

What's Happening

IN THE WORLD ?

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South Sudan Becomes the World's Newest Nation

The world has more than 190 countries. New ones seldom form, and when one does, it often comes after long years of suffering. This is exactly what happened in the new African nation of South Sudan, where people finally celebrated their independence on July 9.

For a long time religion has divided the people of Sudan. In ancient times Egypt, Sudan's neighbor to the north, colonized the northern part of the country. Then when Egypt came under Muslim rule 1,500 years ago, Islam spread in northern Sudan too. Even today the population in the north is mostly Arab Muslims. Today most southerners practice their traditional African beliefs, and some practice Christianity.

Foreign countries also have influenced Sudan's political life. In 1821 Egypt conquered the north. In the 1890s Britain and Egypt took control of the entire country. The two countries ruled jointly in Sudan, and for more than 20 years they governed the south and north as separate administrative regions. In 1956 Sudan became an independent country, but that began an unhappy period.

Southerners feared that the powerful Muslim north would treat them unfairly. In 1955 they began a small revolt that later became a bloody civil war. It lasted for 17 years and took the lives of half a million Sudanese. About 80 percent of them were civilians, not soldiers. In addition, hundreds of thousands had to leave their homes. The war ended in 1972 when southerners ended their fighting in exchange for making the south a separate administrative region again.

The ceasefire did not last long. Mistreatment of the south by the government continued and tensions rose again. They led to a second civil war from 1983 to 2005, which took the lives of another two million people. Those who did not die from violence died of starvation or disease. Most victims were in the south.

The war ended with a peace agreement in 2005. It called for the removal of northern troops from the south in 2008. It also granted southerners an



opportunity to vote on whether to become independent. That vote took place in January 2011, and more than 98 percent of the voters chose to secede from Sudan.

On July 9 the Southern Sudanese celebrated their independence. Tens of thousands of them gathered in their new capital, Juba. At the ceremony someone read the official declaration of independence, and the new president took the oath of office. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, welcomed South Sudan as the 193rd member of the U.N. The new president, Salva Kiir, also gave a speech about his country's past sacrifices and future challenges.

One challenge will be to establish a good relationship with Sudan. On July 9 the Sudanese President attended the ceremony in Juba and congratulated the people of South Sudan. However, problems remain. For example, the two countries must figure out how to share the profits from oil production. Most of the oil comes from the south, and since 2005 the south and north have shared profits equally. They also must agree on the exact position of their border and create citizenship laws that embrace people in both countries.

Another huge challenge will be to improve people's lives. It is one of the poorest and unhealthiest nations in the world. Half of its eight million people live on less than \$1 a day, and one in seven children dies before the age of five. It must build roads and develop opportunities for people to earn money from things other than oil. It also must build schools and raise the literacy rate from only 15 percent of the population. Finally, after decades of civil war that tore families and communities apart, people now must learn to abandon the violence that became a way of life.

Despite the problems that lie ahead, the people of South Sudan have a wonderful opportunity. They can build a government that treats its citizens well. They also can build a new nation that prospers, is at peace with its Sudanese neighbors, and becomes a respected member of the African and world communities.

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The world has more than 190 countries. A new one is rare, and often it comes after years of suffering. This is the case in South Sudan. The new African nation finally celebrated its independence on July 9.

For a long time religion has divided the people of Sudan. In ancient times Egypt, Sudan's neighbor to the north, colonized the north. When Egypt came under Muslim rule 1,500 years ago, Islam spread in northern Sudan too. Even today the people there are mostly Arab Muslims. Southerners practice their traditional African beliefs, and some are Christians.

Foreign countries also have influenced Sudan's political life. In 1821 Egypt conquered the north. In the 1890s Britain and Egypt ruled the entire country together. For 20 years they treated the south and north as separate regions. In 1956 Sudan became an independent country, but that began an unhappy period.

Southerners feared the government in the north. In 1955 they began a small revolt. It later became a bloody civil war that lasted for 17 years and killed 500,000 people. Most of them were civilians, not soldiers. Hundreds of thousands also had to leave their homes. In 1972 southerners agreed to stop fighting if the south became a separate region again.

The peace did not last long. The government mistreated the south, and that led to a second civil war from 1983 to 2005. Another two million people died from violence, starvation or disease. Most victims were in the south.

The war ended with a peace agreement. Northern troops had to leave the south by 2008. Southerners also got the opportunity in January



2011 to vote on whether to split from Sudan. More than 98 percent of the votes were for independence.

