

Sudanese Citizenship-State: Overthrowing the regime or building the alternative?

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This modest contribution aims at providing an objective and critical analysis, exploring the root causes and dimensions of Sudan's chronic national problems, and proposes solutions, especially in light of the repercussions and consequences of the separation of South Sudan and the establishment of an independent state there.

By Elwathig kameir

August 6, 2012 - I.1 The Sudanese people preceded the Arab Spring in achieving two popular uprisings/revolutions, which toppled two repressive military regimes in the Sixties (1964) and the Eighties (1985). The civil war in South Sudan had cast a long shadow on the causes and motives of these revolutions. In both cases, the revolution failed to reach its ultimate objective of establishing and sustaining a truly democratic system of governance. Instead, the situation reverted to an authoritarian one-party rule, stunting the building of the citizenship and democratic state necessary for accommodating the multiplicity and diversity of Sudan's political, ethnic, religious, and cultural components, and failing to address all forms of exclusion and marginalization of the Sudanese peoples. The failure of the revolution in realizing its objectives can also be, partially, attributed to the inability of the revolutionary forces, especially trade unions, to transform themselves into a leading politically organized mass. Though some scholars and analysts attribute the country's chronic political crisis to this "vicious cycle", this description remains a mere symptom of the real crisis, which lies in the underlying identical mentality of the political class, especially the ruling elite, whether they came in military uniform or civilian attire. These elites have lacked both a perceptive leadership and an inspiring vision, aimed at building a democratic and modern state based on equal citizenship rights for all Sudanese.

I.2 However, the coup of June 1989 remains qualitatively different when compared to what happened in the two previous instances. It was not a coup that followed the conventional pattern of a military coup as when General Aboud seized power in the name of the army in 1958, and Nimeiri in 1969, despite the latter's leftist ideological inclination. Rather, in 1989, it was purely an ideological coup by the National Islamic Front (NIF) as a political party that had as its ideology and societal vision the "civilizing project" of the Inqaz regime. This ideology and vision is unilateral and exclusionary in nature, elevating the party over the nation, promoting the slogan of "reconstituting" the Sudanese society, reflected in the policies of "empowerment" and complete hegemony over the political, security, services, justice, and economic state institutions, including the armed forces, and the accompanying slogans of "jihad" and Islamization, with rampant corruption and manipulating the economic policies and practices to serve the interest of the regime's patronage networks and social groups. The Inqaz regime is also solely and directly responsible for exacerbating the civil war, by turning it into a religious war for the first time in the history of the conflict between the South and the North, while expanding the war zone by igniting a bloody conflict in Darfur and its attendant human suffering, which resulted in the indictment of the President of the Republic by the International Criminal Court. That's in addition to the humiliation of, and discrimination against, women (especially in war zones), as well as escalating campaigns inciting ethnic hatred and cultural discrimination against non-Muslim Sudanese of African origins, and the official adoption of bigoted and chauvinistic political discourse. Large sectors amid the Islamists themselves and within the NCP, as expressed in the newspapers' columns, successive memoirs and writings of prominent figures, concur with this diagnosis of the regime.

I.3 This modest contribution aims at providing an objective and critical analysis, exploring the root causes and dimensions of Sudan's chronic national problems, and proposes solutions, especially in light of the repercussions and consequences of the separation of South Sudan and the establishment of an independent state there.

I. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA): The Lost Opportunity

II.1 The failure of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in uprooting the Salvation regime through political and military means, due to organizational and organic reasons, led it to opt for the realistic objective of "dismantling" the regime from within, thus laying the ground for reaching a negotiated settlement, though on separate tracks (Niavasha, Asmara, Cairo, Abuja). Notwithstanding the shortcomings and gaps that marred the CPA, especially by virtue of being a bilateral contract between two parties, the Agreement remains a watershed in the contemporary political history of Sudan. It marked the end of the First Sudan Republic and ushered the country into a new constitutional reality for the transition from totalitarianism and one-party rule to democratic polity and multiparty democracy. It need not be overemphasized that all the political forces opposed to the Inqaz regime, especially those that were operating under the umbrella of the NDA, agreed to add the negotiated political settlement as one of the mechanisms of change and democratic transformation, together with the popular uprising and armed insurgency. Although it is essentially a political compromise between the SPLM and the NCP, the

