

## I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

There is no understanding of the present without the knowledge of the past. History shapes the consciousness of people and affects their attitudes towards other people and cultures, in what concerns the relationship with their close neighbours as well in what concerns the relationship with members of a more distant community or a larger political entity.

Because this paper argues for the creation of unity of the many peoples and cultures found in the South Sudan, it is crucial to highlight all those events and attitudes which have deepened the differences between people and which have made it so difficult to provide them with a feeling of really belonging together. In order to overcome deeply rooted and seated feelings of hatred and distrust, to be able to pardon and to join forces in building a more prosperous and harmonious future, it is necessary to remain or to become conscious of the historic and cultural reasons which have caused so much suffering and which have made it hitherto so arduous to reach a state of unity and lasting peace.

*From the Turco-Egyptian administration to the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium:*

The recorded history of the modern Sudan begins with the establishment of a corrupt and inefficient *Turco-Egyptian administration* in the Northern Sudan in 1824. Around 1881, the *Mahdist* uprising started and came to succeed four years later in overthrowing the Turco-Egyptian administration with the fall of Khartoum in 1885. The Mahdist state aggravated slavery by subjecting the South Sudan, the Nuba Mountains and the Southern Blue Nile to extreme plunder and pillage. The memory of this period has shaped the uneasy relations between the people of the South Sudan, the Nuba and the Funj on one side, and the Northern Arabs on the other side. The Mahdist state was conquered in 1898 by a joint Anglo-Egyptian expedition, and the agreement between Egypt and Great Britain in 1899 formed the basis of the *Anglo-Egyptian Condominium* which drew the present boundaries of the Sudan. However, later political developments in the relations between the colonial powers prompted the British to seal off the Nuba Mountains, the Southern Blue Nile and the Southern Sudan from the rest of the North by creating a new law – the “*Closed District Ordinance*” - which was meant to curb Egyptian influence and to protect the Black Africans living in these areas from Arab slavery. As a result, the different regions of the Sudan, namely its Northern and Southern part, were administered separately. The British, the dominant power in the Condominium<sup>1</sup>, had initially intended to tie the Southern Sudan to British East Africa, but post-war-realities forced a reversal of that policy - the policy of the three Southern provinces – in 1946; the lot of the people of the Southern Sudan was cast with the North, thus uniting the country for the first time in history.

*The Sudan's way towards independence.*

The colonial decision to unite the country got coupled with the marginalisation of the South in the independence-process. The Northern political elite thwarted the Southern demand for a federation with the North, and this in spite of the fact that a unanimous

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<sup>1</sup> Egypt at the time was itself under British occupation following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after the first World War. The Condominium agreement stipulated an arrangement in which the British administered the Sudan while the Egyptian footed the bill for ruling the country.

vote for independence in the parliament on December 19<sup>th</sup>, 1955, had predicated a federation as a means of bridging the social, economic and political disparities which were due to uneven development of the two parts of the country.

With the independence of January 1956, the ruling Northern political elite which had inherited the power defined it only on two parameters, namely Islam and Arab culture. This enabled them to monopolise political and economic power and to completely marginalise other ethnic groups, allowing themselves at a same time to embark on a programme of arabisation and islamisation of the whole country.

*The 1<sup>st</sup> civil war, the creation of a Southern Region and the failures of regional self-governance.*

The policy of the so-called national government heightened the tension in the South as the people resisted the imposition of purely Arabi and Islamic values. The conflict ignited by the *mutiny in Torit of the Southern Corps of the Sudan Defence Forces (SDF)* on August 18<sup>th</sup> 1955 *escalated into a war* which came to unite the people of the South Sudan against the Northern, Arab dominated government. Spearheaded by the *Anya-nya Land Freedom Army*, this war was to last for the next seventeen years...! In March 1972, an agreement between the South Sudanese Liberation Movement (SSLM) and the regime of President Nimeiri brought this first liberation-war to an end; brokered by the Ethiopian Monarch it came to be popularly known as the “*Addis Ababa Agreement*”. Even though this agreement did not meet all the aspirations of the people of the Southern Sudan (and in particular not their quest for a separate state), it at least established the principle of a regional self-rule and provided the people of the South Sudan a breathing space.

The Southern Region with its *capital in Juba* was created from the three Southern provinces of Bahr-el-Ghazal, Equatoria and Upper Nile. A *People’s Regional Assembly (PRA)* and a *High Executive Council (HEC)* were established as the regional parliament and government respectively. The Southern Region got its own Public Service Commission, its own Police and its own Prison Service; it operated like a liberal democratic sub-system whereby South-Sudanese leaders ran loose clandestine political coalitions, namely the *Southern Front (SF)* and the *Sudan African National Union (SANU)* within President Nimeiri’s oppressive, totalitarian and autocratic *Sudan Socialist Union (SSU)*.

