

CONFERENCE PAPER

**Race, Discrimination, Slavery,
Nationalism and Citizenship in
the Afro-Arab Borderlands**

With particular reference to the Sudan

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Race, Discrimination, Slavery, Nationalism and Citizenship in the Afro-Arab Borderlands

With particular reference to the Sudan

Kwesi Kwaa Prah

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Introduction

This paper attempts to historically trace and raise issues concerning tensions in the Afro-Arab Borderlands, (with particular reference to the Sudan) which are generally avoided in public discussions because too many people regard these issues as sensitive and unsuitable for discussion in polite company. They are however issues which in the light of the establishment of the African Union, the implications and goals of this institution, the ideals implicit in the creation of this institution and the historical tensions in the Afro-Arab Borderlands, are matters whose discussion cannot be wished away or indefinitely postponed.

We need to remind ourselves of the fact that, in the historical experience of Africa, two major forms of dominance have been nationally imposed. The first of these was the cultural and political imposition arising out of the Arab conquest of North Africa which started in the 8th century A.D. with the *Hejira*. The second over-lordship has arisen out of Western expansion and conquests and is of much later vintage mainly dating from the late 19th century. The conquest of North Africa by the Arabs was a slow process, which has been steady over the centuries. Apart from the political implications of conquest, perhaps even more important and in many ways more socio-culturally consequential has been the process of cultural denationalization of African communities in the face of Arab conquest and over-lordship, and the replacement of African cultural institutions by Arabic ones. Possibly the most notable and far-reaching of these cultural denationalization experiences has been the case of the Berbers/Tamasheq in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. The culture of the Berbers/Tamasheq and the language of the people suffered subjugation and denigration from very early in the history of the Arab/African encounter. Recent conflicts, protests and demonstrations in Algeria highlight the historical plight of Berber national culture in the face of Arabization and dominance. In a news item put out on the BBC on Sunday the 22nd of July, 2001, the Algerian President Bouteflika during a visit to President Bush in the US announced that his government will give greater cultural rights to the Berber. But possibly nowhere in the Afro-Arab Borderlands is the problem of race, class and citizenship in such high tension between Arab and African (or possibly Arabized Africans and Africans) as the Sudan and Mauritania. These two countries are frequently in the news for these reasons, but indeed the problem and scenario is enacted in other countries in the region including Libya, Mali, Niger and Chad.

The situation in Mauritania is beset with nascent conflict.¹ The history and tradition of African enslavement by Arabized moors is old and has persisted to the present day.² In his own ornate language, writing in 1955, Gunther points out that, the Moors, "in the olden days were avid and successful slave traders; every year they descended into Senegal, and reaped a crop of human loot".³ Slavery was abolished by the French in 1905. A second abolition was proclaimed with the independence constitution of Mauritania in 1961. It has however continued and the tensions arising out

of the enslavement of Africans in Mauritania has frequently threatened the peace between Mauritania and Senegal. This former French colony of 2 million people probably contains the world's largest concentration of chattels. In 1993, the U.S. State Department estimated that up to 90,000 blacks live as the property of North African Arabs (known as *Beydanes* or white Moors). Other sources add 300,000 part-time and ex-slaves, known as *haratins*, many of whom continue to serve their owners out of fear or need. The local anti-slavery group *ElHor* ('The Free') estimates that there are as many as one million *haratins*.

It is frequently forgotten that Christianity predates Islam in the Sudan. Francis M. Deng reminds us that :

Christianity entered the scene in the sixth century and was able to establish kingdoms that survived for a thousand years. But the intervention of Islam in the seventh century set in motion a process of gradual decline for Christianity. This decline culminated in the eventual overthrow of the Christian kingdoms in 1504 by an alliance of the Arabs and the Islamized kingdom of the Funj, whose origin remains obscure, but is known to have been "Black" as its Arabic name, *El Saltana El-Zegra*, "The Black (meaning Black) Sultanate" reflects. (Among the Northern Sudanese, the word "black" is never used to describe people since it is considered insulting to call a freeman black that being the colour associated with the slave race.) In due course, Islamization and Arabization gained hold in the North and eventually overshadowed the preexisting indigenous and Christian elements.⁴

In this day and age, with a fundamentalist Islamic regime firmly in power in Khartoum, it is difficult for people to imagine that Sudanese society had a Christian, pre-Islamic ancestry. Some years ago, in a conversation with one of the leading Sudanese archeologists who had fled the Sudan and was based in exile in Cairo, I was informed that the regime is so anti-intellectual and obscurantist that it tried to suppress scholarship about pre-Islamic Sudanese culture, much in the same way that the Taliban regime in Afghanistan treats pre-Islamic Buddhist culture. Deng adds that :

Although the process of Arabization and Islamization in Northern Sudan was persuasive, it should be noted that it was carried out in a context of a racially stratified society that deemed the Arab people and their culture superior and the African Blacks and their belief systems inferior. The Arabs were propped up by military conquest, supported by material wealth, and elevated in status by the universal image of Islam and Arab civilization. In contrast, the Black African was considered, an active or potential slave, the downtrodden of the earth. Many Black Africans in the North converted to Islam because, by simply uttering the formula : "There is no god, but the (One) God and Mohammed in his Prophet," they suddenly became freemen and respectable members of the community. For many, the motivation to do so was irresistible. To the new members of the Muslim identity, which was associated with the Arabic language and culture, the sense that they had been promoted into a superior class was more than religious or cultural; it developed into a gift of birth and descent, assumed and sometimes fabricated, ultimately a belonging to the Arab race. Over the centuries, these elements evolved eclectically, embracing indigenous races, customs and practices, but retaining the emphasis on the Arab-Islamic umbrella as the uniting feature of the community and ultimately of the emerging nation-state. The stratification

and the discrimination remained, however, and would continue to demean the non-Arabs and non-Muslims.⁵

Since August 1955 an armed struggle is being fought intermittently in the Sudan. In Africa its only rivals in duration have until recently been the Eritrean armed resistance which was inaugurated in September 1961, and the Angolan civil war. The early beginnings of the African nationalist insurgency in the Sudan can be traced to the Torit Mutiny of 17th August 1955, when members of the Equatoria Corps garrisoned in Torit revolted against the military authority of the ending Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, then officered by Arabist Sudanese. This happened within months of the transfer of state power from the Condominium Administration into Sudanese hands on the 1st January 1956.

After the collapse of the mutiny, armed resistance emerged at various points in the South. Rebel units under Latada and Paul Ali Gbatala operated as separate insurgency groups on both the east and west banks of the Nile. Until the early 1980s, Ali Gbatala's unit operated in Western Equatoria. However by 1959, the initial force of the armed resistance had been spent. The fires of armed rebellion seriously rose again in 1963 with the emergence of *Anya Nya* then under the leadership of SANU (Sudan African National Union). Through various turbulent stages of evolution, the war was brought to a major lull by the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972. While most of the African nationalist insurgents led by Joseph Lagu agreed to the peace of Addis Ababa, some elements under Gordon Mourtat Mayen, Ali Gbatala, and others rejected the agreement. Ali Gbatala continued the armed struggle, Gordon Mourtat Mayen and Aggrey Jaden remained in exile as political and historical representations of continued rebellion.

With the explosion of the Akobo Incident in 1974 when the integration process of former *Anya Nya* units into the national army broke down, the fires of war increased in intensity. The *Any Na* Patriotic Front surfaced out of small beginnings in the Adobo Incident and formed under the political leadership of Gordon Mourtat Mayen until 1981.

