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## Factors Shaping the Post-Referendum Nation-Building in Southern Sudan in Relation to the Sudan

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### **Introduction**

Ancient Kush, located in present-day northern Sudan was strongly influenced by Egypt for some 1,000 years beginning in 2,700 BC. Subsequently, Egypt's power in Sudan waned. In the sixteenth century Muslim religious brotherhoods spread through northern Nubia in the area adjoining current-day Egypt. These, plus the Ottoman Empire, ruled the area through military leaders for some three centuries. In 1820 Muhammad Ali, who ruled Egypt on behalf of the Ottoman Turks, sent 4,000 troops to Sudan. This invasion resulted in the Ottoman-Egyptian rule of Sudan from 1821 to 1885. Slavery in the Sudan took hold during this period, when it was made state policy. Slavery became a cash commodity when the Europeans started making incursions into the continent to procure slaves. 'Jallaba' means of mixed race from the North of the Sudan. The Jallaba were the procurers of slaves who led raiding squads backed by formidable armies. As Egyptian rule faltered, the Jallaba hoped to inherit the governance of the Sudan. The late Dr John Garang de Mabior (2008) refers to the Jallaba as Afrabians, a hybrid of different races and nationalities, including black Africans, immigrant Arabs, Turks, Greeks

and Armenians, that first evolved during the fifteenth century and have since always chosen to identify themselves as Arabs, even though many are black. Hashim states that the political Right, descendants of the Jallaba, has ruled the Sudan since self-government in 1955.

The present-day misunderstandings between Khartoum at the centre and the marginal peripheral areas such as South Sudan, creating tension and war, find their roots in slavery, Arabisation and the Islamisation drive south into tropical Africa. In a filed confidential report of the Juba Conference of 1947 dated 21 June 1947 addressed to M.F.A. Owen, the Deputy Governor of Bahr El Ghazal Area, in Wau, which was signed by B.V. Marwood, Governor of Equatoria, which conference brought together senior British colonial administrators, traditional Chiefs of Southern Sudan as well as leaders from Northern Sudan, for the purpose considering 'the unification of the two parts of the country', we find the quote from Owen to the Northern Sudanese present that they were still suffering from the 'sins of Zubeir Pasha and the slavers'. Owen goes on to state:

The sins of the Fathers shall be vested upon their children even unto the third and fourth generation.

Owen went on to say that the South had not forgotten the days of oppression even if the North had done so, and that the Southerner's view was dominated by fear and suspicion.

When the northern elite was installed in power in Khartoum by the departing Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, they considered the Sudan as consisting of their fellow noble Arabs of the centre North area; the Muslim Africans of the periphery (with possible Arab blood) undergoing rapid Arabisation; and the slaves, being blacks with no authority to rule.

The institution of slavery in the Afro-Arab borderlands and Sudan is a matter on which information is either suppressed or not available. Both Arabs and Africans are reluctant, unwilling or unable to bring the facts to the common knowledge of the two peoples, either by way of curriculum reform or academic research. The approach has been (Laya 2005) to not raise questions of legitimacy of the state, and in the name of 'national unity' reference to slavery is prohibited. Laya affirms there were close relationships between the trans-Atlantic and the trans-Saharan slave trades.

In a paper on the impasse of post-colonial relations, Simone (2005) refers to the legacy of Afro-Arab slavery as having distorted the relations between two major nationalities in Africa and in our world, the African and the Arab.

This, he explains, is because the descendants of the slavers have never publicly condemned or even admitted the abuses of the past, to the descendants of those who were abducted and whose lands were raided. This is a major factor in explaining why slavery continues today. Despite the adoption of the Arab Charter on Human Rights by the Arab League in September 1994, slavery abides. In December 2005, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) adopted a Ten-Year Program of Action, promoting issues such as tolerance, moderation and human rights. This has not affected the lives of the people living in Islamic states such as the Sudan and Mauritania. The issue of slavery cannot be divorced from that of reparations and restitution, as stated in the Declaration of the Conference on Arab-Led Slavery of Africans, held Johannesburg on 22 February 2003 (CASAS Book Series No. 35, Cape Town).

