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III CUATRIMESTRE 2011****NOTA****NEW IMPLICATIONS IN AFRICAN POLITICAL SITUATIONS: SOUTH SUDAN****por Ewu John Eko**Master Candidate at the Institute of Peace and International Relations,  
Hekima College (Nairobi)**ABSTRACT**

In the postcolonial history of Africa, there are two great examples of self-determination; the creation of a new state from a previously independent African state: Eritrea was the first, separating from Ethiopia in 1993; South Sudan is the second separating from the Sudan in 2011. No state in history has agreed to cessation of a part, it comes as an ultimatum on the state. When this happens, there are some new dynamics introduced in the political situation of the continent and the region. In the case of South Sudan, there are new dynamics in the political situation of Africa as well as the regional blocks like AU, IGAD, SADC and the entire Great Lakes and the Blue Nile regions. These new dynamics call for some readjustments in the political life of Africa.

**IMPLICATIONS OF SELF-DETERMINATION  
ON SOUTHERN SUDAN'S POLITICS**

Saturday the 9th of July 2011 marked the split of Africa's largest country in two, formalizing the long-awaited independence of South Sudan after decades of war and rancor between North and South. Despite the relatively peaceful January 2011 referendum on Southern self-determination under close international scrutiny, tensions continued to mount between the North and South and among the Southern ethnic groups leading to the South's independence. Nevertheless, much remains to be done to achieve peace in the transitional areas and negotiate the groundwork for future North-South relations. Meanwhile, both states continue to face mammoth domestic challenges in the following months. Mounting militarization on both sides of the disputed North-South border, Abyei, remains cause for concern. In South Sudan, while Southern Sudanese remain jubilant, they have just been born one of the world's most underdeveloped states. South Sudan also faces a significant political challenge in building a genuine multi-party democracy and trust among its citizens. The fact that South Sudan is a very new state makes the Abyei border dispute paramount concern in order to achieve a successful nation building process.

Abyei is a territory geographically, ethnically and politically caught between Sudan and South Sudan, making dispute over the area one of the most intractable in former unified Sudan. The region was given special status in the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), and its own referendum either to remain a special administrative territory within the North or to join the Republic of South Sudan. This however, did not take place partly because of frenzied disputes over who was eligible to vote. Ngok Dinka constituents are overwhelmingly in favour of joining the South, while Misseriya communities fear annexation could prevent migration and thus menace their lifestyle. This notwithstanding, the Abyei dispute has also assumed broader political dimensions, and is being used as a quibbling flake between Sudan and South Sudan. In May 2011 due to recurring incidents, Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) took control of Abyei, claiming an alleged attack by Southern Sudanese police forces on a UN convoy carrying SAF troops. Since then, tens of thousands have been displaced, and the UN has reported over 100 civilian casualties. The Government of South Sudan (GoSS) declared the invasion an "act of war", yet has shown significant restraint and adopted a policy of non-retaliation. To bring the situation to a halt, Bashir and South Sudan President Salva Kiir reached an agreement on 12 June 2011 withdrawing all SAF troops by 9 July and has been

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replaced with the Ethiopian-led UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). This was approved by the UN Security Council later in the same month. The replacement has facilitated a certain degree of stability and the return of Abyei's residents resulting in improved security and civilian protection. However this only maintains an unstable status quo. With no lucid alleyway to a permanent resolution, Abyei could remain a setback for the smooth relations between Sudan and South Sudan states.

After formalizing their independence from the Sudan, focus in the South is now shifted to the political schema at home. The new transitional government presides over a fixed term from 9 July 2011, during which a broadly consultative review process should yield a permanent constitution. Two key factors shape the ongoing transition; the degree to which the ruling SPLM is willing to allow a genuinely multi-party system to take hold, and how much internal democratic reforms will be tolerable within the SPLM. There are already perturbing authoritarian propensities with the SPLM threatening to suppress the opposition and unknot a great deal of the goodwill created by the 2010 political parties conference<sup>1</sup>. There are competing camps possibly breaking away to form new parties when the time is right. The fear is that such fragmentation could generate serious instability, and rifts that unfold primarily on ethno-regional lines could indeed prove disastrous. A resort to politics by the gun must be avoided by all means. Though this scenario is far from inevitable, division of the enormous party into two or more competing entities could prove a positive development, if well managed by the relevant actors. During this transition period, a more inclusive process is needed to complete a permanent constitution and regain the confidence of all Southerners. At this preliminary stage, the SPLM/SPLA must take responsibility in checking abuses, and the ruling party should be encouraged to open up political space. It should be conspicuous to the SPLM from scratch that a genuine multi-party system is not a threat to its power, but a long-term investment in stability, especially as the new state will continue to wrestle with internal security issues for a while.

As in other parts of Africa, the question of ethnic identity has become impossible to dissociate from leadership personalities and their choices of political alliances in South Sudan. Notwithstanding the fact that ethnic diversity should be a pillar of strength, historical circumstances and current realities have often caused violent conflict among the region's 65 different ethnic groups.

