

WAR AND POLITICS IN SUDAN

CULTURAL IDENTITIES AND THE
CHALLENGES OF THE PEACE PROCESS

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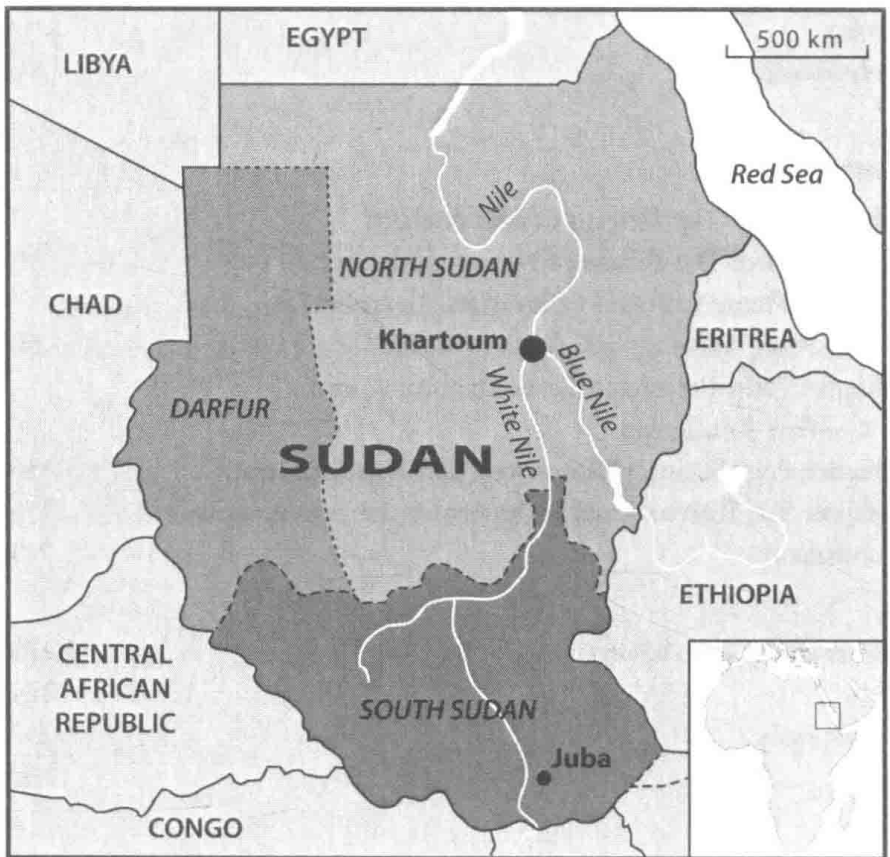
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MAP OF SUDAN



PREFACE

Regarding Sudanese conflict, the question 'Why are they fighting?' first interested me while living in Sudan at the start of the second civil war. My mother, a medical attaché at the US Embassy, arrived in Khartoum during the summer of 1984. The question provoked a flurry of sometimes contradicting responses from adults and other children of various nationalities at my school: narratives of oppression and colonialism, Islamic law, oil interests, tribalism, and the hand of such foreign antagonists as Libya, Israel, and Ethiopia. Individual names to the conflict loomed large: Nimeiri, Garang, Sadiq. The fate of the country seemed to hinge upon the will of a handful of men.

Years later, I would see that same blizzard of motivations for war put forth in media reports and diplomatic statements. By the time of the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in January 2005, the causes of war had grown even more complex. Having already discovered the importance of individual personalities in Sudanese politics, I paid even more attention to the CPA after the shocking death of John Garang in July 2005. Would the agreement, so dependent on negotiations between elites, collapse? Would Khartoum see the tragedy as an opportunity to renege on a peace agreement? Would the new leadership of separatist-minded Salva Kiir forego any pretense of unity in the interim period?

