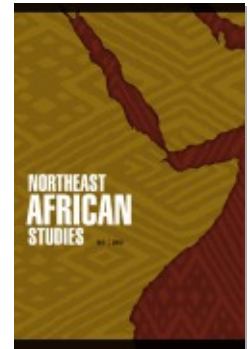# The British Southern Policy in Sudan: An Inquiry into the Closed District Ordinances (1914-1946)

David Nailo N. Mayo

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Many Sudanese scholars and politicians—such as Beshir, Collins, Mahdi, Mirghani, and Turabi—often cite the Southern Policy (SP) and the Christian missionari e s a s t het causes of disunity between the north and the south, the Arabs and the African ethnic groups, the Muslims and the Christians. And had it not been for the Southern Policy or the missionaries, the southerners would have been receptive and integrated into the Sudanese nation-state. Religious zealots like Mirghani, Turabi, and el-Mahdi have extended this logic to mean that the southerners would have abandoned their ethnic allegiances and become integrated into the Arab-Islamic nation (Umma) and culture. The *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Southern Sudan Disturbances*—published by the Ministry of Interior on 10 October 1956—also attributed the crisis to the divisiveness of the Southern Policy by perpetuating and exacerbating southern prejudice against the north (Henderson 1965, 170). The arguments against the Southern Policy also epitomized the British and the Christian missionaries to have "misled" the south by depriving the latter an opportunity to look to Khartoum for counsel. The southerners were portrayed as innocent people who have not any sense of direction of their own, unless guided by "Arabism," which Khartoum believes to be a civilizing culture. That is a scandal the Sudan faces. It is also a gross misrepresentation of various African ethnic peoples in Sudan. Let me just ask: Why should a society that has lived thousands of years, before the Arab-Islamic era, seek counsel from the Arabs? I wonder whether such a "Sudan" could truly become democratic, by adopting the principles of one man, one vote; and each vote has equal weight when only one culture is held esteemed and is supposed to dominate the rest.

This article is devoted to answering the charges leveled against the Southern Policy. The Sudanese problems go far beyond the epoch of the European intrusion. Before delving into the Southern Policy, war and peace issues in the Sudan need to be addressed. Since the Ottoman Empire, the history of Sudan has been the history of invasion by the Arab-Islamic peoples against the natives, and resistance by the latter against the invaders. This invasion is not only by sword, but through other cultural annihilation modalities such as: cultural diffusion and assimilation, and scorning native ways, customs, languages, religions, and so forth; and by portraying their culture, religion, etc. as superior. In support of the supposedly "superior" Arab language, culture, and religion (Islam), the sword had always been an arbiter. For instance, a Turkish officer—after ransacking Dinka villages along the Nile—was quoted as saying: *"it is necessary to sow terror; the route we follow will then be easier"* (Gray, 1961, p.17).

In the earlier contact between the natives and the Turks, Gray observed, the former were extremely hospitable and offered their food to whom they considered "guests." In spite of their hospitality, which the invaders did not want in the first place, they were forced to accept reality of hostilities (Gray, p. 17). In the history of southern resistance, often translated as "rebellion," the southerners did not just resist against the Arab-Islamic invasion but also against the European conquest. Between 1839 to 1900, the southerners fought against the fierce Arab slave trade. Then from 1900 to the 1920s, the southerners fought the combined British conquest and domestic Arab slavery. In Sudanese modern history since the 1820s, perhaps the Sudan can count on only 34 years of peace: between 1930 to 1954 (the post-pacification period), and 1972 to 1982 (the post-bellum period). With only 34 years of tranquility since the 1820s, it is obvious that something must be really wrong somewhere in our system; and whether we like it or not, we are perpetual prisoners of this system, whether one is Christian or Muslim.

Why a Separate Policy for the South?

The Southern Policy was a colonial policy designed to exclude the Arabs from the administration, trade, and settlement in the southern part of the country. With the asymmetrical historical developments in

the Sudan before the British invasion, the British attempted to mitigate the disharmonious relations between the north and the south by creating a protectorate in the south—which they believed was in the best interests of the southerners and no great loss to the north (Henderson 1965, 164). Many ordinances were created—the 1922, 1925, and 1930 ordinances against trade—which culminated in a broader Southern Policy in 1930. The memorandum on Southern Policy stated:

> The policy of the Government in the southern Sudan is to build up a series of self contained racial or tribal units with structures and organization based, to whatever extent the requirements of equity and good government permit, upon indigenous customs, traditional usage and beliefs. (Beshir, 1968, p. 115; and Henderson, 1965, p. 165)

After subduing the southern Sudanese ethnic groups, the British indeed became genuinely interested in the land and the people. During the 1928 Rejaf Language Conference local tribal languages were promoted. The publication of local textbooks of vernacular for the major languages in the south was initiated for elementary school instructions. Therefore, the Southern Policy, though imposed by the colonial power, had attempted to preserve the culture and language of the non-Arab majority in the Sudan—especially in the south and the Nuba region. The latter was annexed to the north in 1928.