Despite the relative peace it had created in the South, the Addis Ababa Agreement suffered of *serious structural weaknesses* and therefore *failed to solve the more fundamental issues of the conflict in the South*.

Confusion existed regarding the status of the North and the South in the new constitutional arrangement in the country after 1972. The Southern Region enjoyed local autonomy while the North represented what was sovereign over the whole country, thus enabling the Northern political elite to sabotage and to overturn some critical decisions taken by the Southern Region.

The SSLM’s political leadership did not take over the helm of power in the Southern Region during the provisional period. Being absorbed and integrated into the ruling system even before the end of the transitional period of five years, it failed to transform the regional autonomy into a platform where the people they presumed to lead could cultivate a South Sudanese national consciousness. Many of them were visibly corrupt, practicing tribalism in the government services and in the allocation of public resources in order to buy the loyalty of their constituencies. By doing so, they contributed to the fragmentation of the unity and the fragile Southern nationalism which had been forged over years of common struggle against foreign invaders, thereby dividing the people along ethnic and sub-ethnic lines.

Encouraged by such weakness and *lack of resolve* among the Southern political elite, the Northern political elite, already envious and suspicious of the liberal political atmosphere in the Southern Region, worked to sabotage the economic and development-projects which had been planned for the South. This was deliberately *to keep the Southern Region economically dependent on the North* and to prevent any adventurous attempts at secession.

The *complete economic strangulation of the Southern Region by the North* was reflected in the dearth of social services in the South, which was now more dependent on resource-injections from the North, and this even in agricultural produces that traditionally were grown therein. The health-care services, now provided by the NGOs, were concentrated in Equatoria (especially in Juba and its environs) while the parts of Bahr-el-Ghazal and Upper Nile were completely neglected.

There was *a complete breakdown in the education and school system*. Although there were now more schools opened (e.g. Juba University was opened in 1977) and more than fifteen senior secondary schools existing, there was a real *shortage of qualified teachers* and a *lack of school equipments and textbooks* as well. The result was *a drop in the standard of education throughout the Southern Region* which in turn resulted in an increase in the rate of school dropouts and in a severe reduction of the number of students from the Southern Region accepted to institutions of higher education.

Moreover, *President Nimeiri repeatedly interfered in the political and democratic process in the Southern Region, dismissing Regional Governments and dissolving the Regional People's Assembly at will*. This not only paralysed the functioning of the regional institutions but *was also deliberately meant to cultivate among the Southern politicians discord, divisions and lack of confidence in their own leadership*. The more the Southern politicians in the Region acquiesced and cooperated with President Nimeiri's erratic policies, the more he undermined the regional institutions, until *he finally abrogated the Addis Ababa Agreement and simply dismantled the Southern Region on pretext of administrative decentralisation*.

*The 2<sup>nd</sup> civil war, initial success and subsequent failures.*

Against the background of such developments, signals of a renewed war with the North were beginning to show in the Southern Region, mirroring discontent with the implementation of the Addis Ababa Agreement. The three *mutinies in Akobo* (1975), *Wau* (1976) and *Juba* (1977) became the foundation of the formation of a new fighting force, the so-called *Anya-Nya-II*, which was to rekindle the struggle for independence of the South Sudan. The ranks and file of the Anya-Nya II were swollen with students, herdsmen and members of the armed forces; they had all been inflamed by President Nimeiri's decisions on decentralisation which aimed at strangulating the South economically and had forced black people hailing from West, Central and South Sudan to return from the North to their places of origin.

Tension had been escalating until the beginning of 1983, when *mutinies in Battalion 105 in Bor and in Battalion 104 in Ayod* erupted into an open rebellion. These two mutinies led by former Anya-Nya officers marked the formation of *the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLM/SPLA)* in July 1983 and the beginning of the present war. Within a matter of weeks rather than months, the SPLA hit the international mass-media's attention with its *military victories against the Sudanese People's Armed Forces (SPAF)*: these early victories made most South Sudanese to believe that the battle for freedom would soon be won. The SPLA had grown into a large army of about one hundred-and- twenty thousand men and women.

Not long after its birth, a controversy of a fundamental nature hit the infant SPLM/A which quickly drew the fault-lines in the liberation-movement. A *discrepancy between the articulation of the objectives of the war and the political aspirations of the people of the South Sudan* constituted a benchmark upon which rested the Derg's military support to the militarist leadership of the infant movement. The interference of the Ethiopian regime in the internal affairs of the movement helped to postpone forever the internal political debate through which would have evolved the political direction with a clear articulation of the objectives of the war.