Understanding what kept peace deals together took on a new importance for me. I looked to the 1972 agreement between Khartoum and

the Anya Nya separatists to find what lessons could be gleaned for the new agreement. Upon reading some of the major literature on the events of that era, I saw that the distribution of similarities and differences between the two agreements might allow for a more detailed comparative analysis. I had already been considering such a study between the CPA and other African peace agreements but was frustrated. I felt that such comparisons neither accurately conveyed the significance of either peace treaty nor produced a better understanding of the countries involved. A comparison of two or three detailed case studies, I felt, was also too limited to promote theories about conflict resolution in general.

Comparing peace treaties concluded at different periods within the same state was an unconventional approach, but I believed that, even if it did not explain or rule out broader theories, it might better explain the history of modern Sudan in particular. For a state where domestic conflict is the norm, successful peacemaking efforts must be scrutinized at least as thoroughly as the origins of conflict. By examining the bargaining process, the provisions agreed upon, and the greater political environment, I hoped to find new explanations for Sudan's unique and violent post-colonial history.

The secession of South Sudan in 2011 and the re-emergence of debate over the nature of African states give added urgency to the need for a longer history of war in Sudan. Many readers drawn to study the conflict may still wish for comprehensive answers to the question of why, after several decades of independence, Khartoum finally agreed to allow the region to break away peacefully. Why did it occur under this government and not earlier ones, whether autocratic or parliamentary? How could a regime implicated in such consistent brutality against its own people allow one third of the country, rich in oil and strategically located along the Nile, to secede?

Part of my attempt to answer these questions requires explaining how the current regime in Khartoum has attempted to manipulate the national identity of northern Sudanese to preserve its own power. The junta of Omar Hassan Al-Bashir continues to uphold the Arab identity that was so integral to northern nationalism in Sudan, but this identity was for decades forced to give space to Islam as the dominant cultural force in state building. An emphasis on Arab identity

reemerged after the Machakos peace process began in 2002, and especially after the Darfur insurrection erupted in 2003. The identity shift served to motivate the Arabized clients of the regime against the non-Arab populations assumed to support insurgents in remote northern areas. As the south prepared to become its own nation, the state's neo-patrimonial networks were forced to adjust, and the new line of division rests along the Arab/non-Arab schism.

For over a decade now, the National Congress Party (NCP) regime has had no ideological core. The momentum of its early Islamist project propelled it for a time after the dismissal of Hassan Al-Turabi, its chief Islamist ideologue. Turabi, however, encouraged the Darfur insurgency, which was fought in part by a group aligned with him against his erstwhile government allies. Opposition from Sudan's leading Islamist has led the regime to lean more heavily on Arab unity as a source of legitimacy. Because there is no longer any serious ideological commitment behind either Arabism or Islamism aside from preservation of the regime, they are virtually indistinguishable. Those fighting Khartoum in the hinterlands of South Kordofan and the Abyei subregion, Darfur, Blue Nile and elsewhere have been left out of the new patronage system, contracted substantially in preparation for the loss of the revenue from southern oil that sustained Khartoum for many years.

South Sudan, too, will seek to form a national identity in the wake of its independence, a goal consistently shared by the vast majority of the population since the first civil war. Few peoples in the world have fought for their own state as long as the southerners while simultaneously forming so few bonds among themselves as countrymen. Southern nationalists dreamt for over half a century of 9 July 2011. The history over the past year of fighting along the north-south border, continued disputes over oil revenue, corruption and intra-South Sudan infighting indicate that the region's troubles are not yet behind it. I hope this history of Sudanese attempts at peace will shed light on some of the challenges both Sudans may face going forward.

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The staff at ANU's Menzies Library was supremely valuable in my research efforts, and patient in their assistance of a graduate student often blessed with more abstract knowledge about what he thought he needed than practical knowledge of how to get it. Not a single text that I required for my research, no matter how old, obscure, or regionally unavailable, was beyond the means of the ANU librarians to locate and bring back to Canberra. I am truly impressed by their capabilities and dedication. I also thank my colleague Wendy Levy, whose gracious sharing of research material and contacts improved this work considerably.

