



A review of *South Sudan: From Revolution to Independence* by Matthew LeRiche and Matthew Arnold (London: Hurst and Company, 2012. 300 pp., ISBN: 978-0199333400) by Robert Mason, Lecturer, Department of Political Science, British University (Egypt).

LeRiche, a post-doctoral fellow at LSE, and Arnold, an academic and aid worker, have written a timely and authoritative book following years spent on the ground in South Sudan before its independence in 2011. The book includes a survey of Sudan's modern history and the roots of civil conflict, charting the independence of Sudan from the 1960s when the first Anya-Nya rebels attempted to revolt against the monolithic Arab-Islamic state. The following chapters discuss the emergence of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) as a dominant force for independence in the 1980s under the charismatic leadership John Garang de Mabior; the Sudanese revolution of the 1990s; and the failure of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) to make unity attractive to the SPLA and National Congress Party (NCP) in Khartoum.

The authors rightly dismiss the oversimplified concepts of Muslims versus Christians, North versus South, and the insular tribal groupings, to explain the current Sudanese political landscapes. Instead they address the plethora of social, political and security threats to Africa's newest nation state. Amongst them are the effects of inter-factional fighting and successive wars, famine, disease and displacement. The challenges for the Government of South Sudan are therefore comprehensive. State-building only began after the 2011 referendum on independence, so a permanent constitution is yet to be established, and there is continuing political discord in the SPLM, as well as ongoing tension between Juba and Khartoum. A lack of official communication from the government in Juba is singled out as a particularly worrying sign that there is no clear and definitive state-building strategy. In response, the book hypothesises on reconciliation, security, and development issues, but without the inclusion of as many interviews with leading experts and figures as might be expected. However, the book is well research and the authors should have been well placed to assess the empirics of policy implementation. These attract much for criticism for being skewed in favour of donor expectations and international advice over local relevance and sustainability. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the demise of SSR due to the divergent interpretation of the troika (the US, UK and Norway) and the SPLM on some aspects of the CPA.

Since the SPLM is the dominant political force, the political vision is theirs. The leadership is acutely aware that it must be inclusive if it is to reconcile the disparate and divergent strands of the new nation. All parties are linked to conflict, and therefore articulating an alternative strategy which puts nation before tribe will be a hard but necessary step. So far, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) has had a mixed result at best. No doubt that creating political pluralism from militant pluralism is required and a transformative public agenda is necessary. However, it is the articulation of the agenda on terms acceptable to the majority which appears to be in doubt. Establishing leadership positions, hierarchy and reconciling an existing tribal framework dominated by the Dinka will determine whether it is possible to turn warlords into bureaucrats.

The book poses other tough political questions for the SPLM in Juba, including how it will deal with the integration of various forces into the SPLA at a time when the army is already bloated and expensive. The alternative of not doing this could lead to a new political or security threat that facilitates another civil war. South Sudan is also stuck in the development trap: landlocked, with weak governance and resource rich (the state is 98% dependent on oil revenues). Compounded by a limited absorptive capacity (ability to manage aid and investment efficiently), an underdeveloped financial sector and limited domestic production, LeRiche and Arnold argue for focus on a consistent budget, oil revenue stabilisation measures and diversification. Oil revenues will spark agriculture development, as promoted by Garang, but as discussed elsewhere by academics and politicians at the University of Juba, social services also need to be developed in line with infrastructure expansion. This final point is crucial because Khartoum has been able to implement an unofficial blockade against South Sudan over the disputed Abyei province simply because the northern states of South Sudan are not properly integrated with the rest of the country.

South Sudan continues to suffer from cyclical violence from cattle rustlers and local armed groups known as 'White Army' militias. As Arnold et al argue in another book, *Militias and the Challenges of Post-Conflict Peace: Silencing the Guns*, getting security into areas such as Jonglei state, which by 2010 still didn't have a single police station, will simply be a first step towards turning the political economy of war into a political economy geared up for peace. Being based on empirics and with a strong sense of direction on many of the complex issues facing South Sudan, this book should be useful for political scientists, those involved in aid, development and state-building in the years ahead. It provides both a thorough and useful examination of the complex policy and humanitarian issues involved in short-term peace-building and longer-term state-building.