Sudanese Elites: How the Riverain Groups Achieved Political Dominance and

their Impact on the Sudanese State

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Nile riverain Arab tribes, particularly the Ja'aliyiin, Shaygiyya, and the Dangala, have dominated Sudan's political, economic, and security sectors since precolonial days. How have these groups achieved dominance despite being minorities, and how has their continued rule impacted the Sudanese state? I argue that the dominance of these tribes has come at the expense of peace as over the years the Sudanese elite has sought to impose its narrow version of Arab-Islamic "Sudanese" identity on the country by undermining the purported autonomous nature of state institutions. More importantly, the imposition of this Arab-Islamic identity has alienated non-Arabs and non-Muslims and weakened their connection to the Sudanese state, which has led to conflict.[1] The northern Arabs have asserted this identity primarily to maintain and reinforce their hegemony as a minority government but also in part because of their own identity struggle. The rest of the Arab world looks down upon Sudan as an African, not Arab country, something the Sudanese elite deeply resent. Construction of a new Sudanese identity not based on this narrow elite vision may be the only way to mitigate conflict in Sudan in the future.

Ethnicity in Identity Formation and Nationalism

There are several theories about identity formation and the role of ethnicity and nationality in identity formation in Africa. Many scholars dismiss the view of Clifford Geertz, who asserts that primordial attachment to kin, family group, or tribe is a critical element of human behavior.[2] Rather, they argue that ethnicity in Africa is a colonial construct, in that the Europeans rigidly defined groups whose identities previously were fluid. Bruce Berman, Dickson Eyoh, and Will Kymlicka note that colonial bureaucracies played a key role in the construction of "tribal" identities out of kinship groups and political units, building upon

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[1] Namely the 1955-1972 north-south civil war, the 1983-2005 north-south civil war, the low-intensity conflict in the east from 1996-2006, and the ongoing Darfur war.

[2] Hyden, Goran. *African Politics in Comparative Perspective,* Cambridge University Press, 2006, pgs. 186-187.

indigenous power relations to facilitate indirect rule.[3] These tribal identities are the products of contests over wealth and power, particularly access to state resources.[4] David Welsh argues that while ethnicity, or rather, ethnic identity may have been a product of the colonial era, its major stimulus comes from competitive politics.[5] In other words, ethnic identity has been used as a political resource. In Sudan, identity has become a means to achieve power and resources. People identify with an ethnic group that can bring them economic and political benefits. Frances Deng, a prominent Sudanese diplomat and scholar, notes that in Sudan, such factors have moved from the realm of benign self-perception to the politically contested stage of national symbolism with the implications of shaping and sharing power, wealth, and other national values.[6]

Those in power often use narratives to justify their authority. M.A. Mohamed Salih defines narratives as modern or traditional discursive forms employed by authors to explain, justify, or subvert a system of authority or dominance. According to Salih, the prevailing discourse magnifies the political role of the dominant ethnic group and its relation to the state. This group thus uses narratives to maintain the status quo and reinforce the dominance of the group. This also can contribute to the marginalization of minority groups, who can be seen as posing a threat to the nation-building project.[7] This paper will examine the use of narratives by the northern Arab Sudanese elite to justify and to maintain their monopoly on power.

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[3] Berman, Bruce., Eyoh, Dickson., and Kymlicka, Will. "Ethnicity and the Politics of Democratic Nation-Building in Africa," in *Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa*, Ohio University Press, 2004, pg. 5.

[4] Berman, Eyoh, and Kymlicka. "African Ethnic Politics and the Paradoxes of Democratic Development," in *Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa*, pg. 317.

[5] Welsh, David. "Ethnicity in Sub-Saharan Africa," *International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1944-), Vol. 72, No 3, Ethnicity in International Relations (Jul., 1996), pg. 485.

[6] Deng, Francis M. *War of Visions: Conflict of Identities in the Sudan*, The Brookings Institution, 1995, pg. 4.

[7] Salih, M.A. Mohamed. "Other Identities: Politics of Sudanese Discursive Narratives," *Identities*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1998), pgs. 5-6.

Promoting nationalism is another way to strengthen and preserve identity. Ann Mosley Lesch describes the Sudan's north-south conflict as a clash between two divergent views of nationalism. The northern elite favors the ethnic nationalist approach in which the state corresponds with one self-defined ethnic group, the riverain Arabs. On the other hand, the south favors the territorial model, which is based on the idea that residents in a particular territory have a common allegiance to the state, regardless of ethnicity.[8] Donald Rothchild and Alexander Groth maintain that ethnonationalistic groups promote their identity through the exclusiveness of the national group's definition based upon particular criteria, and through the maintenance, internal cohesion, and loyalty to the group based on perceived outside threats.[9] These are classic strategies employed by the northern Sudanese elite, and the conflict between these two theories of nationality can help explain the Sudanese conflict.

Sudan, Africa's largest country, has more than 50 ethnic groups, and the largest (self-defined) groups are Arabs, Dinka, Beja, Nuer, Nuba, Nubian, and Fur.[10] Sudanese identity remains a complicated issue. Broadly speaking, modern-day Sudanese identity is divided into Arab vs. African, Muslim vs. Christian, northerner vs. southerner, to name a few. In this paper, I will focus on the northern center: the ruling riverain tribes and how they maintain power in Sudan. Arabs comprise only 40 percent of the population, and the riverain Arab tribes make up an even smaller percentage. The riverain tribes, as defined by R.S. O'Fahey, refer to the inhabitants of the Nile Valley between Aswan and Khartoum as well as those living in Gezeira, between the Niles and to the east and west in the savannahs. O'Fahey describes them as

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[8] Lesch, Ann Mosley. *The Sudan-Contested National Identities,* Indiana University Press, 1998, pgs. 6-7.
[9] Rothchild, Donald, and Groth, Alexander J. "Pathological Dimensions of Domestic and International Identity," *Political Science Quarterly,* Vol. 110, No. 1 (Spring, 1995), pgs. 70-71.
[10] Lesch, pg. 15.