### **Arabisation and Islamisation**

Gregory. A. Pirio in his book *The African Jihad – Bin Laden’s Quest for the Horn of Africa*, provides some background information on the ‘Arab Project in Africa’, being the expansion of Islam and Arabic culture in Africa, by defining some basic terms, which have application today from Nouakchott on the Atlantic Ocean to Port Sudan on the Red Sea. The term ‘Islamist’ is used to describe those groups that seek the establishment of an Islamic state, which theologically promotes a fundamentalist approach to Islam known as the Wahabist or Salafist version of Islam. ‘Islamisation’ is a set of political ideologies that hold that Islam is not only a religion, but also a political system that governs the legal, economic and social imperatives of the state according to its interpretation of Islamic law. Islamists, such as those ruling in Khartoum, Sudan, advocate that Sharia, a legal system based on the Koran and the Islamic tradition of jurisprudence, should determine public and some aspects of private life.

Pirio explains the term Jihadist as describing those Islamists who espouse violent action, whether military action or terrorism, to achieve their aims. Jihadists see themselves as waging war against ‘Kafirun’ or unbelievers. They see their struggle as a just war legitimised by religious, political and military interpretations of the Islamic concept of Jihad. Jihadists often see their actions as part of a local and global struggle to decentre the West in world affairs in order to establish ‘Hakimiyyat Alklah’ or ‘God’s rule’ on a global scale. In Islam, Jihad refers to peaceful inner spiritual striving, which is a widely respected Islamic ideal. Jihadi have misappropriated the word Jihad to sanction the use

of violent struggle against non-believers and Muslims, who disagree with their version of Islam. Terrorism is the antithesis of the real meaning of Jihad.

In 1989, by way of a military coup d' état, Colonel Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir took power in Sudan and retains power to this day. The ideological driving force behind the new regime to promote political Islam was Hassan al-Turabi and his National Islamic Front (NIF). It was Hassan al-Turabi who articulated a grand vision for the Arabisation of Africa. Working with Ben Laden, who was then resident in Sudan, they plotted to Islamise South Sudan, Somalia and areas south of the Republic of Sudan, to be used as a launching pad to take control of Yemen and ultimately Saudi Arabia. Not only did they seek to control the Horn of Africa, but also East Africa, stretching into Tanzania. It is important to bear in mind that in those days Khartoum saw South Sudan as a corridor to the capture of Kampala in Uganda.

In 1991 Bin Laden moved his Jihadist fighters from Afghanistan to Sudan at the invitation of al-Turabi. In May 1996 Bin Laden left Sudan for Jalalabad, Afghanistan. At some point he was resident in Juba, fighting on what was considered by Jihadi as part of the global front of Jihad. He left due to pressure from al-Bashir, who was then struggling to take the de facto leadership of Sudan from al-Turabi. It was during Bin Laden's residence in Sudan that Islamic fundamentalist structures were planted in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Uganda and Tanzania. Sudan's attempts to set up a Jihadist mobilisation in Tanzania were thwarted by the Tanzanian government. Apart from seeking to Arabise and Islamise Africa, Khartoum sought to cut-off Ugandan support for the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) of South Sudan. This then is the context of Southern Sudan's conflict with Khartoum, which was and remains a formidable war machine with extensive capacity outside its borders. Southern Sudan lost some two million plus lives in the years of war starting with the Torrit Rebellion in 1956 and the Anya-Nya rebellion.

Sudan, historically speaking, was the land of black people. Later it was impacted by slavery and Islam. The ambitions of the current Bashir government to create an Islamic state were not well received by those living in the margins of the country and led to a sustained war between Khartoum at the centre and South Sudan, Darfur and other outlying areas of the periphery, whose populations were considered by Khartoum to be insufficiently Arabised and Islamised by those in the centre. The writer of this chapter lived in Juba from 2006 to 2008, working at the social science research centre, the Kush Institution, within the Office of the President of South Sudan, observing at close hand developments in the South, Darfur and the region in general.

