

The Will is there but is the Capacity? Probing the Prospects of Independent statehood in Southern Sudan

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In January 2005 Sudan's longest-running war came to its formal end. The peace process culminated in the signing of the internationally pressured Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the main warring parties, the National Congress Party controlled Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) rebel movement. The treaty established a six-year interim period (2005-2011) during which the protagonists pledged to make political unity of Sudan attractive to southern Sudanese who were generally considered to have suffered most during the war. It was stipulated that in the course of the interim period presidential and general elections would take place and before its end southern Sudanese would be allowed to choose between unity and separation in a historic self-determination referendum. This plebiscite is considered to determine Sudan's faith and possibly lead to the establishment of a new independent state in southern Sudan.

The southern self-determination referendum is scheduled to take place in January 2011 and it is expected that the southern Sudanese will overwhelmingly favour political separation from northern Sudan which they generally perceive as the main obstacle to the realisation of peace, equality and prosperity in their own region. In addition, many southerners expect political secession and the emergence of the independent state of South Sudan. Yet, considering the brief post-war period of autonomous SPLM rule of all southern Sudan, and given the lack of consolidation of a system based on political plurality, together with limited infrastructure and the absence of a diverse multi-sector economy, the region may not yet have the capacity to become an independent state.

This paper analyses the period of implementation of the CPA (2005-2011) with a focus on the consolidation of post-war political and economic order in southern Sudan. It seeks to point out the main challenges that should be overcome in the process of the establishment of an independent state. Finally, it maps probable post-CPA scenarios and suggests political and economic arrangements that could facilitate transition to independence.