Agreement provides the required framework for the continued pursuit of the objective of the New Sudan through purely political means as opposed to the pre-CPA combination of military and political methods. Indeed, it was dubbed by the late SPLM Chairman, Dr. John Garang, a "Mini-New Sudan". The CPA is not an end in itself, but rather a mechanism/tool for the transition and transformation that could lead to one of two possible outcomes: first, the success of the two partners, and the rest of the political forces, albeit with varying degrees of responsibility, in using the post-CPA situation to deepen the common denominators between the Sudanese, and then move it towards building a democratic and unified Sudan (New Sudan) and second, the failure of these forces in realizing this objective, thus allowing the situation to degenerate towards the separation of South Sudan. The latter is exactly what transpired. The two partners in power, and the rest of the political forces, wasted this precious opportunity, resulting in the partition of the country, while leaving the remainder of the once-united Sudan threatened with fragmentation and disintegration, in light of the burden of a heavy legacy of CPA outstanding, and post-secession issues. Meanwhile bloody conflict is engulfing Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile, with the looming specter of war between the country and the state of South Sudan.

II.2 The NCP, the sole ruling party that has complete hegemony over power and control of state institutions, is primarily responsible for this predicament, by having failed in the faithful and honest implementation of the CPA provisions as the only guarantee for the transition to a genuine citizenship-state, which would maintain the unity of the country through allaying the fears of the people of the South, the Nuba Mountains, Southern Blue Nile, and Darfur, of the perpetual dependence, marginalization, and deprivation of rights, and guarantee their freedom, equality, and justice. On the other hand, the CPA was not merely predicated on trust of the NCP, or other northern political forces, it was rather premised on the SPLM/A being an equal partner in its implementation. Thus, it is difficult to exonerate the Movement from its responsibility for the lack of perseverance in pursuing issues related to the democratic transformation, a key factor for maintaining the unity of the country, the restructuring of the state, and putting an end to economic marginalization across the Sudan, and achieving national unity. The actual political practice of the SPLM following the signing of the CPA, particularly after the untimely death of its historical leader in late July 2005, carried many indicators of the Movement's observed retreat from the vision it had been preaching for more than two decades. Furthermore, it has abandoned the struggle for achieving the ultimate objective of realizing the country's unity on new bases preferring separation and the establishment of an independent state in the South.

II.3 Also the other political forces, especially those that were under the NDA, have a share of the responsibility. The "opposition" political forces, for instance, were unduly preoccupied with the power-sharing arrangements rather than focusing on how to make use of the margin of freedoms availed by the Agreement in order to achieve the Alliance's grand objective of democratic transformation and the consolidation of the country's unity. Indeed, except for "interim" power sharing arrangements, the CPA has heavily drawn from, and was informed by the Asmara Declaration in 1995. These forces, therefore, were supposed to be "players", even if not invited, and not mere referees or spectators in the process of the CPA implementation. Thus, they should have clarified their positions on the fundamental issues, which they had earlier endorsed in Asmara, in particular with regards the relation between the state and religion in the context of building the Sudanese citizenship state. Acting as a mediator, when the unity of the country was at stake, reminded Southerners of the broken promises of the past. It confirmed their long-held belief that Northerners cannot easily shake-off the old habits of renegeing on agreements and dishonoring commitments. In addition, the political activity of the opposition political parties either underground or outside the Sudan have jeopardized their communication with their respective bases and grassroots. These parties also suffer from discord amongst their constituencies and leadership, and a lack of adherence to internal democratic principles, thus weakening the role and contribution of these forces to the dynamism and enrichment of the political discourse. Many events prove the involvement of the NCP in attempts to win over some of the opposition leaders and sow divisions amid the ranks of these forces without exception, including the very partner in power. However, it should be underlined that the task of preserving the coherence and unity of any political party primarily remains the responsibility of the party itself and its leadership. It should be noted here that the international donor community also played a role in creating a favorable environment for the partition of the country

II. The Implications of the Secession: The Viability of Political Violence

III.1 On the other hand, the CPA, both in design and implementation, has not adequately addressed the challenges and causes of conflict in the Nuba Mountains, and Southern Blue Nile, as well as in the other marginalized areas of the Sudan, especially Darfur. This is the main reason behind the resurgence of violence and the menace of a new civil war, and perhaps an international conflict between Sudan and South Sudan. Both partners to the Agreement bear the responsibility for this disappointing outcome, albeit to varying degrees. Thus, the SPLA, as per the terms of the Agreement on Security Arrangements, is unambiguously defined as an indivisible whole that belongs to South Sudan, and not subject to disaggregation by origin of combatants i.e. whether they hail from South Kordofan or Blue Nile. Indeed, Article 20, of the Ceasefire and Security Arrangements Implementation Modalities and Appendices, states "If the result of the referendum is in favor of secession of the South from the North, the JIUS shall dissolve with each component reverting to its mother Armed Forces to pave the way for the formation of the separate Armed Forces for the emerging states". Therefore, the Agreement was mute on, and made no reference to the fate of thousands of non-JIUS fighters from the Two Areas stationed with their mother units of the SPLA in the South. In light of the two partners' conflicting interpretation of the meaning and substance of "popular consultation", it was obvious that the expected secession of the South will precipitate potentially explosive