While the Addis Ababa Agreement brought for almost ten years some measure of peace to the South, in hindsight, the 1970s appear more as a period of armistice than a durable peace. The Nueri regime which ruled over the peace of Addis Ababa increasingly flaunted and rescinded the terms of the Agreement and willy nilly propelled the Sudanese state into the fiery vortex of a full scale civil war, by 1983. Since the early stages of the renewed insurgency, the resurgent armed resistance, in the main, has been led by Dr. John Garang. There was a faction led by Okot Atem (later eliminated by the Garang faction) based mainly in Nuerland, this group claimed roots from the Mourtat Mayen wing of the resistance. Over the past five years, other fissures have appeared in the camp of the resistance, with the emergence and growth of what has come to be known as the Nassir faction, which today represents the main group contending the leadership of the African nationalist resistance in the Sudan. Over the past two years, two major Nigerian sponsored peace conferences have been held in Abuja without success in resolving the conflict. The Nassir faction is fighting for separation of the Southern Sudan from the rest of the country. Until fairly recently Garang had insisted that the war is for the liberation of the whole of the Sudan from the hands of 'the Khartoum clique'. There are indications that Garang's wing is currently rooting for a confederation.

Why has the Sudanese conflict so far eluded substantial peace? This question can be partly understood in terms of the inability of the warring parties to achieve a political and constitutional arrangement which would resolve the contradictions on which the civil war is premised. The dominant feature of these contradictions is the national question in the Sudan, a situation in which an Arab minority controls state power; dominates the armed forces, the civil bureaucracy, the political elite, commerce, trade, banking, and the judiciary, and orders these instruments of state power towards

a spoken or unspoken policy of Arabization of the African national majority. But complicating matters further has been the discovery of oil on a massive scale in the south of the country.

Since the end of the Second World War, more specifically since the Juba Conference of 1947 African nationalist opinion has largely defended the idea of a federal arrangement which will recognize the African majority. This has been repeatedly rejected by successive Sudanese regimes. The Addis Ababa Agreement gave some room for African national self-expression in the constitutional form of Southern Regional Autonomy but the looseness, and fragility of the constitutional edifice led to a steady erosion of its basis by the Numei regime which as time went on increasingly pursued a policy of divide and rule, and constant dismantling of the Addis Ababa Agreement, and Arabization.

The National Question

According to the only Sudanese census which gave a count of Arab and African in the Sudan, only 39 per cent of Sudanese regard themselves as Arab.⁶ In spite of this fact the Sudan is regarded by most international bodies to be part of the Arab World. This oddity is on account of the fact that the prevalent character of the Sudanese state is Arabist. The Sudan in national terms is a minority-ruled state. In a crucial political sense that creates comparisons with the erstwhile white minority-ruled South Africa and Namibia in Sub-Saharan Africa, however limited the scope of these comparisons may be. It is ironical that this comparative perspective of South Africa and the Sudan is noted by the former South African White parliamentary opposition leader Van Zijl Slabbert.⁷ Indeed, the two cases provide classic examples of settler-colonialism.

In Mauritania, the African and Arab proportions of the population is also constantly in dispute. While African observers claim that the majority of the population is African, the Arabs make opposite assertions.

In Chad, Niger and Mali the preponderance of the African populations are rarely disputed. The nomadic character of these Sahelian countries further complicates definitive assessments of population sizes and African/Arab proportions.

The Sudanese conflict is often explained as simply a regionalist confrontation. This view is as erroneous as the suggestion that it is largely a religious conflict. While the problem bears both regionalist and religious dimensions, those features of the conflict belie the more fundamental character of the contradiction which is that the Sudan is largely made up of Africans who are homogeneously more concentrated in the South where their cultural features are also less Arabized. The Southerners have to some degree been Christianized but most lean more profoundly on their traditional African cosmology and ritual. In the north most of the nationalities have to a great degree been Islamized but again here Africanist beliefs are not uncommon, particularly among the Fur, Fung and Nuba. It is in the north that the African cultural traits have been most diminished and replaced by Arab culture. In many areas of the north, African languages are slowly perishing in the face of Arabizing forces and influences. The Beja who have historically resisted Arabization are increasingly being Arabized. The Funj, Nuba, Messalit, Zaghawa and Fur, remain largely conscious of their African national identity. However, of all the African nationalities of the North, it is particularly among the Nubians that claims of Arab identity is most rampant. Another irony here is that before the penetration of Arabs in Nubia, this area of the Sudan had been Christianized; from earlier beginnings, by 543-580 AD, Christianity had established preeminence over purely African religious practices, and indeed Christianity then became the official religion.⁸ As recently as 1742 pockets of Christian communities were reported to be in Nubia.⁹ Although today many Nubians claim Arab nationality, in as much as they have been culturally Arabized, it is noteworthy that structural linguistic similarities exist between the Nubian languages of the Nile basin particularly Dongolawi and Mahas, and the

languages of the Nuba Mountains, some of the smaller African nationalities of Darfur, and some languages in the South.

As I have indicated elsewhere, essentially it is possible to classify Northern Sudanese who claim Arab nationality into either one of the two groups. On the one hand the Jaali and the Barabra who are mainly Arabized Nubian riverian cultivators and on the other, the Juhayna who are mainly nomadic groups. Among especially the Jaali Nubian dialects still survive in the face of increasing Arabization.¹⁰

The Mauritanian case in the Afro-Arab Borderlands has interesting parallels. French and Arabic are widely spoken. Moors in the south speak a dialect of Arabic, Hassaniyyah, while several other African languages are spoken including those of the Pulaar, Soininke and Wolof peoples.

After independence, linguistic Arabization was pursued more doggedly, there was a long dispute between the Moors and the Africans over retaining French as an official language; in 1991, Arabic became the sole official language. The increasing pre-eminence of Arab culture and influence in the economy, politics and social life of the society has continued apace to the present.

The dominance of the Arab minority in the Sudanese political economy is practically defined in conditions of extreme underdevelopment in the South and relatively better development in the North. Class variation has tended to run along the crucial national distinctions. This is particularly noticeable among the elites, with African representation singularly weak among the mercantile and banking elements, judicial, and military brass. The ranks of the lowest menial workers in Khartoum and Omdurman are well represented by Africans.

The need for the dominant groups in Sudanese society to define themselves as differently as possible from African is in some instances reduced to absurdity. For example, as the late African nationalist leader Joseph Oduho (assassinated in March 1993 by Garang's troops) explains:

In every passport given to any Sudanese, whether he be brown, semi-white, pitch-black, it is always said "brown" is the colour. And on my passport it is written that I am brown, and probably if I went one day to Nigeria, they will say, brown? this man! It is one of those things ... that you cannot know until you have lived here a long time to know the real difference between the South and the North¹¹

The claim of Arabness in the Sudan carries with it, subjectively a notion of cultural and national superiority.¹² This situation has tended to encourage Arabization.

Historically, in the collective psyche of the African perhaps what has crystallized most uniformly in African perceptions of the Arab is the history of slavery. Abdel Rahman Sule, a Southern Moslem who had been in the forefront of pro-federalist politics in the 1940s and 1950s, recalls his youth early this century.

My father was a chief, the *effendia* who came around our village to kill elephants were Muslims. I used to see what these people were doing. That is how I became a Muslim. In 1927 I was caught with arms from Ethiopia, by then I was already a Muslim. But I was very aware of my Africaness. When I was a kid, if I was woken late in the morning by my father, he would say "If it had been the days of the Ansars you would have been taken". My father always woke me up early so that in his words I am not taken by the Ansars.¹³

The veteran politician Clement Mboro, whose father was an Ndogo Chief recalls that during the 1930s;

There were Arab traders and peddlers coming around to trade The attitude of the people was one of distrust That they were not sincere, they were not honest, they were not to be trusted They used to sell us the black people, they used to trade in people Thus we grew up with the feeling that they were not friendly, not sincere ...¹⁴

The inability of post-independence Sudan to meet this history squarely, frankly, dispassionately; treat it objectively and openly on all fora of social activity has tended to exacerbate the Sudanese national cleavage. Oduho is caustic in his remarks.