But there were some external forces as well. The Arab decolonization policies employed tactics of open civil disobedience against the British. During World War I, for instance, the cleavages in the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, a joint rule between Britain and Egypt, became clear. Trust for each other was also thinning out drastically. The Arab civil disobedience against the British made the latter turn to the population in the Closed Districts. In the south, the British started to recruit the native soldiers to replace the Arab troops. In 1917, for instance, the last batch of the Arab troops left Mongalla, then capital of the Mongalla Province, now Equatoria Province (Nalder 1937). Developments in Egypt in the 1920s, especially after the assassination of Sir Lee Stack—the Governor General of Sudan—in Cairo in 1924, and riots in Khartoum the same year, made the British take much sterner emer-

gency measures. The Egyptian soldiers and civil servants were trans-
ferred or expelled from the Sudan (Nelson, p.41). As the Arabs were re-
belling against the British rule, the latter started to restrict the Jallaba
(Arab merchants) from trading or proselytizing in the south.

Meanwhile, the northern elites were so incensed by the Southern
Policy that they felt deprived of many opportunities in the southern dis-
tricts. To the merchants, the Southern Policy deprived them of lucrative
business in the south, as all business and trade were at their monopoly.
Meanwhile, the religious zealots felt deprived from competing with the
Christian missionaries who monopolized proselytization among the
southern ethnic groups. Therefore the Southern Policy became the main
focus of debate among the newly educated elites emerging from Gor-
don's College (now University of Khartoum), who were active in the
Graduates General Congress (GGC) formed in 1936. The GGC, for in-
stance, presented a memo to the government demanding a pledge for
Sudan's self-determination after the war to be preceded by abolition of
the Southern Policy and the end of the separate curriculum in southern
schools (Nelson, p. 43). Sir Stewart Symes, governor-general, rejected
the memo on the grounds of the established policy for the south, yet the
events during World War II subverted the establishment of a separate
development in the south.

The British policy was also perceived as the barrier to northern dom-
ination of the country in an Arabic-Islamic style. For instance, Mud-
dathir complained that the SP:

> was aimed at the elimination by administrative means, of all
> traces of Muslim/Arabic culture in the South and the substitution
> of tribal customs, Christianity and the English language with the
> ultimate objective of giving the southern provinces a character
> and outlook different from that of the country as a whole. (Obeid,
> 1980, p.68)

As one could detect from this quote, the phrase "substitution of
tribal customs" is quite provocative and certainly the root of north-
south discord. Tribal customs were not, in the first place, supposed to
be substituted by any other culture but to be respected, guarded, and
protected. Second, the SP was not giving the south a new, different out-

look, but rather its natural African outlook—full recognition of its peculiar non-Arabic-Islamic character.

The experiences in the African-Arab relations in the Sudan, and in most Sudanic territories of the Sahel, are harsh realities that a conference like this should not underestimate. There is pervasive racial hatred and suspicion, religious and cultural bigotry between the Arabs and the African ethnic groups in the Sudan. Even the Arabized African, with no Arab blood in his flesh, scorns anything non-Arabic/Islamic—likening it to "primitiveness" and "backwardness" and not worth adopting. This mosaic view, first imposed during slavery, became an acceptable norm to describe the people from the peripheral regions of the Sudan in general. Dunstan Wai (1983, p. 189) observed that:

> The twelve centuries of contacts between Sub-Saharan Africa and Arab Middle East have been asymmetrical. Arabs have penetrated Africa, enslaved some of its inhabitants and imported their own religion (Islam) and language (Arabic). They have felt superior as the conveyors of a "civilized" culture, and have generally tended to be condescending towards those regarded as "inferior."

The prevalent suspicion—if not mistrust—on each side is seen in pejorative terminologies. The Arabs often refer to the non-Arabic peoples as *abeed* (slaves), while the southerners often refer to the Arabs (not all northerners) as *mundukuru,* a term which connotes untrustworthiness. Wai's (1983, p. 189) lucid translation probably captures this well:

> ...many Africans today still view Arabs as cunning, crafty, dishonest, and untrustworthy, not least because of their racial and cultural arrogance continues to revive 'memories' of the rampages of slave traders in their region.