"overwhelmingly Arabic-speaking, wholly Muslim, and to a greater or lesser degree identify themselves genealogically or culturally as Arab."[11]

Sudanese Arabs share ethnic and religious identities. While many Arab groups claim genealogical lines dating back to the Prophet Muhammad, several northern "Arab" groups are Arabized African groups. They have adopted Arab language, culture, and Islam over centuries of contact with Arab traders and merchants as well as Arab holy men.[12] Groups such as the Ja'aliyiin and the Dangala can claim to be "pure" Arabs; indeed, they claim to be descendants of the Ismailite tribes in northern Arabia. Non-Arab groups such as the Nubians, Beja, Nuba, and Fur have adopted Arab customs, the Arabic language, and converted to Islam.[13] As a result, over time it has become difficult, if not impossible, to look at someone and declare them "Arab" or "African."

The religious identity of Arabs is generally based on Sufism, a largely peaceful tradition. The Arabs also are overwhelmingly Sunni Muslims. There are several religious fraternities known as *tariqas*, each centered around the personalities and teachings of a particular saint, Sheikh, or master. The *tariqas* exist within Sunni and Shia Islam, not as separate sects.[14] Religion and politics are intertwined in Muslim societies, and this has resulted in rivalries between the various *tariqas*, particularly the Mahdiyya and Khatmiyya traditions. The Mahdi tradition (Mahdiyya) advocated a purist form of Islam and rejected Sufism and the *tariqas*. The powerful northern Mirghani family embraced the Khatmiyya tradition of Sufism, a more moderate tradition closely associated with Egypt.[15] The northern educated elite tend to be tied to

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[11] O'Fahey, R.S. "Islam and Ethnicity in Sudan," *Journal of Religion in Africa,* Vol. 26, Fasc. 3 (Aug., 1996), pg. 259.
[12] Deng, pgs. 400-401.
[13] Wai, Dunstan M. *The African-Arab Conflict in the Sudan*, Africana Publishing Company, 1981, pgs. 20-23.
[14] Al-Rahim, Muddathir 'Abd. "Arabism, Africanism, and Self-Identification in the Sudan," *The Journal of Modern African Studies,* Vol. 8, No. 2 (July 1970), pg. 239.
[15] Al-Rahim, pgs. 239-241.

one of the *tariqas,* which are powerful in Sudanese politics. However, most Sudanese outside of Khartoum, particularly those in the northern provinces of Darfur and Kordofan, follow a more mystical, Africanized form of Islam based on the Sufi tradition. While many are devout Muslims, they do not follow the strict interpretations of Islam practiced by the northern riverain Arabs. The numerous northern ethnic groups have an identity based on language, religion, and racial and ideological identification with Arabs from North Africa and the Middle East that has helped unify them.[16]

Historical Background

From 1500 to roughly 1800, most of what is now present-day Sudan was considered the Funj Sultanate of Sinnar. The Funj, an Arabized and Islamicized group, overthrew the Christian Kingdom of Nubia in 1504 and institutionalized Islam as the national religion.[17] The Sinnar Sultanate and its sister sultanate in Darfur were well-known slave-raiding kingdoms, and the Muslim slave-raiders of Sinnar and Darfur became a dominant regional force. Islam and Arabism were seen as the carriers of civilization, as Amir Idris calls it, and those who were not part of either were subject to subordination, exploitation, and enslavement. At the time, agricultural and other "menial" labor was considered socially humiliating. Thus non-Muslim and non-Arab slaves, who did much of that work, were looked down upon and the Arabic-speaking riverain Muslims came to see themselves as culturally superior.[18]

This situation continued with the Turco-Egyptian conquest of Sudan in 1821, which helped to make it a more centralized state. Prior to the Turco-Egyptian invasions, what is now southern Sudan had virtually no contact with the north. Geographical barriers ensured that Arab

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[16] Wai, pg. 23.
[17] Idris, Amir H. *Conflict and Politics of Identity in Sudan*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, pg. 26.
[18] Idris, pgs. 18, 27.

influence did not penetrate the south in any appreciable way until the Turks and the Egyptians increased their slave raids into the south. The Turks and the Egyptians introduced modern infrastructure such as schools and roads but also turned slave-raiding, particularly in the southern regions, into a state-organized and sanctioned activity.[19] Arab settlers moved in and exploited the existing conflicts between the African groups.[20] The Turco-Egyptian regime ended with the arrival of Muhammad Ahmad, who claimed to be the Mahdi ("Rightly Guided One" or a prophet). The Madhi movement was a politico-religious movement based on the idea that the Mahdi would guide the believers into power and return society to the practice of the purest forms of Islam.[21] In 1883, Ahmad and his troops defeated the Turks and the Egyptians in a final battle at El-Obeid (Kordofan) and established a Mahdist state based on Islamic principles.[22]

The Colonial Period

In 1898, a joint Anglo-Egyptian military force ousted the Mahdi regime and established the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium in what is now present-day Sudan (excluding the independent Sultanate of Darfur, which would not be incorporated into the Condominium until 1916). In the beginning, the British tolerated slavery, working with the powerful Muslim slave traders to consolidate the state.[23] The British saw the slave traders, the precolonial elites, as their largest threat. To avoid anti-colonial resistance, they gave them a stake in the system, favoring a narrow elite within the Arab communities.[24] The British viewed the Arabs as "civilized" and favored self-defined "Arabs" for education and administrative jobs while those of "slave descent"

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[19] Idris, pgs. 28-29.
[20] Wai, pgs. 27-28.
[21] Lesch, pg. 28.
[22] Smith, Stephen. "Sudan's History in Regional Context: A Timeline," October 2007, unpublished, available by email.
[23] Idris, pg. 33.
[24] Sharkey, Heather J. "Arab Identity and Ideology in Sudan: The Politics of Language, Ethnicity, and Race," *African Affairs*, Vol. 107, No. 426 (December 2007), pg. 21.

(blacks) were given more menial jobs or joined the army. Gordon College in Khartoum, one of the few institutions of higher education, did not admit southerners until 1944. At the same time Arabs were being favored in the colonial center, Arab merchants and local government officials spread the riverain Arab-Islamic identity (meaning speaking Arabic, the riverain manner of dress, and restrictions on women) to the east, west, and south.[25] A specific Arab-Islamic identity based on the riverain Arabs' practice of Islam already had begun to spread throughout Sudan.

Socio-economic development during colonial times largely was concentrated around Khartoum and in the Northern Province, particularly with regard to commercial investments, social services, and education. Elfatih A. A/Salam notes that this resulted in the emergence of a national middle class that had monopoly power over the economic, administrative, and political activities in the center of the country. It also meant that ethnic groups not part of that middle class had difficulty in challenging those in power, in political and economic terms.[26] While A/Salam refers to it as a "national" middle class, there was no country-wide middle class. Rather, there was a small middle class who came from the northern riverain areas and dominated the administrative, political, and economic apparatus in central Sudan, where power was held. Historically, the center controlled political and economic power at the expense of the periphery.

