



# THE SUDD INSTITUTE

RESEARCH FOR A PEACEFUL, JUST AND PROSPEROUS SOUTH SUDAN

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## Weekly Brief

### **The 2012 U.S. Presidential Election: What the Outcome Means for South Sudan**

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When America votes for their president the rest of the world watches very keenly, chiefly because American politics has tremendous spillover consequences. Owing to its robust democratic culture, economic and military capacities, and its vast interest in promoting those values globally—the United States of America ultimately surfaces as an epitome of world-class leadership—that which can be fashioned and emulated, particularly in the developing nations. The recent re-election of Barack Obama for a second term as president was received in South Sudan with jubilation. Renewed hopes have been placed on the US as one of the strongest partners in development and governance in this young country. What does President Obama's reelection mean for U.S. policy toward South Sudan? How might his reelection impact peace and security in our new state?

On the U.S. side, a new policy on Africa has spelled out Washington's expectations from countries receiving aid. South Sudan can easily glean from it what applies in its case. More specifically, the Obama administration has a track record of wide range of political, capacity, and material support exercises in South Sudan that reflect its interests. Namely the administration:

- Closely monitored and supported the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)
- Provided development aid and technical assistance to the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS)
- Monitored the elections and referendum and helped to ensure they were conducted in a transparent, fair, and timely manner;
- Formally recognized South Sudan's independence in July 2011;
- Promised lasting bonds between South Sudan and the United States, with the upgrading on 9th of July of the U.S. consulate in South Sudan to an embassy;
- Urged the two Sudans to fulfill their responsibility of maintaining peace, cultural interactions, and economic sustenance in order to realize prosperity;
- Added South Sudan to the pool of countries considered qualified to purchase defense equipment from the United States; and
- Strongly emphasized protection of human rights, civil liberties, promotion of accountable and responsive systems of governance, tolerance of independent media, and effective installation of transparent democratic processes in the infant state.

It is possible that the US views this support as an investment in South Sudan's potential to emerge as an open democratic government, and Washington will surely watch the developments in South Sudan from that vantage point. It is not surprising that Washington expects this investment to bear fruits in the form of governance.

On the side of South Sudan, the president's congratulatory message to the U.S. president speaks of South Sudan's appreciation for the United State's longstanding support. However, many sources suggest that there seems to be tension between Juba and Washington, as Juba has not been adhering to some of Washington's expectations. Corruption and claims of loss of large amounts of public money, reports of increasing human rights abuses, the recent expulsion of the United Nations Human Rights Monitor, reports of increasing xenophobia against foreign workers and oppositions, rising crime rates in urban centers, some of which involve the security forces, and slow progress in security sector reform, including the professionalization of the national defense force, are all issues that make South Sudan appear to have deviated from the expectations of good governance upon which the US places a high premium.

Viewed from this lens, the re-election of Obama seems to raise some key questions, including: Given the state of the economy in the U.S. and the West, will these issues rock the relationship between Juba and Washington, as American tax payers become jittery about continued support for a government they may see as not living up to its own peoples' expectations? Would presence of such tensions lead to reduction in US financial assistance to South Sudan? Would such a decrease of funding further increase economic and physical insecurity in South Sudan? Further, if these tensions heighten, what would this mean for a country whose democracy is naturally transitional, its institutions incapacitated, and its cultural and economic fabrics persistently plagued by rampant corruption? The Sudd Institute takes the view that while speculations about reduction in US aid to South Sudan is likely, there is potential for several policies that the government of South Sudan can adopt in order to pre-empt further developments toward rocky relations that could have serious implications for South Sudan development. Such policies would include more stern response to corruption, promotion of democracy through opening up of political space, development programs that are equitable and people-centered, and passage of legislations that ensure respect for basic civil rights. Any action of this kind would keep the promise that South Sudan is developing into the nation that the world hoped it would be.

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### **About Sudd Institute**

The Sudd Institute is an independent research organization that conducts and facilitates policy relevant research and training to inform public policy and practice, to create opportunities for discussion and debate, and to improve analytical capacity in South Sudan.

### **About the Authors**

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