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INTRODUCTION

In the course of post-colonial Sudanese history, tensions between the northern and southern portions of the state have led to two protracted civil wars, the first lasting from 1955 to 1972 and the second from 1983 to 2005. The successfully concluded peace agreements to these wars, the Addis Ababa Agreement (AAA) of 1972 and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005, are the landmark moments in Sudanese conflict resolution. A comparative examination of these treaties – both the measures they stipulate and the environment in which they were negotiated – will provide important insights into Sudan's progress as a state. Despite a significant amount of material chronicling the causes of these wars and their resolution, *comparative* analysis regarding the resolutions of these conflicts remains scarce; specifically, analysis of what each warring side demanded from the other and how these demands evolved over several decades. Since Sudan became independent in 1956, the country has seen only 11 years of peace. To understand the motives for these wars and their endings is therefore, in a large part, to understand the political history of post-colonial Sudan. That both conflicts erupted along the same north/south fault line, yet revolved around different insurgent objectives, also begs further analysis of the evolution of Sudanese identity as reflected in the peace agreements: specifically, how the conception of national and regional identity changed between the 1970s and the 2000s. Therefore, this book is not a pure analysis of the mechanics of conflict resolution. It is an analysis of a specific state, almost perpetually engaged in domestic conflict, through the prisms of its two most significant peace agreements.

This book seeks to bring a fresh approach to understanding insurgent motivations in the two conflicts. The first insurgency had a separatist objective, while the second sought a broader national revolution involving marginalized peoples from areas outside the south. This evolution of southern objectives has rarely been examined in detail, particularly with regard to the resolution of the conflicts. The contradiction that the first insurgency would settle for regional autonomy in the AAA and the second for the option of southern secession in the CPA – both arrangements antithetical to each movement's respective cause – has also rarely been explored.

The goal of this study is to trace the evolution of southern and northern objectives in Sudan's conflicts within the context of their two successful attempts at conflict resolution. Ultimately, the aim is to determine what the two sides wanted and the process of fighting and negotiations by which they were able to reconcile these goals. Abu Baker El Obeid, in his study of the AAA, highlights the distinction between a historical analysis and a legal analysis of the agreement; he explains that 'a strictly legal analysis tends to be misleading, since it does not tell us much about how the Southern Problem developed. On the other hand, the historical background would not show how the Agreement was legally formulated.'¹ Emulating his 'middle way' compromise, much of this book consists of explaining the historical evolution of provisions that would eventually become codified in each of the two agreements.

Consequently, while the various conferences and initiatives throughout the history of both wars will be explored, the study will examine them as they relate to the two successful forums. The scope of the work will be limited generally by confining historical analysis within the conceptual boundaries of the events that led up to these agreements. Periods of Sudanese history not directly related to either conflict – the colonial era and the immediate post-AAA period in the 1970s, for example – will be examined primarily in terms of their relevance to the agreements or, more commonly, to substantiate broader themes in Sudanese history that are also addressed in the agreements.

Analysis cannot be limited to a strict comparison between the agreements. The treaties were negotiated at different periods within

the same state's history and, therefore, must be viewed as part of a historical process to avoid distortion of their significance. The CPA was, in many instances, a response to the perceived failures of the AAA, especially in the realms of security and wealth sharing. As a result, some of the concepts covered in the study can only be viewed as evolutionary processes. The significance of many issues addressed in the text of the agreements simply cannot be analyzed satisfactorily without greater understanding of the history of the debate and conflict they have inspired.

In addition, an understanding of events leading up to these agreements can clarify how both sides visualized such concepts as federalism or political Islam, two examples of terms with meanings that changed drastically between agreements. This is especially relevant in the early analytical chapters that focus less on the technical detail of conflict resolution than on the historical trends that dominated Sudanese conflict and, therefore, had to be confronted in the agreements.