Well, people usually are not very happy particularly people from the Northern Sudan, of the mention of the slave trade. And one really cannot understand why this should be so All the years I was a school teacher, history was out of the curriculum of the Southern Sudan. It was not allowed to learn history When I left the country in 1960, history was not taught. From 1950 to 1960. That entire decade, history was never taught. The history of the Sudan has never been taught in the Southern Sudan. Just to avoid the idea of slavery Now they are teaching it, but they skip over it¹⁵

The effacement of the history of slavery in the Sudan does not only in effect deny the Africans in the South access to knowledge of their national history. Equally this denial debases the history of the Northern nationalities. For, as Sir Harold MacMichael explains,

the importation of slave women from the South which has proceeded uninterruptedly for centuries, has lent a further measure of spurious homogeneity to all these Nubian people¹⁶

Few testimonies capture this reality better than the late Sirr Anai Kelueljang's famous poem *My Cousin Mohammed* :

Listen!

You, Mohammed, and I, are not brothers

You're the son of my aunty - you are my cousin!

Long ago your Arab father came; also, he came with the Holy Koran and his traditional ways. But without a mistress for his wife!

You, Cousin Mohammed in the Northern Sudan, are an offspring of my slave-aunt, who in her wretchedness stooped to conquer by blood-strength. A reality as large as the Imatong Mountains!

You are no longer a pure Arab like your father. You are the hybrid of Africa, The generous product of many years of bloody war on the African land, Your African Motherland!

My Cousin Mohammed says he knows everything because he is educated.

When I sing songs about freedom, justice and equality, My Cousin gets angry and shouts at me:

You Abid!

You also want to be free,
and be equal to me!

The unresolved national question and its class underpinnings can be identified as the fundamental cause for the civil war. The absence of a political arrangement which while recognizing the majority African national character of the Sudan will afford the Arab minority equal national rights constitutes a recipe for continued war. Every single change of government in the Sudan during the past 30 years has to different degrees been prompted by considerations relating to the national question as expressed in the "Southern Problem". As Ambrose Ring Thiik observes:

This was started over 30 years ago because the unrealistic attitudes on the part of the Northern Sudanese who took over from the British, combined with the lack of any national consensus, prevented the working out of constitutional arrangements acceptable to the South.¹⁷

Thus the African national resistance led by the SPLA/SPLM has come to represent the latest installment of Africans in the Sudan in their quest for self-determination, national liberation, and majority-rule within a constitutional formula for the whole of the Sudan. Since 1983, the civil war has ceased to be confined to the geographical area of the South, and has spread, although weakly, to other predominantly African areas of the North, such as the Southern Kordofan region and the Southern Blue Nile area. These developments emphasize the fact that the conflict is not merely regional but rather represents African resistance to Arab minority rule.

The Constitutional Dilemma

The Sudan as it stands today like all countries on the African continent is a creation of the colonial powers; in this case Britain. Although there was stipulated in the Condominium arrangement of 1898 Egyptian partnership, for all intents and purposes, Britain remained the very senior partner in the arrangement. Few have expressed British thinking in this matter as succinctly as Lord Cromer. He wrote that:

The facts are plain enough. Fifteen years previously, Egyptian misgovernment had led to a successful rebellion in the Sudan. British rule had developed the military and financial resources of Egypt to such an extent as to justify the adoption of a policy of reconquest. But England not Egypt had reconquered the country.¹⁸

He admitted that it was the Egyptian Treasury which bore the lion's share of the expeditionary force costs. Egyptian troops had been the teeming ranks of the military expedition, but they were commanded and directed by British officers. "... the guiding hand had been that of England". For Cromer it was absurd to presume that without Britain's role and assistance in the form of men and money the Egyptian government could have reconquered Egypt. However, although in the condominium arrangement England was the unchallenged senior partner, "it would have been unjust to ignore Egyptian claims in deciding on the future political status of the Sudan".¹⁹ Herein lay the extent and limits of Egyptian suzerainty and overlordship in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. During the period of condominium rule (1898-1956) many British administrators, particularly those who had Southern experience realized that the Sudanese arrangement was a potential powder-keg. However, for various reasons of imperial self-interest, the British withdrew without a constitutional dispensation which could have defused the political and constitutional time-bomb embedded in the situation.

Realizing the cultural dichotomy between African and Arab Sudan, the British formulated what has come to be known as the *Southern Policy* in 1930, but long before this, the de facto approach had been one of recognizing the difference between the social, economic, and political interests of the areas of high African concentration in the Southern end of the country, and the Arabized provinces of the North particularly in the riverian areas north of the 12th degree latitude.

The method favoured by the British to insulate the African South from the Arab North was one of the Anglicization and Christianization. In 1903 the condominium government apportioned areas of the region South of the 10th latitude to different Christian missions. This arrangement was largely blessed by the *1905 Regulations and Conditions Under which Missionaries Work*. A 1906 Act gave further financial concessions to the Missionaries. African resistance to British domination was relentless and persisted well into the third decade of the twentieth century. Education was seen by Cromer as a crucial method of pacification. It was felt that the English would support Christian proselytization. Northern Muslim soldiers became the next target in the strategy of the administrators and missionaries in the South. In 1911 Governor Owen of Mongalla suggested the institution of a new all African, Southern army, to replace the Northern Sudanese troops. In 1914 Sunday replaced Friday as the day of rest, in the Lado Enclave. This regulation was implemented in Mongalla Province in 1917. In this latter province, the same year Governor Owen "deported" to the North serious or fundamentalist Muslims in the area. Again, that same year the Governor withdrew from all Muslim festivals. In 1922 the condominium administration passed the Passports and Permits Ordinance, together with the Closed Districts Order. This latter law made parts of Northern Kordofan, Kassala, Gezira, Darfur and Equatoria closed districts. On the basis of these ordinances the South was virtually closed to Northern elements. The 1925 *Permits to Trade Order* submitted that only natives of the South were allowed to carry on trade in the South without permit. Further elaborations were made to this order in 1928. Syrian and Greek traders were courted since they represented Christian religious confession. To reinforce British thinking on administrative practice in general and the insulation of the South from Arabizing influences in particular, the notions of *Indirect Rule* as developed by Lugard found fertile experimental and practical ground in the Sudan.

The statutory beginnings of Indirect Rule in the Sudan can be traced to the *Powers of Nomad Sheikh Ordinance of 1922*. By 1923 this had ordered and regularized the traditional judicial functions and usages of about 300 Sheikhs. In 1927 the Powers of Sheikhs Ordinance further extended the powers and authority recognized and enjoyed by the Sheikhs of nomadic ethnicities to the sedentary groups.²⁰ In the South a meeting of governors in 1922 had sponsored relegation of local administration "in the hands of native authorities under British supervision". African ethnic consciousness was encouraged. The 1928 Rejaf Language conference selected 6 African languages as media for instruction. As from the same year grants-in-aid were made to missionary schools.²¹

Thus, by and large, by the late 1920s a formidably array of ordinances, regulations and arrangements had been instituted, which in effect, closed the South to untrammelled Arabizing influences, and their effect of eroding the African identity of the Southern Sudan. Peter Woodward is right when he argues that, this line of policy associated particularly with MacMichael "was not a piece of unavoidable pragmatism".²² The easier course of action would have been to allow Arabization to seep into the South under the rationale of pursuing a united and easier Sudanese policy. Such a policy of opportunistic pragmatism would have as is noted by the then British Foreign Secretary Arthur Henderson implied "a policy which deliberately and of set purpose aimed at encouraging the conversion to Islam of a population who have neither racial nor other affinities with the Moslem Arabs".²³ There was through the period of condominium rule a distinct lobby within the British administrative cadre which felt that at some future date, the South should be appended on to the British empire in East Africa. The idea never got off the drawing board. Oduho has however argued that in practice the administrative arrangements for the South in effect did not only isolate the South from the North, but also from East Africa.