situations in the two areas. However, our incessant calls to the SPLM leadership to convene the National Liberation Council (NLC), and engage in serious and frank dialogue on these issues before the referendum went unheeded. It was mistakenly believed by some leaders of the SPLM that holding the NLC meeting might lead to a split within the ranks of the Movement due to the dichotomy of opinion regarding separation between Northerners and Southerners. Contrary to such understanding, however, our call for the imperative of convening the NLC meeting did not aim at standing against Southerners' option for separation. Rather, the intention was to frankly discuss the situation and accordingly prepare ourselves for dealing with the expected explosive situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile in light of the precarious CPA-premised security arrangements and the ambiguous popular consultation process.

III.2 It is widely acknowledged that the war was imposed on the SPLM-N in the Two Areas. Self-defense and fighting back cannot be averted, and surrender is not an option beyond the terms of the CPA-premised Security Arrangements and the defined time-schedules. While nobody questions that the injustice and marginalization justifies and legitimizes the resort to armed struggle, war is costly and not a mere act of bravado. I also tend to believe that neither the model of the SPLM/SPLA, or anything like it, can be reinvented nor can the experience of its legendary leadership be reproduced. Neither the objective circumstances nor the epoch are the same. Thus, such an attitude amounts to an attempt at reinventing the wheel in a completely different political setting at the local, regional, and international levels.

III.3 Besides, the endorsement of armed struggle as the primary means for change obliges the movements espousing this option to first define the objective of armed resistance, expected outcome, and prospects for negotiations. Does it aim at destroying the SAF and, in the process, replacing it with an army that fits the particularities of the New Sudan? This was the original thesis of the late Dr. Garang. In the evolution of the struggle against the NIF-NCP regime, however, this proved to be both untenable and unrealistic, thus he resigned to a politically negotiated settlement. Therefore, the CPA introduced the JIUs, a mechanism for merging the SPLA and SAF, to serve as a nucleus for Sudan's National Army in case South Sudanese opted for unity. Dr. John Garang's principled position since 1972 was that any solution within the context of a New United Sudan must first and foremost recognize the Anyanya, and later the SPLA, as the legitimate army of the Southern Sudanese people. This was the position that the late leader of the SPLM unambiguously expressed in his letter to the Commander-in-Chief, Anyanya National Armed Forces, Leader of the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement, in 1972. This is exactly what was underscored by the CPA. The underlying logic was to guarantee a national army for South Sudan in case Southerners opted for separation. This also was precisely what eventually transpired. Therefore, the vision was compelling and insightful and the objective of armed struggle was clearly defined. This approach, however, is inapplicable to the situation in the Two Areas, unless the ultimate objective of the SPLM-N is to unite South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Darfur in a new federal state.

III.4 Alternatively, does armed insurgency, in the form of guerrilla warfare, aim at exerting sustained pressures, combined with the efforts of peaceful opposition mounted by the rest of the Sudanese political forces, in order to topple the regime in Khartoum or force it to respond to the demands for change? If this is the case, it remains important to answer a number of questions and address a few concerns. To mention a few:

- In light of the fragile institutional setup of the Sudanese state, with SAF as the dominant power and the only cohesive force, a thin line separates regime overthrow, ill-defined as it may be, from collapse of the Sudanese state itself. Indeed, even ethnic, linguistic and religious homogeneity did not save Somalia from disintegration and state failure.
- There is need to gauge the responsiveness of the people in war-affected areas, and public opinion in the whole country, regarding armed resistance and its attendant consequences.
- The escalation of armed conflict in the Two Areas would likely degenerate into an all-out war between South Sudan and Sudan, which is a bad omen for the people in both countries. Moreover, the break-out of such war would be a free gift handed to the NCP, adept, as it is, in political and military mobilization and legitimization of war on the pretext of uniting and bolstering the "internal front". With the SPLM-N as the perceived culprit, this mobilization would not only be against the South, but would also be used for silencing and intimidating the members and supporters of the SPLM-N and, for that matter, all peace-lovers in the country. In fact, the campaign has already started following the recent events in Heglig. Indeed, this would be a field-day for the Just Peace Forum and a fertile ground for fundamentalists and extremists. In other words, continuation of armed conflict would adversely affect the prospects of democratic transformation, and would greatly reduce the probability of popular uprising in government-controlled territories all over the Sudan.
- The rear-base logistical backup and the political and diplomatic support of neighboring countries to the cause of any armed movement in its insurgency against the incumbent regime is a fact in virtually all of the African experiences. The accessibility to such backing, and the support of the region at large and the international community to the Southerners' demand for the right of self-determination, were instrumental in sustaining the protracted guerilla war waged by the SPLA/M during the 1980s and 1990s. Now, the regional and international scene has dramatically changed and the world seems to have reached the end of its tether and is fed up of wars, in deference to negotiated political settlements. Besides, the separation of the South before resolving the CPA's outstanding political issues and completing the disengagement of the SPLA and the SPLM-N, with the ongoing armed conflict in Darfur, has put the new state in a politically and morally awkward and unenviable position with respect to the SPLM-N. It is, therefore, legitimate to ask: is South Sudan, given its own colossal challenges of state-building, security, problems of political and economic governance, and internal contradictions, in addition to regional and international pressures, capable of footing the bill of providing continuous support to the insurgency?