Yet that is not a bygone case of the past. In the current civil war in the Sudan, cases of slavery have been documented in several newspapers, including the pamphlet by Professors Ushari Mahmud and Suleiman Ali Baldo of the University of Khartoum. These reports have been consistent with the old patterns of slavery and with the manner in which the successive Arab regimes in Khartoum treated the displaced

southerners and the Nuba people in the northern cities. These further awaken the historical animosities between the Arabs and the African ethnic groups, which shows even in peace talks between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the successive governments in Khartoum. Stereotypes run deep. For the SPLA, it says: do not give the Arab another opportunity to enslave you; the Arab says: do not give an *abeed* the honor of sitting next to you, for he might overturn the coat. A coup attempt led by a military corporal from the south (in September 1985) against the Transitional Military Council (TMC) of General Suwar el-Dhahab, threw the north into a real panic. Individuals asked questions such as: What would have happened if that coup had succeeded? Would the southerners have treated us in the same way we treat them? People in Khartoum were confused. Meanwhile, they have not asked such questions when the northerners have attempted, and many cases succeeded, to seize power by coups. This panic was rooted in the sociology of the Sudanese schism. Though the false image tends to suggest that the Sudan is a united country, in reality, there are two countries in the Sudan. The union, which the north persistently wants to enforce, is self-defeating. Unity is a result of spontaneous human relations where aggregate interests of society are respected and benefits and burdens are equally distributed. Unity also requires that there should be a sufficient amount of mutual sympathy among the populations in the country. Unfortunately, the Sudan is lacking only those basic prerequisites for unity, but it makes no effort to create them.

Did the Southern Policy Divide the Sudanese People?

The epoch in which the SP was shaped has not change much, especially when the guns are still roaring unceasingly in the savannahs and mountains of southern Sudan. Some important questions need to be asked: Did the Southern Policy—in fact and in deed—divide the Sudanese people? If so, how? If not, why not?

There is no doubt that the British colonial administration in the Sudan, like elsewhere, created the so-called "divide and rule" and/or "indirect rule" policies. Potholm, for instance, elucidated that colonial overlay in Africa had the following basic tenets: colonial systems were

imposed or at least maintained by the use of force; colonial systems were authoritarian—that is, undemocratic in form and substance; colonial systems were disruptive; colonial systems were racist; and colonies were sources of revenue (Potholm 1979, 34–36). In the Sudan, the natives were overwhelmed with all these, especially the amount of coercion and violence—as was practiced in what the British considered as "pacification" while the natives considered it a direct "conquest." Chief Chier Rian, for instance, stated:

> The British conquered the country with soldiers....In a drill, when they tell soldiers to turn, they turn; march, they march; stop, they stop. This is the way the British used to give orders. (Deng and Daly, 1989, pp. 186–187)

Deng and Daly also added that the people sent to the south were strong and ruthless military men—bog barons—given wider discretionary powers to conquer and tame *the savages in the jungles and savannahs of Africa* (emphasis added). Most of these "bog barons" were not trained in academia or administration. Professor Tothill of Gordon Memorial College, when asked to put together a handbook for agricultural development in 1941, lamented that it was hard to trace references except to peruse through the government files or correspondences (Tothill 1952, 1).

Meanwhile, throughout Africa's struggle for political independence in the 1950s and 1960s, the Christian missionaries were regarded as the "vanguard army" of colonialism by placating and softening the hearts of the natives. "Indeed, if the original sin was the sin of disobedience," wrote Mazrui, "the structure of damnation could be used to encourage greater compliance among the newly converted Africans. Even the doctrine of 'turn the other cheek' could be abused by imperially motivated Europeans to inculcate a spirit of subservience among African peoples" (Mazrui 1977, 89). Jomo Kenyatta, at his trial at Kapenguria, had been quoted as saying: "The Europeans told us to shut our eyes and pray and to say Amen...and while our eyes were shut, they took the land" (Mazrui, p. 89). Vice President Oginga Odinga argued that: "One of the reasons why Africa was poor was because the white man used the Bible to soften our hearts, telling the Africans not to worry about earthly

worth as there would be plenty in Heaven" (Mazrui, p. 90). Similar views were echoed everywhere in the continent. The Right Reverend Archbishop Desmond Tutu remarked on the similar situation in South Africa where the Afrikaners brought the Bible and gave it to the Africans in exchange for land (Tutu 1986, Chapters 2–3).