Well, this idea of isolating the Southern Sudan against the influences of the North ... also isolated us against influences of East Africa. And so, we were left nowhere, really, the people of the Southern Sudan Southern Sudanese had nowhere to go The Northern Sudan looked on Egypt as Australia and America in the early days looked at Britain. We identified ourselves culturally through traditional religions and so on²⁴

Thus in a serious sense, Southern Policy, as it has come to be known, did not begin in 1930. It had been steadily under construction from the initial years of condominium rule. While the system differentiated the Northern people and cultures from the South, it was in practice not socially hermetic, and not pursued with rigour. Indeed until the mid-1920s the Baggara were slave-taking in the Bahr el Ghazal and selling the human commodities in remote markets in the North.²⁵ It is important to note that the administrative and more stringent enforcement of Southern Policy was galvanized into motion after the detection in 1929 that extensive slave trading was still going on from the Beni Shanqul across the White Nile.²⁶ It was after this revelation that the authorities decided to enforce more consistently the Closed Districts Legislation and close the South to Northerners, including Northern administrations.²⁷ Indeed in this respect, I need to point out that till today slavery of Africans and their transportation into places like Libya as a recent American Congressional report indicated, has not ended. In April 1996, UN Special Representative for the Sudan, Gaspar Biro, reported "an alarming increase ... in cases of slavery, servitude, slave trade, and forced labour." In June 1996, two reporters from the *Baltimore Sun* illegally visited the Sudan. They produced a series of articles in the *Baltimore Sun* called "Witness to Slavery", in which they documented slavery in the Sudan. In fact, they bought two young slaves and set them free. In connection with the mounting demands for reparations from the West for slavery and colonialism, some observers have pointed out that similar demands should be directed to the Arab countries for slavery of Africans. A briefing provided by the General Headquarters of Sudan People's Liberation Movement and Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army to the Foreign Ministers of the Frontline States of Southern Africa (SADCC - Zimbabwe, Zambia, Angola, Mozambique, Tanzania, Malawi, plus Swaziland and Lesotho) dated 28th July 1988 drew attention to :

The re-emergence of full blown slavery in the Sudan is an inhuman act against human rights and violates all considerations for the respect of the declaration of human rights pronounced by the United Nations and the Geneva Conventions on human rights. It is essential that organizations like the OAU, UN, Amnesty International, Anti-slavery Society in London and independent world nations that pride in the values of respect for human rights should condemn Mr Mahdi's government for indulging in such a trade in this 20th century. Up to now, no voices have come out openly in protest. The different nations of the world are much closer than they were during the days of slavery in the 17th and 18th centuries.

In a letter which appeared in *The Citizen* (South Africa) on Monday, 6th August, 2001, (*Slavery: what about Sudan?*), the author, Hilda Weber asked, "... when will Sudan, which still had slavery in 1996 according to the UN, be held accountable? Likewise Mauritania, which still had slavery in 1998."

The Civil Secretary, Sir Harold MacMichael issued on the 25th January 1930, a confidential memorandum to the governors of the Southern provinces, in which he summarized the key tenets of government administrative policy in the South.

The policy of the Government in the Southern Sudan is to build up a series of self-contained racial or tribal units with structure and organization based, to

whatever extent the requirements of equity and good government permit, upon indigenous customs, traditional usage and beliefs.

Mohammed Omer Beshir's suggestion that "its ultimate objective - the separation of the South from the North - guided the Sudan Government policy until 1945"²⁸ is superficial and simplistic; more pointedly, that argument confuses the status of the effect for the cause. This ultimately is the reading that can be made into the Governor-General of Sudan's letter to the British High Commissioner in Cairo in 1945 that:

It is only by economic and educational development that these people can be equipped to stand up for themselves in the future, whether their lot can be eventually cast with the Northern Sudan or with East Africa (or partly with each)²⁹

Southern Policy was predicated on the assumption that the Southern genius was distinctly and undeniably African. But the primary and self-interested objective in view was to achieve effective administration through the ostensible enlightenment of Lugardian principles of Indirect Rule. The three decades of armed resistance by the fierce and martial African ethnicities in the South was being brought to a close by the Nuer Settlement of 1933. As late as 1938 the Government Secretary's annual report for the previous year attested to the fact that "in parts of the territory a risk of local disturbances and of outbreaks of violence must always be taken into account".³⁰ This was to be avoided. The administrative policy was welcomed in the South by the administrators, and remained the official guiding formulation on Southern Policy until after the 2nd World War.

The 1930s saw the emergence of Northern Sudanese nationalism which was largely independent of active Egyptian influence, and which represented the rise of a middling socio-economic stratum mainly representative of petty bourgeois interests but with some element of the small but fledgling commercial bourgeoisie. They initially surfaced as literary, cultural, and mutual-aid societies and were predominantly led by the *effendia* (petty administrators), the educated, and urbanized elites. Appearing first on the political scene in 1931, they made a more mature appearance with British encouragement in 1938 as the Graduate Congress. They represented a new breed, distinct from the more politically subservient traditional leaders. The Graduates Congress emerged in direct response to the Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1936. The treaty sought to give Egypt greater scope in Sudanese affairs, which had been curbed since the assassination of Sir Lee Stack in 1924, two years after Egypt was granted independence. The Congress broke-up when Mahdist and Khatmia sympathizers within the Congress disagreed over policy and objectives. These two streams represented traditional religious affiliations in the North. The Khatmia elements grouped themselves into the Ashiqqa (Brothers) in 1943 and more or less gained control over the Congress in the following year. In 1945 the Mahdists formed the UMMA party. The working classes in the North based preeminently among the railway workers became increasingly articulate during the mid-40s. The Sudanese Communist Party was formed in 1946. Together with the National Unionist Party which emerged as the natural successor to the Ashiqqa in 1952, what all these groups had in common was that they were Arabist in orientation and have consistently denied the national question by intention or default. The Sudanese Communist Party as early as 1954 advanced the position of "autonomy" for the South, however in substance this position bypassed confrontation with the fact that the Sudan was an African country with an Arab national minority.³¹

The South throughout this period remained fairly peripheral to the economic and social processes engendered by the penetration of colonial capitalism into the Northern Sudan. It has largely remained so till today.

The British revised and abandoned the Old Southern Policy formally in 1946. In his memorandum on Southern Sudan Policy of the 16th December 1946, the Civil Secretary James Robertson restated the formula to read amongst other points that;

the peoples of the Southern Sudan are distinctively African and Negroid, but that geography and economics combine (so far as can be foreseen at the present time) to render them inextricably bound to future development to the Middle-Eastern Arabized Northern Sudan.

In order to meet and contain anti-colonial nationalist consciousness in the North and in accordance to the advice of Stafford Cripps to Douglas Newbold to "not wait upon events"³², an Advisory Council was created in 1944. The central question in the politics of the North after 1945 was the issue of the eventuality of political independence, and in what shape or form independence was to come. On these matters the two dominant streams of North Sudanese politics, the NUP (Khamtia) UMMA (Mahdist) and their antecedents reflected opposing view points. While the NUP supported an arrangement of Sudanese - Egyptian federation in line with their old and much vaunted notion of "unity of the Nile Valley", the Mahdist - Ansar UMMA grouping favoured independence with some measure of Commonwealth or British linkage. Most of the cooperation for both the Advisory Council and the later Legislative Assembly of 1948 derived from the Madist elements. The success of the 1952 coup in Egypt created a favourable political atmosphere for the NUP. The threat of prejudicing their imperial prospects in Egypt, the Middle East, and the Empire East of Suez demanded remaining on collaborative terms with the Egyptians and their political sympathisers in the Sudan. American influence in British Middle East politics was not insignificant.

