Research Article

Post-Partition and Sudanese Nationalisms: Rethinking What It Means to be a Northerner and a Southerner

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Abstract: Sudan, a troubled geography from its very existence, continues to confront numerous conflicts. At the core of these conflicts lies the unresolved issue of identity and identity politics. As nationalism takes many forms, Sudan remains a laboratory for divergent identities and nationalisms, each motivated by different concerns and expectations. This study aims to understand the fabric of nationalisms in Sudan in the post-partition era. Since it lacks the cultural domain and rises on the basis of political concerns and interests. The region, home to both Arabs and Africans—the main reason for partition in the first place—was partitioned to reveal their distinct cultural identities. For both Southerners and Northerners, the struggle to remove what has been imposed on them for years has given birth to North Sudan and South Sudan. However, both regions have once again experienced outside interventions, further complicating the national identity crisis. The study finds the efforts of nationalization void, since both of the Sudans are deprived of even fulfilling the requirements of being a state, let alone being a nation.

Keywords: Ethnic Conflict, Identity, Nationalism, Civil-War.
Jel Codes: D74, F52, F54

Bölünme Sonrası Sudan Milliyetçilikleri: Kuzeyli ve Güneyli Olmanın Anlamını Yeniden Düşünmek

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Öz: Varlığından bu yana sorunlu bir coğrafya olan Sudan hâlâ birtakım çatışmalar ve sorunlar ile karşı karşıyadır. Çatışmanın temelinde çözülememiş olan kimlik ve kimlik siyaseti sorunu yatmaktadır. Milliyetçiliğin pek çok yüzü olduğundan Sudan, her biri farklı çıkar ve beklentilerle motive edilen kimliklerin ve milliyetçiliklerin laboratuvarı olmaya devam etmektedir. Bu çalışma, bölünme sonrası dönemde Sudan'daki milliyetçiliklerin yapısını anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Zira kültürel öğeleri yok sayan ve sadece bir takım siyasi endişe ve çıkarlar etrafında inşa edildiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Coğrafyanın hem Araplara hem de Afrikalılara ev sahipliği yapması, ki bu durum bölünmenin esas nedenini oluşturmaktadır, kendi farklı kültürel benliklerini ortaya koyma mücadelelerini devam ettirmektedir. Yıllardır hem Güneyliler hem de Kuzeyliler için kendilerine dayatılanları ortadan kaldırma mücadeleleri neticesinde Kuzey Sudan ve Güney Sudan olarak ortaya çıkan iki ulus-devlet anlayışı beraberinde milliyetçiliğin içeriğini de yeniden okumayı kaçınılmaz kılmaktadır. Çalışma, uluslaşma çabalarının sonuç vermediği ve ulus olmak bir yana her iki Sudan'da görülen durumun, devlet olmanın gerekliliklerini bile yerine getirmekte zorlandıklarını ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Etnik Çatışma, Kimlik, Milliyetçilik, İç-Savaş
Jel Kodları: D74, F52, F54

1. Introduction

The complex case of Sudan encompasses genocide, displacement, civil-war, famine, state failure, secession, colonialism, Islamic extremism, etc. It is likely that no other land in the world has experienced all these tragic events. In the words of Bhabha, "postcolonial migration, the narratives of cultural and political diaspora, the major social displacements of peasant and aboriginal communities, the poetics of exile, the grim prose of political and economic refugees" (1994, p.5) are all part of Sudan's troubled history. All these aforementioned negative events have affected a single state, *The Sudan*, or more recently, the Republic of the Sudan (North Sudan), the Republic of the South Sudan, and the ambiguous status of the autonomous region of Darfur. At the center of these developments lies two forms of nationalism, competing with one another behind different motivations. Whether defined as "anti-colonial nationalism" (Cooper, 1996), "lost nationalism" (Vezzadini, 2015), or "secessionist nationalism" (Paalo et al., 2024), this article attempts to understand the ambivalence and duality of Sudanese nationalism, which is by no means new to the region, which has recently undergone a period of re-construction to stabilize the North and South regions. As Opello and Rosow (1999, p.161) argue, "European states constructed an interconnected global order by means of conquest, trade, religious conversion and diplomacy. Of all Europe's exports, the *nation*-state is perhaps the most important." In the case of Sudan, all imperial powers have left important cultural imprints on the land. It is these leftovers of the past that the Sudanese states are attempting to re-configure in order to establish their restored identities. A diverse country with numerous ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural groups (Gurdon, 1984), Sudan has experienced a turbulent political climate since its independence. In the midst of these conflicts have been several attempts to name and define the nation, whether as Arab or African, with each party aiming to see their cultural images embedded within the state. During the colonization era, The Sudan was a territory controlled by colonizing forces not exclusive only to British rule, but also by the neighboring Italian, Belgian, and French regimes ruling the countries bordering the Sudan (Sharkey, 2003). An uninterrupted process starting with colonization has led to an internal colonialism, with the post-colonial era giving birth to a partition between the North and South. Frankly speaking, throughout history there were *de facto* two Sudans, which recently became de jure with two independent states vying for their individual statehood and nationhood.

