



South Sudan – birth of the world's youngest nation

The emergence of the independent South Sudan is a final step of the lengthy process. At the end of the colonial era in 1956, two historically heterogeneous regions – the Arab-Muslim north and the African Christian-animist south – found themselves located within the borders of Sudan. At that time the people living in the south (and also in other peripheries) experienced cultural discrimination and economic marginalization from the central government in Khartoum. In 1983 an attempt to impose Muslim law on the entire country caused an outbreak of the second North-South war, which cost the lives of two million people. Finally it ended in 2005 with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the main insurgent from the south, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, (SPLM) and Omar al-Bashir's government in the north, and by which, the government of national unity was created in Khartoum.

In the current issue of our policy papers Jędrzej Czerep, Research Fellow at the Casimir Pulaski Foundation, analyses the challenges related to the creation of the youngest nation in the world. “The CPA peace agreement expires on July 7, 2011. The proclamation of independence of the Republic of South Sudan is bound to take place then. While the South, after six years of autonomy, has already got some experience in administering its territory – a range of quasi-national institutions operate with the help of the security system (police, and former guerrilla army – SPLA) – the South will still have to face numerous problems.”

I highly encourage you to read the new issue of the “Pulaski Policy Papers”!

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The Casimir Pulaski Foundation is an independent, non-partisan institution with a mission to promote freedom, equality and democracy, as well as to support actions of strengthening civil society. The foundation carries out such activities as conducting scientific research, preparing publications and analyses, organizing seminars and conferences, providing education and support for leaders in Poland and abroad. The Casimir Pulaski Foundation is one of only two Polish institutions that have a partnership status with the Council of Europe and is a member of the Group Abroad – a umbrella organization of top 40 Polish NGOs working outside of Poland.

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The emergence of the independent South Sudan is a final step of the lengthy process. At the end of the colonial era in 1956, two historically heterogeneous regions – the Arab-Muslim north and the African Christian-animist south – found themselves located within the borders of Sudan. At that time the people living in the south (and also in other peripheries) experienced cultural discrimination and economic marginalization from the central government in Khartoum. In 1983 an attempt to impose Muslim law on the entire country caused an outbreak of the second North-South war, which cost the lives of two million people. Finally it ended in 2005 with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the main insurgent from the south, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, (SPLM) and Omar al-Bashir's government in the north, and by which, the government of national unity was created in Khartoum. The leader of the South became the vice-president of the country, and joint military forces were to be created. In the South the former guerrilla fighters created an autonomous government in Juba with its own army. Six years later, in 2011, people from the South were able to choose between independence and retaining unity with Khartoum. On the one hand, the transformation period created an opportunity for a new arrangement of relations of the South with the central government, and on the other hand, it allowed the institutions of the autonomy to stabilize and grow to a possible separation. People voting in historic referendum which took place in the period from January 9 to 15, 2011, decided, almost unanimously, that a new country – The Republic of South Sudan – would emerge on the world map.

Pessimistic scenarios saying that the referendum would bring forth another war did not come true. On the contrary, the voting itself was conducted surprisingly smoothly. The numerous observers (among others, the EU, Arab League, IGAD, the Carter Center) were impressed by the transparency of the plebiscite. Barack Obama called the Sudanese stance “an inspiration to the entire world”. Also, the fact that Omar al-Bashir, wanted by the International Criminal Court, consented to the secession of the South was a huge surprise. As a result, Sudan will lose one-third of its territory along with the majority of its oil resources. The creation of the independent South Sudan changes the balance of power in this restless region. The question of whether the referendum and the secession will ever happen is no longer valid. Today the most important aspect seems to be how it happened and what conclusions can be drawn. The carrying out of the referendum was an enormous logistical challenge. South Sudan is a country where a longstanding war finished six years ago. The previous elections were conducted here (like in all of Sudan) in spring 2010 when the central authorities in Sudan, the authorities of the southern autonomy and local administration were elected. The previous year's elections, announced as the first 'truly free', were to serve as a test before the referendum. That test was negative: the voting was not transparent, it was conducted in an atmosphere of distrust, and the most significant candidates of the opposition withdrew at the last moment. Both in the North and the South the most dominant groups won, and minor rivals were victimized.

