# UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

## INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

# Determinants of Successful Secessions in Post-colonial Africa: Analyzing the Cases of Eritrea and South Sudan

**By**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (Coursework) in Political Science, Cluster of International and Public Affairs, College of Humanities, School of Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.**

**2014**

As the Candidate's Supervisor I agree to the submission of this dissertation

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Date

# DECLARATION

I, **Albano Agostinho Troco** declare that:

(i)     The research reported in this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged.

(ii)    The dissertation has not been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.

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Albano Agostinho Troco

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Date

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# DEDICATION

To my father Agostinho Vasco Wanga Troco for instilling in me the love for academic
excellence and to the loving memory of my mother Constantina Albano,
Your light extinguished long before I could understand the breadth and length, height and depths
of your love

# EPIGRAPHS

"We would like our African brothers to know that we are not against unity but we have been occupied by a neighboring country".

<div align="right">Eritrean Nationalists rallying for independence in 1972</div>

"The South will at any moment separate from the North if and when the North so decides directly or indirectly, through political, social and economic subjection of the South".

<div align="right">Father Saturnino Lohure (1921-1967)<br>in a speech delivered before the Sudanese national Parliament in Khartoum on June 23, 1958</div>

# ABSTRACT

Post-colonial Africa has been riddled by numerous secessionist conflicts. Since the dawn of independence in the 1960s a number of African countries have experienced rebellions involving ethno-linguistic groups or marginalized regions demanding territorial separation from the state in order to establish new independent nations. This includes: Angola (Cabinda), Comoros (Anjouan and Mohedi), The Democratic Republic of Congo (Katanga, South Kassai) Ethiopia (Eritrea, Ogaden, and Oromia, Afar), Mali (Tuaregs), Niger (Tuaregs), Nigeria (Biafra, Niger Delta), Senegal (Casamance), Somalia (Somaliland) and Sudan (South Sudan). However, despite the prevalence of secessionist conflicts in the continent only two cases have succeeded resulting in the establishment of new states: Eritrea in 1993 and South Sudan in 2011.

This research seeks to explain the determinants of successful secessions in post-colonial Africa. This objective is achieved through an analysis of the dynamics of secession in Eritrea and South Sudan. Without any pretensions to establish theoretical causal generalizations, the study examines the conditions that have evolved out of the particular experiences of Eritrea and South Sudan to contend that both domestic and international politics play a decisive role in determining the outcome of secessionist conflicts in the continent.

The research favors the qualitative methodological approach, makes use of descriptive data gathered from secondary sources and is informed by the theoretical assumptions of Wood's comparative analytical framework on secession and Coggins' international-level model of state birth.

**Key words**: Secession, Self-determination, Post-colonial Africa, Eritrea, South Sudan,

# LIST OF ACRONYMS

ALF Azania Liberation Front

AU African Union

BCE Before Common Era

CPA Comprehensive Peace Agreements

ELF Eritrean Liberation Front

ELM Eritrean Liberation Movement

EPLF Eritrean People's Liberation Front

EPRF Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Forces

GC General Command

GoS Government of the Sudan

GS General Secretariat

NPG Nile Provisional Government

OAU Organization of African Union

OLF Oromo Liberation Front

SANU Sudan African Nationalist Union

SC Supreme Council

SPLA/M Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement

SSLF/M South Sudan Liberation Front/Movement

SSPG South Sudan Provisional Government

TPLF Tigray People's Liberation Front

UN United Nations

US United States

USSR Union of Socialist Soviet Republics

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# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background to the Research

The Republic of South Sudan emerged as Africa's 54th state on July 9, 2011. South Sudan attained independence and sovereignty by formally withdrawing from the Republic of Sudan as a result of the phased implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). This was a settlement signed between the Government of Sudan (GoS) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) in 2005, making provisions for the exercise of the right of self-determination through referendum by the people of Sudan's Southern provinces.

Approximately eighteen years earlier, Eritrea achieved statehood following a United Nations-sponsored referendum on independence. The plebiscite occurred in 1993 and marked the culmination of nearly thirty years of armed struggle opposing a number of Eritrean liberation movements and successive governments in Addis Ababa.

The birth of the states of Eritrea and South Sudan represent a remarkable political development in post-colonial Africa as they constitute the only cases of successful secessions on the continent. The experiences of Eritrea and South Sudan are all the more extraordinary considering the incidence of insurgencies involving ethno-linguistic groups or ethnically homogeneous regions seeking to withdraw from their "parent" state in post-colonial Africa. In addition, the Organization of African Union (OAU) and the African Union's (AU) policies as well as the international community's preference for the status quo difficults the recognition of secessionist claims outside the colonial context (McNamee, 2012:3).

In line with the above, this study investigates the determinants of successful secessions in post-colonial Africa through an analysis of the cases of Eritrea and South Sudan. In addition, the study explores the immediate and remote causes of secessionist demands in Africa, the determining factors of successful secessionist bids in Eritrea and South Sudan as well as the lessons that can be drawn from these two secessionist experiments.

## 1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

The death and birth of states is a defining feature of the international system. Indeed, the number of states has increased from just 25 in the early 1800s to about 194 as of 2006 (Kohen, 2006:2). In the course of the twentieth century alone an estimate of "150 states entered the system (and very few died), quadrupling the international community's membership roll" (Coggins, 2011:437). Most states born during this period came into being through the processes of decolonization or secession.

In Africa, the vast majority of states were formed out of colonial territories. As stated by Southall (1974:153): "more new nation states were formed in Africa during the 1960s than had been formed in the rest of the world for many centuries". However, not every colonized nation in the continent achieved independence when the United Nations deliberated on the right to the self-determination of peoples (Coggins, 2011:438). In fact, African political elites decided to maintain the inherited colonial borders, transforming them into international boundaries between the emerging post-independent states (Hughes, 2004:834). These borders have repeatedly been criticized for their arbitrariness, that is "their propensity for bringing together peoples that historically lived under different, if not inimical systems" (Engelbert et al., 2001:1093). The specificity of interstate boundaries in Africa in conjunction with issues of governance has been at the origin of numerous secessionist conflicts in post-colonial Africa.

As early as 1960 and 1970, Katanga and Biafra declared their independence from the Republic of Congo and the Federal Republic of Nigeria respectively (Bereketeab, 2012:3). Since then, the list of African states that have experienced secessionist insurgencies has grown. In this regard, Englebert (2014:147) provides a list that includes countries such as Angola (Cabinda), Comoros (Anjouan), The Democratic Republic of Congo (Katanga, South Kassai) Ethiopia (Eritrea, Ogaden, and Oromia, Afar), Mali (Tuaregs), Niger (Tuaregs), Nigeria (Biafra, Niger Delta), Senegal (Casamance), Somalia (Somaliland) and Sudan (South Sudan). McNamee (2012:14) points out that as of 2012 there were around six secessionist movements operating on the continent: Casamance, Cabinda, Zanzibar, Ogaden, Western Sahara and Somaliland

Despite the high incidence of secessionist conflicts, post-colonial Africa has only seen the establishment of two new states outside the colonial context: Eritrea in 1993 and South Sudan in

2011. Hence, it is relevant to examine what factors determine the successful outcome of secessionist demands in post-colonial Africa.

This research focuses on the dynamics of secession in Eritrea and South Sudan to illustrate the submission that a combination of domestic and international factors play a decisive role in determining the successful outcome of secessionist demands.

## 1.3 Research Questions

The research endeavors to answer the following questions:

1. What are the immediate and remote causes of secessionist demands in Africa?
2. What factors drove the people of Eritrea and South Sudan to demand full independence and sovereignty from the Republics of Ethiopia and Sudan respectively?
3. What factors account for the successful outcome of the secessionist movements in Eritrea and South Sudan respectively?
4. What lessons can be drawn from the experiences of Eritrea and South Sudan in terms of the dynamics and determinants of successful secessions in post-colonial Africa?

## 1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are to:

1. Determine the remote and immediate causes of secessionist demands in Africa.
2. Explore the motivations of the people of Eritrea and South Sudan to seek full independence and sovereignty from their respective "parent" states.
3. Establish the determinants of successful secession in Eritrea and South Sudan.
4. Articulate the lessons that can be drawn from the experiences of Eritrea and South Sudan in terms of the dynamics and determinants of successful secessions in post-colonial Africa.

**1.5 Principal Theories upon which the Research Project is constructed**

There is more than chance involved in the study of secession. A set of patterns can often be discerned from the analysis of individual cases. To this end, several theories have been constructed to explain when and why secessions or attempts at secession take place. Theories of secession have been categorized into three distinct groups: explanatory, normative and legal (Pavikovic & Radan, 2011:171). Explanatory theories of secession are concerned with the social, political and economic factors leading to (or causing) secession. Normative theories of secession speculate on the moral and ethical justifications of the phenomenon, while legal theories weigh up the rights of peoples to self-determination against the preservation of the territorial integrity of states based on a variety of legal documents such as constitutional laws and Resolutions from the United Nations.

Although theoretically relevant, normative and legal approaches to secession limit the analysis of the phenomena to the level of ideas. A useful theory of secession must transcend the realm of ideas and engage germane structural factors such as the social, political and economic context in which secessions or attempts at secession take place. As stated by Keller (2007:3), "only in this way theories can provide the roadmap for understanding and even resolving intrastate conflicts that revolve around demands by certain groups to separate".

In line with the above, a number of explanatory theories were considered for this study: Collier and Hoffler's theory, Bartkus' cost/benefit approach, John Wood's comparative analytical framework and Coggins' international-level model of state birth. Collier and Hoffler theory of secession, assumes that "secessions are attempted whenever a part of the population perceives secession as economically advantageous" (Collier and Hoffler, 2002:2). The authors turn to the cases of Katanga, Biafra, Eritrea, South Sudan and Slovenia to support their views. Bartkus rational choice theory of secession indicates that decisions to secede are dependent on four primary variables: "the benefits of continued membership, the costs of secession, the costs of membership, and the benefits of secession" (Bartkus, 1999:18).

Collier and Hoffler's economic theory and Bartkus rational choice approach to secession have proved inadequate to address the research questions of this investigation: the former because of its failure to account for cases where secessions were (or are) not economically beneficial (such as Macedonia, Montenegro, the Basque country), as well as the theory's narrow focus on a single

determinant to account for a complex phenomenon such as secession; the latter because of its inherent instrumentalization of rational calculations in ways that are more suitable for quantitative studies[1].

Therefore, this research is informed by a combination of two analytical tools: Wood's comparative framework on secession and Coggins' international-level model of state birth. The former examines the internal dynamics of secession – from inception to attainement of statehood; while the latter explores the politics of external recognition of secessionist movements and their subsequent admission into the international community of states.

### 1.5.1 Wood's Comparative Analytical Framework on Secession

Wood's analytical framework investigages secession as a social and political phenomenon. The model examines secession as a dynamic process occurring in five stages: "the preconditions of secession, the rise of secessionist movements, the response of central governments, the direct precipitants of secession and the resolution of secessionist crises by armed conflict" (Wood,1980:109).

**1. Preconditions of secessions**: Wood believes that secessions or attempts at secession do not happen accidentally; rather, a number of preconditions are necessary for the emergence of a group's alienation from the central government and the development of secessionist impulses (1980:12). These factors are of geographical, social, political, economic and psychological nature. In other words, in order for a secessionist process to begin there must be: a separable territory containing the potentially secessionist population; a degree of solidarity among the group based on ethnic ties, common culture or other aggregative elements; a pattern of changing access to benefits (the group's perceptions or anticipation of denial of its "rightful" share); a decline in the legitimacy or politically integrative capacity of the central government; and the perception or anticipation of threat to the group's identity and security (1980:122).

**2. The rise of secessionist movements**: is premised on three dominant elements: ideology, leadership and organization. Wood believes that in general, secessionists subscribe to some form of nationalism. They frame it to articulate the group's grievances and the message that their interests will be better served in a new nation-state. Leaders play a central role in this process as

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[1] As it will be explained later, this research favors the qualitative methodological approach.

they are tasked with the mobilization of the group, definition of strategies, creating the picture of the nation to be created and the initiation of an "outbidding contest with the central government and with loyalist representatives of their region" (1980:123). These efforts are consolidated in the formation of secessionist organizations reflecting coordinated structures of command.

**3. The response of Central Governments**: Wood (1980:125) believes that the effectiveness of the central government's response can conclusively determine the outcome of secessionist challenges. In this context, the central government is faced with two options: the suppression of secessionists through coercive means including assimilation or accommodation through constitutional and political reforms. According to Wood constitutional reforms such as redrawing internal boundaries can undermine secessionist challenges while acknowledging plural division. In addition, political reforms including devolutionary arrangements within unitary states and the decentralization of legislatures in federations can eliminate secessionist demands (1980:126). Nevertheless, Wood (1980:127) states that, "the outcome of a secessionist attempt depends on the central government's ability to assert or recreate its legitimacy as the ruler of all of its territorial components, and on its will to use all of the authority implied by that legitimacy".

**4. The precipitants of Secession**: these are actions or events that lead secessionists to declare or implement their pro-independence agenda and the central government's reaction to militarily suppress them. In Wood's views, these actions and events are usually "constructed as a direct threat to the security of either side" (1980:128). For the secessionists it might be the fear of cultural assimilation while for the central government is the loss of territory perceived as a threat to the state. Wood (1980:129) concludes that "it is easy to identify precipitants of secession after the fact and risky to predict them in advance".

**5. The resolution of secessionist crises by armed conflict**: Wood (1980:129) observes that few secessionist struggles develop into an all-out war as they are usually settled through peaceful means, neutralized by central government repression or simply lose their initial strength. However, in case of warfare, two factors can influence decisively on the outcome: the strategic and tactical advantage of the belligerents and external involvement. Guerrilla warfare is the norm in most secessionist struggles. The central government has to fight the entire civilian population in the secessionist region often leading to large casualties, charges of genocide and refugee movements (1980:130). These elements attract outside involvement in the internal war. External

involvement in secessionist struggles can take many forms; and this involvement influences the outcome of the conflict in multiple ways. Moreover, Wood notes that, if the internal preconditions to secession are present external support to the government will not maintain the status quo for very long. If they are lacking external assistance to the secessionists will not improve the likelihood of a successful secession (1980:132).

Finally, Wood (1980:133) concludes that "a 'successful' secession is complete when it becomes institutionalized in a new government, legitimate at home and recognized abroad".

### 1.5.2 Coggins' International-Level Model of State Birth

This model asserts that international politics determines the recognition and birth of new states. Coggins (2011:448) argues that since the international system of states functions like a community or social group, "it is the mutual exchange of sovereignty that constitutes membership, not effective, domestic level authority. As such, secessionists only accede to statehood when they are recognized or accepted by existing members".

The Great Powers[2] play a decisive role in this process because of their material strength and influence on other member states. In line with the aforementioned, Coggins (2011:449) elaborates, "when the Great Powers agree, their decision serves as a focal point that initiates a cascade of legitimacy throughout the system's remaining members". Furthermore, Coggins discusses three broad categories of self-interested reasons that can influence a states' motivation concerning the recognition of new members. They are informed by international politics and include: external security, domestic insecurity, and coordination.

The pursuit of external security is a driving force for recognition because of state's compulsion to survive: "state leaders weigh any potential grant of legitimacy with reference to their own security situations, judging how each new member will positively or negatively affect them" (Coggins, 2011:449). Domestic insecurity too affects recognition behavior, as states facing internal challenges would not like to encourage secessionist movements within their borders. Lastly, Great Powers' coordinated recognition is necessary whenever possible as failure to do so results in international instability and the preservation of the status quo.

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[2] - The leading political, economic and military states in the international system such as the veto holding members of the UN Security Council.

## 1.6 Research Methodology and Methods

This research privileges the qualitative research approach. Qualitative research can, broadly, be defined as the use of "words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data" (Bryman, 2013:380). Qualitative research is also used to describe any study whose findings are not the result of statistical processes or other quantitative means (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:17). The study espouses the interpretative epistemological paradigm, which assumes that the social world is the outcome of the examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants (Bryman, 2013:381) and, as such, there is no separation between social phenomena and those involved in its construction. Social reality is not something out there, waiting to be discovered, but something that is constructed through inter-personal and group interactions.

The process of data collection involved the scrutiny of existing relevant studies that capture the dynamics of secession in Africa. Particular attention is given to the cases of Eritrea and South Sudan to illustrate the role of both domestic and external factors in determining the successful outcome of secessionist movements on the continent. In this regard, secondary data was gathered from various sources such as books, reports, peer-reviewed articles, online journal articles as well as published and un-published theses.