The partition, as a result of the independence of the South, opened up the debate on what it means to be Southern or Northern Sudanese. Although the term southerner was previously used to refer to the population living in the south (mainly Africans) of the Sudan, it currently attempts to express a distinct community; namely, a separate *nation*. Thanks to its colonial past, defining what Sudanese meant for the people living in this geography is a complex task. The country has been continually socially, culturally, and politically divided, which is currently facing the same legacy and questioning of what a nation denotes in terms of a North and South in this geography. Clearly, this is not only a situation witnessed in the Sudan, but the fate of the whole African continent. Bearing this in mind, this paper attempts to understand the fabric of nationalisms, which confront each other in the name of a 'sovereign voice' and 'sovereign consciousness,' despite gaining much less than they expected. Such uncertainties have led to Sudan, now split into two separate states, to be labeled as an "incomplete Sudan," a "renegotiating Sudan," and a "contested Sudan," since both Sudans confront the ongoing dispute surrounding national identity.

2. The Emergence of Nationalism in the Colonization Era

Among the wealth of literature on colonialism and post-colonialism (Said, 1978; Spivak, 1990; Bhabha, 1994; Fanon, 1994), when it comes to locating *culture* in the center of this debate, Homi Bhabha (1994) stresses the importance of "hybridity,"

"in-betweenness," and "disrespect" because "…the colonialists so affirmatively rationalize colonialism on account of the cultural inferiority of the colonized" (Khalid, 2010, p.88), which is the main struggle Sudan has faced throughout its history. And, for Bhabha, colonialism and its aftermath came with "…its discontinuities, its inequalities, and its minorities" (1994, p.4), and "…the signs of the emergence of community envisaged as a project – at once a vision and a construction – that takes you beyond yourself in order to return, in a spirit of revision and reconstruction, to the political conditions of the present" (p.3). Throughout the history of Sudan, it can be argued that a process of assimilation into a culture, first initiated by the colonizers and later by the North towards the Southern regions, had become a permanent phenomenon.

As Oppong argues, Sudan lies "…between the North African and Middle Eastern culture realm to the north and sub-Saharan African culture realm to the south" (2010, p.11). This divergence has led to the clash of these two different worlds with results of ethnic deprivation and racialized violence. As a former colony, Sudan's fate was to live under the shadow of foreign rule. Sudan is a mere example of this situation, since it faced outside pressure formerly from the Ottoman Empire, and later by British rule, in addition to its intertwined relation with Egypt. As a result of being an extension of other states, throughout its history, the region has been called *Ottoman Sudan*, *Egyptian Sudan*, and *Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*. Sudan's identity has consistently been overshadowed by prefix masking that downgrade the countries' origins. Now known as the Republic of Sudan (North Sudan) and the Republic of South Sudan, they are once again burdened by prefixes, as if their struggles in the name of self-worth are not enough. With two Sudanese States in existence, how can one define nation-ness, and for that matter, nationalism, for each of these States?

The onus now is on ensuring that everyone has access to resources and a means of cultural production, re-production, consumption, and distribution by recognizing different cultures and giving them the chance to participate in decision-making processes. When it comes to cultural rights, one of the main issues is related to the language of cultural rights in discourse, procedures, legal processes, and instruments. With the new states emerging as a result of anti-colonial liberation struggles, the international community began to consider the concept of culture in its anthropological domain. In this process, where the independence of new nations becomes an international political issue, it expands the concept of culture by associating it directly with identities. As a result, Said was right to express that "culture is a battleground on which political causes can be fought" (1993, p.4). The issue concerning the protection and promotion of indigenous cultures, an integral part of their ancestral lands through which they establish a collective spiritual relationship, gives a special meaning to cultural rights demands.

For Bhabha, "subordinated peoples asserting their indigenous cultural traditions and retrieving their repressed histories" (1994, p.9) is the main point in today's conflicts occurring around certain regions, and that "postcoloniality is a salutary reminder of the persistent neo-colonial relations within the new world order and the multinational division of labor" (p.6). Thus, it is once again through culture, and the right to cultural practices, as Bhabha describes, that "forms of popular rebellion and mobilization are often most subversive and transgressive when they are created through oppositional cultural practices" (p.20). He further stresses that "cultures recognize themselves through their projections of otherness" (p.12). Throughout the history of Sudan, the Sudanese have constantly confronted the *Other*, mirroring their very own self as the *Other*, and forced to live in their very own homeland like aliens. This is what Bhabha (1990) calls "self-marginalization"; that is, living in their own lands without having the right to reveal their very existence, and never allowed to identify their culture for that matter. As Fanon argues, "Culture, like truth, is concrete. And for the masses, the most elevated form of culture, that is to say, of progress, is to resist imperialist domination and penetration, although this might come wrapped up in valid forms of *culture* or

civilization" (1994, p.8). Since, the Sudanese being culturally subordinated by the white (cultural) supremacy, they were never to speak for themselves (See, Spivak, 1988).