Meanwhile, for Mazrui, Christianity created a structure of damnation to support the colonial structure of domination (Mazrui 1977, p. 90). Mazrui, whose main writings are directed to detaching Africa from the West and joining it to the Middle East, has not contrasted this "Christian damnation" with "damnations" from other religions such as Islam. In the Sudan, this logic of Christian damnation had been mystified and used to "de-missionarize" the south. The 1962 Missionary Society Act, passed by General Ibrahim Abboud, restricted the Christian missionaries and subsequently their expulsion in February 1964. The missionaries were blamed for ill-advising southern intellectuals, especially as many of these were graduates of missionary schools. Part of the blame the missionaries shouldered was that they educated the southerners, which in Khartoum was tantamount to awakening them, as well as making them difficult to Islamize or Arabize.

Meanwhile, the Turkish and Mahdist occupations of south Sudan had nonetheless produced in Equatoria a small half-caste partially Arabicized proletariat; but the British and the missionaries did not approve of that type either (Henderson 1965,164). This is a clear case of conflict of cultures: Arabism, Islamism, Judeo-Christianism, Europeanism, and Africanism—all were, and still are, interacting negatively in south Sudan. Those are some of the premises Khartoum uses to support its arguments against the Southern Policy.

Nevertheless, because of the authoritarian and undemocratic nature of colonial systems, disruption of local social systems was real. For instance, the creation of nation-states by erecting borders arbitrarily—often dividing extended families or tribes that had lived in peace for generations, or by joining hostile tribes, chiefdoms, or kingdoms into an imposed state—were organically disruptive. Extraction of profits through the exploitation of indigenous labor and natural resources, coupled with the Eurocentric world view of things—whether in food, industry, social, or spiritual aspects—were concrete demerits of the colonial systems. But we have an avalanche of other problems too. Political

myopia of the African scholars is one of the problems. African scholars have often associated terms like "imperialism" or "colonialism" with the Europeans; they are, however, less cognizant of the equally marauding Arab imperialism of the Ottoman Empire in Africa. Sudan, as a colony of the Ottoman Empire for 60 years, has now admitted that it belongs to the Arab World, thus detaching itself culturally from Africa. Had it not been of south Sudan, which consistently opposes such connection with the Middle East, the Sudan would have been purely an Arab protégé.

The other part of the question, which is the core of this article, assumes that the Southern Policy did not divide the Sudanese people. Facts seem to suggest that it did not necessarily divide the Sudanese people. First, the heterogeneity of the Nile Valley kingdoms, chiefdoms, ethnicities, etc., could not permit us to see the map of the Nile Valley as it is today. Each kingdom or chiefdom, in most instances, was a nation-state by its own right and a politically independent monarchy or ethnocracy until the era of colonialism. In this regard, what we mean by "Sudanese" appears to be a colonial artifact. Hence, we have to give credit to the colonial power for demarcating the map of Sudan in the shape it is today, and in uniting us. We should be clear about assumptions we make, especially when one emphasizes the concept of "Sudan-ness."

Second, when we argue that the British had divided us, we seem to be saying exactly the opposite. The British came and erected borders, *ceteris paribus,* which the Turks and the Mahdists did not explicitly demarcate. Classical Sudanists observed that until Mohammed Ali's invasion (1820–21) of the land below the 2nd Cataract, "no single name could have been applied to the whole country" (Hamilton 1935, 15). A Turkish officer, Captain Salim Bey Pasha, sent by Mohammed Ali in the Summer of 1839 into the heart of Africa, made a new impact in social relations (Gray 1961). From 1860 to 1910, the inhabitants of the Upper Nile Valley took an unwilling and always painful part in the making of more history than they had experienced in the previous 5,000 years of their history (Hamilton 1935; p.100). The early travelers, in what they considered "two Sudans," asserted that:

> In place of the white robes of the north we get our first glimpse of the elaborate coiffure of the Shilluk or the ash-smeared Dinka.

> This is the true Sudan, the land of the blacks....the change of race
> is complete; for all their variety, the races of the South are essen-
> tially negroid...living his own life in his own natural conditions.
> (Hamilton, p. 100)

Salim's conquest of the land beyond Khartoum opened the south to
hostile intrusion, which placed this territory as the "mine" of slaves
and ivory from 1840s to 1900. Explorer Samuel Baker estimated at least
50,000 slaves were captured annually from the southern part of the
country during his time in the 1860s (British Official Reports 1960, 4).
This number kept growing as the slave-caravan route from Bahr el
Ghazal through El-Obeid to the Mediterranean gained significant im-
portance. During that time, it was clear that no claim for statehood was
ever mentioned other than the rapacious exploitation of its natural re-
sources—slaves that must be captured and sold to the merchant ships,
gold that must be mined, and elephants and rhinoceros that must be
freely hunted for ivory.