The October 1946 agreement (the Sidqi-Bevin Protocol) reached between the British and Egyptians undertook "to follow in the Sudan, within the framework of the unity between the Sudan and Egypt under the common crown of Egypt". It represented an attempt to buy the favour of Egypt by "selling the Sudan to Egypt".³³ While Southern opinion on these events and after were not invited, the UMMA supported demonstrations in the North helped to dampen swiftly British support for the terms of the protocol. During mid-1947 the issue was taken to the U.N. Security Council where it fell like a damp squib. The Sudanese were marginalized in these discussions. But while by and large the Northern Sudanese had some platforms and institutional forms for political expression, in the South there were neither the platforms nor the cadre of educated voices to articulate their interests.

The Juba Conference of June 1947 saw the initiation of the constitutional debates in the Sudan which have so far failed to produce a constitutional structure capable of containing the conflicting interests in Sudanese society. The principal architect of the conference James Robertson has written that;

I thought that before advising the Governor-General in Council about this matter I ought to satisfy myself about the capacity of the Southerners to sit in a Legislative Assembly and play a constructive part in the discussions and deliberations I looked upon the conference solely as a means of finding out the capabilities of the Southerners, and it was therefore quite inaccurate for some people to say later that at the Juba Conference the Southern representatives agreed to come in with the North The only decision resulting from the conference was taken by myself. I decided that I could, after what I had seen of the Southerners who attended, endorse the recommendation of the Administrative conference, and ask the Governor-General-in-Council to accept its proposal that the new Legislative Assembly should be representative of the whole Sudan.³⁴

It has been suggested that "the change of attitude of certain educated Southerners who had first spoken against any participation in the Legislative Assembly and later changed their minds was due to the efforts of Mohd. Saleh Eff. Shingeiti, a Northern member of the Conference".³⁵ This view is corroborated by Sir James Robertson, who writes that;

I guessed at the time that my friend Mohamed Shingeiti, one of the Northern Representative I took with me, had been busy during the night persuading the Southern Officials that Northern rates of pay would surely come to the South, if they agreed to come in with the North. This apparently persuaded Clement Mboro and others³⁶

Sir James Robertson's guess was apparently wrong. Clement Mboro who was the most articulate of the educated Southerners at the Conference bears a different testimony. In an interview I had with him, he recollected that in the minds of most of the Southern intelligentsia who took part in the Juba Conference it was clear that the best course of action was to throw in their lot with the North, join whatever constitutional arrangement that could be reached on the basis of the unity of the Sudan. This was quite well understood by all to be the declared course of action since 1946. Again most of the intelligentsia were of the view that separate constitutional arrangements for the South within the unity of the Sudan was undesirable. The only prominent dissenting view on this was Hassan Fertak, who felt that separate constitutional measures with one Sudan were necessary. Most of the chiefs were of a different view. Their position was that age and experience had taught them that it would be injudicious to go it together with the North. Separation was a better option. In the event, the views of the intelligentsia prevailed. Mboro remarks that they never met Shingeiti except in the conference room.³⁷

.... The one who attempted to influence us was Ibrahim Badri. He happened to have worked for many years in Bahr el Ghazal. He happened to know me, to know my father. I remember him myself and Stanislaw Paysama sitting, he pressed my hand, he said, my son, the best thing for you is to opt out of this thing with the North the Sudan is already united but for your constitutional development, you had better have your own local arrangement here. Have your own local council, your own local autonomy, but not to join in with the North straight³⁸

The Advisory Council, promulgated under the Advisory Council for the Northern Sudan Order of 1943. This Council presided over by the Governor-General and deputized by the Civil Secretary met eight times from 1945 and was annulled in 1948.

The scheduling of Juba Conference was one of the principal decisions reached at the Sudan Administrative Conference of 22 April 1946. The other concrete decision taken was the need and composition of a new Legislative Assembly to replace the Advisory Council. A British draft for the Legislature was in some details objected to by the Egyptians particularly with regard to the marginalization of Egyptian role. These objections were largely overruled by the eventual Executive Council and Legislative Assembly Ordinance. This ordinance created a 12 to 18 member Executive Council, 50 percent of whom had to be Sudanese. The Legislative Assembly was structured to have 10 nominated members, 52 Northerners and 13 Southerners. Between the institutions of the Executive Council and the Legislative Assembly work on Government legislation was shared. The Legislative Assembly which first met on 15th December 1948 under Abdalla Bey Khalil saw the formal incorporation of Southern opinion into the developing constitutional dispensation for the Sudan prior to the attainment of the status of independence. While political debate in the North was preoccupied with the formula for

independence with regard to the degree of merger, cooperation, or independence from Egypt, Southern politicians were most concerned about the sort of federal structure for an independent Sudan which would protect the economic, cultural and national interests of the Africans in the South.

U.S. anxiety matched by pressure on the British government to conclude an understanding with the Egyptian regime which could protect western interests in the Suez Canal in particular, and the Middle East in general, only served to raise Sudanese fears mainly within the UMMA that Britain might sell the Sudan for a bargain with Egypt. Thus when the Egyptian monarch announced in the Egyptian parliament that the 1899 and 1936 Anglo-Egyptian treaties were to be withdrawn the UMMA dominated Legislative Assembly went ahead and passed a resolution demanding self-government in 1951. Ensuing discussions resulted in the creation of a Constitutional Amendment Commission to propose constitutional changes. This Commission started its work on the 29th March 1951. The new, pro-Egyptian unionist political party National Front, the unionist Ashiqqa, and Khatmiya under Ali el Mirghani, supported a position of independence under the Egyptian crown rather than outright merger, and all boycotted the Constitutional Amendment Commission, as they had done with the Legislative Assembly and the Advisory Councils.³⁹

When the Egyptian government on the 8th of October 1951 abrogated the 1899 and 1936 Agreements and enunciated a constitution for the Sudan, it was rejected by all shades of political opinion in the Sudan except the Ashiqqa.⁴⁰ The British rejected the Egyptian constitution and ultimately prepared a report which served as draft for the Self-Government Statute, adopted by the Legislative Assembly on the 23rd April 1952. The British Government endorsed the draft statute in October of the same year.⁴¹

In July 1952, King Farouk was overthrown, Gen. Neguib's new administration entered into negotiations with the UMMA and reached agreement calling for self-determination for the Sudan preceded by a period of transitional government. All the Northern Sudanese parties signed an agreement with the Egyptians on January 10, 1953 endorsing the Egyptian proposals. The British outflanked these developments with an Anglo-Egyptian agreement signed on 12 February 1953. The transitional period to self-determination was not to exceed three years. The negotiations for the Anglo-Egyptian agreement excluded Southern participation on the grounds that Southerners had no political parties. This show of disregard for Southern opinion whatever the formal explanation offered was regarded with great suspicion by Southern leadership. Benjamin Lwoki, a prominent Southern leader later complained that;

Southerners were not happy when the 1953 Agreement was signed. None were present. The Legislative Assembly was dead telegrams of protest had been ignored. The terms of the Agreement had not been carried out⁴²

One of the results of the Anglo-Egyptian agreement was that a Governor-General's Commission was set-up to assist in its transition to independence. This body did not include Southern opinion. A Sudanization Committee was formed in February 1954 to localize administrative posts in the Civil Service. Of about 800 posts which were Sudanized only 4 southerners were made Assistant District Commissioners and 2 Mamurs (Executive Officers). These developments did not help to allay Southern fears regarding the intentions of the North. In 1951 a group of Southerners formed a political caucus which became the Southern Party in 1953. In the elections of November-December 1953, the National Unionists won a majority, and political moves towards independence continued amidst attempts to woo the South. The South was not to be easily charmed.