As Bhabha remarks, "…our political referents and priorities – the people, the community, class struggle, anti-racism, gender difference, the assertion of an anti-imperialist, black or third perspective – are not there in some primordial naturalistic sense. Nor do they reflect a unitary or homogenous political object" (1994, p.26). It is clear that, in the case of Sudan, a former colony, was never handled nor addressed in a holistic manner. The colonizers even dealt with the region in a particularistic manner.[1] During the British rule, the northern Sudanese were considered civilized and generally literate, while the southern were primitive, illiterate, unskilled, and pagan (Idris, 2013) or just labeled as *Sudan blacks*. Although both the northern and southern Sudanese were subaltern, the situation for the South was much worse, since the Southern faced a double sub-altern effect. Bhabha stresses "the importance of the hybrid moment of political change. Here, the transformational value of change lies in the rearticulation, or translation, of elements that are neither *the One*, nor *the Other*, but something else besides, which contests the terms and territories of both" (1994, p.28). This quote encapsulates the issue in Sudan, where the colonizers fragmented the issue of identity into multiple sides, first through the northern group, with whom a series of negotiations had already begun, and secondly, through a group of people settled in the south encountering missionary activities from both the colonizer and the "colonized colonizer" (Powell, 2003), namely Egypt. According to Bhabha, the issue circles around "the relation of oppressor and oppressed, center and periphery, negative image and positive image" (1994, p.19), all of which are visible in the case of Sudan. A fragmentation of society emerged between the Arab North versus the African South, preventing the formation of the nation, and fueling competing nationalisms in the first place. Certainly, leading to an intertwined cultural war; first, between the British rule and the North, and secondly, between the North and South of Sudan. The overarching aim of Britain's pursual of a "divide and rule" strategy was to detach the South via assimilation both linguistically and religiously in the name of refurbishing this southern sub-culture.

Culture itself is like a double-edges sword, which can lead public authorities to implement the cultural rights of politically, socially, and economically excluded communities, and to establish them as cultural communities. On the other hand, the groups that have an unequal share of various forms of power in society, especially ethnic, religious, linguistic power, which can be effective tools to achieve economic and political goals that cannot be achieved through other methods (Üstel, 2021, p.109).

The policy of British rule was, according to Lord Kitchener (the Governor-General of Sudan), to "seek out the better class of native, through whom we may hope to influence the whole population" (cf. Powell, 2003, p.36), which thus raises the question as to who can speak in the name of the Sudanese. It became the northerns who assembled around religion, and speaking Arabic, became the ones to step up against the colonizer. Bhabha (1994) summarized this as "the incalculable colonized subject – half acquiescent, half oppositional, always untrustworthy – produces an unresolvable problem of cultural difference for the very address of colonial cultural authority" (p.33), when speaking about how the cultural superiority of the white man, who builds this supremacy on differentiation, transforms the very native culture. However, the question concerning which culture, and whose culture, remains to be answered. Regarding, the cultural gulf between the north and south, "since every community takes pride in their culture irrespective of the worth given to it by others" (Khalid, 2010), the colonizers instrumentalized the North–South divide between religion and culture, in addition to taking advantage of the politically unstable North, and economically poor South. For

[1] Frederick Lugard divides the natives under the rule of British Empire as primitive tribes, advanced communities, and Europeanized Africans. See, Frederick Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, London: Frank Cass, 1922. Also See; G.F.W. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (trans. J. Sibree) New York: Dover, 1956.

Bhabha (1990), "… a particular ambivalence that haunts the idea of the nation, the language of those who write of it and the lives of those who live it" (p.1). And, the Sudan was narrated by the very colonizers, making the natives to play. For Bhabha (1990), "… a form of cultural elaboration, is an agency of ambivalent narration that holds culture at its most productive position, as a force for subordination, fracturing, diffusing, reproducing, as much as producing, creating, forcing, guiding" (p.3-4).

3. The Post-independence Era: The Policy of *Sudanization*

From the outset, the first wave of national sentiment emerged in the North with a dual understanding between the *tariqahs* [2] located in the region. The Mahdism (Mahdiyyah) and the Mirghani (Khatmiyyah), by combining religion with nationalism, namely *Islamic nationalism*, contributed to the homogeneity of the people in the North. Mahdiyyah, a religious movement, focused on a re-reading of religious thought under the leadership of Sayyid Abdal Rahman al-Mahdi. Its ideas disseminated rapidly throughout the North of Sudan and quickly turned into a political force and rebellion against the Ottoman-Egyptian administration. After several years of struggle, the movement successfully overthrew the foreign rule and established an Islamic and national state called Mahdist Sudan (*Sudanese Mahdiyya*) in 1885 (Holt, 1956, p.241-2). However, the Mahdisim confronted another religious movement located mainly in the East of Sudan, namely Khatmiyyah, led by Sayyid Ali al-Mirghani, who was in favor of an Egyptian administration. The newly established state soon collapsed in 1898 after sustained pressure from the Anglo-Egyptian forces, leading Sudan to become a condominium[3] of the United Kingdom and the Kingdom of Egypt in 1899, until its independence in 1956. It was clear that both foreign rulers had little cultural understanding of the people of Sudan, which thus prevented a sense of belonging, apart from their shared loyalty to the Condominium government. It must also be stated that for many Sudanese, Egypt was evaluated as a "blood brother" with whom they shared certain traits (Vezzadini, 2015).