The British looked at Sudan as having an Arab north and an African south and they ruled the country in such a manner. By governing the south separately, it was imagined the south would one day either be its own independent region or be integrated into British East Africa (now Kenya). The British discouraged the use of Arabic in the south, banned Islamic religious practices, replaced Arab administrators with indigenous ones, and instituted a policy of using the

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[25] O'Fahey, pg. 261.
[26] A/Salam, Elfatih, A. "The Politicization of Ethnic Sentiments in the Sudan: Implications for Nation-Building," *Journal of Third World Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Spring 2008), pgs. 118-119.

local language in primary schools.[27] In 1922, the British introduced the Closed District

Ordinance, prohibiting people from traveling to the south or the west without permits. Idris

believes this policy sought to eradicate Arab-Islamic influences and maintain the African identity

in the south. He argues that while Arabism was a product of enslavement, Africanism was a

product of colonial indirect rule, in that colonial rulers reinforced the indigenous "African"

system instead of imposing their own.[28] Peter Kok describes the legacy of British colonialism as

the consolidation of an Arab-Islamic hegemonic bloc in north-central Sudan and the conservation

of underdevelopment and tribal peculiarities in the south.[29] While the north viewed itself as a

single, homogenous, cultural identity superior to the rest of the country, the British fostered a

separate southern identity, thus cementing existing differences and exacerbating the divide

between the two regions.

The politicizing of identities began during the colonial period in the early 1900s. Jay

O'Brien discusses how ethnic labels were used in reference to lifestyle. For example, "Arabs"

were nomadic pastoralists and "Baggara" were cattle-herders.[30] The colonial state

institutionalized the racial identities of "Arab" and "African" through indirect rule and their

policy of ruling the north and the south separately.[31] Idris argues that "Arab" and "African" thus

were transformed from flexible cultural identities to rigid political identities because of state

policies. He notes that colonial rule institutionalized ethnic and racial entitlements, rights, and

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[27] Wai, pg. 35, and Burton, John W. "Development and Cultural Genocide in the Sudan," *The Journal of Modern African Studies,* Vol. 29, No. 3 (Sep., 1991), pg. 512.

[28] Idris, pgs. 39, 110.

[29] Kok, Peter. "Between Radically Restructuring and Deconstruction of State Systems," *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 23, No. 70 (Dec., 1996), pg. 556.

[30] O'Brien, Jay. "Power and the Discourse of Ethnicity in Sudan," in *Ethnicity and the State in Eastern Africa.*, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1998, pg. 66.

[31] Darfur was not incorporated into the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium until 1916 and then was ruled as part of the north, although with even more colonial neglect.

privileges, and consequently created unequal forms of citizenship. This resulted in political

tension and violence as groups became marginalized and faced discrimination.[32]

At independence, the British shocked the southerners and decided the south and the north

should gain independence as one country. The British and northern elites made this decision

without southern input.[33] The northerners resented separate rule for the south, believing the

south eventually would have become Arabized and Islamicized.[34] The decision put the

southerners at a distinct disadvantage as they were ill-placed to gain meaningful roles in the

political and economic life of a newly independent, united Sudan. In 1955, violence broke out

when the south rebelled against northern domination.[35] The southerners viewed the northern

government as a colonizer and believed their identity would be ignored in the newly independent

state.[36]

Sudanese Nationalism

What it meant to be "Sudanese" evolved over time, particularly during the colonial

period. The term "Sudan" was first found in the writings of early Muslim geographers who

referred to the area south of the Sahara desert as *Bilad al-Sudan* or "Land of the Blacks."

Through the slave trade, and the fact that the vast majority of slaves were black, the term

"Sudanese" came to take on connotations of servitude. Until at least 1900, northerners used the

term "Sudanese" to refer to people from the non-Muslim, non-Arab areas that were the historical

targets of slave-raids. During the 1920s and 1930s, the northern elites started using "Sudanese"

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[32] Idris, pgs. 10-11, 20.
[33] Sharkey, Heather J. *Living With Colonialism: Nationalism and Culture in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan,* University of California Press, 2003, pg. 92.
[34] Lesch, pg. 33.
[35] Deng, pg. 177.
[36] Wai, pg. 8.

to refer to a national concept. Heather Sharkey argues that by favoring the self-defined Arabs at the expense of all the other groups, the British cultivated a group of men who had the educational and political capabilities to develop nationalist ideologies.[37] It is significant that the majority of educated Sudanese belonged to the northern riverain groups. During the 1930s and 1940s, when nationalism became a dominant force in Sudan, the educated elite defined the terms of the discourse.

Idris describes Sudanese nationalism as being less about fighting the British and more about competing political claims for the identity of the post-colonial state.[38] The northern riverain Arabs viewed themselves as the natural successors to the British and began to craft a "Sudanese" identity based on their own identity. Sharkey describes a notion that arose in the 1940s, articulated by future Prime Minister Muhammad Ahmad Majub, in which Sudan was defined by its hybridism of Arab and African identity, while its cultural superiority was attributed to the "Arabs."[39] History was constructed to portray the northern elite's view of the past, placing themselves at the center of the Sudanese historical narrative. The discourse they used was an expansion of the ideology about the historical right of Arabized Islamic peoples to rule over non-Muslim and non-Arab groups.[40] Writings and speeches at this time were filled with language denoting Arabic and Islam as the pillars of the nation.[41] The northern elite used this narrative to justify and legitimize their hold on power.[42] They also used their narrow Arab-Islamic identity to attempt to unite several disparate ethnic groups under the guise of

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[37] Sharkey (2007), pgs. 29-30 and Sharkey (2003), pgs. 17-18, 23-24.
[38] Idris, pg. 44.
[39] Sharkey (2007), pg. 33.
[40] Idris, pg. 17.
[41] Sharkey (2003), pg. 11.
[42] Idris, pg. 15.

nationalism. That the vision was meant to be a unifying one was of little consolation to those who did not fit into that narrow category, particularly those living in southern Sudan and Darfur.