On July 9 the Southern Sudanese celebrated their new country. Tens of thousands of them gathered in their new capital, Juba. Someone read the official declaration of independence. The head of the United Nations welcomed South Sudan as its 193rd member. The new president, Salva Kiir, also gave a speech about his country's past sacrifices and future challenges.

One challenge will be to form a good relationship with Sudan. On July 9 the Sudanese President was in Juba to congratulate South Sudan. However, problems remain. For example, the two countries must figure out how to share the profits from oil production. Most of the oil comes from the south, and since 2005 the south and north have shared profits equally. They also must agree on a border and create citizenship laws that recognize people in both countries.

Another huge challenge will be to improve people's lives. It is one of the poorest and unhealthiest nations in the world. Half of its eight million people live on less than \$1 a day. One in seven children dies before age five. It must build roads and help people earn money from things other than oil. It also must raise the literacy rate from only 15 percent of the population. Finally, after decades of war that tore communities apart, people now must learn to live without violence.

Despite its many problems, South Sudan has a wonderful opportunity. It can build a government that treats its citizens well. It also can build a new nation that prospers, enjoys peace, and becomes a respected member of the African and world communities.

Background Information

South Sudan is known officially as the Republic of South Sudan and is the 54th African nation in the United Nations. The U.N. admitted South Sudan officially on July 14. Montenegro was the last country to become a member of the U.N. in 2006.

The leaders of 30 African nations attended the celebration on July 9.

Sudan was Africa's largest nation geographically before South Sudan split from it. Now Algeria is the largest, followed by the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Sudan is now the third-largest.

Sudan was the first to recognize South Sudan officially. It did that on July 8, a day before other countries did.

At the ceremony on July 9 officials unveiled a statue of John Garang. He was a rebel leader in the south who played a key role in getting the peace settlement in 2005. In January 2005 he became First Vice President of Sudan, but he died in a helicopter crash the following July.

South Sudan's new president, Salva Kiir, took John Garang's place as First Vice President in 2005. He was a commander of rebel forces during the civil war and a leader of the independence movement.

Violence continues in several places in Sudan, especially in a civil war in the region of Darfur.

Hundreds of thousands of southerners still live and work in the north, and some northerners work and live in the south. Sudan and South Sudan need to make sure that these people get to keep their citizenship in one of the countries, or perhaps in both.

Since 2005 Sudan has produced 500,000 barrels of oil every day. About 75 percent of it comes from South Sudan but flows north through a pipeline to Port Sudan in Sudan for export.

Tourism could become an important part of South Sudan's economy. It has wildlife and game preserves that will attract tourists, and the country probably will build new hotels in Juba for them.

There are other nations beyond the 193 in the U.N. The U.S. recognizes two other independent states: The Holy See in Vatican City and the Republic of Kosovo. Taiwan also meets the definition of an independent state, but the international community recognizes it as part of China.

Before South Sudan broke away, Sudan was almost the size of Texas but had only 100 miles of paved roads.

Topics for Discussion and Writing

Pre-reading:

- What kinds of problems might cause citizens to want to break away from their country and form a new one?

Comprehension:

- Identify some of the challenges that lie ahead for South Sudan.

Beyond the Text:

- Why do you think breaking the cycle of violence and living in peace might be difficult?
- How is a higher literacy rate connected to economic growth?
- What do you think a government should do for its citizens?

Vocabulary (*advanced article only)

Article-specific: to colonize; Muslim/Islam; to conquer; civil war; in exchange for*; ceasefire*; starvation; to secede*; oath*; literacy rate

High-use: traditional; to influence; jointly*; administrative*; region; revolt; tension*; to grant*; challenge; to establish*; to embrace*; decade; to prosper

Sources

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State Department Documents/FIND July 21, 2011

Sudan Tribune July 19, 2011

AllAfrica July 14, 2011

British Broadcasting Corporation www.bbc.co.uk
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CA Curricular Standards (4–12)

English-Language Arts

Reading 1.0 Vocabulary Development

2.0 Comprehension (Informational Materials)

Writing 1.0 Writing Strategies

2.0 Writing Applications

ELD—Intermediate and Advanced

Reading Vocabulary Development/Comprehension

Writing Strategies and Applications

Listening and Speaking

History-Social Science

6.2; 7.2; 12.3; 12.9