By the beginning of the 1950s Southern political awareness and combativeness was on the rise. An older group of educated Southerners who had been operating since 1947 as the Southern Sudan Intelligentsia Committee evolved in 1954 into the Liberal Party incorporating and inheriting the mantle of the Southern Party. This group found more sympathetic ear among the UMMA than the National Unionist Party. The Liberal Party at this stage carried the bulk of enlightened Southern opinion. A conference of

the Liberal Party was organized in October 1954, in Juba. There was widespread criticism of the Sudanization process. More importantly the delegates agreed by near popular acclaim that a federal constitutional status with the North should be sought. When a tour of the South was undertaken by NUP politicians led by the Prime Minister Al Azhari they received a decidedly unfriendly reception. When the government raised the salaries of police, prison officers, and some bureaucrats to match Northern scales, they left out the Article III clerical category to which class most of the petty Southern intelligentsia belonged. In mid-1955 the Liberal Party issued a call for all Southerners regardless of party affiliations to form a "Southern Block" to pursue the objectives of Southerners, particularly a federal constitution.⁴³

The general Southern position during this period favoured a federal constitution. There was a smaller group of Southerners which remained unhappy about any linkage with the North and preferred outright separation. The political atmosphere was charged. When 300 Southern workers in June and July were dismissed *en masse* from the Zande Scheme in Western Equatoria tensions mounted. On the 25 July a Southern M.P. Elia Kuze was imprisoned after an unsatisfactory trial. On the 26th, a demonstration took place in the industrial town of Nzara. Six Azande were killed and many others were wounded. From then on events moved swiftly to a violent climax.

The Torit Mutiny of the 18th August 1955, was the ringing historical testimony that the African people of the Sudan were on the brink of war against the emergent Arabist-minority state. Till then, the constitutional demand of Southerners had been largely a call for a federal status. In the ensuing years the Southern viewpoint increasingly hardened. So that, by the time the exodus of December 1960 took place, when Southern leaders like Saturnino Lohure, Ferdinand Adiang, William Deng, Joseph Oduho, Alexis Bakumba and others crossed the border into Uganda and the Congo, the view that it was impossible to coexist with the Northern elite, in a unified state was gaining currency, and separation or secession was beginning to be seriously favoured by the more militant sections of African leadership. Barely three years after the exodus of 1960, the Any Na was formed.

When in December 1955 parliament sought a unanimous vote for independence, they failed mainly because the Southern representation was apprehensive and sceptical of Northern post-independence intentions as Deng Awur Wenyin has argued;

..... the Southerners stood in the way, because they thought (and rightly) that if the situation was like that for them while the colonizers (Britain and Egypt) were still here, how would it look like after they left.⁴⁴

Vague promises to consider Southern demands were made by Northern politicians.

The Sudan became independent on 1st January 1956 under terms of the Transitional Constitution, 1956. Two years later, elections were held for a new Constituent Assembly which was opened with election procedures for a prime minister. The Liberal Party fielded Stanislaw Paysama against Abdalla Bey Khalil (UMMA) and Ismail Al Asher (NUP), knowing well they could not win but anxious to show that the independent will of the political South would not falter. The primary object of the Constituent Assembly was to prepare a permanent constitution for the Sudan. When the draft constitution was drawn up and presented to parliament, it disregarded the demand for federation.

The Southern parliamentarians walked out during the debate. The terminal statement prior to departure of the Southern leadership is significant. It drew attention to the fact that;

The South claims to federate with North, the right that the South undoubtedly possesses as a consequence of the principle of free self-determination which reason and democracy grant to a free people⁴⁵

Even more significantly, parliamentarians and notables from other predominantly African areas of the Northern Sudan, specifically the Beja nationalities of the North-East and representatives from Darfur and Kordofan advanced subsequently similar demands for federal status.⁴⁶ These developments were regarded as ominous signs and induced the narrow riverain Arabist elite led by the Prime Minister to arrange a military takeover. The Abboud regime ruthlessly pursued a policy of Arabization in the South.

The nationalist resistance of the *Any Na* grew with time but was weakened by excessive factionalism, leadership squabbles, regionalism, and the absence of a consistent and coherent ideology of national liberation. Thus by 1967, warlordism was emergent, and their tactics often tended to alienate the rural masses who formed their main support-base.

The collapse of the Abboud regime in October 1964 was a direct consequence of the failure of the regime to bring forward viable solutions. In 1965, the escalating war prompted the convention of a Round Table Conference with the African nationalist insurgents, but this failed to open the way substantially for moves to bring the expanding insurgency to an end. Rather, throughout this period the articulation of arguments for an Islamic state developed increasing stridency. These trends were keenly opposed by the Southern Front and SANU. However the telling and more decisive opposition to theocratic constitutionalism was the fledgling bush war. As one regime after the other moved centre-stage with no ability to resolve the "Southern Problem" the Free Officers Movement under Numeiri seized power on the 25th May 1969. The June 9th Declaration recognized the cultural diversity of the country this led the way towards the Addis Ababa Agreement of 27 March 1972. While the agreement gave regional autonomy to the South, it addressed the problem in largely regionalist terms. Questions of religion, culture and nationality were given scant attention. Numeiri forged the Sudan Socialist Union as an instrument of civil rule and political machinery in the absence of political parties. In 1973, elections were held for the First Peoples National Assembly. Its function was to propose a permanent constitution. The resulting constitution while conceding regional autonomy placed Islam centrally in the state and adopted Islamic Law and custom as the main sources of legislation.

Within ten years, the Numeiri regime made a full circle. Piece by piece the Numeiri regime dismantled the basis and structure of regional autonomy for the South. Throughout the 1970s the Numeiri government made an adept use of the principle of divide and rule in the South while exploiting for this purpose latent ethnic and regionalist feelings of people caught up in the holism of their largely precapitalist social world. The main focus of such strife and divisiveness which was keenly exploited by the Numeiri regime was the rivalry between the people of the Upper Nile and Bahr el Ghazal on one hand and Equatorians on the other. One key factor making the Southerners particularly susceptible to the politics of divide and rule was the class character of Southern leadership. Consisting largely of petty bureaucratic elements, they relied on government appointments and favours in order to maintain their socio-economic status. Indeed much of the redivision campaign can be understood in terms of the expansion of this class, competition for positions, and the expansion of state bureaucratic positions which redivision implicitly promised. Above all, redivision of the South in June 1983 represented an open contradiction to the Addis Ababa Agreement, and the Southern Regional Self-Government Act, 1972.

The implementation of the Jonglei Canal Scheme to bring water to Egypt and drain the Sudd was taken up without proper political consensus in the South, and against informed ecological advice. Equally opportunistic was the project for the Kosti oil refinery which attempted to situate the refining of oil found in the South out of the region, and then piped out through the Red Sea coast at Port Sudan.

In 1980, some of the Northern parliamentarians in concert with the government redrew the boundaries between the North and the South, in order to bring key areas of Gogrial district in the Bahr el Ghazal and the oil-rich areas of Lakes province, the Renk area, into the North. Despite a protest walkout by Southern members of the National Assembly the new map was endorsed.