During the re-construction period, Britain initiated several reforms, with the Gordon Memorial College (currently the University of Khartoum) as the forerunner. The aim of the school was to provide both English and Arabic education to the youth in North Sudan, mainly because the Condominium administration required literate individuals (Holt, 1956, p.243) to be employed in the bureaucracy. However, the establishment of the College led to another goal, which became a base for the development and dissemination of nationalist sentiments, particularly after the students began to learn Arabic, and for that matter, Arabic philosophy and Arab nationalist thought, which was disseminated among them.[4] In the meantime, a political division led the students to break off into two groups, mirroring the dual trajectory of Sudan, which was once again in play. The first group called themselves "Shawgists" and in support of the principle "Sudan for Sudanese," while the second group called themselves "Feelists," who were in favor of a "union with Egypt" (Gaffer, 2012, p.127). However, in the South, the situation remained opposite, as education was not funded by colonial rule, so to some extent, the Christian missionary groups provided education in English for the youth in the South. Education became an important mechanism for massifying language and culture, both in North and South, albeit in different directions.

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[2] The role of religion still plays an important role in North Sudan. In addition to its religious teachings, the tariqas have become social and political organizations in support of Muslim unity, in contrast to the South, which has replaced tribal bonds and membership. See, Mansour Khalid, *War and Peace in Sudan A Tale of Two Countries*, London: Routledge, 2010.

[3] Although the term condominium refers to a territory in which multiple sovereign Powers agree to have equal sovereignty and exercise their rights jointly, in terms of British rule, The Sudan was not evaluated as a colony, since it was treated as an exception and put under the foreign office, rather than colonial office. See, Heather J. Sharkey, *Living with Colonialism Nationalism and Culture in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003, pp.6-7.

[4] Abu Roaf Literal Society, Left Book Club, Al-fajr Group, Wad Medani are some of the formations supporting the printing of newspapers and leaflets for disseminating nationalist and patriotic sentiments.

In 1918, Sudan School's Graduates Club was established in Omdurman. It became very popular among the youth, especially in carrying out cultural and social activities, which later evolved in to a center for anti-colonial resentment (Gaffer, 2012). The school became a lab for the politicization of Sudanese. It was only in the 1920s when the term *Sudanese* (Sudani) was used for referencing a community and a nascent or alleged nation. In its early usage, the term signified Black people in the North or for ones coming from the south, mainly non-Arab and non-Muslim inhabitants (Sharkey, 2003). Clearly, the term was associated with non-Arab people. Since the term *Sudan* referred to the land of the Blacks. İbrahim (2022) argues that the Arab and Muslim population were *Sudanized* rather than identified as Sudanese, similar to an imported term from the south whose content was determined by the north. This content was prepared by the tariqahs.

It was not until 1924 that a group of soldiers began to protest the foreign rule, showing early signs of national sentiment. This group, called the "White Flag League Movement," was later joined by students and mobs, turning the movement into a revolt against the Condominium government. The protests were expressions of anti-colonial resentment spread by Arabic print culture[5] againts British rule. The early roots of these sentiments were considered "acts of Wataniyya" (Gaffer, 2012, p.129), projecting patriotism, and "qawmiyya," meaning tribalism with reference to the motherland. These developments gave birth to the first ever existing political parties in Sudan: the Ashigga (Brothers) party, formed under the leadership of Ismail al-Azhari, and the Umma (or Ummah/Oma meaning the followers of Islam) party, formed by moderates under Sayyid Abd-al-Rahmani. The Umma party was in support of a Mahdist State like the one formed in 1885, and against any foreign rule, either from Britain or Egypt. The motto of the party became known as "Sudan for Sudanese." The Ashigga party was in favor of a union with Egypt under the motto "the Unity of the Nile Valley." With the establishment of political parties an awakening era started, which led to the politicization of Sudanese. The forerunner in this process was the Graduates General Congress. Established in 1938 by the graduates and becoming a foundation for national struggle, the Congress was a workshop where the educated elites gathered to plan their moves in drawing a future for Sudan. Since the graduates were also civil servants working in public offices, it can be argued that the roots of national sentiment are found in the efforts of these servants, later known as "bureaucrat-nationalists" (Sharkey, 2003). The trajectory was clear: to transform the colonial-state into a nation-state. As a result, an important event was the issuing a Memorandum [6] by Congress in 1942, which was sent to the British Governor-General. This initiative was not much welcomed by the colonial rule. Another important event that took place in 1942 was the first meeting of the party called The Black Bloc (Al Kutla al Sawda) in hoping to represent the Black people. This political formation was evaluated as racist and was not recognized by the colonial rule. After a short period, the Liberal Party was founded in 1952 to represent the interests of the Southern people.

It was in 1953 when a three-year period of a transitional government[7] began to rule the country, widening the gap between the North and South. This was followed by the declaration of independence by the Sudanese Parliament in 1955. The declaration was followed by the establishment of a supreme commission with five members (only one remaining a southerner) via a transitional constitution. Finally, in 1956, Sudan gained recognition of its independence and a coalition government was established between the

[5] Hadarat al-Sudan; an Arabic newspaper published between 1919 and 1938, al-Fajr (meaning The Dawn); a journal published between 1934 and 1937, al-Nahda (meaning The Awakening); another journal published between 1931 and 1932, have all played an important role in disseminating nationalist sentiment. See, Heather J. Sharkey. *Living with Colonialism Nationalism and Culture in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

[6] Twelve Articles delivering the requests of the Sudanese people with reference to self-determination and Sudanese nationality for that matter. See, Nowar Gaffer, "The Graduate's National Movement in Sudan, 1918-1944," *Jurnal Jabatan Sejarah Universiti Malaya*, Vol. 20, No.20, 2012, p.136.