One group that feels marginalized is the Nuer tribe. This is evident in the involvement of some Nuer tribe's people in the ongoing revolts, including Peter Gatdet and the late Gatluak Gai. In admitting the existence of Nuer perceptions of marginalization and attempting to address the issue, the SPLM's minister of legal affairs and constitutional development in the GoSS, John Luk Jok, has argued that despite a fair representation of the Nuer tribe in the ruling SPLM, including the post of vice president, disturbing perceptions exist among them about their marginalization by the Dinka.<sup>2</sup> This calls for concern.

Oil is the dominant source of revenue, projected to provide some 98 per cent of total GoSS revenue in 2011<sup>3</sup>. Oil and oil revenue management will have considerable impact on national stability and the character of the new state; as such, it remains an integral element of the constitutional review process during the transition. If well administered, oil can become a key gadget in empowering state and local politics in South Sudan. If

1. Cf. Crisis Group Africa Report, *Politics and Transition in the New South Sudan*, (172), 3, 4 April 2011.

2. Nuer marginalization in South Sudan a false claim – minister, *Sudan Tribune*, 26 April 2011, <http://www.sudantribune.com/Nuer-marginalization-in-South,38708> (accessed 26 May 2011).

3. Crisis Group Africa Report, *Politics and Transition in the New South Sudan*, (172), 20, 4 April 2011.

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not, the resource could cause deeper national division and societal decomposition, and the new state could easily become another epitome of the “resource curse”.

**SOUTH SUDAN AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICS**

At this initial stage of South Sudan nation building, the international community is re-tuning its relationship with the SPLM, and positioning itself as a supportive partner to the people of South Sudan and the new government. The international community and other organizations like USAID are already supporting in the development of infrastructure, professionalizing the security services, and diversification of the economy.

At the regional level, moments after Africa’s 54th state was inducted into membership of the African Union on August 15, Foreign Affairs Minister Deng Alor Kuol announced that South Sudan was ready to contribute troops to the AU Mission in Somalia, Amisom. This announcement has however attracted disapproval from both the government and the opposition. However, as a member, the AU needed to request the country to send troops to Somalia. This is just one of the political dynamics that South Sudan has to battle with given that the government at home is still in formation. Should the South Sudanese send troops to Somalia, they will have fulfilled the promise by President Salva Kiir on Independence Day that the country would actively participate in building peace in the region. “The Republic of South Sudan shall be a partner in all human endeavours that promote security, justice, liberty, and prosperity. As South Sudanese we know how it feels to be deprived of freedom and dignity.”

South Sudan’s independence may encourage splits in other African countries a number of voices are suggesting that could happen in the near future; countries like Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Congo, Angola and others may experience break up. Colonel Gaddafi described a divided Sudan as “the beginning of the crack in Africa’s map” ... this in fact will bring in new dynamics in the political life of the continent. Border changes and the partition of nations occur relatively rarely. In Africa, Eritrean independence from Ethiopia in the early 1990s brought in new dynamics into the continent. South Sudan’s secession may inspire hope among secessionists elsewhere in the continent and this will greatly impact on the political situation of the continent.

During a recent visit to Kampala, the South Sudanese President Salva Kiir reiterated his country’s commitment to join the EAC. This venture is of crucial importance to South Sudan and the region at large. The landlocked South Sudan needs a gateway to the world after separating from the Sudan. More so, a significant percentage of South Sudan’s trade is with East Africa (80 percent), while it clears a big chunk of its goods through the port of Mombasa, Kenya.

According to South Sudan’s roads and transport minister, Anthony Lino Makana, the country has started talks with several oil firms to build a 200-km link to the existing pipeline running from Mombasa to Eldoret in Kenya. Makana said such a pipeline would help South Sudan export its oil to Kenya, Uganda, Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania and Ethiopia. If and when it joins the EAC, South Sudan would be bringing with it oil wealth, minerals and a huge agricultural potential. Joining the EAC is almost inevitable for South Sudan given its historical and cultural links with Kenya and Uganda.

A business strategist and author, Pete Ondeng, contends that South Sudan currently cannot compete with “mature” economies that it would be joining in the EAC. Once South Sudan become a signatory of EAC, it would be difficult to stop the flow of goods from member countries, an event that might delay the take-off of the new country’s

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manufacturing sector. Ondeng told the Independent East African News Agency (EANA) that once strategic and important industries are identified, the South Sudanese government must both encourage and protect their domestic growth, given that free trade may not accelerate it to become a mature economy. The majority of Sudan's oil is located in the south, and plans are being discussed for a new pipeline from South Sudan to Kenya that would shift 85% of oil revenue from Khartoum to Juba. With this in mind, China has sensibly begun to build closer ties with the south, while also trying to maintain its relationship and investments in the Sudan. South Sudan is advised to be very astute in every venture it takes in the nation building process. ■