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I am an assistant professor of political science at juba university which is currently operating in Northern Sudan. The university was established in 1977 and was in Juba, Southern Sudan. It moved to the north in 1988 because of the civil war. I got my B.Sc in Sudan, my M Soc. Sc, in Birmingham and the Ph.D from Sudan. Currently I am the deputy director for the Center of Peace & Development Studies, University of Juba.

Abstract

My contribution will focus on the elections issue and the referendum and in particular the post 2011 period. Both elections which are scheduled to take place during April 2010, and the referendum of 2011 are probably pivotal as far as Sudan and the Sudanese people are concerned. After almost 20 years of autocratic rule by the Sudanese are aspiring to bring the country back to democracy and form a government that reflects the will of the people. Elections if properly contested can make the dreams come true.

As far as the referendum is concerned, almost every Sudanese is questioning his or herself about whether the Sudan is going to remain as one country or not. The Sudanese are heading towards the unknown (which can be the separation of the South). The consequences of the unknown are always difficult to predict. A new state in Southern Sudan is not a guarantee that peace is going to prevail in Sudan. Despite the importance of these burning issues it seems that many Sudanese are not yet prepared to play their role. The reasons for this are many, but the most important thing in my view is that many people in the last few years are looking for the outside to rescue them from many things. The role that could be played by the outside (international community) is important, but by all circumstances, salvation can not come from outside Sudan.

When tackling the elections and the referendum, I will try to explore their importance and also the dangers that might follow if they were a failure or a success. The elections are important as a means for political, peaceful and democratic transformation of power. Political accommodation for the various social and political groups in Sudan is a must. If this did not happen, there is no guarantee that there is going to be a stable Sudan. Stability is a pre-requisite for democracy. This is a challenge for all Sudanese. The question is are the Sudanese ready for that? Are the Sudanese political parties well prepared? Is it possible to hold elections in areas that are conflict-ridden like Darfur and many parts of Southern Sudan? There are many questions that could be asked.

Regarding the referendum, the consequences for the outcome are things that people need to address carefully. There are people both in the South and in the North who think that the South should go its own way. Whether they are serious and aware about

what might happen next is difficult to tell. Those southerners who are looking for separation, are the ones who still believe that the South is underdeveloped because of the North. In the North there are people who think that the South should go because it is different from the North. How big are the numbers supporting each of the two views is difficult to verify since opinion polls is something that the Sudanese are not used to up to this moment.

The outcome of the referendum (if the South decided to separate), is not going to end there. Separation might have dreadful consequences both internally and regionally. Within Sudan, thousands of Southerners live in the northern part of the country for two or more decades. They are people who do not know anything about the South. Even if they did not vote for separation because they are not given the chance or because they participated in the referendum and opted for unity, they are still going to be regarded as Southern Sudanese by people in the North. Here you can not dismiss the element of xenophobia. This might be a cause for unrest in the country if force was used to drive the Southerners out of the North. Are we going to witness a new Rwanda? Only time will tell. If the South became a new State, what sort of relations is it going to have with the North? What is the fate of Northerners who used to live in the South for long? What will happen to those Sudanese who were born from parents coming from the north and the south?

Regarding the South itself, is it ready to accommodate all Southerners who used to live in the North and were evicted because of the new situation. If this took place, Southerners coming from the north might be a new source of violent conflicts engulfing the South. This is because the land issue is very important. People who left the South and came to the North, when going back will not find the land of their ancestors. Other occupants will be there and will not accept the idea of evacuating the land. This is also a time bomb that might explode in the South and add to the instability engulfing the South at the moment.

For the North, a new state on its southern border is going to affect its trade with countries bordering the southern part of the South. Goods can not be transported easily to and from the north to countries like Kenya, Uganda, and the DRC. There is no reason to believe that the new state in the South is going to give northern Sudan preferential terms of trade.

Regionally the separation might have adverse repercussions. It is not only that a region like Darfur is going to call for self-determination, but there are many countries in Africa that might find themselves in a situation where certain groups are calling for self-determination. The issue of the referendum is a very intricate issue and its consequences are difficult to predict.

Observers might ask how and when is international engagement is needed? My personal point of view is that international engagement is needed because, as they say the world is becoming like a small village. It is no doubt that the international community have the expertise needed. It can help by alerting the Sudanese to the dangers that they might encounter if they were not serious enough. The issue of elections is an area where the international community can help by providing advisory missions, logistics and material wants.

regarding the referendum, I think time is running and the best thing that the international community could do right now is to convince the Sudanese that it is high time to extend the referendum date for three or more years. This is so because up to the moment unity is not been made attractive to Southerners. At the same time the dangers of separation are going to have devastating effects to Sudan and neighbouring countries.

Thank You

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