The experience of the 2010 elections failed to provide many reasons for optimism. The closer the date of the referendum, the stronger the beliefs were that it would all end up in a spectacular disaster. According to the CPA, the organizing of the plebiscite was bound to take two and a half years. Ultimately the chairman of the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC) was appointed only in July 2010, and the most important institution responsible for the conducting of the voting started its work without staff, funds and headquarters. Mohamed Khalil Ibrahim, law professor, a lawyer, a Muslim from the North, a graduate from the London School of Economics was appointed as the head of a mixed staffed (north-south) body. There were substantial concerns about the impartiality of the

commission which consisted of six representatives from the North and five from the South. Khalil's personality, his energy and a desire to perform the given task flawlessly, had an enormous impact on the success of the plebiscite. Not only did he manage to acquire and employ financial and logistical support from international organizations, but also combated the shortages on the national level. Khartoum gave the commission as little as 26.6 and Juba 60 million Sudanese pounds out of the 400 million (160 million dollars) promised by the central and autonomous governments. Another challenge was the attempt to conduct the registration of voters. Based on ethnic criteria, groups who could vote were traditionally connected with the south of Sudan (representatives of the peoples who occupied the area in 1956). A small group of Arabs recognized as autochthons was also given the right to vote. It is worth mentioning that the majority of the Arab merchants, who do their business in the South today, as newcomers, did not receive the privilege to decide on the future of their land.

More than 3.9 million people registered to vote in the referendum in the South, 60,000 in the North of Sudan, and almost 117,000 in the eight states of the Diaspora – Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, Egypt, Great Britain, the U.S., Canada, and Australia. The turnout was exceptional at the referendum, in total 97.58 percent of the registered voters.

When analysing the results in detail it can clearly be seen that the voting was equally substantial both in the South and in the Diaspora: the ballot box was attended by 98.77 percent and 96.65 percent respectively. Both groups also voted for secession (the South: 99.57 percent, the Diaspora: 98.55 percent).

In the North, the situation was reversed. There was a substantial risk of election forgery. Not long ago Khartoum and other cities of the Arab north were inhabited by 1.5 million southerners, mostly internal refugees. There were also large numbers of students – all the three universities of the South were in the recent past located in the outskirts of the northern capital (at present more and more departments are moving to the campuses in the South). The southerners living in the North also had justified concerns about their safety. In the weeks before the referendum, the propaganda fight kept on going. The students calling for independence of the South met with acute repressions. Information about armaments of Arab militia appeared raising common concerns. At the same time, the choice was not really that obvious for the voters themselves – the northern part of the country is much more developed economically with a greater access to education and healthcare.

A fact worth paying attention to is that only 60,000 out of 700,000 people registered in this part of Sudan, and only 59 percent gave their vote. Moreover, 42 percent supported the current status of the country. Looking at the results in a greater detail, one can notice that in some parts of northern Sudan the votes for unification prevailed.

Where does the reason for such a disproportion lie? First of all, the southerners living in the North preferred not to stir up the already tense atmosphere, not to stand out with the de facto 'anti-regime' program. Secondly, on the eve of the referendum many of them decided to pack their belongings and come back (often after many years) to the South. According to the UNHCR, by the beginning of January around 120,000 people arrived in their homeland (thousands more are expected to do so in the next months).

The stance taken by the president of Sudan, Omar al-Bashir, was one of the biggest surprises for the observers. Until recently his statements were ambiguous, one might have concluded that he would block the secession of the South. Although his government supported the CPA from 2005 it was not at all certain whether it would be inclined to fulfil its side of the agreement. The division of the country means a loss of profits from selling oil (80 percent of this resource is extracted in the South). Meanwhile, on January 4, 2011, a few days before the referendum, he visited Juba where he declared the recognition of every possible outcome of the referendum. He called for supporting the unity of the state,

though he promised that he would be the first one to recognize independence of the South. He also offered technical assistance in the formation of the new country. Such a surprising change of tone could be explained by a few factors. At the end of November 2010 a group of international research centres published a thought-provoking study of the costs of possible resumption of the North-South war. The think-tanks analysing security issues in Africa (Institute for Security Studies, Republic of South Africa), micro-economy (Frontier Economics, Great Britain), genocide prevention (Aegis Trust, Great Britain), and economic development (Society for International Development, the U.S.) all participated in working on the joint report. The authors of the report have analyzed various scenarios of a possible course of events in Sudan in terms of its financial situation. A return to the war would cost a hundred billion dollars over ten years, including fifty billion in lost GDP, and twenty billion would be lost by neighbouring countries. The report also depicted the destructive influence of the conflict on oil extraction. The report was 'put on the table' at a moment when Khartoum was still undecided about what stance it should take. Certainly the report helped it consider both possible profits and losses, and enabled it to make a decision about a peaceful division.