In the 1940s and 1950s as Sudanese nationalists grew more vocal, the British attempted to appease them by increasing the number of Sudanese in the government, a policy that was known as "Sudanization."[43] This policy allowed the educated northern elite to dominate the country's administrative structure, with few other Sudanese groups gaining entry. Thus when Sudan gained independence, the northern elite already were entrenched in the government.

Citizenship also was a tool for the northern elite to construct its Sudanese identity. The 1948 Nationality Act defined citizenship in terms of membership in ethnic groups living within the territorial boundaries established by Anglo-Egyptian rule in 1898. Being born in Sudan, even to parents born in Sudan, did not necessarily entitle someone to Sudanese citizenship.[44] In practice, someone who belonged to an Arab tribe was granted citizenship whereas being a member (or being suspected of being a member) of a tribe that had West African origins could disqualify that person from Sudanese citizenship, even if his/her family had been there long before the British came.[45]

The Identity of Independent Sudan

Once Sudan gained independence in 1956, the northern elite began a policy of Arabization to unify the country following the divisive rule by the British. General Ibrahim Abboud, in power from 1958 to 1964, championed Arabic and Islam and promoted religious and cultural homogeneity without regard for the differences in the south and elsewhere in Sudan.[46]

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[43] Sharkey (2003), pg. 73.
[44] Idris, pg. 95.
[45] O'Brien, pg. 67.
[46] A/Salam, pg. 120.

He Arabized southern administrative and educational institutions, expelled all foreign

missionaries, and introduced Arabic as the main language in Sudan.[47] Nationalism and national

integration was equated with Arabization and Islamization, something which would be true in

subsequent administrations.[48] However, Sharkey notes that while proving successful in terms of

a cultural process of spreading the Arab identity, Arabization failed in its original intent to unify

the country and provoked hostility and resentment in the south.[49] Deng observes that the

northerners generally assumed that their identity was the national model, and what prevailed in

the south was a distorted image that the colonialists had imposed to divide the country. The

northerners believed that Arabization and Islamicization eventually would help reintegrate the

country.[50]

In 1964, a popular uprising against Abboud led to his downfall.[51] Sadiq al-Mahdi, great-

grandson of the Mahdi who overthrew the Turco-Egyptian forces in 1883, became prime

minister in 1966. Lesch uses a quote that al-Mahdi made after he became prime minister to

foreshadow what his policies would be:

> The dominant feature of our nation is an Islamic one and its overpowering expression is
> Arab, and this nation will not have…its prestige and pride preserved except under an
> Islamic revival.[52]

Around the same time, Hassan al-Turabi, an Islamist with strong ties to the Egyptian-based

Islamic movement called the Muslim Brotherhood, returned to Sudan and began uniting the

Sudan branch of the Muslim Brotherhood with other similar-minded groups. Al-Turabi viewed

the old forms of Islam - Mahdiyya and Khatmiyya among others - as outdated. He believed in a

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[47] Sharkey (2007), pgs. 33-34.
[48] Wai, pg. 85.
[49] Sharkey (2007), pgs. 22, 37.
[50] Deng, pg. 148.
[51] A combination of civil war in the south, a declining economic situation, and a repressive political environment led
to demonstrations in October 1964 calling for Abboud to step down. He did, in favor of a civilian government, and
elections were held in 1965.
[52] Lesch, pg. 42.

modernized version of Islam, based more on ideology than traditional historical family ties. Al-Turabi formed the Islamic Charter Front, which would be the precursor to the National Islamic Front (NIF).[53] Al-Mahdi and al-Turabi drafted a constitution that established Islam as the state religion and Arabic as the state language. Islamic law was the main source of legislation.[54] The constitution was never passed, though, as al-Mahdi was overthrown by Ja'afar Nimeiri in 1969.

Nimeiri was inspired by Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nassar and saw himself as secular, socialist, and Pan-Arab.[55] He is credited with ending the 1955-1972 north-south civil war by signing the 1972 Addis Ababa agreement. The agreement enshrined in the constitution the idea of a dual Arab and African identity for Sudan and respect for Islam, Christianity, and traditional religions. However, Nimeiri lacked support for his government and faced several coup attempts, including one by al-Mahdi and al-Turabi in 1976.[56] The 1976 coup attempt worried Nimeiri, and soon he embraced national reconciliation as a policy, which meant opening up talks with al-Mahdi and al-Turabi. He brought them back into the government, giving the government a hard-line Islamic ideological bent.[57]

Following al-Mahdi and al-Turabi's return to government, Nimeiri faced increasing pressure to withdraw his support for the Addis Ababa agreement and implement an Islamic constitution. In 1983, Nimeiri unilaterally abrogated the agreement, instituted *shari'a* (Islamic) law, and divided the south into three regions. Particularly disturbing for non-Muslims and southerners was that *hudud* punishments (harsh punishments for offenses such as drinking alcohol, adultery, or theft) were introduced and applied equally to Muslims and non-Muslims

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[53] The NIF was the political party that would take power in a 1989 coup, led by Lt. General Omar al-Bashir and al-Turabi. The NIF was later renamed the National Congress Party (NCP).
[54] Warburg, Gabriel. "Mahdism and Islamism in Sudan," *International Journal of Middle East Studies,* Vol. 27, No. 2 (May, 1995), pgs. 232-233.
[55] Lesch, pg. 45.
[56] Nimeiri faced coup attempts in 1971, 1973, 1974, 1976, and 1985.
[57] International Crisis Group (ICG), "God, Oil and Country: Changing the Logic of War in Sudan," Africa Report No. 39, January 2002, pg. 12.

alike. By following an Islamization policy, Nimeiri believed he could enhance his legitimacy.[58]

However, his policies alienated secular Muslims and non-Muslims. Idris argues that the

imposition of *shari'a* law on Sudan relegated the southern Sudanese (as non-Muslims) to

subjects rather than citizens. He notes that state-enforced discrimination had the unintended

consequence of violence between those who ruled by exclusion and those who wanted inclusion

in the state.[59] The abrogation of the Addis Ababa Agreement and the ensuing Islamist policies

led to the resurgence of war in 1983.

