research centres like CODESRIA should be engaged in applied research which guides decision-makers to take an enlightened view about the problems of their country. This is a normal process in advanced countries but not so in most African states. However, African scholars should continue to do their part of the job persuading politicians and senior government officials to make use of their labour, and the time will come when they would listen. The political problem chosen by CODESRIA for the workshop and the conference, is extremely vital and serious not only for the Sudan and the region but for the whole of Africa. The African fathers chose, during the independence period after the Second World War, to maintain the artificial borders left by the western colonial powers as they are, because any attempt to change them would trigger conflicts and spread havoc among the population of the continent. There is almost no country in Africa which does not share ethnic groups or resources with its neighbours across their borders.

A number of attempts were made by some disgruntled minorities to secede from their mother country for one reason or another. Only Eritrea (1991) and South Sudan (2011) managed to achieve that goal after long and bloody conflicts which lasted for decades. Some people rightly argue that these two examples are special and should not be repeated in other cases; the majority of African elites still do believe in the inviolability of African borders. The specialty of Eritrea is that it was not part of Ethiopia since the eighth century; the British who took it from the Italians in the Second World War and administered it as UN Trust Territory. The UN decided in 1950 that Eritrea be made independent as a federated part of Ethiopia which decided in 1962 to end the federal status of the region and absorb it within its territory. The UN kept silent but the Eritreans who opposed the union started their sporadic guerrilla warfare, which never ceased till they achieved their independence in 1991. The war between Ethiopia and Eritrea on the borderline, after the independence of the latter showed that secession does not mean the end of conflict between the predecessor and the successor states. Will the same happen in the case of the Sudan?

The fate of southern Sudan was actually decided a long time ago by the British who occupied the country after defeating the Mahdist state in 1898. They intentionally kept the two parts of the country separated, no citizen could go from one part to the other without permission from the government, and the south was left undeveloped in all aspects of life. The senior British administrators of the three southern provinces used to meet regularly with their counterparts in East Africa and not with those in northern Sudan; education and medical care in the south was handed to Christian missions while the education and health departments in Khartoum were responsible of administering education and health in the north. It was not strange that in the Juba conference of 1947, southern leaders preferred that southern Sudan, because of its unequal development compared with the north, should remain under British colonial administration for some time or linked to East Africa. It was the British officials in charge of the conference who put pressure on southern politicians to accept being part of a united Sudan because it was the north which was footing the bill for their region.

The first mutiny of the southern corps against the new-born national government took place as early as 18 August 1955, four and a half months before the declaration of independence on 1 January 1956. The British governor-general was the head of the state at the time. Besides, it was only natural for a southern politician to be attracted to the idea of having a sovereign

state in the south because of the cultural differences and level of development. At the same time the factor of oil in the south drives politicians to possess all the revenue of oil produced in their region instead of sharing it with the north according to the terms of the CPA. It is also true that the Sudanese national governments, since independence, did not do much to bridge the development gap between the two parts of the country or remove the mistrust of southern politicians who felt that they had been marginalised in decision-making for a long time; and that the agreements made with them, by central governments, to give the south a federal status and keep it as a united region, were not fulfilled. The cultural domination of the north over the whole country was opposed by the southern elite who had modern education and international experience. The papers given in the Nairobi conference discussed the various aspects of the serious problem of granting, even for good reasons, the right for self-determination to a minority community in the African continent, and the consequences of separation on the region.

The editors of this book have divided the papers presented in the conference into four parts according to the theme: the first is on the rationale of self-determination in the African context; the second on north-south relations and encompassing issues that may impact the country and the region at large; the third is on the problems of nation-building in the emerging country of South Sudan; and the fourth is on the economic policy recommended for the new state.

In the first part, which has one paper, Mamdani raises serious questions about the significance and validity of self-determination for a minority within an independent African country. How should those committed to Pan-African unity understand the emergence of a new South Sudan? How will we write the history of relations between the north and south; is it a history of one people colonizing another? How did the SPLA, a champion of a united New Sudan, come to demand a separate state? Will the south establish a new viable political order? Will independence lead to peace? He argued that the south managed to win its independence without a military victory due to the external factor of 9/11th which led to the US invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan. On the other side, Nyaba in the foreword defended the right of self-determination on the basis that unity of a country cannot be imposed by force of arms, because the era of imperialism has gone forever. He uses the slogan of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front when they seized power in Addis Ababa in May 1991, referring to the Eritrean case by saying that: 'Peace is better than unity'. However, the outcome was not exactly peace in Eritrea, and it may well be so for the two Sudans!