Samuel Baker and his wife, sent by the Royal Geographical Society,
found a hostile environment had existed between the slave traders and
the indigenous peoples. The Bakers' account indicated utter misery and
ruin in the areas they passed through (Hamilton 1935, 62). Baker's suc-
cessor, Charles Gordon, then appointed as governor of the Equatorial
region (annexed to the Khedive's dominion in 1863), appealed to the
Khedive to let the south be administered separately from the north
(Obeid, p.66). Gordon, like his successor, recognized the clear differ-
ences in the Nile Valley between the Negroid Africans and those of
Arab stock.

When the late Mohamed Omer Beshir wrote his book, *The Southern
Sudan: Background to Conflict,* he knowingly misrepresented the anthro-
pological differences between the southerners and the northerners, and
attempted to argue—convincingly—that the British and the missionar-
ies were wholly to blame for the civil strives in the Sudan. His falsifica-
tion of the southern Sudanese history and ethnicity in an attempt to
bring peace in the 1965 Round Table Conference did not help him or
the country deliver peace. But acknowledgment of the existing differ-
ences and historical injustices upon the southern Sudanese people, in-
stead, helped Nimeiri bring the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement.

Beshir, like Mazrui, was among the Afro-Arab scholars who believe Africa has to be attached to the Middle East for intellectual nourishment and understanding of its own history. Nonetheless, facts will always render the Arab manipulation of academic literature weak in spite of Khartoum's rhetoric to rewrite textbooks.

Advantages of the Southern Policy to the South

The Southern Policy, as designed by Sir Harold MacMichael, civil secretary (1926–33), was supposed to protect the south from the north. It is not easy to tell if the British had a hidden agenda in creating the Southern Policy, yet the protectorate protocol seems to have been motivated by a humanitarian factor, as we could detect from this statement:

> the backwardness of Southern peoples made necessary the construction of artificial barriers against more sophisticated outside influences, if the basis of local cultures was to be preserved; and the progressive replacement, through improved and extended education, of outsiders by local people in government posts, thus creating a nucleus for further development. (Daly, 1991, p.38)

The case of "protectorate" was not a new policy to be introduced by the British. Other colonial regimes in history have used protective measures to ensure stability in the colonies. The same logic was used in early 1920s to protect the Sudan from the Egyptians, who were believed to be more sophisticated than the Sudanese. The expulsion of Egyptian personnel in 1924 was the case in point. We have also seen outright division of countries in instances where one parsimonious party in conflict is likely to be severely brutalized by the other. The creation of Pakistan in 1947, for instance, was a result of brutal conflicts between Hindus and Muslims. "In that year alone, 500,000 persons died when Muslim minorities in Hindus-dominated areas and Hindus in Muslim majority regions were slaughtered" (Kohli 1986, p.166).

Second, the SP was consistent with colonial "Indirect Rule." The latter justified the exclusion of the non-indigenous *effendi* (master) from participating in the administration of different peoples, while encouraging the local people's participation in governing themselves.

Third, the SP brought an end to slavery in the southern provinces. Article XII of the Condominium Agreement of 1899 as drafted by Lord Cromer stated:

> I think we may at once go so far as to forbid the importation and exportation of slaves into and from the Soudan. The question of how to deal with domestic slavery in the Soudan is much more difficult. For the moment we had better leave it alone. (Abbas, 1952, p.172)

There were many implications to this, especially sending wrong signals to the slave-owning lords—that slavery is fine. As late as the 1930s, domestic slavery was still taking place inside the "Closed Districts." This was partly due to lack of enforcement of the Southern Policy by the British, and partly because it was difficult for the few British officers to detect and monitor the practices of the Arab merchants. For instance, in 1929, the British realized that an extensive trade in slaves was still going on across the White Nile. This aroused all the old fears, and a decision was reached to enforce the Close Districts legislation, and virtually close the south to the northerners (Henderson, p.197). Therefore, the "Close District" Ordinance was implicitly created to amend Article XII of the Condominium Agreement, and to enforce the abolition of slavery in the Sudan. But slavery, even though it is the most abominable business, is still practiced today in the Sudan and other Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia. The latter did not abolish slavery until 1962.