The study of the region's history in Chapter One primarily supports the analytical chapters that follow and does not provide a comprehensive history of Sudan. A short review of the colonial era is necessary to explain how the nationalist visions in northern and southern Sudan became so asynchronous, and how the north came to dominate national institutions at independence. There would be no understanding of the southern movements as 'guerrilla warfare' were it not for the advent of a modern Sudanese military under the Condominium. Clapham notes that in pre-colonial times, the disparity between African forces was not so great that the term 'guerrilla' would have any meaning.² Because of the study's focus on the origins of conflict, other important events in colonial Sudanese history – such as the 'care and maintenance' period of southern administration in the 1930s, the Nile Valley Unity movement, and the significant role of the Sudanese Communist Party in the early northern nationalist movement – are not examined in detail. Instead, the emphasis is on the foundations of issues that would define the relationship of the warring parties during post-colonial hostilities. A review of such concepts as the Southern Policy and Native Administration helps to explain the lack of integration of the Sudanese state, how this absence

would define future conflict, and how conflict resolution efforts tried to address problems.

The coverage of events after the beginning of the first war in 1955 and Sudanese independence provides a chronology to be analyzed in successive chapters, and grounds theory in a historical basis. In addition, it introduces the dominant movements, parties, and individuals relevant to both conflicts and their resolution. Finally, this chapter will describe the patterns of conflict resolution attempts, laying out the basic issues of contention to be evaluated in subsequent chapters.

Chapter Two examines the fundamentals of identity and ideology as they applied in northern and southern Sudan. The first part of the chapter discusses the evolution of these processes. Successive regimes in the first war, whether leftist or conservative, advocated Arab Islamic culture as a nation-building tool to compensate for a lack of national integration at the time of independence. Emphasis is made on determining competing visions of national identity – not regional, religious, or tribal identity – because both the peace agreements were of a national nature and did not seek to address such subnational identities directly. Early southern resistance to northern nationalism led to the formation of a fragile shared southern consciousness, but regional unity foundered along tribal lines without the threat of a common enemy to unite the south's disparate peoples.

Chapter Three seeks to clarify the priorities of both parties by examining concessions on issues of identity in the agreements. It clarifies the most important distinctions between the governments concluding the treaties, as well as those among the rebel movements with whom they successfully negotiated. It aims to differentiate between the nationalist vision of successive governments in the first war and the conduct of the Bashir regime in the second. Islam is a complex, multi-faceted element of Sudanese society, but here its influence is addressed primarily in terms of its use as a tool of the state. This focus serves to highlight an often-overlooked distinction in the political role Islam played in the conduct of both wars and its interaction with conceptions of Sudanese nationalism. In the second war, Islam increasingly became a political weapon used regardless of nationalist principles. The decoupling of Islam from the objectives of the northern

nationalist movement allowed for concessions in the CPA regarding the integrity of the Sudanese state that Khartoum would not make in the AAA.

Chapter Four observes the process by which institutions break down, as reflected in the AAA and CPA. The chapter gives issues of identity discussed in earlier chapters a more concrete political foundation and covers Sudanese patronage politics and coalition building. These two characteristics have defined Sudanese governance since independence, and both agreements were designed to extend them. Because both peace agreements were implemented nationally, the chapter will concentrate on national patronage politics rather than similar sectarian and regional networks. In addition, the national nature of the agreements, and their role in attempting to induct the rebel movement into a coalition with the state, also requires that greater attention be paid to the government's neo-patrimonial tendencies rather than the internal patronage of the various rebel movements. Certain facets of the government patronage apparatus, Islamic banking and regional administration most notably, are so elaborate they are worthy of a separate study. In the interest of space and focus, I have touched upon them only as they relate to the peace agreements.

Chapter Four also explains how exclusivist coalitions formed under the patrimonial state during the colonial period helped prevent the emergence of broad-based nationalist movements that appealed to both the north and the south. The national government's resulting fragile base of legitimacy led to a series of weak coalitions and strong neo-patrimonial hierarchies. The dynamics of patronage politics destabilized and disrupted attempts at mediation of the conflict, as demonstrated during the 1980s by the parliamentary governments' failed attempts to negotiate an end to the war. These dynamics have destroyed the foundations of northern nationalism and made the 'New Sudan' alternative presented by the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) insurgent leader John Garang equally unworkable.