It should be noted that the use of data gathered from secondary sources does not reduce the quality of the study in relation to primary data source research. Secondary data collection includes benefits such as "savings: in terms of resources, time, money and personnel; increased data quality; larger sample size; and intellectual advancement" (Davine, 2003:286). Hence, the re-analysis of existing data for the purposes of answering new research questions is significant because it has the potential of creating new meaning and develop empirical knowledge in the process.

In addition, the study undertook a textual analysis of data gathered from the aforementioned sources. Illustration was the favored method as it is grounded on the re-evaluation and interpretation of existing data in order to exemplify, explain and elucidate propositions. This technique is consistent with social research interpretative epistemology which argues that social phenomena is not separated from those involved in its construction; and social research

constructive ontology which argues that human understanding of the social world is the outcome of the examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants (Bryman, 2013:380).

## 1.7 Significance of the Research

This research is of relevance given the prevalence of secessionist activities in the contemporary world. Secession is a global phenomenon affecting both developed and developing societies. The African continent, in particular, is still home to a number of separatist movements including Casamance (Senegal), Cabinda (Angola), Zanzibar (Tanzania), Ogaden (Ethiopia), Western Sahara (Morocco) and Somaliland (Somalia) (McNamee, 2012:14). An investigation into the determinants of secession in Eritrea and South Sudan will help scholars, policy-makers and commentators to understand the impacts of domestic and international politics in the creation of new states in post-colonial Africa.

## 1.8 Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first chapter provides the necessary background information to the study such as the research problem, questions and objectives of the study, the theoretical framework and the methodological approach to the research. The second chapter reviews the existing literature on the phenomenon of secession with particular emphasis on the definitional problem, historical manifestations of the phenomenon, academic approaches and the secessionist debate in Africa. The third chapter analyses the process of secession in Eritrea looking at the territory's political geography and history, federation with Ethiopia, Ethiopia's annexation of Eritrea, the liberation wars and attainment of statehood. The fourth chapter describes the dynamics of South Sudan's long walk to independence, the uneasy relationship between North and South, the civil wars, and the settlement of the conflict through the CPA. The last chapter sets out the summary, conclusions and lessons that can be drawn from the experiences of Eritrea and South Sudan regarding the explanation of the determining factors of successful secessions in post-colonial Africa.

# CHAPTER TWO

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Introduction

Secession is a contemporary political phenomenon (Beary, 2008:31). Although the term is often associated with negative and disapproving connotations, the post-Cold War period has witnessed renewed scholarly interest on the subject as a process of state creation (Anderson, 2013:343). Secession has both an interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary character leading to complementary academic approaches, as social scientists, legal scholars and philosophers have examined it through the lenses of their respective disciplines (Siroty, 2007:45).

In this regard, this chapter provides a review of available literature on the phenomenon of secession with the view of identifying and clarifying the main discourses surrounding the subject. The chapter will focus on the concept, historical overview, dynamics, theories and practices of secession around the world, with particular consideration to its manifestations and discourses on the African continent.

## 2.2 Secession: A Contested Concept

The word secession has contested meanings (Doyle, 2010:1). Pavikovic and Radan (2007:4) validate this view observing that "there is little consensus amongst scholars on the definition of secession". This conceptual divergence means that there is no generally accepted criteria to determine if a case of state creation is or not the result of secession. However, different definitions of the phenomenon share the common assumption that "secession is synonymous with moving apart or withdrawing" (Anderson, 2013:345). This notion emanates from the etymology of the word, the Latin verb *secede*, with "'se' meaning 'apart' and '*cedere*' meaning 'to go'" (Pavikovic & Radan, 2007:5).

A number of scholars have offered various definitions of secession. For instance, Crawford (1979:247) defines it as "the creation of a state by the use or threat of force and without the consent of the former sovereign". According to Bartkus (1999:3) the concept denotes "the formal

withdrawal from an established, internationally recognized state by a constituent unit to create a new state". Kohen (2006:1) views secession as "the creation of a new independent state entity through the separation of part of the territory and population of an existing state". In the words of Pavikovic and Radan (2007:1) secession is "a process of withdrawal of a territory and its population from an existing state and the creation of a new state on that territory"; while Anderson (2013:344) describes secession as "the withdrawal of territory (colonial or non-colonial) from part of an existing state to create a new state".

Although the aforementioned definitions convey the idea of creating new states out of existing ones, there are some discernible differences between them. For instance, in his definition, Anderson (2013:344) includes all cases of state formation resulting from the decolonization process. According to this view, the vast majority of former colonies in Africa and Asia would be considered cases of secession. Crawford (1979:247) sets the limits of secession on the use or threat of force by the secessionists, and opposition of the parent state. Crawford's (1979:247) definition reduces secession to a few cases such as Bangladesh (Pavikovic & Radan, 2011:3). For Bartkus (1999:3), Kohen (2006:1), and Pavikovic and Radan (2007:1), secession includes only states formed outside the colonial context, with Bartkus stressing the role of recognition by other states as a criterion for statehood.

These definitional differences are driven by the scope of the proposed definitions. In this regard, Kohen (2006:2) argues that definitions of secession can be categorized into broad and narrow conceptions. Pavikovic and Radan (2011:3) use the same terminology. Broad notions of secession consider all cases of state emergence including through the processes of decolonization; while narrow definitions of secession refer only to the processes of separating a non-colonial territory from an internationally recognized sovereign state in order to create a new independent state.

Anderson (2013:350) notes that secession can be consensual (occurs when the parent state consents to the withdrawal of the secessionist region) and unilateral (occurs without the parent state consent and often involves the use or threat of force).

## 2.3 Brief Historical Overview of Secession

History has registered several events that can be termed secession. In the words of Coggins (2011:24), "as long as political communities have existed, discontented minorities within them have attempted to break away". In fact, as early as 479 BCE the Ionians pleaded with the Greeks to help them escape from the authority of the Persian Empire. In medieval Europe, dissatisfied communities "sought to extricate themselves from kingdoms, feudal domains and churches" (Beary, 2008:39). However, secession, as a modern phenomenon, is a predicament that dates back to the emergence of the interstate system with the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 (Coggins, 2011:24).

Bridget Coggins has provided the most comprehensive attempt at charting historical changes in secessionism. She observes that, although there are no reliable records of secessionist demands during the 18th century, "the American colonies' declaration of independence was a harbinger of secessionist demands to come" (Coggins, 2011:26).

Secession was a rare occurrence over the course of the 19th century with the exceptions of developments in the Americas. Colonies in the New World won successful wars of independence from their European metropolises, especially Spain, resulting in the creation of new states such as Argentina, Colombia, Peru, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela, etc. (Coggins, 2011:27). Kohen (2006:1) argues that this process took the form of secession as "the idea of – and consequently, the term – 'decolonization' did not exist during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries". Similarly, in 1865, a group of 11 Southern states forming the Confederate States of America were forcibly reintegrated into the United States after a failed attempt to secede from the Union (Beary, 2008:39). Incidentally, Coggins (2011:27) observes that "between 1816 and 1916, secession was responsible for approximately 63 percent (26) of the new states entering the system".

The 20th century saw membership in the international system of states more than triple. According to Beary (2008:41), the number of states has grown from "the approximately 55 that existed in 1900 to the 192 that make up the United Nations today". In the words of Coggins (2014:5),

> These new states were born in various ways over four periods of independence.
> The first two occurred after the world wars, as victors punished vanquished and

rewarded their friends. The third occurred more gradually as empires shed their colonial holdings from the end of World War II through the 1970s. Finally, the Yugoslav and Soviet collapses created more than 20 new states from just two as the century concludes.

During this period, "the percentage of states born as a result of secession approached 70 percent. In the last 50 years it grew to 73 percent, making secession an increasing common cause of state birth" (Coggins, 2011:28). The majority of demands for secession in the 20th century were anti-colonial and resulted from colonial peoples' exposure to the ideas of self-determination and nationalism in Africa and Asia.

Presently, "secession seems to plague all types of societies – liberal democratic, former communist, and developing" (Bartkus, 1999:3). Without a doubt, in the recent past, conflicts in South Sudan, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Basque Country, Tibet, the Philippines, Northern Cyprus, Quebec, etc., have all been linked to aspirations for independent statehood.

## 2.4 The Dynamics of Secession

Heraclides (1991:1) argues that secession is "a special kind of territorial disintegration involving states". It arises when sub-state ethno-cultural communities frustrated in their quest for recognition and resources, challenge the state and its territorial definition through the pursuit of independent statehood (Premdas, 2013:2). Territorial fragmentation of the state is a threat against the very definition of the state; as a result, central governments often attempt to militarily subdue separatist groups (Pavikovic & Radan, 2011:1).

As stated by Beary (2008:1), "frequently, separatist struggles are prolonged, punishing, and prohibitively costly and are fought with fanatical intensity and uncompromising stubbornness involving high civilian casualties". In this regard, Premdas (2013:5) has observed how "few are the cases if any where the parties are not joined in their struggle by foreign interests or states with their own agenda more often than not adding fuel to the sustenance of the struggle". Beary (2008:38) supports this view noting that "separatist movements are frequently manipulated by external powers as part of a geopolitical chess game that can become violent".

Horowitz (1985:230) clarifies,

> Whether and when a secessionist movement will emerge is determined mainly by domestic politics, by the relations of groups and regions within the state. Whether a secessionist movement will achieve its aims, however is determined largely by international politics, the balance of interests and forces that extend beyond the state.

Secession is a process directed towards attainment of independence as its outcome. In this regard, Kohen (2006:14) explains that, "secession is not an instant fact. It always implies a complex series of claims and decisions, negotiations and/or struggle, which may – or may not – lead to the creation of a new state". Reasoning along the same lines, Premdas (2013:4) argues, "as a social process, secession may be conceived analytically as constituted of steps and stages, cumulative and precipitating causes, periodically displaying patterns of accommodation and intransigence".

Secession is closely associated with recognition. According to Wood (1980:133), a "'successful' secession is not complete until it has become institutionalized in a new government, legitimate at home and recognized abroad". Pavikovic and Radan (2007:10) support this view noting that once a territory breaks off from its parent state, recognition by other states completes the process of achieving statehood. In other words, an entity is treated as a state only if the outside world recognizes it to be one (Sterio, 2009:8). In this regard, Dugard and Raic (2006:94) have argued that "recognition has provided the *imprimatur* of statehood to seceding entities for over two hundred years".

Malone (2008:42) notes that recognition covers "a confusing mixture of international law, domestic law, and politics". The author elaborates further observing that "recognition is the willingness to deal with another state or government representing the state as a member of the international community". Ker-Lindsay asserts that although recognition may take various forms (recognition of governments, insurgencies and states), strictly speaking, it refers to the practice of states only (Ker-Lindsay, 2012:6), and it is generally informed by political considerations (Ker-Lindsay, 2012:7).

The significance of recognition in determining the actual status of secessionist territories has been the object of a long-running debate between legal scholars. There are two major views on the matter: the constitutive and the declaratory schools of thought (Sterio, 2009:10). Under the

constitutive view, acts of recognition define statehood: "an entity does not exist as a state until it has been recognized by other states. The recognition itself 'constitutes' the state" (Malone, 2008:44). The declaratory theory holds the view that a state's existence does not hinge on recognition or non-recognition but on the fulfillment of the fact of statehood (defined territory, permanent population and effective government (Ker-Lindsay, 2012:16). Anderson (2013:355) has identified a third school of thought, the constitutive-collective recognition theory, which submits that "collective recognition by international organizations is a *sine qua non* for statehood".

## 2.5 Normative and Legal Approaches to Secession

The secession debate has often been structured along normative lines. As clarified by Bartkus (1999:15), "moral questions lie at the very core of any secession". A question often arises from secessionist attempts: what arguments justify a plea for secession?

In several instances, political theorists have identified "political norms and/or ethical norms which would best justify the creation of a new state out of an established one" (Pavikovic & Radan, 2007:200). Buchanan (1997:31) argues that "all theories of the right to secede either understand the right as a remedial right only or also recognize a primary right to secede". Some authors like Pavikovic and Radan (2007:201) use a different terminology: remedial theories and choice theories. Remedial theories are highly restrictive, stressing that "a group has a general right to secede if and only if it has suffered certain injustices, for which secession is the appropriate remedy or last resort" (Buchanan, 1997:31). Choice theories of secession are more permissive maintaining that "the state is a voluntary association into which citizens and groups of citizens can enter and from which they can exit by their own choice" (Pavikovic & Radan, 2007:201).

Likewise, discourses on secession have also been assessed from a legal perspective. For example, Pavikovic and Radan (2007:221) explain that the legality or lawfulness of secession "can be examined from the context of a state's constitutional law and international law". Secessionists may exercise the right to secession under a state's law provided that "it is consented to, first, by the population of the territorial entity that seeks to secede, and second, the host state as a whole" (Radan, 2011:333). In relation to the first, consent may be determined by referendum, while the second entails the adoption of an appropriate constitutional amendment.

These procedures have been observed in the cases of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, the Yugoslavian Federation and Ethiopia (Radan, 2011:333).

In terms of international norms, Crawford (1979:390) argues that "secession is neither legal nor illegal under international law, but a legally neutral fact the consequences of which is or may be regulated internationally". Other scholars, however, do not accept this approach, arguing instead that "there exists a limited or qualified right of secession in international law that stems from the rights of peoples to self-determination" (Pavikovic & Radan, 2007:233). Radan (2011:301), for instance, argues that "an implicit, but limited, right of unilateral secession exists pursuant to the right of peoples to self-determination, such a right is said to arise if a territory community within a state is systematically discriminated against". However, it must be noted that "even if secession is illegal it may be effective if the seceding entity is recognized as a state by the international community" (Pavikovic & Radan, 2007:221).

## 2.6 The Secessionist Debate in Africa

Secession is not a novel occurrence in the African political arena (Ylonen, 2013:130). As stated by Christopher (2011:1) "the continent of Africa has been wracked with conflict and secessionist movements since independence". In effect, as early as 1960, provincial authorities in Katanga attempted to break away from the newly independent Republic of Congo (Bereketeab, 2012:10). In the same way, Biafra declared its independence from the Federal Republic of Nigeria in 1967 on the grounds of distinctive identity (Keller, 2007:3). However, these early secessionist attempts in the nascent independent Africa did not succeed as they were decisively crushed by the military of their respective central governments (Bamfo, 2013:2).

It is worth mentioning that there were no major secessionist conflicts in Africa between 1970 and 1991. Sudan and Ethiopia were the lone exceptions (Engelbert & Hummel, 2005:422). As explained by Njoku (2010:348) this interlude in African secessionism may be attributed to "the UN/OAU anti-secessionist policies in Africa, which successfully isolated both Katanga and Biafra…and the international politics of the Cold War era, which discouraged other secessionist agitations, although it did not make Africa less volatile".

The disintegration of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics (USSR) in 1990-1991 reignited the flames of secessionist struggles in Africa (Engelbert & Hummel 2005:421). At present there are

several secessionist conflicts underway in the continent, including Casamance (Senegal), Cabinda (Angola), Zanzibar (Tanzania), Ogaden (Ethiopia), Western Sahara (Morocco) and Somaliland (Somalia) (McNamee, 2012:14).

The debate on secessionism in Africa can be divided into five broad categories: causes, secessionist deficit, right of secession, the determinants of secessions in South Sudan and its impacts on other secessionist movements in the continent.

### 2.6.1 Causal Factors of Secession in Africa

There are two distinct views on the causal factors of secession in post-colonial Africa: the legacy of the inherited colonial borders (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Mhlanga 2013; Ouguergouz & Tehindrazanarivelo 2006; Engelbert et al. 2002; Herbst 1989; Griffiths 1986), and failures of governance (Whitehead 2014; Ndulo 2013; Bamfo 2012 and Keller 2010).

Proponents of the character of African borders' position, such as Ouguergouz and Tehindrazanarivelo (2006:258), argue that "it is almost impossible to examine the problematic of the state in Africa without making reference to the artificial and arbitrary character of African borders". Herbst (1989:693) clarifies: "boundaries in Africa are often characterized as artificial and arbitrary on the basis of the fact that they do not respond to what people believe to be rational demographic, ethnographic, and topographic boundaries". Despite their artificial and arbitrary character, African borders have remained virtually unchanged since 1884, when they were first demarcated by European colonial powers at the Berlin conference.