The failure to formulate a clear political ideology and a programme for guiding the liberation armed struggle, coupled with the SPLA's inability to organise, to create democratic political institutions within itself, precipitated in 1984 the *first split within the infant liberation movement* and pushed a large section of the rebel forces – the Anya-nya II - into an alliance with the Nimeiri-regime against the SPLM/A. Although the splits occurred ostensibly to rectify the situation within the SPLM/A, the SPLM/A-United and later the SSIM/A or the SPDF never fared any better than the mainstream SPLM/A, in terms of organisation and formation of democratic institutions and respect of human rights and civil liberties. Naturally, the enemy was eager to exploit these internal divisions and splits.

In retrospect, the SPLM/A and the splinter groups that broke off from it contributed substantially to the current disunity and the localised conflicts in the South Sudan. Thus, whether in the form of apparent proliferation of political/military movements or as tribal militias allied to the NIF government, the people of the South Sudan are presently more divided along ethnic and political/military lines than at any other time in their known history. Communities have been displaced from their homes en masse, surely in part as a result of war and extensive enemy aerial bombardment, but also as a result of the actions of the SPLA, SPDF, SSIA and tribal militias. Some communities have even preferred to live as refugees in Kenya or Uganda as their own compatriots had displaced them and were occupying their homes.

**Table 1: List of nationalities found in the South Sudan**

	NATIONALITY		NATIONALITY
01	Acholi	31	Logir
02	Aja	32	Lokoya
03	Anyuak ( <i>Anyuaa</i> )	33	Lolubo
04	Atuot ( <i>Reel</i> )	34	Lopit
05	Avukaya	35	Lugbwara
06	Bai	36	Maban
07	Baka	37	Madi
08	Balanda-Bor ( <i>Bor</i> )	38	Makaraka
09	Balanda-Bviri	39	Moro
10	Banda	40	Mundari
11	Bari	41	Mundu
12	'Beli („ <i>Jur-Bel</i> “)	42	Murle
13	Binga	43	Ndogo

NATIONALITY		NATIONALITY	
14	Bongo	44	Nuer ( <i>Nädh</i> )
15	Didinga	45	Nyangatom
16	Dinka ( <i>Jieng</i> )	46	Nyangwara
17	Dongatona	47	Otuho ( <i>Lotuho</i> )
18	Feroghe	48	Päri
19	Gollo	49	Pöjulu
20	Horiok	50	Sere
21	Imatong	51	Shatt
22	Jiye	52	Shilluk ( <i>Collo</i> )
23	Jurchol ( <i>Luo</i> )	53	Suri („ <i>Kachipo</i> “)
24	Jur-Mananger	54	Tenet
25	Kakwa	55	Teuth
26	Keliku	56	Tid ( <i>Tirma</i> )
27	Kreish	57	Toposa
28	Kuku	58	Uduk
29	Lango	59	Yulu
30	Larim (“ <i>Boya</i> ”)	60	Zande

## II. PRESENT SITUATION IN THE SOUTH SUDAN

Variety and diversity characterise the South Sudan. In no point it is homogeneous, neither from a perspective of culture, tradition or language nor from that of religious, ethnical or national identity.

The South Sudan is inhabited by about sixty different nationalities (*see Table 1*). They occupy defined geographic territories at the district and sub-district levels (*see Table 2*). Some of these nationalities are organised into quasi-states with traditional leadership and quasi-armies of their own while others are egalitarian; some are pastoralists and nomadic while others are agro-pastoralists or sedentary agricultural communities.

### *Current divisions among political and military movements within South Sudan*

A synoptic view of the present context reveals the following disturbing realities which underpin the conflicts and divisions in the South Sudan. We find that the South Sudan and its peoples are compartmentalised and parcelled out among different political and military movements, namely the

*SPLM/A*, the *SPLM/A-United*, the *Sudan People's Democratic Front (SPDF)*, the *South Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM)* and of course the *Government of the Sudan (GoS)* with the numerous *tribal militias* which it sponsors in order to fight the war against the *SPLM/A*.