Chapter Five addresses greed/grievance theories of conflict in the context of the treaties and evaluates the relevance of these theories. Here, analyzing the two treaties comparatively is especially beneficial, as natural resources were a dominant issue of contention in the second

war but played only a peripheral role in the first. In addition, larger patterns of socioeconomic development will be examined to determine the motivations of actors in the wars. The roles the army and insurgent movements had in implementing ceasefires, troop quotas, and other elements of the negotiation process and final agreement will also be reviewed in this chapter.

Chapter Six explains why the resolution of Sudan's wars cannot be analyzed in terms of the demands of internal parties alone but must be observed in the broader context of Sudan's domestic and foreign circumstances. An analysis of the role outside actors have played in Sudan's conflicts and their resolution is also a barometer by which to gauge the influence of nationalism, political Islam, and broader Arab/African questions of identity. Especially in a politically weak state, such as Sudan, these broader relationships are particularly obvious indicators of the capabilities, limitations, and motivations of both regimes and rebel movements.

The conclusion reaffirms and harmonizes the findings reached in the body of work and further outlines the relevance of the information gained towards Sudanese political history generally.

CHAPTER ONE

THE ORIGINS OF NATIONALISM

The theme of a weak central state relying on unstable coalitions and an exploitation of hinterland resources to consolidate power resonates throughout Sudanese political history, predating even the Turco-Egyptian conquest of the early nineteenth century. State expansion traditionally projected outward from the Nilotic center, commonly meeting resistance in such remote regions as Darfur, the Nuba Mountains, and southern Sudan. The Islamic faith, initially uncoupled from the early state-building process, spread peacefully from Arab lands through the belt of northern Sudan. The religion retained an orthodox flavor in urban regions but mixed with local practices as it passed through the countryside. These Sufi traditions emerged as the dominant sub-national forms of northern identity, gradually overshadowing tribal affiliations.

Climate posed a natural barrier to the spread of Islam, as the marshes and jungles of the south were not conducive to traditional patterns of dissemination. As a result, until the Turco-Egyptian expedition into the upper Nile region no political ties or shared consciousness of any kind existed between northern and southern Sudan. With the Turkish arrival, the south began to identify Islam with a violent, expansionist northern state. As the barrier of climate prevented Egyptian incorporation of the south, the territory served as an unorganizable hinterland notable primarily for its commercial potential in ivory, cattle, and slaves.¹

An indigenous Islamic revival movement in the 1880s, led by a charismatic religious figure known as the Mahdi, eventually overpowered the administration in Khartoum. The Mahdi died soon after defeating the Turco-Egyptian forces in 1885. His successor, the Khalifa Abdullahi, presided over an Islamic state for 13 years before a combined British-Egyptian force toppled the regime in 1898. The Mahdist state had further weakened tribalism in northern Sudan, but was unable to penetrate the south permanently. Accordingly, large portions of the region went without administration from outside rule until the 1920s. The chasm between northern and southern experiences during this period would lay the foundation for their distinct identities.

The Anglo-Egyptian Condominium and Northern Nationalism

Twentieth-century colonialism exacerbated the earlier center-periphery dynamic of the state and defined the perimeters of the Sudanese nationalist movement that became so prominent by independence. By 1898, the need to keep the full course of the Nile out of the hands of other European powers compelled the British to overthrow the Mahdist state. To quell opposition from imperialist rivals, Britain undertook the seizure in the name of Egyptian reconquest. Lord Herbert Kitchener's forces raised both the British and Egyptian flags when Khartoum fell and began nearly six decades of Condominium rule. Egypt, however, would play little more than a token role in the huge territory's governance, providing only mid-level staff and administrators.

Britain's need to govern Sudan in accordance with its legal obligation to Egypt precluded any division of the vast territory. No portion of the south was to be transferred to British East Africa, regardless of the administrative logic of that approach. The resulting Anglo-Egyptian Agreement, signed in January 1899, was maintainable only while the British controlled both Egypt and the Sudan.

Upon the establishment of the Anglo-Egyptian regime, neither a Sudanese aristocracy nor any alternative power elite existed. The Mahdist regime was entirely demolished, and the tribal and sectarian structures predating its existence severely weakened. The British