In this regard, Njoku (2010:339) suggests that there are two major arguments in the discussion on the subject of borders in post-colonial Africa. The first group contends that, "the post-colonial state should be adjusted in order to create homogeneous communities that can live in peace" (Njoku, 2010:339); while the second group upholds the inviolable character of inherited colonial borders as agreed upon by the African leaders at the OAU summit in Cairo in 1964 (Keller, 2007:1).

Some scholars, such as Engelbert et al. (2002), Hughes (2010), Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Mhlanga (2010) and others collectively suggest that African borders should be "de-colonized". For instance, Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Mhlanga (2013:1) argues that,

> The fact that state borders on the African continent were and are artificial is not unique to Africa, but what is problematic is their arbitrariness which has an impact on issues of nation building and identity politics. Artificiality and arbitrariness of borders must not be conflated into one problem. Arbitrariness more than artificiality of African boundaries, has had serious consequences for politics of identity, character of conflicts and the project of nation building.

This argument is supported by Engelbert et al. (2002:1903) who maintains that "evidence appears to support claims that Africa has paid a substantial price for refusing to challenge some of the arbitrary borders it inherited from colonialism". In effect, the African continent has paid the price of failure to decolonize its borders in terms of interstate disputes, civil wars and political instability and secessionist conflicts (Engelbert et al., 2002:1118).

Notwithstanding, the advocates of the sacrosanct character of African borders often criticize the aforementioned view. The view mirrors the position of the OAU and its successor the AU. It dates back to the founding charter of the OAU in 1963 when member states pledged, "respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each state" (Griffiths, 1986:213). This commitment was reaffirmed at the OAU summit in Cairo in 1964 when African heads of state observed that "considering that border problems constitute a grave and permanent factor of dissension ... all Member States pledge themselves to respect the borders existing on their achievement of national independence" (Griffiths, 1986:213). In a similar fashion, Sturman (2008:68) elaborates, "the new norms of the AU do not include a revision of *uti possidetis*". Herbst (1989:692) provides the rationale for this view arguing that "the vast majority of borders have remained virtually untouched since that time because the system for the most part continues to serve the political needs of the colonialists and present-day African leaders".

Another group of scholars have made the case for poor governance as the causal factor of secessionist attempts in Africa. For example, Ylonen (2013:131) suggests that dynamics of marginalization lead groups to challenge the state. This view is supported by Ndulo (2013) who argues that "failure of governance leads minority groups to believe that they are not included in running the affairs of the state". According to Katz (1995:183) "this frustration often leads to mobilization under ethnic or territory-based identity with the belief that the group's rights would be adequately protected in a self-governed territory". Arguing from a similar perspective, Bamfo (2012:37) indicates that ideological and policy differences between a region or ethnic group and

the central government might lead to the emergence of separatist sentiment which might or might not develop into a secessionist war.

Ylonen (2013:131) sums up this view stating that,

> in order to understand demands for self-determination it is useful to examine them in the context of state marginalization that is particularly prevalent among those states with colonial past in Africa, which have continued to be highly exclusive and suffer from challenges related to the lack of legitimacy among sectors of the population"

### 2.6.2 The Right to Secession in Africa

There is also an ongoing debate on the state of the African legal order on the rights of people to secession. International law recognizes both the right to self-determination and the right of a state to its territorial integrity. Mnyongani (2008:464) argues that the tension between the two rights has been the cause of many wars in post-colonial Africa where "struggles continue to be waged under the banner of self-determination and these have been thwarted with reference to the right of a state to its territorial integrity". As previously mentioned, the OAU and its successor the African Union do not recognize, as a matter of principle, a right to secession to any African people.

However, Cowell (2013:25) claims that the African Union has "shifted from the Organisation of African Unity's (OAU) practice of defending state sovereignty at all costs, to a more value-driven approach regarding the recognition of secessionist states". Sturman (2008:68) is of different opinion arguing that "the AU has made its instance on secession more legally binding than it was under the OAU Charter". Ouguergouz and Tehindrazanarivelo (2006:257) argues that the African Charter on Peoples and Human Rights offers potentialities for a right to secession, especially in cases where a people is denied the opportunity to enjoy its right to internal self-determination as illustrated by the experience of South Sudan.

### 2.6.3 The Secessionist Deficit Argument

A different group of studies has explored another dimension of the phenomenon of secession in Africa by focusing on the continent's secessionist deficit. Engelbert and Hummel (2005: 399)

remark that "over the last 40 years, Africa has experienced relatively fewer secessionist conflicts than most other regions of the world, even though it is otherwise plagued with political violence and its countries tend to display a higher prevalence of many of the factors usually associated with separatism". This raises the question: what factors explain the relative scarcity of secessionist conflicts in Africa?

Baker's (2001:65) argument that secessionist leaders' shifting political objectives as well as the nature of calculations behind those changes are informed by a number of factors including "popular support, state response, international response and personal opportunities" seem to provide an answer to this question. Reasoning along the same lines, Engelbert and Hummel (2005:412) argues that "in Africa as elsewhere, regional leaders can be expected to capitalize on local grievances and promote secessions if the potential rewards of a separatist state, in the absence of international recognition, outweigh the potential rewards associated with control or partial control of institutions of the sovereign national state".

Engelbert develops this argument in two other instances. First, the author illustrates it by comparing the cases of elite compliance in Barotseland (Zambia) and defiance in Casamance (Senegal), concluding that "provided they can use the post-colonial state in their local strategies of domination and access to resources, regional elites are unlikely to challenge it, even if they are kept at a distance from resource-sharing arrangements at the national level" (Engelbert 2005:29). Secondly, he argues that African actors' decisions to seek secession are constrained by two main factors: "the rules of internal recognition of new states (and the particular African doctrine in this matter) and the relatively unique nature of Africa's post-colonial state" (Engelbert 2014:147).

In general, the international system opposes the recognition of new states through secession (Engelbert 2005:418). Anderson (2013:343) notes that "this situation is explicable by the fact that secession represents a challenge to perhaps the two most fundamental principles of international law: the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states". The norms of the OAU rule out any secessionist movement outside the colonial context. In this regard, Sturman (2008:67) has argued that "secession has long been regarded as the antithesis of African statehood by the Organization of African Union".

The African Union, the successor of the OAU, seems to maintain the status quo on secession. Sturman (2013:68) notes that "the reappraisal of state sovereignty by the AU does not extend as

far as changing the regional norm against secession". In the same way, "the UN espouses anti-secessionist doctrine in Africa on the grounds of respect for the principle of sovereignty and respect for the geographical status quo" (Njoku, 2010:340). Hence, "the failure of the OAU to recognize secessionist claims as legitimate claims of self-determination has almost certainly been a contributory factor in deterring claims of secession" (Cowell, 2013:29).

However, some scholars have criticized the debate on the scarcity of secession in Africa. For instance, Ba (2013:79) argues that "although the argument that Africa has a secessionist deficit is empirically sound, it has also served as ammunition for some other scholars to call for more secessionism in Africa". Ba (2013:86) further suggests that redrawing the African map does not offer the best solution for violent protracted conflicts in the continent, "data shows that no secessionist movement in Africa resulting in the creation of a new state has either resolved conflict or led to more stability in the country or the region".

### 2.6.4 The Post-South Sudan's Secession discussions

In recent years, the successful secession of South Sudan has engendered renewed academic interest on Africa's latent and active secessionist movements. A number of studies have explored the determinants of Southern secession in the Sudan while others have focused on the impacts of South Sudan's experience on other nationalist movements in the continent.

A group of scholars have argued that South Sudan's secession has not led to a domino effect on other secessionist movements in the Africa. Writing in 2011, Tull (2011:1) commented that,

> at present, there is no evidence to suggest that other governments in sub-Saharan Africa, likewise confronted with demands of separatist movements, will acquiesce to the partitioning of their state in order to end an irredentist conflict. Likewise, no secessionist movement currently exists in Africa, which could muster enough military power to force the central state to agree to separation.

In a similar fashion, McNamee (2012:7) argues that Africa's borders are likely to remain unchanged after Sudan's historic split partly because of "the values instilled in the continent's founding political structures, namely the Organization of African Unity (OAU)"; the position of the international community, which shows "predilection for the status quo"; and finally, "the particular circumstances that paved the way for South Sudan's secession" (Engelbert, 2014:157).

Although in agreement with other scholars concerning the tangible effects of South Sudan's secession on Africa's secessionist activities, Engelbert (2014:1) points out that "there is a significant rise in the coincidence of separatist and Islamist insurgencies". He further suggests that "Islamism might represent a more radical challenge to the postcolonial territorial state in Africa than most other instances of secessionism to date" (Engelbert, 2014:1).

The fact that Southern insurgents in the Sudan achieved their political objective – independence – in the absence of a military victory against the government of Sudan started an intense debate in the literature regarding the determinants of the secession of South Sudan. The discussion has been succinctly framed in the following terms: what factors better explain the partition of the Sudan?

Several reasons have been put forward to account for this fact. Daoud (2012:1), for example, has argued that Southern Sudan's secession is the result of multiple factors including "the impact of the centre's policies, the weakness of the democratic governments, the failure of the peace processes, the existence of historical grievances, and the role of international actors". From a similar perspective, Taha (2011) explains that the unity of the southern rebellion movement, the South's strategic demand for secession and regional and international support for the South represent the three determinant factors for the secession of South Sudan.

A number of scholars have suggested that external factors played a decisive role in the secession of South Sudan. This argument is supported by Mamdani (2011) who claims that "in the case of South Sudan, the external factor was more decisive. That external factor was the 9/11 and, following it, US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq". This view has also been complemented by Medani (2012:290) who asserts that "the U.S.-led compromise agreement between essentially two elite factions in northern and southern Sudan played a crucial role in preventing the reorganization of a unified Sudanese state". Milena Sterio (2013:161) elaborates, "the great powers were instrumental in ensuring that South Sudan remained a part of Sudan, and then over the last decade, the great powers played a dominant role in paving the south Sudanese way toward independence".

Others have evaluated this view advocating instead that domestic factors played the decisive role in determining the break-up of the Sudan. In particular, Huliaras (2012:21) contends that "while both domestic and external factors explain the largely unanticipated outcome, domestic factors

were far more important than external ones". This is in agreement with Salman (2013:345) who contends that "the secession of South Sudan ensued from the failure of Northern Sudanese Political leaders to deal with South Sudan's social, political, economic, and cultural differences seriously". The failure of the central government to make the "unity of Sudan" attractive to the people of Southern Sudan in the interim period contributed to the massive vote in favor of secession in the referendum for self-determination (Christopher, 2011:128).

**2.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has surveyed the main themes in the available literature on the phenomenon of secession. The chapter has explored the different definitions of secession, the history, dynamics and approaches to the phenomenon as a well as the state of the secessionist debate on the African continent. The chapter reveals that secession is a contested concept, it is not a 20th century development and can be approached through the lenses of several disciplines such as philosophy and law.

The review highlights the fact that studies on secessionism in Africa focus mostly on the causes of the phenomenon, its legal status, scarcity, and on the impacts of the recent case of South Sudan on African secessionist discourse. Although, a number of works acknowledge the existence of many secessionist groups in post-colonial Africa, including the successful cases of Eritrea and South Sudan, few have attempted to explain what determines the successful outcome of secessionist movements on the continent.

Building on the reviewed literature, this study investigates the determinants of secession in post-colonial Africa. This objective will be achieved by analyzing the dynamics of secession in Eritrea and South Sudan. Without any pretensions to establish theoretical causal relationships between variables and generalize them to the entire continent, the following lines will investigate factors that have evolved out of the particular experiences of Eritrea and South Sudan in order to provide useful insights into the determining factors of successful secessions in post-colonial Africa.

# CHAPTER THREE

# THE SECESSION OF ERITREA

## 3.1 Introduction

Eritrea became independent on May 24, 1993. Eritrea attained statehood by formally withdrawing from Ethiopia. The event represents an extraordinary development in post-colonial Africa because it was the first time that a territorial unit within an existing state successfully separated to become a state. Although there had been previous secessionist attempts in Biafra, Katanga, Cabinda, Casamance, etc., these cases never succeeded as they were crushed by the military of their respective central governments.

Thus, this chapter endeavors to explain how and why Eritrea successfully separated from Ethiopia. The chapter achieves this goal by analyzing the dynamics of secession in Eritrea through the lenses of the theoretical assumptions of Wood and Coggins' analytical frameworks on secession. The chapter investigates: the history and geography of Eritrea; the genesis of secessionist alienation; the emergence of secessionist movements; the Eritrean armed secessionist conflict; and the decisive factors for Eritrea's successful secession.

## 3.2 Political Geography and History of Eritrea

Wood's analytical framework on secession asserts that a series of preconditions must be in place before a secession process can initiate (Woods 1980:112). The first requirement relates to geographical and demographical considerations as every secession presupposes the existence of a territory containing the potentially secessionist population. In this regard, a comprehensive investigation on the determinants of Eritrea's successful secession must start with an exploration of the region's location, its people and their history.

Eritrea is situated along the west coast of the Red Sea, north of the Horn of Africa[3]. The Italians named the territory in 1890 after the Roman *Erythraeum Mare*, literally meaning "red sea" (Fegley 1995: xv). Eritrea is relatively small compared to other African countries, bordering the Sudan on the north and northwest, Ethiopia on the South and Djibouti on the southeast.

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[3] See maps at appendices 1 and 2

Although Eritrea has a population of approximately 4.5 million, the country is said to be inhabited by a "mosaic of diverse communities" (Sherman, 1980:3).

There are nine ethno-linguistic groups in Eritrea consisting of the Afar, Bilen, Hedareb, Kunama, Nara, Rashaida, Saho, Tigre and Tigrinya. The last two constitute the major ethno-linguistic groups in the country. Tigre-speaking Eritreans are mostly Muslims and agro-pastoralists inhabiting the eastern and western lowlands (Mussie, 2011:18). Tigrinya-speaking Eritreans are generally Christians and share ethnic ties with Tigrinya-speaking communities in Ethiopia. They occupy the Eritrean plateau and northern Ethiopia (the province of Tigray) (Mussie, 2011:18).

Eritrea's history dates back to ancient times. The first recorded allusion to Eritrea was made by the Egyptians in 3000 BCE and narrates maritime commerce between the pharaohs of Egypt and local chiefs on the Red Sea coast of Eritrea (Sherman, 1980:4). Mussie (2011: xx) has pointed out that, "Eritrean history is characterized by prevalent conflicts, movements of people and external intervention". Indeed, between the eighth and the twentieth centuries, Eritrea has successively been under the authority of Arab (Muslim) forces (eighth and fifteenth centuries), Ottoman Turks (sixteenth century), Khedival Egypt (second half of the nineteenth century), Italy (1890-1941), Britain (1941-1952) and Ethiopia (1962-1991).

Eritrea emerged as a modern political entity on January 1, 1890 after Italy established the colony of Eritrea (Fegley 1995: xxxiii). Italian colonial rule over Eritrea lasted until 1941. During this period, the Italians transformed Eritrea into a settler colony introducing developments in the areas of public administration, medical service, agriculture, banking, manufacturing, light industry, road and railway system, etc. The colony experienced additional material progress after 1933 as a result of Italy's war preparations against Ethiopia. Eritrea reached an advanced stage of industrialization with the modernization of the port of Massawa, enlargement of the road network, increasing urbanization and the expansion of Asmara, the capital city.

Italian colonial rule over Eritrea ended in 1941 after the British-led Allied forces defeated the Italian army stationed in the country during the Second World War. Subsequently, Eritrea was controlled and administered by Britain until 1952. During the course of the war, the British Military Administration developed Eritrea's industrial complex to meet the needs of a war economy. However, the territory suffered an industrial lump in the immediate post-war period. According to Fegley (1995: xxxiii) "the British administration did little to combat the neglect

and decline of Eritrean industry and the continued exploitation of Eritrea's agricultural resources by Italian settlers".

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Italy was forced to renounce sovereignty over its colonies of Libya, Somaliland and Eritrea, as part of the terms of the Peace Treaty signed with the four major victorious powers[4]. In relation to Eritrea, the four powers failed to agree on a "disposal" plan as they held different views on the matter: Britain supported the partition of Eritrea between Sudan and Ethiopia; France was in favor of Italy's return as an administrative power; the US proposed a collective UN trusteeship for ten years followed by independence; while the Soviet Union preferred individual trusteeship (Iyob, 1995:63).