The second part comprises of four papers by: al-Abdin, Hawi, Kassahun, and Wassara. All of them acknowledged that there are serious problems and challenges for the country and the region because of the secession of southern Sudan. The first challenge for the Sudan is the future relationship between north and south. Will the two parts maintain peaceful and cooperative relations after secession? Or are they going to end up in endless disputes and conflicts? The two governments have real disagreements about a number of important and delicate issues such as: the residents of Abyei who will decide its future in the referendum, border disputes, fees for oil transportation, sharing the Nile waters, citizenship of residents in the other state, security along the border, border-crossing by pastoralists from north to south and back, support of armed groups in each country against the other etc. These issues are sensitive and serious and they may well lead to conflicts between the two parts of the old Sudan.

If a conflict starts between north and south, it could easily spread to Darfur, southern Kordofan, Blue Nile state, eastern Sudan and it may draw in some neighbouring states. Some of those issues were discussed for many months in Khartoum, Juba and Addis by joint committees from the NCP and SPLM, with the help of the African Union High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) led by the resilient Thabo Mbeki, the former president of South Africa, but without success. The two parties could not disagree more on most of the issues. The same quarrelsome attitude which marked the relationship between the two partners all through the Interim Period continued till the referendum time and after. However serious these issues may be, they are not insurmountable if the two governments have a long-term vision for a peaceful and fruitful relationship and have the political will to overcome the difficulties in the way.

The real challenge for the two countries is to leave behind them the mistrust and bitterness of the past and look forward attempting to live side by side as good neighbours in peace, cooperation and harmony. If the two separating states could crossover the difficult hurdles in negotiating their delicate problems, they would facilitate close economic cooperation between the Arab world and African countries for the benefit of all sides. Since things got worse after the attack by the SPLA on Heglig (April 2012), the PSCAU and the UNSC intervened heavily to set a roadmap for the two parties to agree on all their outstanding issues within three months or face international sanctions; the SC even threatened to impose solutions as would be proposed by the AUHIP which facilitates the negotiations between the two parties.

The late developments of the negotiations showed some signs of progress, especially after the meeting of the two presidents, al-Bashir and SalvaKiir, in Addis Ababa on 14 July 2012. It is more likely now that the two parties will reach some sort of agreements on many issues, under the internal and external pressures. That may be good enough to stop armed clashes between the two states and allow some form of cooperation on security, oil, Nile water and cross-border trade.

The impact of secession on the north is equally troubling. The diversity of the old Sudan which caused the problem of the south is still there in the regions of Darfur, southern Kordofan, Blue Nile and eastern Sudan. Conflicts started in these regions before concluding the CPA in 2005; Darfur with reduced violence and a number of agreements is still searching for an inclusive settlement, and the two regions of southern Kordofan and Blue Nile which were included in the CPA are not satisfied with their lot, and resumed armed struggle few weeks before the separation of the south. The Sudan government complained to the Security Council that South Sudan is supporting the rebel movement in these two states; that will not resolve the problem which requires a new imaginative approach of managing diversity in the country. The political opposition in the north is not satisfied with the single rule of the NCP which has continued for more than two decades without proper public mandate, democratic institutions or a convincing degree of freedom of expression and association. The two major opposition parties (Umma Party and Democratic Unionist Party) refused to accept the initial invitation of the NCP to join its new government after the separation of the south, unless certain conditions of democratic transformation were realized.

On the economic side, the government lost about 40 per cent of its annual income after the revenue from oil of the south ceased; the loss constitutes more than 80 per cent of foreign currency which is badly needed for basic imports. No wonder the exchange rate for the US dollar has doubled and is likely to increase even further; the prices of commodities has gone up beyond the reach of middle class workers; inflation was about 20 per cent in the last quarter of 2011 and by July 2012 it had reached more than 35 per cent; and unemployment reached alarming figures even among university graduates.