By 1985, Nimeiri had alienated most northerners and southerners because he had failed to

honor his promise to facilitate the establishment of ethnic pluralism and because of his

authoritarian methods. The economy was in a free fall and the country faced a growing famine

that Nimeiri refused to address. He was ousted in a bloodless coup while in the United States in

April 1985. A transitional government ruled until 1986 when Sadiq al-Mahdi was re-elected

prime minister, 20 years after his first term. While al-Mahdi's supported the Arabization and

Islamization of the south, he believed that the Islamic laws implemented by Nimeiri were un-

Islamic and should not infringe on the rights of non-Muslims.[60] Al-Mahdi promised to suspend

the Islamic laws and negotiate with the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M),

the southern rebels. However, he failed to honor these commitments and was overthrown by the

NIF in 1989.[61]

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[58] Lesch, pgs. 47, 52-55.
[59] Idris, pgs. 11-12.
[60] Warburg, pg. 224.
[61] Lesch, pg. 86.

The Reign of the NIF

Successive post-independence governments have undermined non-Muslims and non-Arabs' connection to the Sudanese state through their Islamist polices. When Lieutenant-General Omar al-Bashir, Sudan's longest-running president, and al-Turabi toppled al-Mahdi in 1989, the NIF began to implement its Arabization and Islamization policies in earnest, institutionalizing the political, economic, and social foundation of an Islamic Sudanese state.[62] Lesch describes the monolithic view that the NIF had of Sudan: a country in which Arab and Islam reigned supreme in all facets of life, where minorities could be merged into the majority.[63] Al-Turabi had played a key role as attorney general under Nimeiri by facilitating the implementation of *shari'a* law. As a result, he is widely regarded as the architect of the NIF's Islamization project. The NIF not only used rhetoric to pursue Islamization (such as referring to the war against the southern rebels as *jihad*) but also turned ostensibly autonomous government institutions into institutions staffed by people who shared the NIF vision. The NIF purged approximately 20,000 people from the government, civil service, judiciary, professional associations, and trade unions and replaced them with NIF cadres and supporters in the year following the coup.[64] Alex de Waal discusses how at the height of the 1990s, the NIF Islamists sought to turn local government into a source through which Islam was spread and put local services in the hands of Islamic organizations. De Waal argues that this not only weakened the state but it also brought internal party disputes into the state's administrative organs.[65] Lesch once again summarizes the NIF's reach succinctly:

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[62] Idris, pg. 54.
[63] Lesch, pg. 113.
[64] Lesch, pg. 113 and Warburg, pg. 230.
[65] De Waal, Alex. "Sudan: The Turbulent State," in *War in Darfur and the Search for Peace*, Global Equity Initiative, Harvard University, 2007, pgs. 14-15.

Islamist associations monopolized the political, economic, and social areas, and NIF cadres dominated the civil service, schools, and diplomatic corps. They controlled the security and military apparatuses and operated parallel intelligence, police, and paramilitary forces.[66]

The NIF government pushed the introduction of *shari'a* law that Nimeiri had started in 1983 and pursued a puritanical version of Islam with strict dress codes and rules regarding separation of the sexes.[67] The NIF also introduced *hudud* punishments based on *shari'a* law in 1991. The terms the NIF used for administrators and administrative units were terms from Islamic history.[68] The NIF nationalized Christian schools in 1992, Arabizing and Islamizing curriculums and also purged the Ministry of Education, replacing administrators and teachers in schools all over the country with NIF supporters. Arabic became the language of instruction at all public universities, making it difficult for southerners to gain access.[69]

The Muslim Brotherhood and the NIF were willing to establish an Islamic state by force.[70] While the army is overwhelmingly composed of Darfurians (who are Muslims but generally are not Arab), the government formed the Popular Defense Forces (PDF) in 1989, recruiting primarily from members of the Muslim Brotherhood.[71] The PDF had a distinctly Islamic agenda and was seen as a force whose primary job was to defend Islam, particularly the cultural and religious purity of the north.[72] The Bashir government eventually saw it as a replacement to the army, despite its inferior military capabilities, and by 1996 the PDF outnumbered the army (80,000 regular army troops to 150,000 PDF).[73] The use of militias and

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[66] Lesch, pgs. 146-147.

[67] Salih, M.A. Mohammed, "Political Narratives and Identity Formation in post-1989 Sudan," in *Ethnicity and the State in Eastern Africa*, pg. 77.

[68] Manger, Leif, "Reflections on War and State and the Sudan," *Social Analysis*, Vol. 48, Issue 1 (Spring 2004), pgs. 111-112.

[69] Lesch, pgs. 140, 143-144.

[70] Warburg, pg. 234.

[71] Salih, *Ethnicity and the State in Eastern Africa,* pg. 76.

[72] Lesch, pg. 135.

[73] Salih, *Ethnicity and the State in Eastern Africa,* pg. 77.

the PDF reduced the number of northern soldiers fighting in the south, allowing Bashir to continue the war without large numbers of northerners dying. PDF forces have been crucial in conflicts in Sudan as low-cost alternatives to trained military professionals. Many of the government's Arab militias (also known as *janjaweed*) have been incorporated into the PDF and continue to fight against the Darfur rebels. The combination of a *janjaweed*/PDF force provides a force with poor military capabilities and a distinct Arab-Islamic philosophy and agenda rather than a neutral, professional military force used to protect all citizens of Sudan.

The NIF government also encouraged slavery and the revival of the slave trade.[74] By doing so, the NIF government continued the linkages of precolonial times in which the Arab-Muslim group saw itself as morally able to enslave non-Muslims because of Islam. The history of the slave trade and the ravaging of the south by slave raids still are fresh in the minds of most southerners. By defining the struggle in religious terms, the Islamic elite highlight their superiority complex and reinforce the idea that southerners, not sharing their Arab-Islamic identity, are not truly "Sudanese."

A telling sign of northern superiority comes from al-Turabi, who reportedly asserted that without the forced separation of the north and south by the British, southern ethnic groups would have disappeared through intermarriage and the gradual diffusion of Arabic and Islam.[75] That southern ethnic groups and traditions automatically would have been subsumed by Arabic and Islam gives some insight into the thinking behind NIF policies. It is almost as if because the natural progression of the dominance of Arabic and Islam had been halted artificially, the NIF government needed to accelerate its progression through its policies. In recent years, the NIF (now known as the National Congress Party – NCP) has toned down its Islamization and

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[74] Idris, pg. 54.
[75] Lesch, pg. 33.