Consequently, the fate of Eritrea was referred to the United Nations. A UN Commission, consisting of representatives from Norway, Burma, South Africa, Guatemala and Pakistan was sent to Eritrea in early 1950 to prepare a report for the UN General Assembly. The Commission was to consider the views of the Eritrean population, their capacity for self-government, regional interests of peace and security in East Africa, Ethiopia's claims that Eritrea be re-joined to its "Ethiopian motherland" and its need for an adequate access to the sea. Eventually, the Commission was divided in its recommendations: Burma, Norway and South Africa argued for a close association between Eritrea and Ethiopia; while Guatemala and Pakistan recommended full independence. On December 2, 1950 the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution to federate Eritrea with imperial Ethiopia and on September 11, 1952 the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie ratified Eritrea's constitution, thus establishing the Ethio-Eritrean federation (Iyob, 1995:64).

### 3.3 The Genesis of Secessionist Alienation in Eritrea

Besides, the existence of territory and a potentially secessionist population, Wood's analytical framework on secession highlights the incidence of social, economic, political and psychological grievances as essential elements for the development of separatist estrangement between the population of a region and its respective central government. According to Wood (1980:121) these factors can be expressed in "a group's perceptions or anticipation of denial of its "rightful" share [of benefits]; a decline in the legitimacy or politically integrative capacity of the central governments; and the perception or anticipation of threat to the group's identity and security".

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[4] This is a reference to Britain, France, the United States and the Soviet Union.

The abovementioned factors played out during the period of political association between Ethiopia and Eritrea (1952-1962). During the federation years, Ethiopia set up to dismantle Eritrea's autonomous federal status through diplomatic, military and extra-legal means. According to Sherman (1980:27) besides historical claims, the reasons for Addis Ababa sabotage of the federal arrangement were attributed to Ethiopian and pro-Ethiopian views that "Eritrean autonomy was infeasible and that only complete union would serve the needs of both countries".

However, before proceeding to the enumeration of Ethiopia's violation of Eritrea's federal autonomous status it is necessary to understand the rights and responsibilities of the two federal units. In this regard, Fegley (1995: xxxviii) elaborates,

> The UN General Assembly resolution, adopted by a vote of forty-seven to ten, provided that Eritrea should be linked to the Ethiopian Empire through a loose federal structure under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian emperor but with a form of internal self-government. The federal government, in the same way as the existing imperial government, was to control foreign and defense affairs, foreign and interstate commerce, transport and finance. Control over domestic affairs (including police, local administration, and local taxation to meet its own budget) was to be exercised by an elected Eritrean assembly on parliamentary model. The Eritrean state was to have its own administrative and judicial structures and a flag.

According to Iyob (1995:88) during the first half of the federation period, 1952-1955, "Eritrea's façade democracy was gradually eroded by the new administration's collaboration with pro-Ethiopian members of the first Assembly". Emperor Haile Selassie declared the federal Ethiopian court to be the territory's final court of appeal on September 30, 1952, thus violating Articles 85 and 90 of the Eritrean Constitution. Freedom of press was abolished and pro-Eritrean newspapers were closed down. In July 1953, Ethiopia restricted mobility by enacting a law requiring all Eritrean males in urban areas to carry identity cards at all times.

Iyob (1995:89) points out that after 1955 the violation of Eritrea's autonomous status within the federation became more flagrant as "intimidation, coercion, and military might now came into play". In that year, outspoken members of the Eritrean Assembly began to be threatened or arrested for violations of federal (Ethiopian) laws. Newspapers' editors began to be imprisoned without plausible reasons. Tedla Beiru, the highest executive authority in the Eritrean government, resigned in July 1955, "due to excessive interference and pressure from the emperor's official representative in Eritrea" (Sherman 1980:27). The following year Amharic, the language of the Ethiopian ruling class was declared the official language of Eritrea removing

Tigre and Tigrinya from that position. A bill discarding the Eritrean flag and the adoption of the Ethiopian flag was passed in December 1958. A year later, the Eritrean Assembly voted to replace Eritrean laws by the Ethiopian penal code. In May 1960, the Eritrean Assembly changed its name from Eritrean government to Eritrean administration.

In addition, the Ethiopian imperial regime set up to weaken Eritrea's economy making it dependent on Ethiopian production. To this end, Ethiopian officials discouraged foreign investment and commercial engagements in Eritrea (Mussie, 2011:62). Eritrean industries were forced to either close down or move their operations to Ethiopia (Keller, 2007:22). These policies had a serious impact on the Eritrean working class. Mussie (2011:62) states that "higher rates of unemployment resulted in massive migration of Eritrean workers to Sudan, the Middle East, and Ethiopia in search of jobs".

Formal protests or opposition to Addis Ababa's encroachments on Eritrea's federal autonomy were violently suppressed. For instance, in 1960 a group of students demanding the restoration of the Eritrean flag, seal and arms were immediately imprisoned.

Finally on November 14, 1962, "with a sezeable Ethiopian army surrounding the Eritrean administration building where the Assembly convened" (Iyob 1995:94), Eritrean representatives abrogated Eritrea's federal autonomous status turning the territory into Ethiopia's fourteenth province.

**3.4 The Rise of Secessionist Movements in Eritrea**

Organised secessionist opposition requires the formation of secessionist movements reflecting coordinated structures of command. The leadership of secessionist movements capture the grievances of the people, articulate the vision of a new nation, and engage the central government diplomatically and militarily (Wood, 1980:123). In the case of Eritrea, Ethiopia's gradual erosion of the region's autonomy escalated Eritrean resistance. Organized Eritrean opposition to Ethiopian domination began in earnest in the late 1950s. Three leading movements carried out the resistance: the Eritrean Liberation Movement (ELM), the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF).

### 3.4.1 The Eritrean Liberation Movement (ELM)

The emergence of the ELM as an organized underground resistance movement in the Eritrean political arena precedes the abrogation and official incorporation of Eritrea into the Ethiopian Empire in 1962 (Markakis, 1987:55). The movement was established in 1958 by Moslem Eritrean exiles in the Sudan and sought to mobilize support inside Eritrea and abroad against the growing erosion of the federation (Negash, 1997:148). From its inception the ELM sought to reconcile the Moslem-Christian divide that dominated Eritrean politics by emphasizing on a common Eritrean identity and a secular ideology. The ELM was successful in recruiting many members and spreading rapidly throughout the towns and cities of Eritrea because "the ELM's mobilization appealed to Eritreans of different ages, faiths and economic classes" (Iyob, 1995:100).

Although the initial programme of action of the ELM was the defense of Eritrea's autonomous status against Ethiopian encroachments (Mussie, 2011:63), later the movement began to advocate for Eritrea's liberation by coup *d'ét*at (Iyob, 1995:101). To this end, "in September 1960, the ELM leadership embarked on a strategy of infiltration into governmental structures so that the administration in Eritrea could eventually be overthrown by *coup d'état*" (Mussie, 2011:64). However, the coup strategy did not have the backing of exiled veteran politicians who saw the movement as a radical, Communist-inspired organization (Iyob, 1995:102).

In July 1960, exiled Eritrean politicians in Cairo under the leadership of Idris Mohammed Adam founded the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF). The ELF considered the ELM to be a potential rival and began to work against its progress. Markakis (1987:55) points out that the ELF leadership "launched a campaign of denunciation, claiming that the E.L.M. was being promoted by Communists and probable Ethiopian agents". The appearance of the ELF signaled the demise of the ELM as the movement had to fight a two front war against Ethiopian security forces and a new antagonistic front. Several ELM cadres deserted to the ELF in the 1960s, and in 1970 the movement was disbanded (Mussie, 2011:4).

### 3.4.2 The Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF)

Founded by exiled Eritrean politicians in Cairo in 1960, the ELF was more radical and militant than the ELM. The ELF emphasized armed resistance as the only alternative against Ethiopian

domination. To this end, the movement started Eritrea's armed struggle in September 1961 (Negash, 1997:148), with a guerrilla force consisting of the notorious Hamid Idris Awate's companions and Eritrean veterans who had deserted from the Sudanese army and the Eritrean police (Markakis, 1987:56).

In the early 1960s, the ELF leadership declared that the ELF was a Moslem organization and Eritrea an integral part of the Arab world. This strategy gained the ELF both material and ideological support from Egypt, Iraq, Syria, the Sudan and the Arab world in general (Negash, 1997:149). During this period, the movement had no clear ideological line, espousing a combination of Islamic fundamentalism and fervent Marxism (Iyob, 1997:110). A more radical Marxist-oriented philosophy arose in the mid-1970s when young cadres returned from training camps in radical Arab countries, China and Cuba (1997:110).

From its inception in the 1960s the ELF experienced institutional and organizational problems in its leadership apparatus and organizational structures. The ELF leadership started by modeling the organizational structure of the movement on the Algerian National Front of Liberation (AFLN) (Markakis, 1987:56). This approach led to the division of Eritrea into four main geographical zones each with its own military and political structures. The zonal divisions reflected the ELF's politics of exclusion and patronage along ethnic and religious affiliation (Iyob, 1997:112). In addition, a new body, the Revolutionary Command, tasked with centralizing administrative and military control over the regions and liaise with the Supreme Council (SC), the exiled leadership in Cairo, was established in the Sudan.

The internal flows of the territorial system soon became evident as the decentralization of the zones, the lack of links between them, and the absence of a permanent central leadership in Eritrea turned the regions into independent fiefdoms, encouraging factionalism and the persistence of the corrosive Christian-Muslim schism. In 1968 a reform movement emerged within the ELF ranks, abolishing the zones as well as the Revolutionary command in the Sudan, and replacing them with an elected body based inside Eritrea known as General Command (GC) (Markakis, 1987:59).

Problems ensued when a new body, the General Secretariat (GS), was created to replace the exiled Cairo-based SC. The GC refused to acknowledge the GS launching a repressive campaign of terror and violence against the reformists (Iyob, 1997:114). In 1970 the power struggle

between the new leadership and the reformists led to the emergence of three breakaway groups: the People's Liberation Front (PLF), the Eritrean Liberation Front - People's Liberation Front (ELF-PLF), and the ELF-Ubel. The ELF continued to be ripped apart by the centrifugal forces of ideology, ethnicity, religion and sectarianism while waging war against emerging nationalist groups.

In September 1973, a Moslem contingent under the leadership of Ramadan Mohammed Nur and a Christian group led by Isayas Aferworq merged forming the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) (Markakis, 1987:60). After seven years of factional inter-Eritrean conflict, cooperation and uneasy coexistence, the EPLF managed to push the ELF out of Eritrean territory into the Sudan, thus inaugurating EPLF supremacy in the Eritrean military arena in the early 1980s.

### 3.4.2 The Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF)

The EPLF emerged as a breakaway group from the ELF in September 1973 under the leadership of Ramadan Mohammed Nur (General Secretary) and Isayas Aferworq (Deputy General Secretary) (Markakis, 1987:64). The group led the armed struggle to Eritrea's independence in 1993.

From the outset, the EPLF goal was to achieve national liberation through protracted war (Figley, 1995: xli). The movement emphasized on secular nationalism around a single Eritrean identity, thus repudiating the ELF's ethno-religious divide. Furthermore, the EPLF highlighted Eritrea's African identity in clear opposition to the ELF Pan-Islamic and Pan-Arab aspirations (Iyob, 1995:124). Despite this, the group managed to attract support from Libya, Iraq and Syria (Figley, 1995: xli).

Soon after being established, the EPLF suffered a major internal crisis springing from ideological differences amongst its members. First, a group called *Menkaa'e* demanded radical reforms in the structures of the movement accusing its leadership of being petit bourgeois nationalists and calling for the creation of a proletarian party and the introduction of democratic principles within the organization (Mussie, 2011:66); Second, a group from the *Akele Guzai* province claimed ethnic discrimination as their group was not "adequately represented in the EPLF leadership" (Iyob, 1995:116). These demands were considered a great threat by the

leadership and most of their proponents (who refused to recant on their views) were summarily executed (Mussie, 2011:66).

In terms of ideology, the EPLF started out with a "strong socialist and nationalist image" (Figley, 1995: xli). However, Iyob (1995:123) describes the EPLF ideological stand as a "selective, pragmatic (even eclectic), application of Marxist philosophy adapted to the particular context of Eritrea's nationalistic liberation struggle". During its first congress in January 1977, the EPLF's programme envisaged an "independent Eritrean state where the economy would be largely state-owned and centrally planned" (Markakis, 1987:84). Tigre and Tigrinya were adopted as the official languages of the movement and secular education promoted (1987:84).

The EPLF started out attracting large number of recruits especially among the urban, intellectual and Christian youth (Figley, 1995: xli) and two years after its foundation it had approximately 10 thousand fighters in the field. Mussie (2011:66) observes that the EPLF encouraged women to join the organization and by 1991 women constituted one-third of the EPLF army. The EPLF proved to be an effective military force attacking the Ethiopian army throughout Eritrea.

The EPLF managed to establish political and military alliances with two Ethiopian movements: the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) and the Tigrean People's Liberation Front (TPLF). In the words of Mussie (2011:66) "the cooperation between the EPLF and the TPLF played a pivotal role in defeating the Ethiopian army".

## 3.5 The Eritrean Secessionist Struggle

Wood (1980:129) observes that failures to settle secessionist grievances through peaceful means coupled with the secessionists relative strength often results in an all-out war. The warrying parties are often joined by foreign powers moved by different interests and agendas, thus influencing the outcome of conflicts.

A succession of events during the federation years, culminating in the forced incorporation of Eritrea into the Ethiopian empire, led a number of Eritreans to seek independence by the use of arms. Hamid Idris Awate launched the Eritrean armed struggle on September 1, 1961 after attacking an isolated Ethiopian garrison in the western part of the country (Iyob, 1995:92). Markakis (1987:67) explains that, although both the ELM and the ELF have claimed Awate as

their own none of the two movements had anything to do with his initial armed engagements with the Ethiopian forces.

After Awate's shootings, the ELM, the ELF, and the EPLF carried out the armed struggle over Eritrea's independence. The Eritrean armed struggle evolved from occasional ambushes and hit-and-run guerrilla operations to large-scale conventional military confrontations between the Eritrean liberation movements and the Ethiopian army.

During the first decade of the conflict, the ELF resorted to rurally based guerrilla tactics due to its strategic disadvantages in open confrontations with the Ethiopian security forces. The group's attacks focused on police stations to capture Ethiopian military hardware (Shairman 1980:73), the assassination of individuals considered to oppose the revolutionary cause and acts of sabotage against vital infrastructures such as oil storage tanks, roads, railways (Pateman, 1990:85), and Ethiopian Airlines' planes (Sherman, 198:78). During this period, material aid for the Eritrean insurgents came from Egypt, Syria, Iraq, South Yemen, Libya (Heraclides 1991:188).

The Ethiopian authorities attempted to counter the ELF by exploiting regional and religious rivalries between the populace (divide and rule policy) and attacking the ELF zones (military policy) (Pateman, 1990:85). The government of Haile Selassie depended significantly upon the United States and Israel for material military support. For instance, Sherman (1980:75) reports, "from 1953 to 1970 the United States provided $147 million in military assistance to Haile Selassie's government. This amounted to almost one-half of the total US military assistance to all African countries during that time span".

The second decade of the Eritrean conflict started with strong Ethiopian military and diplomatic offensive against the Eritrean secessionists precipitated by the ambush and killing of a high-ranking Ethiopian military commander (Sherman 1980:79).  In late 1970 a state of emergence was declared in much of Eritrea followed by an attack against the ELF-held areas including a bombing campaign by the Ethiopian Air Force and the implementation of forced resettlement schemes to cut off popular support to the guerrillas (Thomas, 2012:8). Furthermore, the emperor proceeded to fight the Eritreans in the diplomatic arena preventing them from getting further military aid from the Sudan, China and South Yemen (Sherman, 1980:80). This offensive had the immediate effect of not only reducing Eritrean guerrilla operations but also alienating the

rural populace causing resurgence in membership for the liberation movements (Thomas, 2012:8).

The period between 1970 and 1974 saw the fragmentation of the Eritrean liberation movements and the beginning of the civil war fought between the ELF and the recently formed EPLF. The war ended in 1974 after the Dergue, the military junta that overthrew Selassie's imperial regime, made it an imperative for the two liberation movements to mount a united front against the new regime in Addis Ababa. According to Heraclides (1991:182), the Dergue persisted with Selassie's policy on the Eritrean issue. In 1976, Eritrean forces launched a massive offensive against the Dergue's troops "amassing victory after victory, in the military arena and liberating most of Eritrea's towns" (Sherman, 1980:87), and by early 1978, the ELF and the EPLF controlled the whole of Eritrea (Markakis, 1987:63).