Nhial Bol in his piece dated 15 April 1998 entitled 'Religion- Africa: Countries of the Horn urged to apply Sharia', states:

An ideology of expansionist Islamic fundamentalism, which sought to 'Arabise' all of Sudan and the Horn, underpinned Sudan's regional aggression.

### **The International Scenario**

The President of the Sudan, Omar Hassan Al Bashir in his address to the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) in Abuja, Nigeria (November 1989) declared that the destiny of Islam in Africa is to win. This represents a direct challenge to African sovereignty and was a calculated threat of interference in the internal affairs of all the states of Africa. In 1998 Bashir introduced an Islamic Constitution to Sudan, making the Sudan a *de jure* Islamic Republic. Sharia Islamic codes became applicable to non-Muslims. Islam was used to Arabise all the people of the Sudan. Al Bashir stands indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for crimes against humanity and war crimes in Darfur, in western Sudan, a region of some seven million people. The conflict in Darfur which involved Khartoum fighting Darfuri Africans (some Darfuri identify themselves as Arabs) has left some 200,000–450,000 black Africans dead and over 2.5 million displaced. The resolution of the Darfur conflict, like that in South Sudan which preceded it, and upon which it was modelled, represents a challenge in terms of peace mediation not only to Africans, but to humanity.

The reaction of Africa to Bashir's indictment has created unease amongst those of Africa descent in the global African community. The majority of African states, at a meeting in Libya, apparently took the position that the issue of the indictment was targeted and unfair and they refused to implement it, despite being signatories to the Rome Statutes, establishing the ICC. These states say that leaders in the West have committed worse offences in places like Iraq and Afghanistan.

Outsiders who have researched first-hand what is in fact going on in the Afro–Arab borderlands have concluded that events there are not a product of chance. They are the calculated result of forces from within and without the region that see it as an area that is off-limits to public scrutiny, in which they can, with impunity, pursue their ambitions. There are few attendant risks of exposure, which allows the borderlands to be utilised for human trafficking and smuggling, the testing of new weapons systems (including nuclear) and other inhumane practices, in complete disregard of the welfare of the

inhabitants. Of late, the place has become an area for international hostage-taking by groups, one of which goes by the name of Al-Qaeda, a product of the Salifista armed rebellion from Algeria.

It is South Sudan's emergence as new state in Africa that poses the first major challenge to the post-, or we should rather say, neo-colonial geopolitical status quo in North East Africa. In historical perspective, the states in Africa were the product of a deliberate policy of decolonisation.

Having attended and monitored the South Sudan Referendum in January 2011 with its large turnout and its 98.83 per cent vote for secession, and the independence day on the 9 July being more of a formality, neither of these events, in the opinion of the author, changed the overall intent of Khartoum to 'call the shots' throughout the old Sudan. Nothing has changed in Khartoum's tactic to rule by the sword, when unable to manipulate by peace agreement. To think otherwise would be an exercise in self-deception and a break with historical precedent.

### **The 'New Sudan' and State Secession**

In Southern Africa and Africa in general, as well as its Western Diaspora, such is the level of collective amnesia about the borderlands in general that many believed the Independence of South Sudan marked the end of violence in Sudan. State secession is a sort of taboo in Africa in general, where the current architecture of multi-state formation is a work in progress jealously defended by the AU. It requires hard work to explain the Sudan realities, in the face of the fear of the unknown and indifference. Some persons in the area, who know better, did nothing to dispel expectations of peace and a negotiated settlement in Sudan. Nothing could be further from reality. Indeed, informed opinion is that in the coming period the Republic of Sudan will be rendered ungovernable with war becoming more generalised in the country than in living memory. This is the reality of relations between the Republic of Sudan and the new state of South Sudan