Arabization campaign, and al-Turabi has been sidelined following a falling out with President

Bashir in 1999-2000.[76]

The End of the Sudanese Civil War

The NCP and SPLM were at a military stalemate after decades of war and recognized

they needed to move forward with a resolution to the conflict. The early agreements, such as the

Machakos Protocol in 2002, focused on "two systems, one state" in which the south had limited

autonomy but real power still rested with the north.[77] Peace talks lasted for several years and

eventually led to the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005. The CPA

provides for a southern government as well as incorporating southerners into central government

leadership positions before a referendum on self-determination in 2011 and possible

independence for the south. During that same interim period, *shari'a* law would remain in the

north.

Both sides recognized that southern secession had to be a viable option for a peace

agreement to move forward, despite the slim chance the south would choose to stay with the

north. The reasons the north agreed to allow the south to hold a referendum with an option for

independence are varied and contradictory. They were based in part on the international

community's potential pressure, as the Machakos Protocol was reached not long after September

11th, 2001, and there was real uncertainty as to how the United States (which so clearly favored

the south) would react to a hard-line Islamist position. It also was a concession to northern

opposition parties that the NCP brought peace to the country. The peace agreement allowed the

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[76] Bashir was at odds with al-Turabi, often touted as the real power behind the regime, over his support of Islamic fundamentalism. Al-Turabi overreached in 1999 when he introduced a bill to limit the president's powers. Bashir then dissolved Parliament, declared a state of emergency, and later had Turabi arrested.

[77] Connell, Dan. "Peace in Sudan: Prospect or Pipe Dream?" *Middle East Report*, Vol. 228 (Fall 2003), pg. 6.

international financial institutions to resume aid and to bring potential debt relief, as well as opening up the country's oil-rich regions.[78] At the same time, the north faced other military challenges, such as the beginnings of a Darfur war and continued rumblings in the east by Rashida rebel groups who claimed their region had been marginalized and under-developed.[79] It also is likely the NCP calculated it had the best chance of maintaining the lion's share of power and oil revenue in a negotiated settlement, since they could not defeat the south militarily. In the end, both sides recognized they fared better with a negotiated settlement.

As previously mentioned, a major impetus for the Sudanese civil war was the competing views of nationalism. The NIF had an ethnonationalistic view of the Sudanese state, in that it should revolve around its Arab-Islamic identity. In the ethnic nationalist approach, the leaders of the dominant ethnic group seek a homogeneity that represses differences and glosses over other ethnicities.[80] The SPLM, on the other hand, had a territorialistic view of identity. John Garang, head of the SPLM before he died in a helicopter crash in 2005, advocated a vision of a "New Sudan." This was his attempt at re-writing Sudanese nationalism based on territorial nationality, which would include all the peoples of Sudan. Garang's "New Sudan" was based on the principle of a voluntary unity with a fundamental change in the country's governance. The northern elites clearly see their historical place as well as current status as bestowing upon them the identity of the one group that the represents the Sudanese state. The territorial model advocated by Garang would provide southern Sudanese and northern groups that are excluded from the narrow elite with an attachment to the state.

With the CPA, the north preserved its ethnonationalist approach in the sense that it views the north (e.g., greater Khartoum) as the center of Sudan, and it will maintain its Islamic identity.

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[78] ICG, "Sudan's Best Chance for Peace: How Not to Lose it," Africa Report No. 51, September 2002, pgs. 6-7.
[79] A claim not unlike that of most of Sudan's rebel groups and regions.
[80] Lesch, pg. 7.

While the north compromised some positions in the central government, the real power will

continue to lie with the northerners in either a united or divided Sudan. For the south, while a

united Sudan has been preached as a possibility, many southerners rejected Garang's vision of a

"New Sudan." Many southerners believe the NCP will never give up power and view the lack of

implementation of the CPA as evidence. Garang's ability to promote his vision was based

largely on the force of his personality and the authoritarian way he ran the SPLM. Since his

death, there has been a struggle between those who believe that the south is not fundamentally a

part of Sudan and should secede and those who believe in Garang's vision.[81] Those who

disagree with Garang's vision thus far have prevailed, and there has been little focus on building

a united Sudan. As long as the northern elites continue to pursue their exclusive ethnic

nationalist model, the southern Sudanese (and other groups that do not fit the narrow Arab-

Muslim definition) will continue to lack a real attachment to the Sudanese state and the

southerners will push for independence.

Darfur

The southerners are not the only ones who have been adversely affected by the

ethnonationalist view held by the elite. The longtime discrimination against and marginalization

of the overwhelmingly Muslim region of Darfur has sparked conflict. Darfur's geography can be

broken down into three zones: northern Darfur includes Arabs and non-Arabs such as the

Zaghawa who are mainly camel-herding nomads; central Darfur is primarily non-Arab sedentary

groups such as the Fur and Masalit; and southern Darfur is mostly cattle-herding Arabs such as

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[81] ICG, "Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement: Beyond the Crisis," Africa Briefing No. 50, March 2008, pg. 4.

the Baggara (Rizeygat).[82] While the Darfurians are overwhelmingly Muslim, most do not

subscribe to strict Islamic practices. In the mid-1980s, the Sudanese government reached a deal

with Libya to supply arms to the government for its fight against the SPLM. In return, Khartoum

agreed to turn a blind eye while Libya used Darfur as a rear base for its wars in Chad. The

thousands of Libyan Islamic Legion solders, many with strong Arab supremacy beliefs, and

Chadian Arabs that flooded into Darfur helped spark the 1987-1989 Arab-Fur war in Darfur.[83]

During this time, the *janjaweed* were first organized. The original *janjaweed* were Chadian Arab

militias who befriended and armed their Sudanese Arab militia allies. The Arab supremacist

ideology espoused by many *janjaweed* was exported to Sudan via Chad through these militant

Arabs, supported by Libya.[84] These *janjaweed* have been the government's primary tool in

fighting the rebel groups in Darfur.