Fourth, training and recruitment of indigenous population in the areas of military, civil administration, education, etc. became possible (Henderson, p.167). The memorandum of the Southern Policy stressed:

> It has been the recognized policy...that the locally recruited staff should take the place of clerks and accountants drawn from the North and that language of Government offices should be English....it is the aim of the Government to encourage, as far as possible, Greeks and Syrian traders rather than the Gellaba type (northern Sudanese Arab-type). Permits to the latter should be decreased unobtrusively but progressively, and only the best type of

Gellaba whose interests are purely commercial and pursued in a legitimate manner should be admitted. (Beshir, 1968, pp. 116–118)

Also, rural infrastructure—construction of roads, the opening of dispensaries, and so forth—would have not been possible had the SP never been initiated.

Fifth, the SP helped eradicate the intra and inter-ethnic conflicts (Henderson, p.197), which the successive governments in Khartoum seems not to bother about the conflicts among the pastoral tribes over grazing lands and water.

However, the SP was not an airtight balloon. The Jellaba (Arab merchants) still monopolized trade. The few Lebanese and Greek merchants—brought by the colonial government to substitute the Jellaba—were unable to fill the market gap. In the civil service, police, and prisons, the northern officials still kept their jobs intact as the British lacked lower-level support staff. So the complaint by most northern Sudanese, that the Southern Policy excluded them from participation, could not be substantiated empirically. Similarly, the weaknesses of the SP were not due to the absence of the Jellaba, but rather due to geographical remoteness of the south from the seas, and reluctance of Sir Steward Symes, the governor general of the Sudan (1934–40), to allocate funding for development. Sir Symes was regarded to be personally contemptuous of southern Sudanese people. Daly writes:

His lack of interest in the region and its peoples was never overcome [by his 1938 tour of the area], and his calls for development were matched by his own consistent rejection of development scheme. (Daly, 1991, p. 4)

This was witnessed earlier in 1937 when J. G. Myers, a botanist, was appointed to conduct research in Equatoria province. Being overwhelmed immensely by the varieties of crops grown in the region, specially robusta coffee growing wild, Myers unhesitatingly recommended extensive growing of robusta coffee in the region. Sir Symes vetoed that plan because locally grown coffee would have reduced custom duty from imported coffee (Daly 1991, 91). Apart from vetoing projects, Sir Symes did not wish to allocate funds for economic development; the education sector was seriously starved of funds and totally ignored. From

the experiences witnessed in the northern Sudan, where the graduates of Gordon Memorial College became the leading figures in toppling the colonial administration, the British were afraid that creating an educated class was at least as dangerous in the south as in the north; administration would therefore remain in the hands of British district commissioners, with few northern and local assistants (Daly 1991, 91).

If the SP was not starved of development funds, and education was aggressively pursued, southern Sudan would have caught up with the north by the 1960s. This point is not a mere wish! Given the ample natural resources—water, good arable land, cement, gold, and now oil—the south stood a greater chance of rapid development. The Anzara textiles in the early 1950s, along with the Azande Agricultural Scheme and Anzara Industrial Complex, became pivotal agents of modernization and development. For instance, the Anzara textiles produced fabrics of high quality, which competed successfully with imported fabrics (Reining 1966).

The Abolition of the Southern Policy and Khartoum's Inclination to the Past

After the Southern Policy was abolished, Khartoum had every opportunity to reverse what it considered the alien political gimmicks of the British and the Christian missionaries. However, it did not; instead, it seized the opportunity to strengthen Arab hegemony, which in all its vicissitudes alienated the natives in the peripheral regions of the country.

In 1946, the Sudan Administrative Conference reversed the Southern Policy, stating that the future of the Sudan depended on the "unification of the Sudanese peoples and it is on this that the welfare of all Sudanese ultimately depends" (Beshir 1968, p. 65). The Conference outright dismissed the earlier arguments that were in favor of it. The British administrators in the south, who became emotionally attached to the people they administered to, were outraged by the decisions on the 1946 Conference. They were opposed to the recommendations for a united Sudan on the basis that the southerners were not consulted, and that unity was going to be politically and economically detrimental to the south because of the development imbalance (Henderson, pp. 170–171, 198–199). The British administrators in the south instead recommended regionalization or federation of the Sudan—arguments that are still valid today.

In principle, however, Khartoum agreed to consult with the south-
erners. The traditional chiefs, who were the only elites at the time, were
invited to represent the southern view at the Juba Conference of 12–13
June 1947. The chiefs, largely illiterate—as opposed to the northern del-
egates composed of GGC members like Dr. Habib Abdalla, a Lebanese
educated scholar—were out-maneuvered in this decisive Conference
and lost the case for separation or federation with the north.