One needs to keep centred, when seeking to come to terms with the South Sudan reality, the Late Garang's vision of a 'New Sudan', which remains the guiding light of the new state. Secession was not an option for Garang, who apart from leading the Sudan revolution, was a visionary and a Pan-Africanist, whose horizon stretched further afield than Sudan. The ultimate objective of Garang was the creation of a democratic state in Sudan, ruled by law, with its separation of powers enshrined in its constitution. Until this is achieved war will continue in Sudan, with the 'marginalised' striving to achieve Garang's

vision, whatever the human costs. Despite the 'independence' of South Sudan, it is now in Blue Nile, Southern Kordofan and adjoining areas that the Sudan Revolution Forces (SRF), constituted by the SPLM-North, forces from Blue Nile, Southern Kordofan and Darfur fight on to achieve the 'New Sudan', lead by the associates of Garang, who participated in the Navaisha Talks, which lead to the signing of the CPA. These are persons such as Yassir Arman and Malik Agar.

What we have seen since the flag went up in Juba is Khartoum actively assisting the installation of the Transitional Government in Libya; its attempt, with the assistance of the United States of America, to escape the isolation of sanctions by negotiating its removal from the list of states sponsoring terrorism; attempts to ingratiate itself with the African community so that the ICC warrant is waived and desperate attempts to conclude any peace agreement on any terms in Darfur, even by way of internal consultation within the captive community in the Darfur camps.

From the Republic of South Sudan we witnessed the visit of the Israeli Likud Parliamentarian, Danny Danon to Juba and were informed that South Sudan would position its Israel embassy in Jerusalem. The South announced the establishment of embassies around the world commensurate with what it perceives as its status as a sovereign nation.

Continuous observation of Western actions in Sudan indicates that although the country enjoys pariah status, none are ready for regime change in Khartoum as happened in Libya. US Sudan envoys had wavered on Sudan secession but in the end respected the will of the South to be 'free'. On security co-operation, and this is where best to make real assessment of real interests, the US is working well with Khartoum.

The new state has been unable to develop as it had planned to during the transitional period after the signing of the CPA. Khartoum kept Juba on the defensive by invading Abyei, by the border demarcation uncertainties, by interfering with the flow of oil from the South to Port Sudan on the Red Sea, by the expulsion of Southerners from Khartoum, by raising tax issues and creating a general crisis scenario and tensions between the North and South.

In the Sudan theatre all actors, be they from the North, South, East or West, are locked into a struggle without end in sight. The intermittent talks in Addis Abba and elsewhere between Khartoum and Juba hosted by the AU, moderated by the AU High Level Panel chaired by Thabo Mbeki have yielded little fruit. There should be no illusions. It is not possible to discern any changing attitudes amongst the African governments vis-à-vis Sudan.

Traditionally, the policy has been 'hands off'. Many came to Juba to pledge their alliance to the new state on 9 July 2011. It may be too early to draw conclusions. The fatigue induced expectations of peace after 9 July 2011 were expectations devoid of foundation and indicate that many have yet to come to terms with Sudanese realities.

Ultimately, the majority of the Sudanese will determine their destiny. However, in the absence of the input of their experience, the rest of Africa will be much poorer in its policy formation. The experience from the Afro-Arab borderlands represents the 'missing link' in the logical framework for unity.