 After the NCP seized power in 1989, they re-oriented the system of local governance in

Darfur (known as native administration) to conform to Islamic practices and in 1995 redefined

the roles of a native administrator to be one of a religious leader who should prepare the youth to

fight a holy war in the Christian south.[85] They also attempted to "Arabize" Darfur. The

traditional power base in the region was the non-Arab, sedimentary tribes such as the Fur and

Masalit. However, the government rewarded the Arab groups that fought on its behalf by

creating new local government administrative units that provided them with local power.[86] For

example, in 1995, the local government of West Darfur was divided into 13 emirates, with six

being allocated to Arabs mainly from Chad. This sparked a war between the Masalit, who

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[82] Mahmoud, Mahgoub El-Tigani. "Inside Darfur: Ethnic Genocide by a Governance Crisis," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East,* Vol. 24, No. 2 (2004), pg. 3.
[83] Flint, Julie and De Waal, Alex. *Darfur: A Short History of a Long War*, Zed Books Ltd, 2005, pgs. 24-25.
[84] Haggar, Ali. "The Origins and Organization of the Janjawiid in Darfur," in *War in Darfur and the Search for Peace*, pgs. 121 and 125.
[85] Abdul-Jalil, Musa A., Mohammed, Adam Azzain., and Yousuf, Ahmed A., "Native Administration and Local Governance in Darfur: Past and Future," in *War in Darfur and the Search for Peace*, pg. 51.
[86] ICG report, June 2003, pg. 11.

historically ruled this area under an independent sultanate, and the Arabs. The government

frequently has interfered with the power structure in Darfur to give more power to its Arab allies.

In May 2000, *The Black Book: Imbalance of Power and Wealth in Sudan* was published.

The *Black Book* was a revolutionary tract that for the first time documented the systematic

control since independence of the vast majority of the country's economic and political power,

including in the military hierarchy, civil and provincial administrations, the judiciary, as well as

the presidency and ministries, by the three riverain Arabs tribes.[87] The book also emphasized the

marginalization of the other regions of Sudan. In 2001, the Justice and Equality Movement

(JEM), one of Darfur's primary rebel groups, claimed authorship of the *Black Book*. Two years

later, the JEM and the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) launched their first major attacks against

the government. The government responded by unleashing the *janjaweed.* The continuing

Darfur war, referred to as a genocide by the United States government, has resulted in non-Arabs

being driven off their land, the displacement of 2.7 million people, and up to 300,000 civilian

deaths.[88]

The balance of power since the publication of the *Black Book* has not changed. If

anything, the prolonged conflict has weakened many Darfurians' attachment to the state. As

long as the attacks against non-Arab citizens continue and the Darfur people are reminded that

they do not have what the elite would consider a true Sudanese identity, the more tenuous their

attachment to the Sudanese state will become and the longer the conflict will persist.

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[87] Flint and De Waal, pg. 18.
[88] BBC News. "Q&A: Sudan's Conflict," March 5, 2009, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3496731.stm.

Possible Consequences of the International Criminal Court (ICC) Decision

A factor that may profoundly affect the Sudanese state and the elites' position is the March 2009 decision by the International Criminal Court (ICC) to issue an arrest warrant for Bashir on five counts of crimes against humanity and two counts of war crimes stemming from the Darfur war. Bashir and the Sudanese government have reacted with defiance and aggression, expelling 13 international nongovernmental organizations from Darfur. On March 29, 2009, Bashir traveled to Qatar for the Arab League summit and was embraced by the Qatari president, whose country formerly was hosting peace talks between the Sudanese government and the Darfur rebels. Bashir also visited Libya, Eritrea, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. While the ICC decision can be viewed as a step towards accountability, it complicates political dynamics in Sudan and may have unintended consequences.

One possible unintended consequence is the coalescing of Sudanese political forces around Bashir. The SPLM supports Bashir, although the SPLM secretary-general believes that Bashir should cooperate with the ICC.[89] Sadiq al-Mahdi, former prime minister and head of the Umma party, has called for a hybrid court to try Bashir because extraditing him to the ICC would be "not suiting the national dignity" because he is a head of state.[90] The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), led by Mohamed Osman al-Mirghani, categorically refused any prosecution of a Sudanese citizen at the ICC.[91] While the support is not for Bashir so much as for the office of head of state, this support strengthens Bashir's hold on power. The longer Bashir is able to act defiantly without consequence, the more emboldened he may become. He would have little

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[89] Van Oudenaren, Daniel. "Interview: SPLM Secretary-General Says Bashir Should Cooperate with Hague Court," *The Sudan Tribune*, March 30, 2009, available at: http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article30693.
[90] "Sudan ex-PM Proposes Hybrid Court to Try Darfur Suspects," *The Sudan Tribune*, March 28, 2009, available at: http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article30667.
[91] "Factbox: Sudan Political Parties' Positions on ICC Move Against Bashir," *The Sudan Tribune*, March 4, 2009, available at: http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article30092.

incentive to implement the CPA or hold elections, particularly if holding elections means he could lose power and be turned over to the ICC.

Another potential unintended consequence could be a palace coup against Bashir. Bashir is considered more moderate than other members of his government, such as Minister of Defense First-General Abdul-Rahim Mohamed Hussein or Director of the National Security and Intelligence Services Salah Abdallah Ghosh. Should they decide he has become a liability because of the arrest warrant, more hard-line members of his government could take over. A government led by hardliner Islamists would do little to encourage southerners, Darfurians, or other Sudanese that free and fair elections would be held or a peaceful, inclusive Sudan is in the future.

Consequences for the Sudanese State

One aspect that has been not been addressed up to this point is why the northern elites are so focused on Arabizing the country. Their primary reason is to extend and maintain their hegemony as a minority group. By imposing their identity on others, they define the terms of what being "Sudanese" is and places themselves in an authoritative position. But there is another factor that plays a role. The northern elite view Sudan as an Arab country, not a black African country. That this view has some traction is evidenced by the fact that Ghana is frequently referred to as the first African country to gain independence, rather than Sudan, which gained independence nearly a year before Ghana. To live up to the notion that Sudan is an Arab country, it is imperative that the rest of the country be assimilated into Arab culture. As long as parts of the country, particularly the south, are more African than Arab, it will be harder for the northern elite to convince the Arab world that Sudan is indeed an Arab country. Deng describes

how Arab identity in the Sudan is a much stronger aspiration than it is within the Arab world, meaning that Sudanese Arabs are desperate to belong to the Arab world while the Arab world is less preoccupied with them. He describes incidents of racist treatment of Sudanese laborers in Gulf states because of their black skin color.[92] While I have largely left out the particular issue of race, the reality is that many Sudanese Arabs have dark skin. It is often difficult to tell if a Sudanese is "Arab" or "African" based on his/her appearance. This has led to the mistreatment of Sudanese Arabs in the Middle East, where they are viewed as black Africans, regardless of the fact they are Muslim and speak Arabic. The government seems to ignore the irony that its favored citizens are treated abroad much the way they treat non-Arabs and non-Muslims at home. The Sudanese government continues to try and impose an Arab identity, which is crucial to achieving the goal of being seen as an Arab state. Indeed, the support from Arab countries for Bashir following the ICC arrest warrant could help him burnish his Arab credentials and encourage his Arabization policies.