The imposition of Sharia Law in September 1983 was the most dramatic arbitrary act by the Numeiri regime against the rights of the non-Muslim Africans of the Sudan. However by then the systematic about-turn on all agreements and understandings regarding Southern autonomy had already triggered off increased armed rebellion, and the SPLA/SPLM emerged to lead African national resistance. Seventeen years later, this war continues with no end in sight, but with different factions of African nationalist resistance prosecuting the war against a Muslim fundamentalist and pro-Arabist regime. In a letter (14th May 1993), I received from a leading Southern Sudanese academic, Prof. George Lako Tombe, he wrote in indignation that;

The Sudan Government is getting slyer and slyer by the day. At present it is holding 'peace talks' simultaneously with the Garang faction in Abuja and the Nassir faction in Nairobi. Both 'talks' are doomed to failure since no genuine agreement can be reached on the fundamental issues of nationality, state and religion, natural resources and development etc. The fundamentalists in Khartoum feel they can win militarily (at least disarray the already divided SPLA/SPLM; and so these 'peace talks' are mere gimmicks to dissuade the United States and the West from intervening in Southern Sudan, Somalia style. With the backing of Iran they are even more determined to hold on to Southern Sudan as an important launch-pad for the Islamization (and maybe Arabization) of Africa.⁴⁷

These views are common among Southern Sudanese and many African observers who know the Sudan. The African nationalist resistance in the Sudan has been in one sense, its own worst enemy. Poor democratic and transparent practice, warlord mentality and demagogic tendencies grafted on narrow localist and ethnic solidarities have inhibited the ability of the resistance to grow and produce the results it has set itself.

These problems are further complicated by the diffidence and silence of African states to express their disapproval of the course of events in the Sudan. Historically, there is evidence that since the collapse of the 1965 Round Table Conference, after which the Nkrumah regime started throwing its support behind the African resistance in the Sudan, many other African countries have more quietly than openly supported the African resistance in the Sudan. This has often because of OAU protocols been more covert than overt. In this respect, the future may hold other approaches. It is unlikely that African states will forever remain silent on the Sudanese conflict.

Within the Movement itself, the most significant crack in the front of the resistance occurred in 1991 in Nassir, with the emergence and declaration of an anti-Garang splinter group led by Riek Machar and Lam Akol. This crack will be judged by history as having seriously set back the African resistance.

In the most important account of the problems that have appeared in the movement since 1983, for which the author won the 1999 *Noma Award*, the author Peter Adwok Nyaba writes that,

From its inception in 1983 to the Nassir Declaration in 1991, the SPLM/A policies and practices ran counter to the expectation of many who had joined it. However, opposition to and agitation against these policies remained at the level of the demand for democratic reforms. The idea of the change of the SPLM/A leadership and the very concept of its consummation in a military coup was something which Dr Riek Machar and Dr Lam Akol introduced. It was something quite new, given the fact that the two were members of the SPLM/A High Command, a position that placed them very close to Dr John Garang, and therefore were not part of the agitation against the situation in the

Movement. These men started to identify with the struggle for internal reforms only when they fell out with Dr John Garang. The idea itself of ousting the leader of a guerrilla army in a coup, as it turned out later, was an ill-conceived adventure and, in fact, it marked a complete departure from the Movement's objective.⁴⁸

This particular split in the African nationalist front has been tragic and has led eventually to the surrender of Riek Machar to the Nationalist Islamic Front (NIF). Adwok Nyaba took a principled position towards these developments. Initially he had supported the Nassir group but subsequently changed when he realized the mistake this represented. Adwok writes that,

It is true the SPLM/A was beset by serious internal contradictions which could have wrecked it into many pieces. Many communities had been completely alienated by the action of some SPLA officers and men and, in fact, some of them decided to cross over and allied with the enemy. For instance, the Murles rebelled against the SPLA in 1989, the Mandari had done so as early as 1984, the Toposa and the Didinga also turned against the SPLA in 1986 and 1990, etc. In the course of time, and because of the neglect of the objective laws of the people's war and national liberation, the SPLA sometimes posed like an anti-people military machine. How could we explain that the people were running away from their liberation movement? It cannot be explained away that some of these tribes did not want the SPLM/A because they perceived it to be a Dinka movement.⁴⁹

For observers who have studied and followed the course of the conflict in the Sudan since its inception in the late-fifties, one of the most striking things about the history of a conflict is the poverty of a rational or scientific approach to the analysis and prosecution of war and the autocratic tendencies which have been displayed by the various warlords the African resistance has thrown up in fifty-odd years. The suffering and dehumanisation of the masses on the ground, cannot be captured in words, and it is possible to say that the warlords of the African resistance are in a sense just as criminal as the ruthless Islamic fundamentalist regime based in Khartoum.⁵⁰ We are told that,

"The contradictions that gripped the Nassir faction, SPLM/A-United, and later SSIM/A triggered off the process of reconciliation and reunification of the Movement. The 'Reconciliation and Reunification Agreement between SPLM/A and Southern Sudan Independence Movement/Army (SSIM/A) Forces of Unity', was signed by Salva Kiir Mayardit, Deputy Chairman National Liberation Council of SPLM and SPLA Chief of Staff, and John Luk, Chairman of the Provisional Executive Council, SSIM and Commander-in-Chief of SSIA, on April 27th 1996, marking the beginning of this process of reconciliation, reunification and reintegration of forces in accordance with the Lafon Declaration. Since then, there has been considerable change of roles and the line of political alliances within the splinter group has shifted so much so that in the course of five years of the existence of the Nassir faction and its political variations SPLM/A there has been a fundamental realignment of forces favourable to the struggle for freedom.⁵¹

Concluding Remarks

The contradictions of Sudanese society which have for decades kept the fires of war burning arise out of the fact that, the sharp class struggles run as it were parallel to the national and cultural cleavages within the society. The overwhelming proportion of the African people of the Sudan are concentrated in the lower rungs of the class structure. The small group of elevated Africans are of the bureaucratic bourgeois element and in general lack the capital and resources to develop along independent social lines. My view today informed by Sudanese history as we know it is that, the Sudanese, in general, and Southerners, in particular, should democratically through a referendum, be given a chance to decide if the African areas should be separated from the Arab areas, or continue in some sort of federal arrangement. Their decision should then be underwritten by the world body.⁵² Complicating the Sudanese situation further is the fact that it appears that the oil reserves in the area of the Southern Sudan may equal Saudi/Gulf levels. This has attracted a motley of external interests whose concerns may be more access to these oil reserves than the rights of the people of the Sudan. This point was well made in an article entitled *Sudan uses missiles against rebels and Bush can't decide which like to take*, which appeared in *The Guardian*, London, August 14. In reaction to this article, two British parliamentarians made the following response:

As you point out the extraction of oil in Sudan, in which European and north American companies are closely involved, offers nothing but further violence to the Sudanese population. Not only does it fund the war, but it is the chief motive behind the Sudanese government's violent displacement of civilians from the oil fields. Given that British firms are involved in the pumping of oil in Sudan, needs to clarify its position on investment in the area. The indecision of the US is mirrored by the British government's lack of a clear policy. Sudan is a former British protectorate which has been wracked by civil war for most of its independence, between the Arab north and the diverse African south. The government must use its influence to re-energise the peace process and do all it can to help bring stability and development to this country, to which we have a strong historical responsibility.⁵³

The Sudan may ultimately be a test case for the future of Afro-Arab relations in the Borderlands. The whipping up of Arab sentiment in favour of the policies of Arabization and war in the Sudan is in the long run a dangerous approach to the question of Afro-Arab relations in the Afro-Arab Borderlands. The SPLM/A in 1988 declared that :

The Arab racist cry in the Sudan is clear and audible to everyone, and that is, *Islam and Arabism are in danger*, and that a *New Zanzibar* is being created in the Sudan by the SPLM/SPLA. All we are doing in our struggle is fighting the racists and oppressors that constitute the ruling clique in Khartoum, and which exploits and survives on Islam in order to exploit and oppress the Africans in the Sudan. ... It is clear from the incidence of Kurmuk and Geisan that the ruling Arab class in Khartoum are for the internationalization of the conflict in the Sudan. The government armed forces were able to recapture the two towns with the help of Libya, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Oman Sultanate, PLO, Jordan, the Gulf States and indirectly Egypt. The motive for the intervention of the above countries in the war in the Sudan is simply their commitment towards the support of Islam and Arabism in the Sudan. This is

being done by these Arab countries in complete disregards as to the values of the Afro-Arab solidarity on the continent.⁵⁴

That same year (1988), Olusegun Obasanjo and Francis Mading Deng in a report they jointly put out on a peace initiative stated that "the conflict was being increasingly internationalized, especially along Arab-African and Islamic-Christian with strategic and ideological overtones that tended to complicate and aggravate the situation."⁵⁵

Africa's longest war needs to be brought to a close. Self-determination and democracy should be the guiding principles for settling this conflict.

