

The Sudan, Africa's Longest Civil War: The Peace Deal Proves that South Sudan Is a Failed Concept

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The reported details of the forthcoming peace deal that's expected to be signed shortly prove that the very concept of an independent South Sudan has failed.

[South Sudan](#) defied all expectations and surprised the world by [agreeing to a peace deal](#) for its five-year-long civil war during international talks in the neighboring Sudanese capital of Khartoum from whence the world's newest country originally seceded in 2011. The personal intervention of Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir and his Ugandan counterpart Yoweri Museveni – both of whom exert the most influence over their mutual neighbor – is considered to have been indispensable in getting South Sudanese President Salva Kiir and former Vice-President-turned-rebel Riek Machar to come together for a third time in trying to end their homeland's seemingly intractable conflict.

Conflict Summary

The South Sudanese Civil War began as a political competition between these two strong personalities that quickly took on deadly ethnic dimensions as the country's two largest ethnic groups began killing one another in a nationwide bloodletting that's [since claimed at least 50,000 lives and displaced 4 million, half of whom](#) have fled abroad as refugees and overwhelmed the capacities of host states such as [Uganda](#) and [Ethiopia](#). The second-mentioned state, despite being much larger and having a much longer history hosting refugees, has been especially destabilized by these "[Weapons of Mass Migration](#)" because of the fact that its sparsely populated border region of Gambella now has [almost as many refugees](#) as citizens.

This has [exacerbated](#) the preexisting conflict between highland Anuak and lowland Nuer, the latter of whom mostly live in South Sudan and form the core of Machar's rebel forces, as [Nuer refugees clashed with their ethnic kin's rivals](#) upon arrival in this Ethiopian region. The situation has since been contained by the authorities but the threat nevertheless remains, which is one of the reasons that aspiring hegemon Ethiopia continually took the lead in encouraging peace talks between South Sudan's two warring factions. As it turned out, the many previous efforts at peace weren't in vain since they laid the basis for the so-called "Framework Agreement" that the international press reported was agreed to by Kiir and Machar.

A Framework For Peace?

It still needs to be signed, and Machar said that [he needs up to 48 hours](#) to notify everyone on his side about its terms, but the deal is being portrayed by the world as the first real chance for peace since the conflict started half a decade ago. The "[African News](#)" online information outlet shared a tweeted picture of the Framework Agreement that enumerates

its main points, which are as follows:

“* The areas agreed upon include a permanent ceasefire, grounding of all forces and the deployment of forces by regional body IGAD and the African Union to safeguard the ceasefire;

* President Kiir and Dr Machar further agreed to have three capital cities; namely Juba, Wau and Malakal on temporary basis to host the three proposed vice-presidents;

* According to the signed Framework Agreement, seen by the media, the two rivals agreed to allow the Khartoum government to secure the oil fields in South Sudan in coordination with the Juba administration, and to rehabilitate the wells to restore the previous levels of production;

* They also declared to work together again for the third time after their long disagreement proved difficult for peace and stability.”

Judging from the above and presuming the veracity of the reported document, the Framework Agreement and attendant peace deal that it forms the basis of contradict the concept of an independent South Sudan and prove that this years-long American-“Israeli” geopolitical initiative has resolutely failed.

Africa’s Longest Civil War

As a brief backgrounder, South Sudan seceded from Sudan in 2011 after two back-to-back civil wars from 1955-1972 and 1983-2005 that many observers consider a single long-running conflict. Post-independence Sudan was the geographically largest state in Africa but was internally split from the get-go between northern Arab Muslims and southern English-speaking black Christians and Animists, generating tensions between the two identity-separate groups that were easily exploited by the country’s Ugandan & Ethiopian neighbors for regional geopolitical reasons but also the US & “[Israel](#)” due to Khartoum’s Cold War loyalties. It’s not to suggest that Arab Muslims and black Christians can’t peacefully coexist in the same country, but just that the colonial-era legacy of distrust between them made this very difficult.