[7] During the three-year period, an international commission ruled the country, including a British, an Egyptian, a Pakistani, and two Sudanese members. See, David Wm. McClintock, "The Southern Sudan Problem: Evolution of an Arab-African Confrontation" *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 24, No: 4, 1970, p.467.

NUP and Ummah parties, accelerating the process of Sudanization,[8] while state power was transferred from the British to the Northern elite, both economically and politically. In parallel with Sudanization began politics of assimilation, with the growing intelligentsia of the North asserting Islam and Arab culture as the only way to find unity. However, with numerous tribes settled in the South, (as a First Nation[9]) the trajectory was difficult to achieve, with the clear-cut division between the North and South remaining solid as a rock. In discourse, it was easy to announce the reclaim of identity from the colonizers, but in practice, the Northern elites failed to recognize the transformative nature of colonialism. The inhabitants of Sudan, whether Northerner or Southerner, had been altogether altered as a result of colonialism. In Bhabha's (1990) words, "in-betweenness," as well as a "self-marginalization," was experienced during the colonization in both the North and South. Furthermore, in the name of the South, the process was more than a tragedy. It was not only the colonizers who exploited the natives in the South, but they were also abused by the Northerners. A history of enslavement, ignorance, and misinterpretation between the North and South laid clear cut in front of them. Given all the negative coding, the Southern collective memory had to be removed. "For Southerns, the precolonial and colonial history is invested with countless traces of extreme ethnic and racial oppression, thus yielding indisputable evidence of continuity between past and present" (Idris, 2005, p.46). Despite past experiences, in which the Arabs themselves suffered the most, the Northern Arab elite initiated a policy of assimilation towards the South.

In an attempt to eliminate British culture and customs, the North initiated a policy of Arabization towards the Southern population, which had previously taken the form of Sudanization within the state apparatus. For the South, the situation differed as there are no unifying factors—ethnic, lingual or cultural—that brought the population together to display a nationalist rhetoric or movement. The *Other* has always defined the South as distinctive while rejecting the characteristics of the native population, which has been continually labeled underdeveloped and illiterate, and enslaved.

During the run up to independence, the South clearly stated that an Afro-Arab state built on federalism would be accepted. For the Southerners, this was a prerequisite for unity with the North under a single state with a clear purpose: the everlasting division was to be settled with a peaceful coexistence between the Negroids and the Arabs. However, the North, ignoring these requests, took action that escalated the events between the two communities. A political and cultural hegemony was thus set in motion, embraced by the bureaucracy, which the Northerners had already assumed control of as a result of Sudanization. As witnessed in several other countries, with the Sudan being no exception, the more the Northerners took over public duties, the more they "…could make sweeping claims for the nation, often conflating their own group needs with particular definitions of the nation and leaving little room in public forums for alternative voices" (Brook and Schmid, 2000, p.3-4). Thus, not only was the process of Sudanization systematically and effectively instrumentalized following a wave of Arabization upon the masses, but the emerging Arabic print culture, with the support of the Northern elite, also disseminated an immediate wave of Arabization across the country, or what is also called "Northernization" (Seri-Hersch, 2020). Non-Arabs (e.g., Beja, Nuba, Funj) were not only prevalent in the South, but they were also prevalent in the north. The Sudanese people comprised Arabic-speaking Muslims, Arabic speaking non-Muslims, and non-Arabic speaking Christians or heathens, and even non-Arabic speaking Muslims (e.g., Beja, Fur). The process was to disseminate the use of the Arabic language throughout the country, which meant the nationalization of education via a state

[8] In addition to *Sudanization*, the terms *Localization*, mostly used by the British, and *decolonization* used by French comes to signify the replacement of state apparatus from the British to the Sudanese. See, Al Agab A. Al- Teraifi, "Sudanization of the Public Service: A Critical Analysis," in Yusuf Fadl Hasan (ed.) *Sudan Notes and Records*, Vol.58, 1977, pp.117-134.

[9] An indigenous population is the first settlers of a region, sharing unique histories, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs.

curriculum. The target was clear: the missionary and private schools teaching language, and tribes in the south speaking local languages (Dinka, Shilluk, and Bari, etc.) had to become Arabic. The aim was to give a unified state appearance to the newborn independent Sudan. Given the lack of any past narratives projecting unity between the North and South, the only option was to shade the existing divisions, and regardless of cultural background, cultivate a homogenous society.

With the removal of external rule and colonialism came a version of internal colonialism. The requests of the South to be recognized as a distinct community and the acceptance of regional self-rule were dismissed by the government. It was in 1955 when the Sudanese parliament declared the country's independence, followed by a series of harsh government decisions, such as ordering the execution and deportation of the Southerners. This was the start of what would later become the first Sudanese Civil War[10] (The Anya Nya Rebellion[11]). Two years after its independence, the military seized power in the Sudan under General Ibrahim Abboud, who later became president of the Sudan. During military rule, relations between the government and the South worsened due to the oppressive policies of Abboud. With false claims to restore integrity, political violence accelerated across the nation. The suspension of the constitution and dissolution of the parliament were the first moves of the military rule.