At present, none of the political/military movements has complete control or hegemony over the whole South Sudan:

- a) The *SPLM/A* has under its control and administration large areas in *Bahr-el-Ghazal, Ekuatoria and parts of Upper Nile*. However, it does not enjoy full control / hegemony over these areas because there exist pockets of considerable resistance.
- b) One area is controlled by the GoS-sponsored *Mandari militia* under the command of Brigadier Clement Wani and the *Madi-Acholi militia* called *Equatoria Defence Force (EDF)* under the command of a former SPLA-officer, Capt. Martin Kenyi. This militia group collaborates against the SPLA with the Ugandan rebel group, the *Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)* under Joseph Kony;
- c) In *Chukudum and Kapoeta Counties*, the *Didinga militia* under former SPLA Captain Peter Lorot and the GoS-sponsored *Toposa militia* under the joint command of Chief Luis Lokipapa, Paul Lango and Kamal el Hag are active against the SPLA;
- d) In *Pibor*, in Upper Nile, the GoS-sponsored *militia of the Murle nationality* operates under the command of Sultan Ismael Kony. The traditional animosity between the Murle and the Bor Dinka, triggered by cattle rustling, must have played a major part in the ostracisation and marginalisation of the Murle in the *SPLM/A*. The Murle alliance with the Khartoum government clearly comes in the context of the their struggle for survival;
- e) The *Fertit*<sup>2</sup> militia and the *Murahalieen*<sup>3</sup> operate in the areas around *Wau* and *Aweil* against the Dinka and Luo civil populations as well as against the SPLA;
- f) In *Upper Nile*, different GoS-sponsored *Nuer warlords* control their clans and sub-clans, and have been fighting it out against themselves as well as against the neighbouring nationalities;
- g) In *Western Upper Nile*, *Paulino Matip's forces* are allied to *Riek Machar's SPDF forces* against *SPLA-sponsored Peter Gadet*. The exploration, development and exploitation of the petroleum reserves exasperate the conflict in the area what has resulted in massive humanitarian disruption and a dislocation of the civil population. As a result, many Nuer people have been displaced into *Bahr-el-Ghazal*.
- h) In the *Zeraf valley*, there is fierce competition for its control by the *GoS-sponsored militia leader Gabriel Tang-ginye*, *Dr. Riek Machar's SPDF* and the *SPLA* under Cdr. John Kong Nyuon, the newly appointed *SPLM Regional Secretary*.
- i) The same competition is found in *Jikany* between the '*Thawrat Jikany*' (literally meaning "Jikany revolution"), the *SPDF*, the *SPLA* (in the Northern area bordering Southern Blue Nile) and the *GoS*.
- j) In *Lou area*, elements of *SPLA, SPDF, SSLM and SSIM* have agreed to live in peace and harmony. There has been no serious fighting since the Waat peace-conference. The only problem in Lou results from the Murle's cattle-raiding-practices in which a number of chiefs were killed recently.
- k) The *SPLM/A-United* under Dr. Lam Akol, who is a minister in the government in Khartoum, is in control of the *Shilluk kingdom*. The area is relatively peaceful and this may be attributed to the dominance of the King and the Shilluk traditional governance system.

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<sup>2</sup> This is a derogatory word given to the small tribes of western Bahr-el-Ghazal. Its use is being discouraged.

<sup>3</sup> Arab tribesmen of the Rezeighat and Messeriya armed by the GoS for creating a buffer zone between the so-called transition zone, - Bahr-el-Ghazal in the South and Kordofan and Dar Fur in the North.

- l) The *GoS* maintains a strong grip on the Adar oil fields against the *SPLA*, but the *Melut Liberation Front* (an independent armed group that has considerably terrorised the civil population) operates in the *Dinka area*, while the *SPDF* operates in the *Nuer area* and the *SPLA* operates in the *Maban and Burun areas*.
- m) To complete the picture, one has to mention that the *Government of the Sudan* still occupies a number of towns in the South, such as *Juba, Bor, Malakal, Wau, Kapoeta, Nasir, Bentiu, etc.*

The present military map of the Southern Sudan thus shows indeed a very complex picture which reflects the lack of unity in the South Sudan. It also represents conflicts arising essentially from the fierce life-and-death competition and out of the rivalry among the political and military elite over political power and the distribution of economic resources.

Pertinent questions arise from this picture:

- a) If at this stage of the struggle for freedom and for the formation of a statehood of their own, the South Sudanese are so much divided and fitted against themselves on the basis of nationality that they risk to get defeated by the common enemy, what then are the most urgent needs for this state?
- b) If certain nationalities pose a threat to the existence and freedom of others to the extent that they now prefer to put up with the principal oppressor rather than with their fellow South Sudanese, does it make any sense to participate in the liberation struggle?
- c) Will military victory alone be enough to unite the people of the South Sudan by bringing under control of the *SPLA* all the areas of the country, such as the *Shilluk, the Murle and the Nuer in Upper Nile or the Didinga and the Mandari in Equatoria* who now enjoy autonomy on account of having established their own militia notwithstanding the government support?
- d) Will the continued divisions in South Sudan not eventually raise the spectre of being defeated by the Arab dominated North?
- e) Why has it been so difficult to evolve a common agenda and who benefits from the ambiguity of the present situation?