China is the country which enjoys the largest influence over Bashir's government. The country is the biggest oil recipient. The creation of the independent South Sudan means the opening of a new market for China – a market which would need new roads and infrastructure for the processing and transfer of oil. Beijing has undoubtedly conducted a very similar analysis to the report mentioned above. A return to the conflict would also involve a slow-down of investments, while the creation of a new country, in the long-term perspective, brings new opportunities.

The division of the country gives Bashir a free hand in imposing Arabic culture and Muslim law, of which he is a great advocate, on all the Sudanese in the North. This process had been slowed down by the CPA agreement, but today it has got a great chance to resume. The division is a great opportunity for Bashir to realize his political ambitions, i.e. introducing a restrictive version of sharia law while simultaneously casting off 'the burden' of the backward South.

Least beneficial for Khartoum is the loss of the majority of its oil resources in the South. It has been estimated that almost 80 percent of the Sudanese oil comes from the South. The estimates show that 470,000 barrels are extracted daily in the country. The profits from these sales, according to the CPA, are divided equally between Khartoum and Juba. These resources comprise around 40 percent of the budget of the North and almost 90 percent of the South. The creation of the independent Republic of South Sudan, and its taking over the control of oil extraction means a practical change from 50:50 to 80:20 in Juba's favour. However, due to the fact that the pipelines leading to the north to Port Sudan at the Red Sea are the only possible route for oil exports, Bashir will be still able to exert pressure on Juba. A burning necessity seems to be the building of Juba's own pipeline leading to Lamu in neighbouring Kenya.

International pressure has also played a part in taming Bashir. Before the referendum the U.S. offered to establish diplomatic relations and to remove Sudan from the list of the countries supporting international terrorism. This would improve the image of the president who was being sought by the International Criminal Court for his crimes in Darfur. Numerous western countries were involved in the CPA implementation, including Great Britain and Norway. UNDP worked on the creation of state structures in the South. For the West the peaceful separation of the North and South would be proof of its abilities to prevent conflicts, and clear its conscience after humanitarian failures in Bosnia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone. As much as Bashir's estimates showed that the western influence did not play the main role here, the world's engagement in the critical moment, before and after the referendum itself, helped to push away the risk of resumption of fights slipping out of

control, and leading to another war.

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Ethnic conflicts. The largest tribe – Dinka – dominates in the army and in the government to the discontent of its traditional rivals, the Nuer peoples. Numerous ethnic groups hostile to the Murle peoples, who for this reason do not want to undergo a post-war disarmament. The Shilluk group, inhabiting the strategically important regions near the border with the North, suffers from repressions as well. Especially dangerous conflict exists in the conflicting region of Abyei where Arabic Misseriya shepherds migrate temporarily to the lands of the Ngok Dinka peoples connected with the South. Ensuring the internal security and defending the people from attacks by the Ugandan guerrilla (the Lord's Resistance Army – LRA) will be the main challenge for this young country.

Regional differences. The unequal development of the country poses another problem. The region of Equatoria is where most investments are being concentrated, leading to resentment in the remaining parts of the country. In order to level out the differences, at the beginning of February 2011 the government announced a plan for building a new capital in the centre of the country.

Lack of infrastructure. During the rainy season travelling around a large part of the country becomes impossible. Therefore, agriculture and trade cannot develop – the products produced locally cannot reach their sales destinations. As a result, almost the entire supplies of food in Juba are imported (mostly from Uganda) at great expense. The creation of local production is indispensable. The building of road-rail connections from Kenyan Lamu (a harbour situated closer to Juba than the north-Sudan – Port Sudan) is a strategic task. This investment will allow the country to become much more economically independent from its uncertain partner in the north.

Fallibility of institutions. The government of South Sudan needs to take full control over administering of the country, e.g. higher education is controlled by a respective ministry in Khartoum, and the lecturers from the University of Juba get their salaries from the North. Such a state of affairs will need to change soon. Corruption is rampant, and it reaches even the highest political circles. The structure of the government is widely extended, and it does not always meet real needs.

Dependence from foreign partners. There is a substantial lack of qualified workforce and white collar workers (foreign investors, e.g. from Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Republic of South Africa usually bring their own workers). Large scale dependency on humanitarian aid does not favour the development of entrepreneurship among local people.