Eritrean military gains during this period coincided with superpower realignment in the Horn of Africa and the Somali invasion of the Ogaden region. In 1977, the US began to cut off military aid to Addis Ababa while Moscow stepped in to fill the void (Pateman, 1990:88). Moreover, it has been argued that during that period, the Ethiopian government, under Soviet and Cuban patronage, directed its energies against a more serious international challenger, Somalia, turning its attention toward Eritrea once the Somali army had been driven out of Ethiopia (Pateman, 1990:88). This interpretation is supported by the fact that the Ethiopian army managed to retake most of the towns held by the Eritrean secessionists six months after the Ogaden war. According to Sherman (1980:93) "the 1978 Ethiopian assault was, for most part, engineered by the Soviets and carried out by Ethiopian, Cuban and South Yemeni forces".

After the 1978 Ethiopian offensive, the Eritrean armed struggle reached a strategic stalemate, which lasted until 1984. This period saw the beginning of a new round of armed confrontations in the Eritrean civil war (1980-1981) ending with the defeat of the ELF and ushering in EPLF hegemony (Markakis, 1987:67). The EPLF continued to gain support from the Eritrean masses and managed to mobilize the Eritreans against the Dergue (Mussie, 2011:). Furthermore, a weakened and demoralized Ethiopian army launched several failed attacks against the EPLF, which resulted in the build up of the Eritreans' military arsenal as they captured large amounts of arms and ammunitions from successive abortive campaigns (Tomas, 2012:12).

The military stalemate was broken in 1984 with the EPLF moving into the offensive (Markakis, 1987:68). In March 1988 the balance of power shifted in favor of the Eritreans after their decisive victory at the battle of Afabet (Pateman, 1990:80). In this regard, Mussie (2011:68) comments that "the defeat of the Ethiopian army at the battle of Afabet was an immesurable military loss for Ethiopia, but it remarkably boosted the fighting morale of the liberation army". Fierce battles continued with the EPLF collaborating with the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Afar Liberation front (Pateman, 1990:94).

In 1990 the EPLF captured the port city of Massawa[5], followed by the liberation of all major towns of Eritrea (Mussie 2011). On May 24, 1991 the EPLF liberated Asmara while the EPRDF took over Addis Ababa four days later (Iyob, 1995:136). These events lead to a regime change in Ethiopia and a *de facto* independence to Eritrea (Thomas, 2012:12). Two years later a UN sponsored referendum was organized and 99.8 percent of Eritreans voted for independence (Iyob, 1995:136). Eritrea was officially admitted into the community of states on May 24, 1993.

## 3.6 Explaining the determinants of Eritrea's Successful Secession

The central question arising from the preceding discussion is why was Eritrea's struggle for statehood successful? Eritrean secessionist movements conducted their struggle for independence amidst a number of factors that had prevented previous secessionist attempts in Katanga, Biafra, Casamance, from succeeding. These factors included scarce international recognition of the struggle, restricted supply of military arsenal, and an international consensus on the fear of the "Balkanization" of the African continent. In this context, it becomes legitimate to ask what factors contributed for the success of the Eritrean cause? This section argues that Eritrea's successful secession is the result of a tight combination of domestic and international factors including Eritrea's historical and legal claims, the Dergue's policies of alienation, the effectiveness of the EPLF's strategies, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, and the role of the United States of America.

### 3.6.1 Eritrea's Historical and Legal Claims

The first factor that influenced Eritrea's successful political separation from Ethiopia relates to historical and legal considerations governing the relations between the two political entities. It

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[5] See map at appendix 2

has been argued that from historical and legal perspective Eritrea had strong foundations for its claim to independent statehood. However, Cold War politics and superpower rivalries favored Ethiopian interests over those of Eritrea (Iyob, 1995:138). This is in agreement with Coggins' theory of state birth highlighting the pursuit of external security as one of the driving forces for state's recognition (Coggins 2011:449).

Haille Selassie's imperial government and the military regime that replaced it argued insistently that Eritrea was not historically a distinct entity, but part of a "Greater Ethiopia". The Ethiopian claimed that both entities had been part of the ancient Axumite kingdom that existed between 100 and 940 AD. Hence, Eritrea's incorporation into the Ethiopian empire represented the reintegration of two entities that had been artificially separated by the forces of colonialism and great power politics (Sherman, 1980:29).

In contrast, Eritreans maintained that Ethiopia had no historical claim over Eritrea. The Ethiopian empire had lost that right when Emperor Menelik signed a series of treaties with Italy between 1886 and 1889 allowing the Italians to colonize Eritrea. Menelik's actions granted a *de facto* recognition of Eritrea as a political entity separate from Ethiopia. Thus, Italian colonial rule "brought forth Eritrea as a multi-national state with a definite political and geographical identity" (Sherman, 1980:32).

Eritreans have also argued that their cause was not one of secession, but one of self-determination. Eritrea was entitled to political separation from Ethiopia because the country's status as a former colony was consistent with the principles of the OAU (sanctity of inherited colonial borders) and the UN regarding the emergence of African states in the post-colonial era (Heraclides, 1991:186). In addition, the UN resolution to federate Eritrea with Ethiopia - regarding Eritrea as a distinct entity, with a separate constitution, a different system of government and separate executive and legislative body – made it clear that Eritrea was not liable to annexation by Ethiopia. Hence, Emperor Selassie's abrogation of the Ethio-Eritrean federal arrangement was not only an open defiance to the UN resolution but also a clear infringement of international law.

### 3.6.2 The Collapse of the Soviet Union and the End of Cold War

Without the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent termination of the Cold War, Eritrea's attainment of statehood would have been difficult. The fragmentation of the Soviet Union cut off guaranteed military assistance to the Ethiopian regime from the Soviet bloc, it changed the East-West framework from which the superpowers viewed developments in the Horn of Africa, and opened a new window of opportunity for the emergence of new nation-states.

From 1977 to 1991 the Ethiopian government depended considerably on military support from the Soviet Union and its allies. The USSR became Ethiopia's major arms supplier after Washington cut off military assistance to Addis Ababa due to human rights violations[6]. It has been reported that by July 1977 the Soviet Union had agreed to supply $500 million worth of arms including jet-fighters and missiles to the Ethiopians (Sherman, 1980:90). Soviet arsenal, Cuban military personnel and other Soviet allies sustained Ethiopia's war efforts during the last quarter of the Cold War. As previously mentioned, Soviet military assistance was instrumental in ensuring Ethiopia's victory over the Somali army during the invasion of the Ogaden region, the re-conquest of Eritrea from the Eritrean liberation movements in the offensives of 1978, and in subsequent assaults aimed at crushing guerrilla insurgencies in Eritrea and Ethiopia.

However, the Ethiopian regime guaranteed support network began to collapse in 1987 after the new leadership in Moscow warned Addis Ababa that they could not count on continuing supply of arms. Soviet authorities informed Mengistu that the Soviet-Ethiopian arms deal would not be renewed after 1990. In that same year Cuban and East German troops began to withdraw from Ethiopia (Schraeder, 1992:165). The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 was followed by the capture of Asmara and Addis Ababa by the EPLF and the TPLF respectively, thus signaling the end of Mengistu's rule over Ethiopia.

In terms of global politics, the end of the Cold War led to unprecedented changes in superpower rivalries (Iyob, 1995:124). During the Cold War events in the Horn of Africa and other regions of the world were analyzed within the East-West framework, as means of preventing or advancing superpowers sphere of influence. However, the end of the Cold War called into question a series of Cold War rationales and the policies they generated (Schraeder, 1992:571).

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[6] See section 3.5 on the Eritrean Secessionist Struggle

As a result, political developments in Eritrea began to be viewed in their own right not as an extension of East-West ideological confrontation.

Furthermore, the process of reforming the Soviet Union initiated by Michael Gorbatchov in 1986 infused "new life into the concept of the right to self-determination" (Negash, 1997:163). As pointed out by Schraeder (1992:172), Gorbachev's policy approach towards Eastern Europe "entailed Soviet tolerance for the fall of single-party communist states and a recognition of the need to allow the peoples of Eastern Europe to determine their own political paths independent of Soviet control". This process called for the reassessment of the international framework governing the emergence of new sovereign states.

It was in this climate of relaxed approach to the principle of state sovereignty that Eritreans were allowed to exercise their right to self-determination. In the words of Iyob (1995:138) "the demand of the Eritrean people for self-determination was no longer seen as an isolated case viewed as a dangerous precedent, but one of many cases".

### 3.6.3 The Role of the United States of America

The United States' efforts to find a diplomatic solution to the civil war in Ethiopia in the late 1980s contributed resolutely for Eritrea's successful secession. Paquin (2010:128) points out that the fate of Eritrea had always been linked to US geostrategic interests. From 1952 to 1991 successive administrations in Washington DC consistently opposed Eritrea's independence on the basis of maintaining stability in the Horn of Africa. In 1991 the Bush administration reversed this policy after Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Herman Cohen declared US support for a UN-supervised referendum on Eritrean independence (Schraeder, 1992:570).

Starting in 1989 various third parties including Italy and the US attempted to broker peace deals between Eritrea and Ethiopia and between Ethiopia and various opposition movements operating inside the country (Keller, 2007:24). The US engaged on a number of official and un-official talks with Ethiopian and Eritrean leaders, including the failed mediation efforts conducted by former President Jimmy Carter in 1989 (Paquin, 2010:139). The US intensified its level of involvement after Mengistu's departure from power on May 21, 1991. The Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Herman Cohen was sent to London to mediate between the insurgents and the collapsing Ethiopian government.

According to Schraeder (1992:570) "the net result of US involvement was a significant contribution to a transfer of power, which largely avoided the bloodshed and clan conflict still evident in Somalia". As part of the Agreements, the US authorized the TPLF to takeover Addis Ababa and establish a broad coalition government there. Moreover, the US also declared its support for a referendum on Eritrea's independence after a two-year transitional period.

Paquin (2010:140) has argued that American support for a referendum on Eritrea's independence was a political tool to stop the civil war and establish stability in both Ethiopia and Eritrea. In his own words, "a denial of Eritrea's right to secede may have caused war to resume in Ethiopia". In addition, American officials also requested the EPLF leadership not to issue a unilateral declaration of independence after they captured Asmara in 1991 because it would further destabilize Ethiopia. The US argued that both the new Ethiopian and Eritrean government needed to consolidate their power to facilitate a stable transition to Eritrea's independence.

Finally, the US affirmed Eritrea's right to self-determination without the previous consent of the OAU leaving "the organization with very little option but to back this policy" (Paquin, 2010:141).

This resonates with Coggins (2011:449) observations that when a Great Power - in this case the United States - confers legitimacy upon a secessionist movement/state its decision initiates a cascade of legitimacy throughout the remaining members of the system.

### 3.6.4 The Dergue's Policies of Alienation

Internally, the policies of the Dergue, the military regime that replaced Selassie's monarchical and feudal government eased Eritrea's path to independence. The Dergue ruled Ethiopia between 1974 and 1991. During this period, the military regime implemented a series of policies that isolated it from groups inside and outside Ethiopia. The activities of these opposition movements precipitated the erosion of the Dergue paving the way for favorable negotiated settlements on Eritrea's independence.

Upon acceding to power, the Dergue adopted "Ethiopia First" as the motto of the Ethiopian government. Berhe (2004:574) notes how "this ideology was oriented towards both nationalism

and modernization, and was thus 'directed against the weakening of the state by secessionist movements'". Since the Dergue regarded "Ethiopia as a monolithic society", it proceeded to declare any "ethno-nationalist grievance or demand for self-determination as contrary to Ethiopian unity and interests" (Berhe, 2004:574).

As a result, nationalist groups demanding any form of self-determination were targeted. Thousands of Ethiopians and Eritreans were imprisoned, tortured or executed in what became known as "Red Terror" (Thomas, 2012:9). The Dergue's excesses led to the emergence of many socio-political groups challenging the military government in Ethiopia including the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF), the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). The ELPF began a campaign of coalition building with these groups and their coordinated activities proved decisive in the victory against the Dergue.

In addition, the Dergue's espousal of Marxism and military cooperation with the Soviet Union made it unpopular amongst Western countries including the United States. In 1976 President Carter's administration cut off military assistance to Addis Ababa evoking amongst other reasons, "gross violations of human rights, including summary executions" and the conclusion of a $100 million arms deal with the Soviet Union (Sherman, 1980:89). In 1984, the great famine intensified international scrutiny to the Ethiopian government's internal policies as the catastrophe coincided with the foundation of a communist party along Soviet lines followed by extravagant celebrations. According to Negash (1997:165), "the communist ideology pursued by the government and the war in Eritrea, which by this time had extended into the Northern region of the country, were henceforth regarded as the reasons for the famine".

The Ethiopian government was further criticized by the international community due to the authoritarian manner in which it attempted to resettle thousands of famine stricken families to the more fertile regions of the country. Negash (1997:165) notes that "more than half a million people had been forcibly moved, leaving behind them thousands of people dead either on the long journeys to the homes they did not choose or in ill-prepared habitat".

The policies of the Dergue not only created international hostility towards the government in Addis Ababa but also drove thousands of recruits into the camps of the guerrilla movements. For instance, in 1989 the TPLF had grown to such an extent that the Ethiopian government considered it be a more dangerous threat than the EPLF. By 1991, the TPLF won state power in

Ethiopia in the name of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) (Berhe 2004:569).

### 3.6.5 The Strategies of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front

The success of Eritrea's struggle for statehood was also facilitated by the military defeat of the Ethiopian regime. The defeat of the Dergue can be attributed to a number of factors including the military and diplomatic tactics of the Eritrean liberation movements. Special attention must be paid to the strategies of the EPLF, as it was the sole movement to engage the Ethiopian government in the last and decisive decade of the armed struggle. The fight against Ethiopian occupation was fought on two fronts: through military campaigns against the Ethiopian army and through diplomatic endeavors aiming at explaining the reasons for Eritrea's independence.

On the military front, the EPLF adopted a number of strategies that proved effective. Firstly, the EPLF counteracted the military superiority of the Ethiopian army by adhering to the practices of guerrilla tactics and protracted warfare (Thomas, 2012:1). Secondly, the EPLF secured massive popular support to the struggle by adopting a number of social reforms in the territories under its control such as ownership, health, education and gender relations (Sherman, 1980:101-106). Thirdly, the EPLF relied primarily on Ethiopia as source of arms and equipment capturing it on the battlefield and in guerrilla raids on specific targets (Keller, 2007:24). Fourthly, the EPLF put in practice a policy of self-reliance in the liberated zones setting up industries to manufacture and repair medicines, clothes, vehicles, arms and military equipment. Lastly, the EPLF established alliances with other groups within Ethiopia opposing the Dergue's regime such as the TPLF and the OLF.

It is worth noting that, in the late 1980's, the various dissident groups fighting the Ethiopian government united under one organization umbrella called the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). As stated by Iyob (1995:134) the EPLF's alliance with the EPRDF "was based on the latter's recognition of the Eritrean demand for self-determination and a mutual conviction of the need to rid Ethiopia of the Mengistu regime". Both the EPLF and the EPRDF coordinated their offensives against the Ethiopian forces. The EPLF focused on the capture of Asmara while the EPRDF relied on EPLF logistical support for the capture of Addis Ababa. Eventually the two fronts defeated the Ethiopian army becoming the main participants in the US-

led ceasefire negotiations in London. In 1993 Eritrea became independent with the full blessing of the EPRDF government in Addis Ababa.

The fight was equally effective on the diplomatic front. The EPLF embarked on a policy of winning over international public opinion to the cause of the Eritrean people. To this end three main strategies were implemented: firstly, the EPLF reframed the nature of its armed struggle from anti-colonial war to a war for the exercise of the right to self-determination (Negash, 1997:163); secondly, the EPLF issued a document referendum stating that Eritreans should be given the option to choose from one of the three alternatives: a) union; b) federation within a regional autonomy framework; or, c) independence; thirdly, the EPLF sought African support for Eritrean self-determination pointing to parallelisms between Eritrea and the historical and legal arguments used the to justify the cases for Namibia and Western Sahara's independence[7].

The strategy emphasizing the right to self-determination as the primary cause of the war garnered enormous support in Europe and North America. Although, in its proposal the EPLF attributed supervisory role to the OAU and the UN implementation of the referendum option the Ethiopian government dismissed it. The EPLF's proposal was seen as evidence that the movement was trying to find a political solution to the conflict (Negash, 1997:164).

### 3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the dynamics of Eritrean secession as well as the determining factors for Eritrea's successful accession to statehood. In the course of almost a century Eritrea was established as an Italian colony (1890-1941), administered by Great Britain (1941-1952), federated and incorporated into Ethiopia and finally becoming an independent state.