### **Lessons from the Sudan Experience and the Relations Between the Republic of Sudan and South Sudan**

The OAU came about at the end of a long historical process which saw a structural manifestation of the quest for Africa national unity. By that is meant that shortly after Africa began to decolonise, the vision of a united Africa, ruling itself with dignity and respect, led to the formation of the OAU. This historical process had begun with the abduction of African slaves from Africa to the Western hemisphere, where the incubation of Africans in the 'new world' was built on crude capitalism with the elimination of the indigenous people of America and the harnessing of black labour from Africa for development. This led to a conscientisation around common experiences of enslavement, racism and exploitation (Sibanda 2008), culminating in the Garveyist 'Back to Africa Movement' and the Pan-African Congress series organised by the African American scholar, W.E.B. Du Bois. In some measure the trans-Atlantic slave trade replicated the experience of Africans – especially women and children – who were the principal victims of the trans-Saharan slave trade and those taken into Arab bondage. The fundamental difference was that the Europeans, apart from attempting conversion to Christianity, did not succeed in denationalising the Africans taken to the Western Diaspora (Caribbean, North/South America or Europe). In contrast, as seen in the Sudan today and graphically illustrated in Darfur (where the conscientisation around African identity is recent and its future uncertain), Africans in the eastern Diaspora ceased to be Africans and became Arabs. It is this loss of identity under the Arab system, which renders the reconnection of the African eastern Diaspora in the Gulf, Arabia, etc, with Africa a major cultural challenge with deep psychological implications.

Cultural solidarity within the Arab League stressed the concept of a single Arab nation. This nation looked back to the ancient Arab empires of the

Umayyads and the Abbasids, noting that Arabs had ‘civilised’ Europe in the Middle Ages. Such a cultural collective for sub-Saharan Africa was promoted by Cheik Anta Diop in his work on the cultural unity of black Africa. Indeed, it is astonishing that little serious effort has been made to establish a culturally based African League/Nation, given the respect accorded Diop and his conclusions, the basic premises of which had been advanced by 1885, if not earlier, by the Haitian, Antenor Firmin in his book published the same year, entitled *The Equality of the Human Races*.

There is much information available in situ about what has happened in South Sudan. Darfur developments can be tracked daily, as can those in other parts of the Sudan, such as Nubia. News availability is a recent development. Because of the distortions and silencing of history, Africans have, in the past, chosen to not interest themselves in the problems of this part of Africa. Indeed, it was only in February 2009 that the AU appointed its High-Level Panel on Darfur, which concluded that, ‘Africa has no choice but to assume a leadership role with respect to the Sudan, it being ‘a bridge between North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa’. The High-Level Panel declared that the Sudan ‘is Africa’s crisis and, as such, Africa has a duty to help the people of Sudan to achieve a lasting solution’. Prior to this, Sudan including the South, was considered by the OAU as an Arab issue, Sudan being a member of the Arab League as well as the OAU. It took that body dedicated to continentalism, some 35 years to arrive at a conclusion that southern Sudanese nationalists, such as Aggrey Jadeen, had reached, through blood, before the OAU was born (*The Sudan Mirror* 2007:21).

## Conclusion

The late John Garang de Mabior (2008) opted for a ‘New Sudan’ with its place in Africa and the world, coming out strongly for a unity of Africans south of the Sahara. His African Nation concept was to be an ideological weapon to arm the African youth. He asked:

Are all parts of continental Africa parts of this African Nation? Arabia has its own Nation incorporated in the Arab League. Do we want in our African Nation people belonging to another Nation? The time has come for the African youth to determine who will lead the national movement (Bankie and Mchombu 2007:214).

Prah (2006:230), in his discursive reflection on nationalism in a substantial work about what he terms ‘The African Nation’, defines this as follows: ‘I speak of and mean nationalism, based on the unity of Africans as a whole

– Pan Africanism.’ Prah is of the view that the states in Africa are stillborn and will never be viable. He refers to the work of the Egyptian, Samir Amin, towards the achievement of the Arab Nation, which organizational framework is represented by the Arab League. He opts for a unity of Africans based on the African Diasporas, plus sub-Saharan Africa.

The future of South Sudan and its relations with the Republic of Sudan are interlinked with the trajectory of history. The emergence of the new state of South Sudan is but a stepping stone in a bigger picture whose implications are of importance to north-east Africa in general. More attention is being given to this area, located between the Middle-East and Africa, as it now attracts intense international media attention.

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