

The 55th African Country: Southern Sudan, a State in the Making

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On the 9th of January 2011, Southern Sudan will hold a referendum to determine the future of the country - the choice is between **unity and secession**, the two options envisioned by the 2005 Peace Agreement. *Unity* means that Southern and Northern Sudan will remain a single country. *Secession* means that Southern Sudan will become an independent state. The most likely scenario is that the majority will vote for secession. The referendum will represent the **beginning of a long process of state-building**. This paper aims at understanding the major impacts of the independence of Southern Sudan at:

National level.

In case of independence, what will happen to the relations between North and South? Will it be a scenario of war or cooperation? Post-referendum negotiations on major key issues - **oil and natural resources, borders and security, national debt, etc** - are already taking place between North and South, but negotiations remain open until the end of the interim period (July 2011). The **economic and political dependence between the two countries** is expected to continue in the medium-term, but a protracted history of mutual mistrust will influence the future of bilateral relations.

Regional level.

The independence of Southern Sudan will bring **new elements to the regional security dynamics**. The new state will share borders with Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, DRC, and Central African Republic. Uganda and Kenya are already main economic partners of Southern Sudan, and the new state will join the East African Community. The planned oil pipeline is expected to connect to Lamu in Kenya, replacing the current **pipeline** to Port Sudan. Ethiopia is also a main economic and political partner, and good bilateral relations are expected. But not all are necessarily good news. Two main critical issues are pending: 1) the potential for border conflicts and proxy-conflicts; and 2) The Nile hydropolitics.

Continental level.

Another important outcome of the independence of Southern Sudan is the political impacts it will have in the continent. What is the political message it entails? Is it the opening of the *Pandora Box* for secession movements in Africa? Will it represent a push factor for recognition of quasi-states, such as Somaliland and Western Sahara? Will it contribute to the promotion of secessionist movements in Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Nigeria, etc?