The government has a real battle to manage the economy for the year 2012 without risking a popular uprising like what happened in some other Arab countries. As a matter of fact, that is what happened in June and July 2012. The government was compelled to take off the subsidy from some essential commodities; the decision led to many demonstrations in Khartoum and

other major cities. In other words, the consequences of secession for the north are additional problems of security, economy and political stability. Later, we shall deal with the consequences for the south. About the impact on the region, it is clear that the lesson from the experiences of Eritrea and Sudan is that ethnic and cultural diversity in the African context, unless well managed in a fair and equal opportunity for all, will cause dissatisfaction and discord which may lead to conflict. Multiplicity of ethnic groups and cultures are to be found almost in every African countries; in the last few decades when plural democracy has been implemented in a number of African countries, ethnicity has played a significant role in their politics. Thus, the Sudanese example may further trigger secessionist movements in some African states, especially in the Horn of Africa. Conflicts in many African countries like Ethiopia, Nigeria, Uganda, Liberia, Rwanda and Burundi, among others, are mainly explained in terms of ethnic diversities. But is it ethnicity, as such, the cause of conflict? Or is it the political and economic marginalisation of certain groups in society? In most cases marginalisation is exploited by politicised elites who want to enhance their own political career, by capitalising on the misery of their communities. The socioeconomic basis of ethnic hostility should be given due weight in attempting to solve ethnic conflicts. However, the political solutions cannot easily be the separation of a marginalised community from the mother country.

After the independence of African countries in the 1960s, liberal democracy was adopted for a short period before military regimes and the one-party system dominated the scene in most countries. The pretext for authoritarian rule was that multi-party system does not suit the tribal-divided African societies; the autocrat rulers justified their hegemony in the name of building a unified nation instead of fragmenting the society on ethnic lines. They ended up of empowering their own ethnic groups at the expense of marginalising others. During the last decade of the twentieth century, African countries started to go back to some form of democracy in a more steady way. This progress should be encouraged, but its challenges of ethnic diversity should be met in a brave and fair manner.

The third part on the nation-building of southern Sudan included two papers (Zambakari and Bankie). The new state of South Sudan suffers from ethnic clashes in a number of states over land ownership, cattle rustling, blood feuds, water, trespassing boundaries, etc., armed groups fighting against the government, and the unprofessional intrusive attitude of SPLA units. In the year 2009, the result of tribal conflicts was about 2,500 dead

and 350 thousand displaced because of military operations in their regions. The problem of managing diversity is not less than that of the old Sudan; there are about 200 ethnic groups in South Sudan, each has its own language, location, customary law and religious beliefs. The government faces a huge socioeconomic problem of the hundreds of thousands of returnees from the north and from other neighbouring countries. Other related factors weaken the ability of the government to face the complex problems of building a viable state: the lack of a minimum infrastructure; the poorly-trained flabby civil service; the weakness of political parties and civil society groups; the hegemony of the SPLA units on public affairs; and the rampant illiteracy rate (85%). The papers in this section recommended that the government of South Sudan should give priority to: the establishment of peace and security among the population; building the government institutions; creation of new conditions for socio-political transformation; making the necessary political compromise in order to carry on board the different opposition groups; addressing the social cohesiveness and consolidating the rule of law. Bankie's paper is mainly about factors shaping nation-building in southern Sudan, but it dwells much on historical developments of the past while containing less practical policies for the future.

The fourth part on recommending economic policies for the new state included three papers (Yongo-Bure (Chapter 8), Yongo-Bure (Chapter 9) and Ssemwanga). Their recommendations are professional and logical but rather theoretical; the difficulty is to convince politicians to carry out objective economic policies. They caution the government about rising the expectations of people at this early stage; the major part of oil revenue should be utilised on development, namely agriculture and animal services, and in human development of education and health care. The government should do its best to attract investment, create jobs for the people and encourage small-scale industries. Interestingly, two papers recommended separate currency for the south, but the government had already started the process of secretly printing a separate currency before Independence Day. Yongo identifies in his paper a number of quick impact activities and long-term programmes and projects which will lead to sustainable development. However, his advice to involve the population through an open dialogue on decision-making on development may prove to be difficult for politicians to accept. The latest developments have shown wide-scale of corruption in South Sudan to the extent that president Salva Kiir was obliged to write a published letter to a number of senior government officials accusing them of illegally seizing 4 billion US dollars from public money, which they should return. The

shutdown of oil in the south (March 2012), because of disagreement with the north on transportation fee, made the economic situation very bleak for the south, according to a World Bank report.

The two questions raised by Wassara, in his paper, are important to the future of the two parties of the old Sudan and to the region as whole: How South Sudan shall co-exist with northern Sudan? How the African Union would contribute to the stabilisation of the region? We keep our fingers crossed waiting for a positive answer for both questions.