Eritrean sense of a distinct national identity emerged during the decades of Italian colonial rule, intensified during the years of British administration maturing as a result of the experiences of oppressive Ethiopian imperialism. A series of socio-political and economic grievances against Addis Ababa's systematic dismantlement of Eritrea's federal status led to the rise of secessionist movements in Eritrea and the beginning of nearly three decades of armed conflict, which ended with the defeat of the Ethiopian army. This last event paved the way for a UN-monitored referendum on Eritrean independence and the territory's accession to statehood.

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[7] Western Sahara is still a disputed territory currently under Moroccan sovereignty.

Since the armed struggle for Eritrea's independence was conducted amidst a number of factors that had prevented previous secessionist attempts from succeeding, this chapter has argued that Eritrea's successful secession was the result of a tight combination of both domestic and external factors. Domestically, the Ethiopian army was defeated as a result of the Dergue's policies of alienation and the effectiveness of the strategies of the EPLF. Externally, Eritrea's historical and legal claims to sovereignty, the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union as well as the mediating role of the United States were decisive in ensuring Eritrea's recognition as an independent state on May 24, 1993.

The next chapter will investigate the process of South Sudan's struggle for independence as well as the determinants of South Sudan's successful separation from the Sudan.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# THE SECESSION OF SOUTH SUDAN

## 4.1 Introduction

The Republic of South Sudan is Africa's newest state. Southern Sudan became independent after formally separating from the Republic of Sudan on July 9, 2011. Like Eritrea eighteen years earlier, Southern Sudan achieved statehood through the process of secession. This was an unexpected political event in post-colonial Africa considering that the AU has not altered its views on secession since Eritrea's independence. Secession still remains the antithesis of African statehood. The cases of Somaliland as well as the islands of Anjouan and Mohedi support this view: the former remains on a legal limbo while the later was annulled after harsh AU's sanctions on its leaders.

Thus, in line with the structure and approach of the preceding chapter on the secession of Eritrea, this chapter investigates the reasons why Southern Sudan successfully separated from the Sudan. The chapter achieves this objective by analyzing the dynamics of the partition of the Sudan through the lenses of the theoretical assumptions upon which the research has been constructed. The chapter further examines the political geography and history of South Sudan, the genesis of secessionist alienation, the emergence of secessionist movements, the North-South conflict as well as the determinants of South Sudan's successful withdrawal from the Sudan.

## 4.2. Political Geography and History of South Sudan

As previously mentioned, secessions do not occur in the vacuum; several factors must be in place before secessionist impulses can develop. Wood's analytical framework indicates that geography, history and demographics play a decisive role in secessionist endeavors (Wood, 1980:112). Indeed, the desire to separate a sub-state unit in order to create an independent and sovereign political entity presupposes the existence of a people inhabiting a given territory. In this context this section provides an overview of the political geography and modern history of South Sudan.

The Republic of South Sudan, formerly known as the Southern region of the Sudan, is a landlocked country situated in East-Central Africa[8]. The country occupies an area of about 640 thousand square kilometers (Salman, 2013:345) sharing borders with six sovereign states: Ethiopia to the east, Kenya and Uganda to the south, the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the southwest, the Central African Republic to the west, and the Sudan to the North.

South Sudan has a population estimated at around 11.5 million inhabitants, distributed among three main ethno-linguistic groups: Nilotic, Nilo-Hamitic, and Sudanic groups (World Fact Book, 2014). Nilotic groups (comprising the Dinka, the Nuer, and the Shilluk constitute the majority), with the Dinka being the biggest and leading group economically and politically (Heraclides, 1987:216). The pattern of life of the people of South Sudan is framed by the environment in which they inhabit, with most groups living as sedentary farmers, agro-pastoralists and seasonal fishermen. In terms of religious belief, many Southern Sudanese adhere to indigenous religion, Christianity and Islam (Salman, 2013:346).

Historically, the different communities inhabiting the territories of modern South Sudan followed different forms of political organisations. Some groups such as the Shilluk and the Azande were organized into kingdoms and chiefdoms; while pastoralist groups such as the Dinka, Nuer, Murle and the Toposa acknowledged diffused and sparse forms of political authority (Johnson, 2004:12). These diverse communities and nationalities emerged as a unified political entity during the period of British and Egyptian colonial administration of the Sudan between 1899 and1956.

The documented history of South Sudan is intrinsically linked to the emergence of modern Sudan nearly two centuries ago. This history, which began with the southward expansion of the Turco-Egyptian regime of Mohamed Ali Pasha in 1821, has been characterized by Southern resistance against successive waves of foreign "invading" powers (Wassara, 2015:54). The Turco-Egyptian regime in the Sudan (1820-1881), also known as Turkiyya, extended its rule to the territories of South Sudan. These "uninvited guests" from the North (mostly soldiers, merchants, explorers and adventurers) moved into the South in search of ivory, slaves and the source of the Nile Basin (Salman, 2013: 347).

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[8] See map at appendices 1 and 3.

The Mahdist regime (1881-1898), which overthrew the Turco-Egyptian regime, had no control over the South except for a few military outposts (Rogier, 2005:7). The Mahdist state built on the Turco-egyptian regime's exploitative practices against the South. Practices such as slave-raiding and slave-trading escalated (Salman, 2013: 347) as well as the forcible conscription of the people of Southern Sudan into the fighting forces of the Mahdist state (Wassara, 2015:54).

British and Egyptian forces defeated the Mahdist state asserting their authority over the South in 1899. This affair ended expansionist and imperial competition over the region between Britain, Egypt, Belgium, France and Ethiopia. The Sudan became an Anglo-Egyptian colony, "recognized as an Egyptian possession administered by British officials on behalf of the King of Egypt" (Johnson, 2004:21). The British began to implement the Southern Policy, a policy of separate administration and separate development for the northern and southern regions of the colony (Johnson, 2004:25; Ali et al, 2005:167; Rogier, 2005:7; Salman, 2013:347).

The Southern Policy encompassed the establishment of different policies regarding administration, law, religion and education between the two parts of the country; closure of borders and restriction of movements between South and the North through the Passports and Permits Ordinance (Salman, 2013:349). In the words of the British Civil Secretary (cited in Johnson, 2004:11), "the administration of South Sudan was to be developed along 'African', rather than 'Arab' lines, and that the future of Southern Sudan might ultimately lie with the countries of British East Africa, rather than with the Middle East".

The establishment of Anglo-Egyptian colonial rule in the Sudan exacerbated a regional gap between the North and the South (Dersso, 2012:7). Johnson (2004:10) observes that "the South remained in the periphery of central government thinking throughout the Condominium period", that is the period of Anglo=Egyptian administration of the Sudan. This was particularly evident in terms of access to education, socio-economic development and participation in administration of the Sudan. Political and educational institutions in the North benefited greatly from government support. Moreover, large-scale economic investment, infrastructure and industrial projects were concentrated in the Northern provinces (Dersso, 2012:7). Contrastingly, there was little educational investment in the South and no major economic schemes were attempted in the region. Hence, the South was socially, economically and politically disadvantaged in relation to the North during the colonial period (Johnson, 2004:17; Wassara, 2015:64).

The Southern policy was reversed in 1947 after the British Foreign Office decided to unite the North and the South in the run up to Sudan's independence. It has since been speculated in the literature that the reversal of the Southern Policy was motivated by Egyptian and Northern Sudanese nationalist insistence for a united Sudan (Johnson, 2004:25; Rogier, 2005:9). What is certain is that the Sudan gained independence as unified and country on January 1, 1956.

**4.3 The Genesis of Secessionist Alienation in South Sudan**

In addition to territorial and demographic considerations, Wood's analytical framework argues that separatist estrangement between the potentially secessionist population and its respective central government is often motivated by the prevalence of social, economic, political and psychological grievances (Wood, 1980:22). In the case of the Sudan, southern grievances against the north were rooted in the country's pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial history (Dersso, 2012:5). However, this study focuses on the most recent origins of the North-South divide, which lies on the politics leading to Sudan's independence.

Britain abolished the policy of separate administration and development for Northern and Southern Sudan at the Juba Conference in 1947 (Johnson, 2004:25). Northerners and Southerners were brought together in preparations for the independence of a united Sudan. However, the legacy of the Southern policy in terms of extreme inequalities between the two regions and groups made it clear that one would dominate the other. In the words of Oromo (2015:70) "Southerners lacked the experience and education that would enable them to function as legislators and thus would be easily manipulated by Northerners".

In early 1952, Northern representatives, which constituted the majority in the Legislative Assembly, rejected provisions in the draft constitution of the Sudan concerning demands for certain safeguards for the South. These included a bi-federal secular state and the appointment of a minister for southern affairs responsible for the social and economic empowerment of Southerners (Oromo, 2015:70). Late that same year, Southerners were excluded from crucial constitutional discussions concerning the future of the country on the grounds that they were not organized in political parties. The talks took place in Cairo and involved Northern political parties and the Condominium powers[9] (Wassara, 2015:64).

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[9] The Condominium powers were Sudan's colonial rulers: Britain and Egypt.

The "Sudanization" process (the replacement of foreign civil service workers for Sudanese servants) confirmed Southern fears of Northern domination, as only six out of 800 senior posts in the administration were accorded to Southerners (Heraclides, 1987:217). Moreover, Southerners complained about being underrepresented in the country's first elected government: the cabinet included only three Southerners in the junior posts of state rather than full, ministers; and just three out of 46 members in the Constitutional Assembly were Southerners (Salman, 2013:351).

Issues concerning the nature of the post-independent state played a role in fuelling the tensions between the two ethno-regional groups. The Sudan was granted independence with a temporary constitution. The mission of defining the character of the post-colonial state was left to the first elected government. Decisions were to be made between a federal or unitary state, and between a secular and an Islamic constitution. Southerners favored federalism as a mean of escaping Northern domination while Northerners argued that federalism was the first step towards separatism. In the end, the Sudan failed to achieve a federal and secular constitution as Northern ideas of a unitary Islamic state prevailed (Johnson, 2004:30).

Besides, the political elite in the North held the view that the South was culturally void and should be filled with Arab-Islamic culture (Heraclides, 1987:218). In line with this view the military government of general Abbud pursued an aggressive policy of Islamization and Arabization in the South, focusing on education. Johnson (2004:30) observes that: mission schools were placed under government control; Arabic became the official medium of instruction; conversions to Islam were encouraged; and the activities of missionaries were intensely restricted until they were finally expelled in 1964.

This sequence of events and measures galvanized the Southern Sudanese political elite to engage on organized political and military opposition against the government in Khartoum. The Southern separatist movement gained momentum with the influx of senior politicians and students that went to exile to form political organizations and guerrilla forces (Johnson, 2004:31).

## 4.4 The Rise of Secessionist Movements in South Sudan

Secessionist efforts are consolidated in the formation of organizations charged with the task of articulating the group's grievances, creating the picture of the nation to be created and the

initiation of an "outbidding contest with the central government and with loyalist representatives of their region" (Wood, 1980:123).

In the Sudan, Southern politicians began to organize in political parties in the run up to the independence of the Sudan. Indeed, fears of Northern domination in a post-independent Sudan motivated Southern representatives at the 1947 Juba Conference to demand political safeguards for the South including federation and independence (Salman, 203:349). The Liberal Party, the first Southern political party, participated in the electoral process that inaugurated the country's first Legislative Assembly in 1953. The party campaigned under a platform that called for a degree of autonomy and self-government for the South (Wassara, 2015:65).

Nevertheless, the rise of Southern secessionist organizations began in earnest in 1962 with the foundation of the Sudan African National Union (SANU). In subsequent years, several other separatist organisations emerged. This section examines briefly the context and politics of SANU, the Anyanya Guerrilla Movement, the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM), and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). The selection of these movements is based on their impacts on Southern Sudan's struggle for independence.

### 4.4.1 The Sudan African National Union (SANU)

SANU, Southern Sudan's first separatist movement, was established in Leopoldville (Kinshasa) in February 1962. The movement was founded by exiled Southern politicians such as Fr. Saturnino Lohure, Aggrey Jaden, Joseph Oduho and William Deng (Daly & Holt, 1988:179) and subscribed to the ideology of Black Nationalism (Heraclides, 1987:220). SANU's ultimate public political objective was "self-determination", understood as a complete independence for the South. The movement called publicly for the exercise of the broad right of self-determination rather than the more specific demand for secession because it contradicted the newly founded OAU's pledge to protect the sanctity of the inherited colonial borders (Johnson, 2011:210).

SANU began to fragment in 1964 after the fall of the military regime of general Abbud. The new civilian government invited the exiled leadership to return to the country and participate in the resolution of the Southern problem at the Round Table Conference (Daly & Holt, 1988:185). William Deng abandoned the call for independence in favor of federalism. He remained in the Sudan leading SANU "Inside". Jaden and Oduho maintained the demand for self-determination.

They returned to Uganda as leaders of SANU "Outside". Fr. Saturnino Lohure concentrated his efforts on military matters (Johnson, 2004:32).

Subsequently, SANU "Outside" began to disintegrate into several minor organizations. In 1967 the Azania Liberation Front (ALF), a faction that espoused Southern independence, broke away from SANU. The South Sudan Provisional Government (SSPG) replaced the ALF in 1967. The SSPG had a secessionist agenda. It changed its name to Nile Provisional Government two NPG in 1969 (Daly & Holt, 1988:200). The wave of factionalism and in-group fighting was brought to an end in 1969, when Colonel Joseph Lagu backed by Anyanya provincial commanders united all the disparate political and military groups under the authority of the Southern Sudan Liberation Front (SSLF) (Johnson, 2004:33).

### 4.4.2 The Southern Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM)

Joseph Lagu established the SSLM in 1971. The movement emerged from the restructuring of the Southern Sudan Liberation Front (SSLF). Lagu, a seasoned military commander, and other provincial military leaders not only united all Southern guerrilla forces under a single military command but also subordinated the political wing to the military (Johnson, 2004:37). According to Heraclides (1987:220), "the SSLM's ultimate aim appeared to vary from time to time". The movement started out as an advocate of Southern self-determination but ended up settling for regional autonomy.

The SSLM was the chief Southern negotiator partner during the Peace Agreement with the Nimeiri's regime in 1972. The movement achieved supremacy in the South's politico-military arena as a result of massive internal and external support. In 1969, Lagu enjoyed strong support from the people of Southern Sudan, Anyanya commanders and Southern exiled politicians leading him to found the SSLF. The Sudan government's alignment with the Arab world in the context of the Arab-Israeli war attracted the attention of external players to the Sudan. The Ethiopian government began to support the Southern Sudanese cause in response to Sudan's support to the Eritreans (Johnson, 2004:37). Israel began a network of military support to the South through Uganda (Heraclides, 1987:223).

### 4.4.3 The Anyanya Guerrilla Movement

The Anyanya derived its name from the Madi word for the venom of a snake, the Gabon's viper. The movement began in 1963 and consisted of a loosely-knit guerrilla army operating independently of each other (Johnson, 2011:210). The Anyanya lacked a unified ethnic core and centralized political wing. This often resulted in factional fighting based on ethnicity, personal ambitions, tactics, and the aims of the struggle (Heraclides, 1987:219). The nucleus of the Anyanya guerrilla force consisted of veterans of the 1955 mutiny who had retreated to the bush in neighboring countries (Daly & Holt, 1988:200). Disgruntled civil servants, students and soldiers serving in Southern Sudan joined the old veterans (Johnson, 2011:216). The movement espoused a secessionist agenda and this limited its ability to secure steady external support, especially from neighboring African countries. (Ali et al, 2005:199).

In its early years, the Anyanya movement relied on the Sudanese security forces for military hardware. The guerrillas armed themselves mainly by "theft from police outposts, the occasional ambush of army patrols or through the defection of Southern police or soldiers" (Johnson, 2004:31). The military capability of the guerrillas began to increase in 1964 after the capture of significant shipments of arms from the civilian government in Khartoum to the Simba rebels in the Congo. The Anyanya relieved the Simbas of remaining weapons after their defeat by the Congolese government (Johnson, 2004:32).

As a result, from the mid-1960s the Anyanya movement evolved into a sufficiently large force to mount a high-intensity warfare against Khartoum. The unification of the Anyanya under one military commander, Joseph Lagu and the introduction of steady military aid from Ethiopia, Israel and Uganda enhanced the movement's military capabilities. These developments contributed to the conditions leading to the peace agreements of 1972 (Ali et al., 2005:199). The agreements had a provision for the absorption of the guerrillas into the national army and other security branches (Johnson, 2004:41).