Borders. By July 2011 all the technical problems connected with the division of Sudan need to be resolved: precise marking up of the borders and the creation of the principles of border traffic (an interesting concept of soft border has appeared, a border which would not count as a barrier for people's free movement); division of national debt (mainly towards Libya); finding a compromise for the bordering region of Abyei (a simultaneous referendum was bound to take place in this conflictogenic region, but due to the lack of agreement as to who would vote, it was put off indefinitely); precise establishing of criteria for granting citizenship.

The creation of a new state will have far-reaching consequences in the region.

A 'snow ball' effect might occur. International recognition of South Sudan may give rise to hopes for a similar scenario in Somaliland (de facto independent but not a recognized part of Somalia), and give additional energy to separatist movements (e.g. Ethiopian Ogaden), and also strengthen the forces opposing the central government in North Sudan (above all in Darfur).

Independent South Sudan might tip the scales in the game for the division of water supplies from the Nile. At present the abiding treaties favour Egypt at the cost of the countries situated in the upper course of the Nile and its tributaries. On the basis of the agreements from 1929 and 1959 Egypt and Sudan have the right to annual quotas 55.5 and 18.5 billion cubic meters of water respectively, i.e. more than 90 percent of the river's total capacity. Today Egypt may veto the plans of any of the countries from the river's upper course, if it wished to make a larger investment with the use of water from the Nile or its tributaries, e.g. build a dam or a power plant. No surprise that in a time of growing demand for water the countries situated in the south from Sahara want to change the rules. In May 2010 Rwanda, Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania, not looking at Cairo, signed an agreement on equal use of Nile's waters. Kenya and Burundi joined the agreement later as well. The government in Khartoum is Egypt's most important ally in retaining the status quo. The creation of South Sudan violates the fragile balance between the two blocs. Although Juba announced it would respect the former agreements, its joining the "African coalition" against the "Arab" group seems to be a matter of time.

The new distribution of forces strengthens the Eastern African Community which consists of Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. This region, which seems to be a natural geopolitical space for the Southern Sudan, is integrating the states economically. Within the framework of the Community the assumption of a common currency is being planned, and in the long-term perspective the member states are planning the creation of a political union. The accession of a new member seems to be a matter of time. The Sudanese from the South are already enjoying the possibility of entrance to universities in Kenya on the same rules as students from the EAC countries. Kenya and Uganda have conducted numerous investments directed towards South Sudan's independence, e.g. when improving the communication system. Entrepreneurs from these countries are very active in Sudan. The neighbouring states are counting on profits from deeper cooperation with the newly created neighbour.

The success of the referendum, the enthusiasm of the local people, and the engagement of the international community in keeping peace in Sudan, all constitute a good starting point for the new independent country. The enormity of the tasks which lie ahead – Khartoum-Juba, and in the young country itself make one remember about possible dangers. Various conflicts may erupt with a great force. The opulence of natural resources and the perspective of cooperation with the EAC countries give hopes for the development of the country's economic potential. Human resources also play a favourable role here. A return of well-qualified young people from abroad is also a very positive occurrence, which bodes well for the future. A common trend of returning and starting a business has appeared among young people from the Sudanese Diaspora. Young, energetic and versatile Sudanese can more and more frequently be seen in Juba and other cities. There is no doubt that the huge experiment which is happening in front of us will have a decisive influence on the future of Africa.

The Casimir Pulaski Foundation

is an independent think tank which specializes in foreign policy, with a mission to promote freedom, equality and democracy, as well as to support actions of strengthening civil society. The foundation carries out activities both in Poland and abroad, among others in Central and Eastern Europe and in North America.

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The Foundation is the main organizer of the Warsaw Regional NGOs Congress www.warsawcongress.pl, the Academy of Young Diplomats www.akademia.diplomacy.pl and publisher of the Communication Platform for Non-Governmental Organizations www.non-gov.org

The Foundation also awards the Casimir Pulaski Prize “The Knight of Freedom” to outstanding people who have made a significant contribution in promoting democracy. So far the prizewinners were: Professor **Władysław Bartoszewski**, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland, historian Professor **Norman Davies**, **Alaksandar Milinkiewicz**, leader of democratic opposition in Belarus, **Lech Wałęsa** and **Aleksander Kwaśniewski**, former Presidents of Poland as well as **Javier Solana**, former High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, and **Valdas Adamkus**, former President of Lithuania.

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