The second nationalist wave included the Islamization of the state. The aim of the Northern elite was to establish an Arab-Islamic state. For that to happen, Quranic schools (*ma' ahads* and *khalwas*) and Mosques for worship were opened, and spread rapidly across the country. The South, which had already suffered from proselytization, was once again experiencing religious pressure and persuasion. The first move of the government was to open the Department of Religious Affairs in 1957 with the purpose of disseminating religious teachings under the Islamic doctrine to the non-Islamic regions in the Sudan, namely in the South. The aim was clear. Every child was forced to attend these primary schools if they were to continue secondary education. The Quranic schools served two purposes: to provide Islamic education, and to disseminate the Arabic language, since the Quran was written in Arabic. The most important instrument of nationalism, education, was created to massify a unique identity upon the population. The rule under General Abboud continued the policies of Islamization and Arabization under the motto of "one country, one language, one religion." Under the nationalization of education, all kinds of missionary and Christian schools were refused permit after a ban was placed on all educational activities other than for religious purposes. Friday became the official weekly holiday, as it was the 'day of prayer' in Islam, which is Sunday for Christianity. According to the government, this duality had to be removed to ensure unity in the country, making Sunday a working day. This provoked a significant reaction in the South, leading, in 1960, both secondary and intermediate students in the South to cause widespread civil disobedience and strike against the government (Poggo, 2002, p.78-80). As a result of the protests, many students were detained, arrested, and a few even imprisoned with the accusation of treason. The incidents led to another ban on public meetings and gatherings. In order to prevent any further protest movements, a government ban was issued for people not to form a crowd in public spaces. After accusations of provoking the people and interfering in the education policy of the state, Christian missionaries were ordered to leave the country by 1963. This move indicated the government's intention to wipe out the Christian presence in the South. This was done with the hope of Islam filling the religious gap in the South. For this to happen, education activities gained momentum by subsidizing the budget and increasing the

[10] There are different opinions as to whether the first civil war occurred from 1955 to 1972 or from 1963 to 1972. Some scholars do not count on the mutiny starting in 1955, which for them do not meet the conditions of a civil war. See, Oystein H. Rolandsen, "A False Start: Between War and Peace in the Southern Sudan, 1956-62" *Journal of African History*, 52, 2011, pp.105-123.

[11] Also known as the guerilla army of the political party Sudan African National Union (SANU). Established in 1961, the party was a defender of South Sudanese nationalism.

number of Quranic schools. The government encouraged students to attend these schools by propagating the motto "reject Islam and abandon education or accept education and become Muslim" (cf. Poggo, 2002, p.91); however, what the government in Khartoum failed to understand was that the more it provoked the people, the more the pressure increased in the South. Subsequently, a matter of action and reaction was displayed, leading to a regional backlash.

Even after the Abboud regime, the civilian government under Mahgoub continued to commit violent acts against the Southerners. In 1965, the massacres in Juba left 1,400 civilians dead. Between 1963 and 1966, the most brutal events, such as mass killings, took place in the South. Nearly 500,000 Southerners were slayed by the government. Under all these internal turmoils, the civil rule was interrupted once again by the military. In 1969, Ja'far Numayri took control of the power with a coup. It was only the Addis Ababa Agreement in 1972 that brought a halt to the ongoing civil war. The agreement provided important gains for the South, underlining the region as a distinct cultural and historic community and gaining a regional administration. As a result, the agreement led to the Southern regional autonomy under a united Sudan. However, the gains acquired by the South did not last long, since Numayri's rule dissolved the autonomy of the South in 1983 and divided the South into regions. Declaring the end of the peace agreement, Numayri imposed Sharia Islamic Law upon the South, which marked the beginning of the second civil war in Sudan. It was only in 1985, when Numayri was also overthrown by a coup led by Siwar al-Dahab. After a year of transition to civilian rule, elections were held in 1986, and civilian rule was restored during a time of ongoing civil war between the North and South.

It was with the start of the second civil war that the regional backlash in the South transformed into a national backlash. The subsequent war has since revealed the roots of South Sudan's institutions representing the national resistance, namely the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). When the SPLA/M were first established, the factions did not pursue a secessionist policy, but rather aimed for a united Sudan. It was only in the 1990s when the organization claimed self-determination for South Sudan. In 1989, Sudan witnessed a second coup, this time led by Omer Al-Bashir. Backed up by the National Islamic Front[12] (NIF), El-Bashir employed a jihadist policy across the country. This meant toughening the regime via a militarist order with an Islamist strategy. Efforts to Arabize and Islamize the country gathered pace. Clashes contracted to loyal militias occurred against every opponent and rebel. Political Islam prevailed during the Al-Bashir era. Al-Bashir's strict rule was centered on Sharia Law and a series of restrictive policies against the rebels, which caused a witch-hunt, especially in the South and West, leading to brutal clashes between the government forces and the rebels. The long-lasting conflict had turned into an identity crisis, with each party aiming to defend its own cultural distinctiveness fostered within different communities. For the regime, the aim was to develop national solidarity through autocratic means, whereas the rebels were primarily concerned about survival.