Furthermore, Sir J. W. Robertson, the British civil secretary moderat-
ing these tough decisions, was quite unsympathetic to the position of
the south. He opened the Juba Conference by blaming his predecessors
for dividing the Sudan through the Southern Policy. He stated:

> I think that the Southern Sudan, by its history and by accident of
> geography, river transport, and so on, must turn to the North,
> rather than to Uganda or the Congo, and I believe that our policy
> regarding these areas should be restated. (Beshir, 1968, p.137;
> Henderson, 1965, p.168)

Despite the protests by the chiefs against unity with the north, Sir
Robertson was reluctant to listen to the alternative views. It was not
deemed necessary for an outgoing power to ponder subsequent circum-
stances. The Juba Conference should have been convened before the
1946 decisions were made, especially when a very important Southern
Policy was to be relinquished altogether. Points of discussion would
have included: constitutional guarantees; the distribution of power,
goods and services; the curriculum drafted in 1928 Rejaf Language Con-
ference; and the use of English or Arabic, or both, as official languages
in schools and offices.

A question could now be raised as to what happened when the long-
blamed Southern Policy was abolished. Did the Sudan become united?
Certainly not. The factors inhibiting the union were far beyond the
Southern Policy. The scandal of the African-Arab relations can be
traced back to modalities of invasion by the Arab-Islamic world and re-
sistance by the indigenous ethnic groups. In the Arab-Islamic history,
the neighboring states were either supposed to be integrated into Arab-
Islamic community or face destruction. Peaceful coexistence has been
rare except when the neighboring state has been subdued, and its peo-

ple pay submission tax *(jizyah)* as the Sharia requires (Taha 1987). In Rawlsian sense, such actions are quite problematic. Rawls, in his libertarian theory, articulated how individual and institutional actions can perpetuate injustices. He argued that it is not only laws and institutions that are just or unjust, but also particular actions of many kinds. These include: decisions, judgments, imputations, attitudes, and dispositions of persons (Rawls, 1971, p.7).

After the devolution of power from the British to the Arabs, the new government in Khartoum turned to the past theocratic anarchy—where resistance of any sort was met with brutalities and truculent slavery. Like the irredentist political pursuits in Somalia since her independence, theocracy by itself made the Sudan a chronically unhealthy nation. Therefore, little evidence suggests that the Southern Policy added anything new to the damaged historical relations and the strict political designs aimed at maintaining that historicity. In most situations where Khartoum had the opportunity to mend the ugly past, it instead made it much more ugly by turning the clock back 100 years. The chiefs they had conferred with the previous summer had been abandoned in their own tribal courts. When the Sudan gained her Self-Government Act in 1953—even though the south registered 3 million people (33 percent) of the 1956 population census—Khartoum gerrymandered electoral constituencies in the south to produce permanent minority representation in the Legislative Council.

Another vexing reality was the Sudanization Process in the early 1950s. In 1954, the Sudanization of administration registered 1,200 jobs—ranging from premiership to assistant district commissioner (ADC). The southern intellectuals asked for extremely few positions, in light of what they actually deserved. They demanded 3 governorship positions, 3 deputies, 6 district commissioners, 8 ADCs, and 12 full mamurs (Henderson, 1965, 173). During the elections of 1954, the northern politicians promised their southern counterparts 40 posts— ranging from governorship to assistant district commissioners—if they could stay with them. Many southern politicians were co-opted into this blackmail. And to their dismay, only four junior positions—2 ADCs and 2 mamurs—were given to them. In spite of the visible non-sophistication of the then-southerners, it did not take long for them to realize that the south would be ruled by another colonizer, this time the north-

erner. Fear of another period of pre-British truculent slavery was not uncommon. Moreover, they were reminded about these in the trials of the 1955 mutineers and brutalities of the 1960s.

Therefore, inquiry into the Southern Policy suggests that the Sudanization of administration should have allotted at least 400 jobs to the south in addition to other opportunities for training in the civics and economic development areas. Moreover, all attempts by southern intellectuals to cooperate with the new government in Khartoum were futile. The reaction from the Liberal Party, formed in 1953 to represent the views of the south, was to demand federation with the north instead of unity. Again, there was ample opportunity for Khartoum to reverse the negative past it had blamed on the Southern Policy, the British, and the missionaries. But instead, it moved toward the only pillar left in the destruction of southern Sudan. That was the Equatoria Corps, the British-trained troops from the south. The calculated policy was to transfer them to the north and then disarm and disband them. But the Equatoria Corps foiled the plan by mutinying in August 1955, and the 17-year war of 1955–72 (Oduho and Deng) began.