NOTES :

1. See, Ethnic Tensions in Mauritania. *Africa News*. September 29, 1986, pp.14-15. See also, Mauritania: The Oppressed. *Africa Confidential*. London. Vol.27. No.23, 1986, Pp. 5-6.
2. See, Slavery and Slave-Like Practices: Report of the Mission to Mauritania. United Nations. Economic and Social Council. Commission on Human Rights. New York. July 2, 1984.
3. John Gunther. Inside Africa. Hamish Hamilton. London. 1955. P.858.
4. Francis. M. Deng. Scramble for Souls : Religious Intervention Among the Dinka in Sudan. CODESRIA/Emory University Workshop. (Mimeo). Dakar, 19-21 May, 1997. P.2.
5. Ibid. Pp. 2-3. The following footnote in Deng's paper is useful : "In his article 'The Hadendowa', *Sudan, Notes and Records [SNR]*. Vol. 20. No. 20. 1937. pp. 147-208. R.R.H. Owen observes a practice whereby the Hadendowa try to trace their ancestry to Arabia even if artificially . "An Arabized Hamitic tribe needs its *sheriffi* ancestor as much as a soap or tinnert lobster king needs his Norman blood. The origin of the Hadendowa, therefore was on this wise". P. 1884. In "The Rubatab". *SNR*. Vol. 29. No. 1. 1936. pp. 162-67. F.C.S. Lorimer also observes that the Rubatab "claim to be pure Abbassium descended directly from Al Abbas, the uncle of the Prophet, and finding their race factor in the Beni Abbas branch of the Koraysh, the Prophet's own tribe ..." p. 162. However, this claim to Abbassid ancestry is denied by Harold A. McMichael in *A History of the Arabs in the Sudan*. Barnes & Noble. 1967. For various genealogies claiming Arab descent from Arabia see also Yusuf Fadl Hasan, *The Arabs and the Sudan: From the Seventh to the Early Sixteenth Century*. Edinburgh University Press. 1967. Chap. 5.
6. According to the 1956 Census Results.
7. F. Van Zyl Slabbert. The Last White Parliament. Johannesburg. 1985. p.92. Van Zyl Slabbert was discussing the work of the German social scientist Theo Hanf.
8. See Giovanni Vantini. Christianity in the Sudan. 1981. p.33.
9. Giovanni Vantini. Ibid. p.205.
10. African Nationalism and the Origins of War in the Sudan. *Lesotho Law Journal*. Vol.2. No.2. 1986.
11. Interview. Joseph Oduho. 19th August 1982. Juba.

12. Joseph Oduho. Ibid.
13. Interview, Abdel Rahman Sule. 7th June 1983. Juba.
14. Interview, Clement Mboro. 17th August 1983. Nairobi.
15. Interview, Joseph Oduho. Op cit.
16. H.A. MacMichael. A History of the Arabs in the Sudan. Cambridge. 1922. p.13.
17. A.R. Thiik. Political and Constitutional Crisis in the Sudan. Sudan Today. London. 1985.
18. The Earl of Cromer. Modern Egypt. Vol.2. London. 1908. p.112
19. The Earl of Cromer. Ibid. p.113.
20. P.M. Holt and M.W. Daly. The History of the Sudan (3rd Edition). London. 1979. p.136-137.
21. P.M. Holt and M.W. Daly. Ibid.
22. Peter Woodward. Condominium and Sudanese Nationalism. London. 1979. p.11.
23. Letter of Lloyd to Arthur Henderson. 19.6.29. Quoted here from Peter Woodward. Ibid.
24. Interview, Joseph Oduho. Op cit.
25. K.D.D. Henderson. Sudan Republic. New York. 1965. p.162.
26. K.D.D. Henderson. Ibid. p.164.
27. K.D.D. Henderson. Ibid.
28. M.O. Beshir. The Southern Sudan. Background to Conflict. Khartoum. 1979. p.59.
29. Quoted here from M.O. Beshir. Ibid.
30. Report on the Administration, Finances and Condition of the Sudan in 1937.
31. It is significant that in substance, the rationalizations of the Sudanese Communist Party do not differ from the since 1928 formulation on the national question in South Africa as understood by Sidney Bunting.
32. Peter Woodward. Op cit. p.33.
33. James Robertson. Op cit. p.96.
34. James Robertson. Transition in Africa. Op cit. p.107.
35. M.O. Beshir. The Southern Sudan. Op cit. p.66. The author indicates as sources, Letter from the Governor, Bahr el Ghazal, to District Commissioners. September 23rd, 1947. Sudan Government Archives.
36. James Robertson. Transition in Africa. London. 1974. p.108.
37. Interview, Clement Mboro, Nairobi. 17th August 1983.

38. Interview, Clement Mboro. Ibid.
39. See P.M. Holt and M.W. Daly. Op cit. p.154-155.
40. Muddathir Abd Al Rahim. Imperialism and Nationalism in the Sudan. Oxford. 1969. p.192.
41. P.M. Holt and M.W. Daly. Op cit. p.155.
42. Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Southern Sudan Disturbances of August 1955.
43. Ibid.
44. Deng Aweng Wenyin. The Southern Sudan and the Making of a Permanent Constitution in the Sudan. Mimeo. Khartoum. 1985.
45. Quoted here from A.R. Thiik. Political and Constitutional Crisis in the Sudan. *Sudan Today*. London. 1985. p.15.
46. A.R. Thiik. Ibid.
47. George Lako Tombe, Letter from Nairobi (14th May 1993).
48. P.A. Nyaba. The Politics of Liberation in South Sudan. An Insider's View. Kampala. 1997. P.1.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid. P.5. Again Adwok tells us that : "The internecine fighting that gripped the South following the Nassir Declaration did not endear many people in South Sudan to the Nassir coup, least those who themselves were involved directly by these intellectual commanders. In the Akobo conference of reconciliation and peace between the Lou and Jikany in September 1994, one Nuer elder wondered loudly why the wars instigated by the intellectuals do not seem to end."
51. Ibid. P.8.
52. See also Francis M. Deng. "Mediating the Sudanese Conflict (Center for Strategic and International Studies) *CSIS Africa Notes*, No. 169. (Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies) February 1995: and Deng, "The Sudan: Stop the Carnage". *The Brookings Review*, Winter 1994. Pp. 7-11.
53. Hilton Dawson (MP), Jenny Tonge (MP), (Associates parliamentary group on Sudan.) UK Must act on Sudan. *The Guardian*. London. August 16, 2001. P. 19. See also, South Africa backs off from oil deal with Sudan. *The Sunday Independent* (South Africa). July 29, 2001. P.3.
54. Briefing on the Conflict of the Sudan to the Foreign Ministers of the Frontline States of Southern Africa (SADCC - Zimbabwe, Zambia, Angola, Mozambique, Tanzania, Malawi, plus Swaziland and Lesotho). General Headquarters Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement and Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army. 28th July 1988. Pp. 6-10.
55. Olusegun Obasanjo and Francis Mading Deng. The Search for Peace and Unity in the Sudan: The Challenge of Maintaining the Peace Process. Report on the Second Round of a Personal Peace Initiative. *Inter-Action Council Document IAC/PB/88/6*. March 1988. P.2.