4. Contested Nationalisms and the Partition

Post-Sudan still remains a geography for competing identities that have struggled to both exist and gain acceptance. Instead of melting into a single (national) identity, the Sudanese competed with one another as a result of mistrust and intolerance. At the center of this struggle lies the democratization of culture, or in other words, the right to culture, by considering it a basic human right and to give it a legal status. This path could have been followed by preserving of the rights of the oppressed as the prominent issue was and still concerns the misreading of the decolonization era. To unify the population with

[12] Also known as the Muslim Brotherhood. A movement emerging in the 1960's representing political Islam, and becoming an important force starting from the 1970's in Sudanese politics.

the hope of becoming a nation, the Northern elite engineered a process of imposition, both culturally and politically. The idea was to build a common ground in defining the nation. However, employing the same process as colonizers has turned out to be a huge mistake that recently led to the break-up of the country.

Rather than meet the cultural needs of the South Sudanese inhabitants, the Northern elite initiated the process of cultural assimilation. In order to create a 'high culture' or 'popular culture,' the ruling class/elite pursued policies that determined the status of culture, which was to instrumentalize, to create a mono-cultural community, which, in contrast, required an acceptance of multi-culturalism and the way cultural policies are evaluated—as equal or unequal—in terms of redistribution and integration. Neither during the pre-colonial nor in post-colonial times was the South a developed region, but more importantly, it has never been given the chance to progress. Further, the region has never been evaluated on equal terms, nor respected for that matter, and as a result transformed into an area of conflict for those with different agendas. This is the main ground on where today's Sudanese nationalisms flourished. The common ground shared between the Northern and Southern Sudanese forms of nationalism is that they have both become repetitive trauma communities, with each state rejecting the other's national project for the sake of its own survival. For Idris, the Southern Sudanese people "are amongst the most politically oppressed and subjected people in the African continent, perhaps comparable only to the victims of the obnoxious apartheid system in South Africa" (2005, p.41), and have recently made an attempt to recreate themselves in a conflict-ridden geography. Following the issues regarding national borders and oil revenues with the North, the Kordofan conflict and inter-ethnic tribal clashes are still ongoing and require immediate attention. The situation is not much different in the North, which still confronts inter-ethnic clashes, as well as the long-term Darfur problem. Having lost a large amount of territory to South Sudan, the people of North have been forced to confront an identity crisis while numerous problems still need to be solved. As a result of military coups, the North Sudan has entered an unstable period, just like the South. It was in 2013 when a political power struggle erupted between the president and his former deputy, leading to a civil war in the country.

Once declared by former foreign minister of Sudan Hassan el-Turabi Kassala as "The New North has a New South," it is important to note that the South was previously used as a term referring to an underdeveloped region within a single Sudan. After the South became a sovereign independent state, a clear-cut border between the two Sudanese States opened up a new phase that would allow both of them to develop for their national identities. During the colonial era, the colonizers determined the land boundaries for their own purposes, as witnessed in many other African states; however, a single border now divides the two Sudanese populations by means of identity. However, this did not result in a peaceful environment between and within the Sudans.

Thanks to the outcome of the 2011 referendum, South Sudan decided to secede (98.8% of southerners voted for independence). Subsequently, the lack of understanding and communication, the legacy of mistreatment, and extreme insecurity between the North and South led to the break-up of the single state. Anti-colonial resistance was later followed by an anti-northern stance, bringing the Southern population together; however, after the secession, the diverse inhabitants of the South did not share many commonalities with their counterparts in the North, aside from being constantly traumatized, displaced, mass killed, or exploited. This begs the question as to why the South Sudanese people describe their newborn nation-state as "the New Sudan." Further, acknowledgment of the term "The Sudans" requires further inquiry. Despite the separation, both Sudans still share the same fate: civil unrest, instability, and state failure. All these are leading to consecutive military interventions (2019 and 2021) in the North, and a civil war (2013 and 2016) in the South. Neither of the states have not managed a peaceful settlement leading to a nation-building process with a clear identity embracing all the communities divided on ethnic and cultural lines. Conversely, the situation is

turning into more divisions. Running up to partition and independence was a strong narrative for the Southern unity, which has quickly faded away and replaced by further divisions. Despite reaching consensus on two agreements in 2015 (Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan) and 2018 (Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan), stability remains far from solid, and the struggle between the Dinka and Nuer tribes persists. On the opposite side, the break-up meant a re-narration for the shrinking North, especially after the removal of President Al-Bashir in 2019. Bashir's removal from office, despite easing the tensions, increased the turmoil even further. Despite the formation of a civilian-military interim government, the country was unable to call for democratic elections. In 2019, President Al-Bashir was removed in a coup led by Abdelfattah al-Burhan, leading to violent clashes breaking out between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) led by al-Burhan, and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (also known as *Hemedti*).