Goran Hyden identities three general problems with the state in Africa. First, he argues that the state lacks the autonomy from society that makes it an instrument of collective action. It tends to respond to community pressures that undermine its authority as a public institution. Second, state officials do not adhere to the formal rules that constitute public authority. They do not distinguish between what is public and what is private. Finally, individuals appointed to public office rarely subordinate their personalities to the definitions of the roles they are supposed to perform.[93] How the northern riverain elite, particularly the Bashir government, have run the Sudanese state exemplifies the problems identified by Hyden. The Sudanese elite have used the state to line their pockets and to promote their narrow political and economic agendas at

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[92] Deng, pg. 380.
[93] Hyden, pg. 65.

expense at the rest of the population. The state has not been autonomous from a small group of elite who have sought to use it to impose a narrow identity on the entire country, instead of serving its purpose as an independent institution responsive to the population's needs. The state institutions dictate public and private rules of behavior based on the NCP's interpretation of Islam, through *shari'a* law, rules regarding dress, and other private actions. Those running these institutions, the NCP cadres and supporters, do not view themselves as agents of autonomous state institutions. Rather, they view their positions as a means to promote the NCP's agenda. The NCP has used the state and its institutions to realize an Arab-Islamic state. This has fundamentally weakened state institutions as well as the connection of groups not fitting the Arab-Islamic identity that the NCP has deemed "Sudanese."

The colonial state made no effort to establish a distinction between state and regime, allowing the northern elite to monopolize and define the state. This will consistently lead to conflict unless a separation between the state and regime is made. The CPA, if fully implemented, would transform the very nature of governance in Sudan, making it more open, transparent, and inclusive, particularly through its call for national elections in 2009.[94] However, implementing the agreement would threaten the NCP's hold on power, which is the primary reason the NCP is dragging its feet on implementation. It is highly unlikely that the NCP would win a free, fair, and inclusive election, and Bashir, with an arrest warrant hanging over his head, is unlikely to jeopardize his position of power and risk being turned over to the ICC. Yet it is through the NCP giving up its power and forming a more inclusive government that reconciliation for all of Sudan could occur. A more inclusive government is fundamentally at odds with the northern elite's view of Sudan and it seems unlikely they will take any real steps that would threaten their monopoly on power. While one could argue they already did that by

[94] ICG, "A Strategy for Comprehensive Peace in Sudan," Africa Report No. 130, July 2007, pg. i.

signing the CPA, the devil is in the details of implementation, something the NCP can still manipulate.

The potential secession of the south in 2011 shows that the southern Sudanese do not share the northern riverain "Sudanese" identity. They see themselves as having another identity that is incompatible with the Sudanese state as it is currently defined. They have no attachment to it, and in fact, the northern elite made clear that the southerners do not fit into what they view as the true Sudanese identity. After years of assault on their identity, it is nearly impossible to fathom how to build an attachment for the southerners to the Sudanese state, particularly as long as the NCP is in power.

Sudan's other conflicts such as the Darfur war, the unrest in the east and far north, and continued skirmishes between ethnic groups in the south, similarly relates to an alienation from the Sudanese state. The fact that the Darfur rebel groups have not called for secession or independence for Darfur, though, indicates they still have some attachment to the Sudanese state. Capitalizing on what that attachment is necessary to build an identity based on a broader definition of what it means to be Sudanese. This may be one way to mitigate conflict in Sudan in the future. Sudan's history cannot be written solely from the point of view of the northern riverain elite. It must reflect the totality of the Sudanese experience: its various groups, religions, and ethnicities. Sudan is far from monolithic and even discussions of the "northern Sudanese" and the "southern Sudanese" implicitly exclude many ethnic groups, such as the Misseriya Arabs and the Nuba, which do not identify themselves with the dominant groups that have come to define the north and the south. As long as Sudan is associated with the narrow vision of the riverain elite, there will always be alienated groups, and given Sudan's violent history, the potential for political violence.

Conclusion

The northern riverain elites, who are both Arab and Muslim, have dominated Sudan since precolonial times, using history to justify their hegemony and their narrative as the foundation of what it means to be "Sudanese." They did this in part because of the narrative they constructed of the civilizing effect that Arab-Muslims had and through their dominance as slave-raiders. The British colonizers also viewed the Arab-Muslims as superior to non-Arabs or "blacks" in southern Sudan and reinforced this difference through separate forms of rule. The northern elites thus were able to impose their vision of Sudan on the rest of the country.

In a sense, Sudan has been the victim of two identity hijackings.[95] First, the British allowed the commandeering of the notion of Sudanese identity by allowing the northern Arabs to redefine "Sudan" as synonymous with themselves. As previously discussed, *Bilad al-Sudan* referred to land of the blacks. The northern Arabs redefined this identity in their terms, denying the original meaning and those who were represented by it. The second hijacking was the Muslim fundamentalist hijacking of the more moderate Sufi traditions that were historically present in Sudan. Islam has become far more radicalized by post-independence regimes. That the first identity hijacking was allowed to occur set precedent for the second one, as the northern Arab elites gained confidence in their ability to manipulate the identity of the Sudanese state.

This paper did not address several issues that are relevant to Sudanese identity and power, including southern Sudanese identity, the Transitional Areas, or the impact of oil on state and power. The paper was intended to focus specifically on the northern elite's definition of Sudanese identity and the use of it to maintain power and hegemony. Because of the northern elite's manipulation of Sudanese identity, the attachments of other groups to the state have been damaged. It seems nearly certain that the south will vote for secession in 2011, if the north

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[95] This idea was given to me from Dr. John Harbeson. I expanded on it slightly for the purpose of my paper.

allows the referendum to be held. Perhaps the damage to the integrity of the Sudanese state has

been so great over the decades of northern exclusivist rule that the only way for the south to feel

a connection to a state is for them to have one of their own. That would not solve the issues that

the other minority groups, particularly the non-Arab Muslims, have in the rest of the country.

And it remains to be seen how this would impact Darfur, considered to be part of the north. The

viability of the Sudanese state is at stake as long as it remains defined as the elite would like to

define it. A new definition of what it means to be "Sudanese" is needed.

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