### 4.4.4 The Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M)

The SPLA/M was formed in Ethiopia in mid-July 1983. The movement developed out of the merger of the Anyanya II and dissident soldiers of the Sudanese Army stationed in the South. The Anyanya II was a loose military organization made up of old Anyanya guerrilla fighters and

some exiled Southern politicians who were disappointed with the terms of the Addis Ababa Peace Agreement. These forces were combined with groups of disenchanted soldiers who mutinied against the national army and deserted from their battalions, garrisons and military units across the South as a result of dissatisfactions with the peace process (Johnson, 2011:214).

From the start, the SPLM declared that its goal was not the separation of the South, but "the national 'liberation' of Sudan and the establishment of a secular, socialist, and a united Sudan" (Ali et al., 2005:200). This overarching goal represented not only a discontinuity with the secessionist agenda of previous Southern organizations, but also required the overthrowing of the government in Khartoum and the creation of a "New Sudan". The "New Sudan" would "reflect the diversity of the population and ensure all groups equal access to economic and political power" (Rogier, 2005:18). The movement embraced socialism as the ideological framework that would shape the transformation of the "Old Sudan" into the "New Sudan" (Rogier, 2005:18).

The history of the SPLM has been characterized by splits, mutinies, and instability. The first split occurred immediately after the formation of the movement and was driven by disputes over leadership and the aims of the struggle. Senior Anyanya veterans (Samuel Gai Tut and Akuot Atem) challenged John Garang's leadership based on their seniority over him in the old Anyanya. The old Anyanya veterans also supported independence for the South. Younger cadres such as John Garang, Kerubino Kuanyin Bol and Salva Kiir Mayardit dismissed Samuel and Akuot's groups from the movement (Johnson, 2004:65). The two groups confronted each other on the battlefield initiating an ethnic conflict in the South between the Nuer and the Dinka (Rogier, 2005:19).

The second split occurred in 1991 and was motivated by opposition to Garang's autocratic leadership style and the fall of Mengistu in Ethiopia. The SPLM was divided between forces loyal to Garang and those loyal to Riek Machar and Lam Akol (Johnson 2004:91). Initially called SPLA-Nasir, Riek and Akol's faction changed its name to SPLA-United and South Sudan Defense Force (SSDF). Riek's group called for Southern independence (Shafer 2007:5). However, this was difficult to believe since the group aligned itself with Khartoum and depended on the government for military hardware. In 2002, Riek and Garang solved their differences with the former rejoining the SPLA.

The SPLA conducted the war against the Sudanese government and became a signatory of the CPA, which paved the way for the independence of the South.

**4.5 The North-South Civil Wars in the Sudan**

Failures of the central government to address secessionist grievances can lead to the development of full-blown civil wars. In cases of effective armed conflict two factors can influence decisively on the outcome: the strategic and tactical advantage of the belligerents and external involvement (Wood, 1980:129). These theoretical assumptions were observed in the case of South Sudan.

Sudan's civil wars began on the run up to independence. It was a complex conflict that lasted for nearly five decades spreading to other parts of the country. This section concentrates specifically on the North-South dimensions of the civil wars. The conflict was fought in two rounds: the first, between 1955 and 1972; and the second between 1983 and 2002. Its immediate causes were Southern fears of Northern domination and internal colonization in post-independent Sudan. Tensions between the two groups were aggravated by Northern refusal of a bi-state federal constitution, policies of Arabization and Islamization (Oromo, 2015:72), and Southern underrepresentation in government structures, as a result of the "Sudanisation Policy" (Rogier, 2005:10).

The first round of Sudan's civil wars started on August 18, 1955 after Southern officers from the Equatorial Corps stationed in Torit mutinied over fears that they would be disarmed and transferred to the North. Similar insurrections within the army, police and prison services broke-out throughout the South (Johnson, 2011:208). The Sudanese Army suppressed these uprisings. Survivors went into hiding in neighboring Uganda, where they established military camps and operational centers (Schafer, 2007:3). These escapees formed the nucleus of Southern guerrilla forces in later years.

The formation of SANU and the Anyanya guerrilla movement in the mid-1960s introduced a new dynamic to the war. These separatist organizations emerged out of discontent with Khartoum's dismissal of Southern calls for a federal constitution and the implementation of an Arab-Islamic assimilation policy in the South (Rogier, 2005:10). During this time the war was modestly conducted both in terms of military hardware and strategies (Johnson, 2004:31).

Attempts to solve the Southern problem were made at the Round Table Conference in 1965. However, the war escalated as the warring parties failed to reach a compromise (Schafer 2007:3).

Between 1967 and 1972 Sudan's first civil war became internationalized as an extension of conflicts in the Middle East and the politics of the Cold War. The military government of Jaafar Nimeiri aligned itself with the Arab bloc and the socialist states. Consequently, Khartoum received substantial military aid from Egypt, Libya and the Soviet Union (Johnson, 2011:212). In turn, Israel developed a network of financial and training support to the Anyanya guerrillas and the SSLM through Uganda and Ethiopia (Rogier, 2005:11). These developments had serious impacts on the course of the war in the South, as the improved position of the Southern guerrilla forces demanded a diplomatic solution to the conflict.

In this context, the Sudanese government and the SSLM negotiated a peace agreement that was signed by President Nimeiri and Joseph Lagu in Addis Ababa in February 1972. The Addis Ababa agreement not only brought peace to the Sudan but also regional autonomy to the South. In the words of Dersso (2013:7) "the agreement guaranteed Southern Sudan regional self-government status within the Republic of Sudan"; It allowed "Southerners to pursue their own affairs under a democratically elected regional government" (Heraclides, 1987:213). However, Southern regional autonomy came to an end in 1983, after Nimeiri's regime took a series of decisions that amounted to unilateral abrogation of the Addis Ababa Agreement. The decisions included: the abolition of the Southern region; declaration of Arabic as the official language in the South; and the imposition of sharia law all over the country (Rogier, 2005:16-17).

The second round of Sudan's civil war started in 1983 with a mutiny of Southern soldiers in the Sudanese army. The rebellion was motivated by "northern promotion of Islamic law, a shortfall in the implementation of the Addis Ababa Agreement and the continued marginalization of the South" (Schafer, 2007:4). These mutineers formed the core of the recently formed SPLA, which received external support from the Dergue's regime in Ethiopia. Johnson (2011:218) reports that initially the SPLA's offensives were seasonal: the movement advanced during the rainy season receding in the dry season.

A series of important developments took place in 1989: firstly, the SPLA captured all the major towns in the South; secondly, peace negotiations between the government of Sadiq al-Mahdi and

the SPLA were initiated on the latter's term of a secular state; thirdly, the National Islamic Front of general Omar al-Bashir staged a coup that overthrew the government of Sadiq al-Mahdi suspending the peace negotiations. In 1991 the war became internationalized as neighboring countries began to align themselves with the parties to the conflict (Schafer, 2007:4). For instance, with the intensification of the civil wars in Ethiopia, Khartoum backed the revolutionary forces (the EPLF, the TPLF and the OLF) while the SPLA gave armed support to Mengistu's regime (Johnson, 2011:219).

The fall of Mengistu in May 1991 impacted negatively on the SPLA. The movement not only lost its supplies and main external patron but also faced renewed internal factionalism (Rogier, 2005:22). As a result, between 1993 and 1995 the balance of the war tilted towards Khartoum. The Sudanese Army's momentum began to decline in 1995 as Khartoum's regional allies Ethiopia and Eritrea became concerned with its Islamist agenda in the region. In addition, Uganda began aiding the SPLA in response to Khartoum's support to the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) (Johnson, 2011:220). By this time the war had already spread to other regions of the country including the Nuba Mountains, Blue Nile and Eastern Sudan.

The Sudanese civil war continued intermittently until it was brought to an end through diplomatic means in 2002. Negotiations began with the signing of the Machakos Protocol on July 20, 2002. The document established the framework of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which was signed in 2005. The CPA committed the SPLA and the Khartoum government to work for the unity of the country "granting the South the option of an independence referendum after an interim period" (Johnson, 2011:221). Consequently, in January 2011 the people of Southern Sudan voted for independence from the Sudan, and on July 9, 2011 South Sudan emerged as Africa's 54th state.

## 4.6 Explaining the determinants of Southern Sudan's Successful Secession

At this juncture it is appropriate to ask what factors determined Southern Sudan's successful political separation from the Sudan? It must be mentioned that South Sudan achieved statehood within a hostile international normative framework governing the birth of new states. The OAU/AU in particular maintained its views on secession as the antithesis of African statehood considering Eritrea an exception to the rule. As an illustration, Somaliland's demands for statehood remain unresolved while Anjouan and Mohedi's withdrawal from the Comoros in

1997 was reversed after the harsh sanctions imposed by the OAU. In addition, the North-South conflict did not ended with a military victor; rather it was settled on the diplomatic table through the CPA. In this context it is reasonable to engage on the determinants of South Sudan's successful ascent to the heights of statehood. This section argues that the partition of the Sudan was the result of a combination of domestic and international factors including: the antagonistic historical relations between the northern and southern parts of the Sudan; international search for peace and stability in the Sudan; the impacts of "9/11" and the war on terror on the Sudanese peace process; and the flaws in the drafting and implementation of the CPA.

### 4.6.1 Antagonistic historical relations between northern and southern Sudan

The first determining factor for the partition of the Sudan lies on the unfriendly historical nature of North-South relations.

Prior to Southern secession, the Sudan was Africa's largest country encompassing not only a vast expanse of land but also a diverse population. The country was described as a "microcosm" with a fundamental division between North and South (Heraclides, 1987:219). According to Holt and Daly (1988:3), "the North is, with certain important exceptions, Arabic in speech, and its people are universally Muslim". The South on the other hand, comprises diverse communities, racially akin to tropical Africa and adherents to indigenous religions as well as Christianity (Dersso, 2012:6). This cultural and religious divide has had serious implications on the interactions between the two regional communities, shaping the political history of the country.

For centuries, the North centred on Khartoum sought to expand its dominance to the periphery of the Sudan. However, early contacts between the people of the North and the inhabitants of the South were marked by extreme hostility and brutality (Wassara, 2015:54). As previously mentioned, during the Turkiyya (1820-1881) and Mahdiyya (1881-1898) northerners viewed the South as a source of slaves, ivory, gold and other natural resources to be pillaged for the benefit of the North (Johnson, 2004:7-9). The Anglo-Egyptian Condominium (1899-1956) ended the assault on the people of the South, nevertheless it reinforced the gulf between the two regions through the implementation of dual developmental policies.

This legacy of pre-colonial conquest, slave-raiding and resource plundering as well as unequal development during the colonial period informed Southern Sudan's demands for special safeguards within a united Sudan.

However, in post-independent Sudan, the North consistently refused to take Southern demands seriously through what Salman (2013:345) termed "a series of broken promises and lost opportunities for resolving the problem of South Sudan". In this regard, it is not a mistake to describe the South as an internal colony from 1956 to 1972 (Heraclides, 1987:217). Indeed, Northern attitudes towards the Southerners attests to this view: underrepresentation and exclusion from the negotiations leading to the country's independence; inequitable participation in the affairs of the state; dismissal of claims for a federal constitution; forced assimilation through the policies of Islamization and Arabization, etc.

Khartoum recognized the right of the people of South Sudan to develop their cultures within a unified Sudan in the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972. Southern Sudan was granted a regional self-government status under Sudan's 1973 Constitution (Dersso, 2012:7). However, Nimeiri's unilateral abrogation of the peace agreement, the declaration of the Islamic state, declaration of Arabic as the official language in the South, and the imposition of sharia law all over the country added to the long list of broken promises to the South. The takeover of government by the National Islamic Front (NIF) of general Omar al-Bashir and Hassan al-Turabi in 1989 further alienated the South. The NIF regime referred to the North-South conflict, which lasted until 2002, as a *Jihad*, a holy war against Southern "pagans" (Rogier, 2005:21).

It is this long history of violations of democratic processes, socio-economic, political and cultural oppression and marginalization that made it clear to local, regional and international peace-brokers that the solution to the North-South conflict in the Sudan lied on the acceptance of Southern claims for self-determination (Dersso, 2012:7).

### 4.6.2 International search for peace and stability in the Sudan

The success of South Sudan's withdrawal from the Sudan was also facilitated by the efforts of numerous external actors to find a diplomatic settlement to the conflict. From 1992 to 2001 African countries and organizations (driven by various interests) launched successive peace initiatives: Nigeria (1992-1993), IGAD (1994-1997), and Egypt and Libya (1999-2001). This

"traffic jam of regional peace initiatives" not only provided the foundations for the final settlement in 2005, but also complicated the resolution of Africa's long running conflict (Rogier, 2005:36).

Reasoning that the weakened position of the SPLA (after the fall of its Ethiopian patron and the split of 1991) would accelerate the resolution of the conflict, Nigerian President Ibrahim Babangida launched the Abuja round of negotiations in the early 1992. Southerners demanded the exercise of self-determination within a unified Sudan, while the NIF insisted on the maintenance of the Sudan as an Islamic state (Johnson, 2004:174). The peace initiatives of Abuja failed as a result of the incompatibilities in the positions of the belligerents.

In 1994 Sudan's partners in the Intergovernmental Authority for Peace (IGAD) launched a multilateral peacemaking process for the Sudan. IGAD member states (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Djibouti and Somalia) were concerned with the negative impacts of the war in neighboring countries. These included the inflow of refugees and the ensuing precarious humanitarian situation, loss of economic opportunities, and Sudan's political destabilization of the region through sponsorship of rebel groups in the neighboring countries (Shafer, 2007:8). In 1995 IGAD introduced a Declaration of Principles (DOP) proposing a diplomatic solution to the conflict, the unity of the country, religious pluralism and the right of self-determination for the South through a referendum (Johnson, 2004:174). Unfortunately, the IGAD peace process collapsed as the NFI abandoned the negotiation table in exchange for alternative solutions, which included a "peace from within" process with the small SPLA breakaway factions. The IGAD peace process resumed in 1997 after Khartoum accepted the DOP as the basis for future discussions (Schafer, 2007:5).

Similarly, Libya and Egypt launched a joint peace initiative in 1999. This new initiative helped to halt the IGAD peace process. The Libyan-Egyptian initiative, which represented an Arab view of the conflict, aimed at countering a "perceived" African domination of the peace process and the exclusion of a major Arab stakeholder, Egypt[10]. By 2001, the initiative had advanced a proposal that excluded "all reference to self-determination and secularism but stressed the need to preserve the Sudan's unity and envisaged inter alia 'recognizing Sudan's diversity',

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[10] Egypt's stakes in the Sudan comprised access to the Nile's waters and the contention of Islamic fundamentalism espoused by the NFI

'establishing a decentralized government', and 'forming an interim government'" (Rogier, 2005:42).

In 2001 the IGAD peace process was revived as a result of political developments in the United States: George W. Bush was inaugurated president at the beginning of the year; John Danforth was appointed special envoy on Sudan on September 6; and a few days later the world witnessed the terrorist attacks of September 11. The aftershocks of "9/11" "dramatically impacted on the bilateral relationship between the US administration and the Government of Sudan, thereby creating the environment in which a new international peace saw the light" (Rogier, 2005:45). In this regard, the US, Britain, Italy, the Netherlands and Norway pressured for renewed negotiations resulting in the signing of the Machakos protocol in 2002. The protocol was mediated by Kenya under the auspices of IGAD and constituted the foundations for subsequent negotiations culminating in the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreements (CPA).

The CPA was signed between Sudan's central government and the SPLA in Nairobi on January 9, 2005. According to Dersso (2012:7), "the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, which created a democratic basis for sustainable peace, was a momentous development for the Sudan and indeed Africa, and brought to a conclusion one of Africa's longest civil wars". The central provision of the CPA was the right of Southerners to conduct a referendum on self-determination after an interim period of six years in which the North and the South would strive to make unity attractive.

In accordance with this provision, a referendum was held between 9 and 15 January 2011. The majority of Southerners (about 98 percent) voted for independence and after six months the Republic of South Sudan emerged as the 54th African state.

### 4.6.3 The Effects of the US-led War on Terror on the Sudanese Peace Process

The US-led war on terror was instrumental in the partition of the Sudan. In particular, the post-"9/11" environment, which intensified growing American security concerns with the Sudan. The terrorist attacks on September 11 impacted dramatically on the bilateral relationship between Washington and Khartoum, thereby creating an environment in which the CPA was signed (Rogier, 2005:52). The rationale behind this strategy was Washington's perception that

"America's own security was linked to the outcome of conflicts like that in Sudan" (Young, 2005:104).