With considerable support from the international community, both in the process of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement to make "unity more attractive" (Cockett, 2010 p.251) signed in 2005, and later in the run up to independence in 2011, South Sudan had to act with the awareness of a multicultural formation. Once a semi-autonomous region, and later an independent state, the region is highly diverse. Clearly defined in its constitution as "a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-racial entity where such diversities peacefully co-exist" (South Sudan Constitution, 2011, Article 1/4), this description is key to understanding how to achieve peace through such diversity. Although English was accepted as the working language of the state, South Sudan comprises many native languages (e.g., Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk, etc.), which the Constitution has assured protection as "all indigenous languages of South Sudan are national languages and shall be respected, developed and promoted" (Article 6/1). The same counts for religious freedom, which is secured via the Constitution under secularism. As the Constitution stipulates, "Religion and State shall be separate. All religions shall be treated equally and religion or religious beliefs shall not be used for divisive purposes" (Article 8, 1-2). Through all the suffering the people confronted throughout the history of Sudan, language and religion have both been instrumentalized in the name of nationalism as prominent signs of difference. Another issue guaranteed by the Constitution was decentralization in the administration. This was included in the Constitution as "all levels of government shall promote democratic principles and political pluralism, and shall be guided by the principles of decentralization and devolution of power to the people through the appropriate levels of government" (Article 36/1). From a normative point of view, although the constitutional arrangements seem satisfactory, under practical means they lack cohesion and remain to be nothing. Although constitutionally guaranteed, respecting pluralism and embracing diversity did not fulfill the expectations, and the country entered a period of turmoil. For Nyaba (2019), this was mainly due to the "sociopolitical duplicity of the Northern elite" (p.23). Aside from becoming a nation, Southern nationalism (if any) only continues to denote a reflection of opposition towards North Sudan.

The same situation applies to the North. The Constitutional Charter accepted in 2019, laid down a road-map for the North via a transition to democracy. In defining the nature of the state, the North Sudan is a "… pluralistic, decentralized state, where rights and duties are based on citizenship without discrimination due to race, religion, culture, sex, color, gender, social or economic status, political opinion, disability, regional affiliation or any other cause" (Constitutional Charter, 2019). Despite all the attempts to restore peace in the North, the civilian government was disrupted, and the transition period was overthrown by a military coup in 2021. Further, despite initiating processes regarding the protection of diversity and pluralism, both Sudans have not been successful. As a result of power struggles, political violence is common. Although the international community supports attempts to restore peace in the region via a Trilateral

Mechanism[13] consisting of different International Organizations, it remains far from an established solution.

What was once a unifying struggle against colonialism asserted itself has now become a unified struggle against each other (between the North and South). However, this struggle lacks a cultural domain, thus making it solely political. According to Gellner's definition of nationalism, that "the political and the cultural unit should be congruent" (1983, p.1), this congruence does not manifest at a national level in either of the Sudans as neither population shows a commitment to the established political systems, resulting in weak attachments both to the state and to their fellow citizens. Theron (2022) emphasizes that the elites in the North and South are trying to keep the state alive for the sake of grabbing power; however, they have forgotten the nation. This causes fragmentation rather than unity in both the North and South Sudan. Culture forms mentality at certain levels, and at this level, there is both tribal kinship and local, rather than national, in both North and South Sudan. Though the aim of nationalism is to reveal a homogenous structure, the Sudans are highly heterogenous and fragmented. In the past, these subaltern groups were pitted against each other, and are now fragments of a single nation state. It seems that no single narrative is sufficient to embrace these diversities. At this point, it is important to mention Chatterjee (1993), who divided culture into "material and spiritual domains" (p.5). The material domain includes the economy and state business (administration, bureaucracy, etc.) introduced by the colonizers, while the inner (spiritual) domain includes tribal, religious, and family bonds, which the colonizers never succeeded in penetrating. For Chatterjee, the inner domain is the essential mark of cultural identity (1993, p.6) and currently one of the main reasons for the ongoing conflicts in both the North and South. The fragmentation and diversity in both North and South Sudan remain at the center of every problem. The endeavor of the communities to protect their authentic and distinctive culture has led to clashes on all fronts. Oppressed by different actors at different times, the groups that make up North and South Sudan aim to preserve and maintain their daily practices, rituals, and lifestyles. As a result, this hinders their attachment to the state, which they find distant from themselves because of political institutions controlled by power-hungry individuals (civil or military) aiming to consolidate more power. This in turn leads to the emergence of a privileged group while excluding the rest.

5. Conclusion

The instrumentalism of nationalism in the Sudan, whether in colonial or post-colonial times, has caused the Sudanese people to suffer from the lack of both statehood and nationhood, making them vulnerable to outside interventions. The attempts taken to create a national identity imposed by the elites has focused on a narrow understanding with the purpose of serving self-interests. As a result, nationalism has never led to unifying positions between the state and the people. Given the ethnic diversity in both of the Sudans, the elites failed to find common ground, namely in the creation of a nation state. The only similarity the ethnic and cultural groups in this region share is their history of victimization, survival, and struggle, resulting in the absence of unity. The struggle between the North and South has led to the death and displacement of millions, all in the name of cultural visibility. Clearly, the division is far deeper, destabilizing both the North and South, which cannot be settled via an agreement on oil resources. The turbulence both in the North and South has the potential of leading to further divisions, especially in the region called Darfur, which requires further inquiry. The remnants of colonialism still haunt both the Sudans, which is why culture always remains at the center of Sudanese politics. However, these two distinct communities

[13] Including United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), The African Union (AU) and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

must also take into account the 'culture of peace,' which can offer solutions to the many problems these polarized and divided communities face.

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