This was naturally taken advantage of in sustaining the decades-long conflict that bled Sudan dry and contributed to its so-called “international isolation” at various periods of time, thus leading to South Sudan’s independence in 2011. That very idea, however, has since proven to have been a failure because of the inability of the world’s newest country to remain functional in spite of the enormous economic promise that it has by virtue of its copious oil resources. Khartoum warned about this many times in the past and has been vindicated in hindsight after the tragedy that has befallen the South Sudanese people following their independence. In fact, it’s becoming less and less accurate to even refer to this political entity as “independent” considering the terms of the Framework Agreement.

De-Sovereignizing South Sudan

To begin with, the first point of the Framework Agreement calls for the deployment of peacekeepers from the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union to safeguard the permanent ceasefire, with this task likely being carried out mostly by Sudan and Uganda, which have the greatest influence in South Sudan and stake in its

success, though it can also be expected that Ethiopia will likely play a notable role as well. The follow-up proposal for three separate national capitals will crystalize the country's "[Identity Federalism](#)" by legalizing its "Balkanization", which is exceptionally dangerous in the long-term given South Sudan's pivotal location at the transregional space between North, East, and Central Africa that structurally reminds one of Afghanistan's at the crossroads of Central, South, and West Asia.

It's the third point, however, that does the most to de-sovereignize South Sudan and prove that its existence as an independent state has failed. Despite fighting for decades to secede from Sudan, South Sudan is now inviting its adversary's military forces into the country to secure and rehabilitate its oil fields in a stunning strategic reversal that turns the most economically productive regions of the South into the "North's" de-facto "protectorate", exactly as Khartoum wanted. Some of the territory that its troops will be deployed to was previously disputed since the 2011 secession but will now come fully under the "North's" influence in exchange for resurrecting the South's energy industry and consequently assisting one of the world's poorest countries with much-needed revenue generation.

Oil Makes The World Go Round

There's little doubt that it was this dimension of the deal that incentivized Kiir and Machar to resolve their personal feud with one another and finally end the civil war. South Sudan's conflict decimated its oil industry and was a lose-lose for both politicians and the country as a whole, with its people desperately in need of urgent relief from the fighting in order to begin the long overdue task of (re-)building their fledgling state. The only possible "compromise" that both leaders could apparently reach was to divide South Sudan into three sub-states with their own regional capitals, invite foreign forces to enforce this "Balkanization", and sell out their sovereignty to Sudan so that the oil can start flowing again and "greasing everyone's palms".

There are also larger factors at play which may have led to the "international community" (i.e. the US-led West) putting enormous backroom pressure on Kiir and Machar to agree to this deal. The US expects that the forthcoming imposition of its "[zero tolerance](#)" stance towards Iranian oil imports (at pane of "secondary sanctions") will give newfound energy allies [Russia and Saudi Arabia larger market share](#) in this industry and the possibility of "cornering it" through a de-facto "duopoly", hence the need to get other sources of supply online as soon as possible. Although the "North" Sudanese transit state has become increasingly close to [Russia](#) and [China](#), the South Sudanese producer is still an American-"Israeli" proxy which therefore enables the latter two to "balance" out the first-mentioned pair's influence over this oil arrangement.

Concluding Thoughts

South Sudan can no longer be considered a functionally "independent" state following the reported terms of the Framework Agreement that both of its warring parties accepted in advance of the forthcoming peace deal for ending the country's half-decade-long civil war. The desperate humanitarian situation in this landlocked state, coupled with the loss of revenue that both sides of the conflict experienced throughout the course of this fratricide, came together to force its most influential politicians to cede their sovereignty to the "North" Sudanese state that they had fought for almost half a century to separate from in exchange for much-needed oil money that could then be used to (re-)develop this "Balkanized" country at the strategic tri-regional crossroads of North, East, and Central

Africa.

Khartoum's commitment to this "win-win" agreement will see it establishing military control over the most oil-rich and partially disputed portions of its southern neighbor and former autonomous region, thereby doing away with the very concept of an "independent" South Sudan and turning it into a de-facto "protectorate" that it will basically rule as a condominium together with Uganda and Ethiopia through their own respective "spheres of influence". So long as each of the stakeholders ensures that the ceasefire remains "permanent", then the struggle will shift from ending the civil war to containing the "Balkanization" process that it unleashed by design, relying on concerted measures and close regional-local coordination to mitigate this geostrategic threat. Even so, South Sudan has proven itself to be full of surprises, and the worst might still be yet to come.

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