However, from a post-Cold War perspective, US security interests in the Sudan began with the assumption of power of the NIF in 1989. The US expressed great concerns at Sudan's adoption of an aggressive Islamist foreign policy (Young, 2005:104), and its pledge to "spread the Islamic revival throughout the Arab and African worlds" (Medani, 2012:284). Washington's relations with Khartoum became overtly antagonistic between 1991 and 1993 as a result of a number of actions and policies followed by the Sudanese government including: providing safe haven for terrorists, support for Iraq during the Gulf war, increasing relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, etc. (Rogier, 2005:46).

In response, the US included the Sudan in its 1993 list of states that sponsor acts of international terrorism (Medani, 2012:284). Furthermore, in November 1996 the US provided USD 20 million worth of military hardware to neighboring countries for protection against Sudanese Islamic aggression. A year later the US imposed unilateral sanctions against Sudan. In August 1998 the US launched cruise missile attacks on pharmaceutical plants in Khartoum (Young, 2005:104). The Sudan remained a pariah state throughout the tenure of the Clinton administration between 1993 and 2000.

The US resumed diplomatic engagements with Khartoum under President George W. Bush. The Bush administration's continued interests in the Sudan were informed by domestic public pressure, oil exploration and terrorism (Rogier, 2005:51). These three parameters triggered American involvement in the peace process. In early 2000, the US began talks with Sudan on security issues later establishing a counterterrorism bureau in Khartoum. In May 2001 the US appointed a Special humanitarian Coordinator for the Sudan and on September 6, Senator John Danforth was nominated special envoy to the Sudan, with the mandate of brokering a peace settlement.

The events of "9/11" strengthened America's engagements with the Sudan. A more proactive foreign policy was adopted towards the former "terror state" strategically located on the intersections of the Middle East and East Africa. The US took a leading role in the peace process applying sticks and carrots to the warring parties. The US required the Sudanese government to

"cooperate actively on terrorism" while Khartoum responded positively fearing "possible American retaliation action" or international integration (Rogier, 2005:52).

In this regard, Young (2005:104) observes that "as American engagements in Sudan intensified, the participation of countries from the region, apart from Kenya, in the peace process declined and broader geopolitical and security issues came to the fore". The US influenced the Sudanese peace process through IGAD and a troika of partners (the UK, Netherlands, Norway, Italy, etc.). These actors negotiated the signing of the Machakos Protocol in 2002 and the CPA three years later.

### 4.6.4 Flaws in the drafting and implementation of the CPA

Although the CPA brought Sudan's civil wars to a conclusion, the peace agreement was beset by numerous shortcomings (both in terms of planning and implementation), which contributed to the abandonment of the promise of a united country. In line with the aforementioned, the following lines will elaborate on two limitations of the CPA: the exclusivist narrow approach of the peace process; and the lack of credibility associated with the national elections held during the interim period in April 2010.

In terms of planning the CPA emerged out of an exclusivist approach to peacemaking: a bilateral deal between two formerly warring parties without the participation of other political-military and civil society groups. In the words of Medani (2012:288) the CPA was "a negotiated agreement among ethnic and military elites, brokered by external parties, who accept a minimal form of elite participation designed to achieve political stability while avoiding opposition from other forces in society". The demands for participation by other political forces - such as the South Sudan Defense Force (SSDF), the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) - were rejected by IGAD and other actors involved in brokering the peace settlement (Young, 2005:102).

Indeed, the CPA installed a coalition government between the SPLA and al-Bashir's National Congress Party (NCP); creating two polities in one country; and establishing an evenly division of oil revenues between Khartoum and Juba. The SPLA's failure to incorporate the grievances of other marginalized groups and regions posed serious threat for achieving sustainable peace and stability in the Sudan. It should be observed that by the time the "traffic jam of peace initiatives" began in the early 1990s, the conflict in the Sudan had already transcended the North-South divide (as acknowledged in the SPLA's vision of a "New Sudan"). The eruption of the Darfur

conflict in 2003 was an attempt by the insurgents of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) to have their voices and grievances heard just like those of Southerners (Young, 2005:102).

Another flaw, this time related to the implementation of the CPA, with special relevance to the argument being advanced (the flaws in the nature and execution of the CPA contributed to the partition of the Sudan) was the lack of credibility of the electoral process held during the interim period between 11 and 15 of April 2010. The process was marred by massive manipulations and vote rigging from the start (Medani, 2012:288). Both the SPLA and al-Bashir's NCP were driven by different objectives. After the death of the pro-unity leader John Garang in 2005, the SPLA began to concentrate on governing the South in order to create the necessary conditions for a successful referendum. The NCP, on the other hand, focused on maintaining the status quo in the North.

Consequently, the SPLA and al-Bashir's regime forged a strategic partnership to ensure that their objectives were achieved. This prompted Medani (2012:289) to observe that "the elections of April 2010 were not only unrepresentative of Sudanese society, their ultimate purpose was to pave the way for the referendum the following year". In the end both parties achieved their objectives: the SPLA won the election in the South with 93 percent; while al-Bashir's National Congress Party (NCP) held on to power in the North with 68 percent of the vote despite a boycott by all the major opposition parties.

## 4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a narrative of the dynamics of South Sudan's long walk to statehood as well as an analysis of the determining factors of South Sudan's successful political separation from the Sudan. The modern history of South Sudan began two hundred years ago and has been shaped by resistance against external powers: the Turco-Egyptian regime (1820-1881), the Mahdist state (1881-1898), the Anglo-Egyptian condominium (1899-1956), and successive Northern governments based in Khartoum (1956-2011).

Southern nationalism was shaped by the experiences of antagonistic relations with Northerners: the legacy of the slave trade, unequal levels of development, fears of assimilation and rejections of demands for federalism, non-discrimination and equal participation. These grievances resulted in a civil war that lasted for nearly five decades. The war was fought in two rounds (between

1955 and 1972; and between 1983 and 2005). It was settled through a negotiated peace agreement, which provided for a referendum on independence by the people of South Sudan.

South Sudan achieved independence (through the phenomenon of secession) in an environment that was particularly hostile to the emergence of new states. Hence, this chapter has argued that the partition of the Sudan was the result of a combination of domestic and international factors. Domestically, the antagonistic historical relations between the northern and southern parts of the Sudan as well as the flaws in the drafting and implementation of the CPA played an important role. Internationally, the role of external actors in the search for peace and stability in the Sudan as well as the impacts of "9/11" and the war on terror on the Sudanese peace process contributed to South Sudan's independence on July 11, 2011.

The next chapter, which concludes the research, will present a summary of the main findings of the study, the lessons that can be drawn from it as well as areas for future investigation.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

### 5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the determinants of successful secessions in post-colonial Africa. This goal has been achieved by analyzing the dynamics of secession in Eritrea and South Sudan. In view of the conceptual diversity of the phenomenon under scrutiny, the study defined secession as "the formal withdrawal from an established, internationally recognized state by a constituent unit to create a new state" (Bartkus, 1999:3). Furthermore, the expression "successful secession" was used to refer to instances where a secessionist territorial unit becomes "institutionalized in a new government, legitimate at home and recognized abroad" (Wood, 1980:133).

The study focused on Eritrea and South Sudan for the obvious reason that these two countries constitute the only cases of successful secessions on the continent. The analysis of the dynamics of secession of these two entities as well as the contributing factors for their successful political separation from their respective "parent" states was informed by the theoretical assumptions of Wood's analytical framework on secession and Coggins' international-level model of state birth. It is appropriate to reiterate that Wood's framework examines the internal dynamics of secession (from its inception to culmination in the emergence of a new state); while Coggins' model explores the politics of the external recognition of secessionist movements and their subsequent admission into the international community of states.

Thus, the next section provides a summary of the main findings of the study in relation to the questions that oriented the research.

### 5.2 Summary of findings

The research has underscored that secession is a global phenomenon plaguing all types of societies (Bartkus, 1999:3). The African continent in particular has not been immune from secessionist conflicts. In this regard, the study started by addressing the question: what are the remote and immediate causes of secession in post-colonial Africa?

In general terms, the study has concluded that the remote causes of secessionist demands in post-colonial Africa date back to the scramble of Africa by European colonial powers at the Berlin Conference in 1885. However, the adoption of the inherited colonial borders by African leaders at the dawn of the independence period (in the early 1960s) coupled with the pledge to uphold the inviolable character of those same borders exacerbated the conditions for the emergence of secessionist demands. These demands are further deepened by issues of poor governance including the politics of domination, exclusion and marginalization of ethnic or regional groups by the state (Bamfo, 2012:37; Ylonen, 2013:131).

However, in the particular cases of Eritrea and South Sudan, what factors drove the people of these territories to demand full independence from their respective "parent" states?

In relation to Eritrea the study has highlighted that its immediate causes are to be found in the UN's decision to federate the territory with Ethiopia instead of granting it political independence just like other former European territorial possessions in Africa. Furthermore, Emperor Haile Selassie's systematic dismantlement of Eritrea's federal status and the forced incorporation of Eritrea into the Ethiopian empire drove the people of Eritrea to take up arms against Ethiopia. In South Sudan, demands for self-determination were the result of uneasy relations between Northerners and Southerners shaped by pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial factors including: the legacy of the slave trade; unequal levels of development; fears of assimilation; and rejections of demands for federalism, non-discrimination and equal participation by the Northern political elite based in Khartoum.

The people of Eritrea and South Sudan achieved statehood after decades of conflict against their respective "parent" states. It is necessary to reiterate that both Eritrea and South Sudan conducted their struggle for independence and achieved independence in an environment that was particularly hostile to the emergence of new states through the process of secession. As previously mentioned, the international fear of global and regional "balkanization" disallowed the recognition and material support to secessionist movements. In particular, the OAU and the AU's pledge to uphold the inviolable character of African borders made it virtually impossible for secessionist movements to succeed. Indeed, major secessionist attempts in Africa such as Katanga, Biafra and Somaliland have failed as a result of these policies.

Then, what factors explain the successful outcome of Eritrea and South Sudan's political separation from their "parent states"?

The study has explicated that Eritrea and South Sudan's successful secessions were the result of a combination of domestic and external factors. In the case of Eritrea the study has argued that domestic factors such as the military defeat of the Ethiopian army and the Dergue's policies of alienation were instrumental. External factors also played a decisive role in the process, especially Eritrea's historical and legal claims to sovereignty, the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the window of opportunity for the emergence of new states as well as the mediating role of the United States. In the case of South Sudan the study has argued that factors such as the antagonistic historical relations between northerners and southerners, the flaws in the planning and execution of the CPA, the role of external actors in the search for peace and stability in the Sudan, and the impacts of "9/11" and the war on terror on the Sudanese peace process contributed to South Sudan's independence on July 11, 2011.

This leads to the last question: what lessons can be drawn from the experiences of Eritrea and South Sudan in terms of the dynamics and determinants of successful secessions in post-colonial Africa? The answer requires a separate section.

## 6.3 Lessons to be drawn from the cases of Eritrea and South Sudan

The secessions of Eritrea and South Sudan developed more or less along the same lines. The process leading to the secession of these two territories began with ethno-regional grievances, followed by the establishment of secessionist organizations and the development of armed struggle for independence. These secessionist conflicts were settled through internationally sponsored peace agreements, which provided for the exercise of the right to external self-determination through a referendum. In both cases the referendum was followed by international recognition of the secessionist states and their subsequent admission into the international community of states.

In this regard, the cases of Eritrea and South Sudan provide a number of lessons in terms of the dynamics and determinants of successful secessions in post-colonial Africa.

First, Eritrea and South Sudan demonstrate that African borders can be changed and maps redrawn. Indeed, although the OAU (and its successor the AU) uphold the sacrosanct character of African borders, the cases of Eritrea and South Sudan indicate that the territorial integrity of the post-colonial state can be tempered with when it impinges on people's rights to self-determination. However, outside the colonial context, the right of peoples to external self-determination has been applied under special circumstances. Firstly, to effect deferred decolonization (Eritrea and Namibia); and secondly, to "remedy" massive injustices where a people is denied the opportunity to enjoy its right to internal self-determination (South Sudan).

Second, secessionist conflicts tend to be prolonged involving high civilian casualties. The conflicts in Eritrea and South Sudan were at different stages known as "Africa's longest civil war". Eritrean struggle for independence lasted for nearly three decades (1962-1991) killing more than 150 thousands people. The North-South conflict in the Sudan lasted for five decades (1955-2005), producing around 2 million civilian deaths and uprooting almost five million people from their homes. That is so because of the centrality of territory for the state. Territorial fragmentation of the state is a threat against the very definition of the state; as a result, central governments often attempt to militarily subdue separatist groups, while secessionists fight passionately for their homeland. These elements turn secessionist conflicts into protracted and highly destructive wars.

Third, external support for the warring parties not only escalates secessionist conflicts but also helps to sustain them. The secessionist conflicts in Eritrea and South Sudan began as unconventional guerrilla struggles developing into conventional warfare once secessionists managed to gather considerable trained cadres and significant military hardware. These developments were influenced by the intervention of external political actors driven by self-interests. In the cases of Eritrea and South Sudan, these developments became evident during the establishment of secessionist organizations and the conduct of the secessionist struggle. In both cases the central government and the secessionists received help from neighboring countries and other states supportive of their causes.

Fourth, the interests of powerful states play a decisive role in the settlement of secessionist conflicts. Regional and international peacemaking initiatives to settle the conflicts in Eritrea and South Sudan were linked to the geostrategic and political interests of powerful states. The US was instrumental in opposing and championing Eritrean secession. At the center of American

policy towards Eritrea was the search for stability in the Horn of Africa. During the Cold War the US opposed Eritrean secession. In 1991 (with the collapse of the USSR and a militarily strong EPLF) the US began championing Eritrean secession. Failure by the United States in supporting Eritrean secession would have led to the destabilization of the Horn as the EPLF would have effectively resumed war against Ethiopia or simply proclaimed a unilateral secession. In the Sudan, IGAD member states became involved in seeking a diplomatic solution to the conflict once the Sudanese conflict became internationalized affecting the national security of neighboring states. Moreover, American engagements in the Sudanese peace process were driven by national interests, including security (pressure from Christian Evangelicals, oil companies and the terrorist attacks of September 11).

Fifth, successful secessions require the consent of the parent state followed by international recognition. Eritrea and South Sudan attained statehood with the blessing of Ethiopia and the Sudan respectively followed by recognition by other states including the OAU/AU member states. The element of "parent" states' consent and international recognition has played against other self-proclaimed states in Africa such as Biafra (Nigeria), Katanga (DRC), Somaliland (Somaliland), Anjouan and Mohedi (Comoros), and Azawadi (Mali).

Finally, the emergence of new states through secession in post-colonial Africa has not brought about peace and stability in the continent. The consolidation of Eritrean statehood has not been successful: the country failed to democratize turning into an authoritarian military state; Eritrea fought a war against Ethiopia over a border demarcation between 1998 and 2000; Eritrea's international relations with Western nations and neighboring countries are tense due to diversion of humanitarian aid to military purposes and poor human rights records. Similarly, the independence of South Sudan did not end conflicts with the Sudan. Fights erupted as a result of disputes border demarcations and sharing in the profits of oil exploitation. In addition, since December 2013, South Sudan has plunged into a civil war between forces loyal to President Salva Kiir and forces loyal to former Vice-President Riek Machar.

## 6.4 Concluding Remarks

Secession is a complex phenomenon. This research has attempted to address a specific dimension of the phenomenon: the determinants of successful secessions in post-colonial Africa by analyzing the cases of Eritrea and South Sudan. This deliberate delimitation of the research

problem is an indication that the study did not seek to exhaust the entire problematic of secessionism in Africa. Consequently, more studies are needed for a better understanding of the phenomenon under scrutiny.

In this regard, future research should focus on exploring the aftermath secessionist developments in Africa. For instance, how has the secession of Eritrea and South Sudan affected their "parent" states? Since secession has not brought about socio-political stability and created an environment conducive to economic development in Eritrea and South Sudan was statehood the right option for these entities? Are there indicators to determine the success of secessionist states? What are the alternatives to secession?

In addition, more attention should be paid to the emerging connection between militant Islam and secession in Africa as evinced by the cases of Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria, the Mombasa Republican Council in Kenya, and other movements in Zanzibar (Tanzania), Ogaden (Ethiopia), etc.

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**APENDICES**

**Appendix 1: Political Map of Africa**

**Appendix 2: Political Map of Eritrea**

**Appendix 3: Political Map of the Sudan**