Conclusion

The experiences in which the south has often been a victim instead of a mutual beneficiary in the "Union" are numerous. A nationalistic government would have various responsibilities to avert pervasive regional inequalities, national prejudice of non-Arabic peoples in the country, and so forth. There would have been no need for purposeful neglect of the south in socio-economic development. Projects that are to be based in the south would have been planned in the center and contracts allocated. Sadly, most of the agro-industrial projects and schemes initiated by the Southern Policy, such as the Mongalla Sugar Scheme, the Mongalla Sugar Factory, Aweil Rice Scheme, Wau Fruits and Canning Industry, Anzara Industrial Complex, and the Azande Cotton Scheme, were left to dereliction. Meanwhile, similar projects in the north, such as Guneid and Kennana, Khashm el-Girba, and El-Roseiris Hydro Power Plant were built within the same period. Furthermore, the regional government in Juba was starved of funds for development and local services except for salaries of government employees.

In war times, opportunities have always been open for the military to commit atrocities such as the Juba and the Wau massacres of the 1960s. In the present civil war, massacres have been witnessed in various instances: the Dueim massacre of 1987; the Jebellein massacres of 1988; the use of food as a weapon to starve thousands of civilians in the south; the Nuba Mountain massacres of 1990–1993; and continuous disappearances of civilians in Juba, Wau, Malakal, and other major towns in the south. Massive starvation calculated to exterminate the whole southern community are the few ethos that may be cited without exhausting the debate. The union—if the Sudan needs it at all—has to come through stages of proven equitable distribution of goods and services; respect for all the Sudanese communities, cultures and religions; and an establishment of a secular government and society where the leadership representation comes from abled Sudanese from any perimeter of the country. The traditional sectarian and inept parties—Khatmiyya (DUP), Mahdism (Umma), and Islamists (NIF)—perpetuate the historical discord—i.e., negative images—that have associated the Sudan with instability and chaos, and also pose serious barriers for unity. Without these prerequisites, the Sudan in its form cannot exist; undoubtedly, it will be divided into Arab-Islamic, and African countries.

To save the nation from being sliced into two parts, Khartoum has to act fast toward the fulfillment of the demands long expressed by the people, and specially by the southern Sudanese leaders such as William Deng, Joseph Oduho, Buth Dieu, and John Garang. But since Khartoum has been dragging its feet since the conflict started in 1983, secession is inevitable, whether by continuous struggle or by international intervention on behalf of the African ethnic groups.

You may recall that as early as the 1870s, Charles Gordon had appealed Khedive Ismail, Turco-Egyptian ruler in Cairo, for a separate administration of south Sudan. The Condominium government also did the same through the Southern Policy. The 17 years of conflict demanded secession. The SPLA puts secession as a probable alternative solution in the Sudanese conflict. What are the problems that have made generations of people invoke separatism as the only means to settle the impasse of nation-state formation in the Sudan? The real barriers to Sudan's unity and peaceful coexistence are embedded in: 1) forceful Arabization and Islamization, 2) continuous attempts to suppress,

dominate, and destroy the non-Arab majority in the country, 3) keeping the south economically and socially backward by discouraging national schemes and projects that otherwise could have reduced the tensions, and 4) the direct exploitation of the south without regard to the progress of its people.

Through gerrymandering, the north in many instances has attempted to demarcate economically viable areas in the south to the north. Other institutions that could generate revenue in the south are also kept or controlled by the north, thus leaving the south as only the grazing ground. One case in point is General Nimeiri's attempt in 1980 to create the Unity Province in Bentiu oil rich districts, and the erection of the refinery in Kosti, some 400 miles away from the oil fields and in the north. Economically, the refinery should have been in Bentiu, to reduce transport costs, and also to provide jobs for the south. Nimeiri's blackmail came after he was pressed to offer a schedule for sharing the proceeds from oil in the early 1980s.

Therefore, the pattern that was witnessed in the Sudanization scheme (giving four positions to the south out of 1,200 jobs) have not changed the feeling that the north could not have enough if it has to share justly with the south. The list of Khartoum's negative policies toward the south is too long to exhaust. Nevertheless, for democracy to take shape in the Sudan, the state must not support the institutions of religious sectarianism. There should be separation of state from religion, and equitable distribution of goods and services—especially to balance the structural injustices perpetuated by the state since independence. In this way, the integration of the south with the northern Sudan will no longer be a question of choice, but rather the inevitable prognosis, by which everyone will call himself or herself Sudanese—no Arab-Muslim, no Africa-Christian, but *Sudani.*

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