- War, or even tense relations, between the two countries, would put the SPLM-N (and the SRF) in a difficult situation since any military operation by the SPLA-N or its allies will be publicized and perceived as an act of complicity in aggression waged by a foreign country, thus tarnishing the image and casting doubt on the credibility of the SPLM-N. Indeed, perceptions are often stronger than facts. Besides, the Western World now feels that the SPLM/A-N is using the war to create a humanitarian predicament that would eventually invite and legitimize foreign intervention. Above all, continuation of war would eventually lead to the depletion and destruction of the human resource-base, thus worsening an already bleak future for the people in whose interest the SPLA-N is fighting. This is in addition to disfiguring the social fabric, by aggravating ethnic and tribal animosities, and threatening any future peaceful coexistence of the diverse ethnic communities of both South Kordofan and the Blue Nile.
- Armed struggle cannot achieve its purported objective of overthrowing the regime without political support from all forces that are intent on regime change, including the Islamists of all hues. Regime overthrow presupposes, as our own experience in 1964 and 1985 demonstrates, a consensus of the Sudanese political forces. In 1995, at the time of the Asmara Declaration, almost all the Sudanese political forces were unequivocally united in the call for "uprooting" the regime. Likewise, the SPLM could not have realized the independence of South Sudan had Garang not secured the support of all Sudanese political forces.

III.5 The formation of the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) suggests that the SPLM-N has opted to build an alliance of "marginalized nationalities" represented by armed insurgents, while calling upon all Sudanese political forces to join its ranks and "reject the path of partial political settlement with the NCP regime and adopt a holistic approach for changing the regime's seat of power in Khartoum". In the current political situation, however, there is a lack of both a) consensus on the objective of "overthrowing the regime", through armed insurgency, among the Sudanese political forces, and b) clarity regarding the SRF's approach for dealing and engaging with these forces in light of the difference of opinion on methods of change. Except for sweeping statements about the necessity of engaging with the opposition political forces, neither have concrete modalities been articulated nor have perceptible outcomes been achieved to-date. The decision of some opposition figures to join the SRF does not seem to have added much value or changed the image of the Front in the eyes of many people. The SRF is still perceived to be an exclusive forum for those marginalized on ethnic and regional bases i.e. the "New South Syndrome". Regarding means of change, the SRF has declared its commitment to the "convergence" of both civil and political action, and armed struggle". Since the days of the NDA, however, this convergence has remained a mere slogan and an elusive objective that lacks a realistic methodology or mechanism of implementation on the ground. The Front has not unveiled any clear strategy in this respect. Since the formation of the SPLM in 1983, there has always been a need for bringing marginalized peoples together in one platform, but not necessarily in the form of a structured alliance premised on ethnic or nationality terms, while espousing armed struggle. In my opinion, the concept of marginalization needs to be revisited with the objective of transcending the narrow definition based on ethnicity or race, while ignoring the complex nature of the concept and its economic, social, and cultural tenor, thus excluding other marginalized groups including the country's workers, tenants, pastoralists, professionals etc. Moreover, there are other political forces from the marginalized regions/nationalities who don't subscribe to the SRF and its constituent components. In turn, this raises the question of: how do we look at these forces and what sort of engagement should be proposed with them? Do we just resign to out rightly dismiss them as conformists and NCP cronies? In post-independence South Sudan, for instance, the SPLM-led government seems to have found it necessary to accommodate prominent figures of the peace-from-within groups, some of whom were ministers in the federal government and members in the NCP itself.

III. Prospects for Change and Harbingers for Sudan's Disintegration

IV.1 It is evident that the vaguely defined objective of regime overthrow in a situation of war and armed conflict, with no consensus and a common vision, is a precursor for dismantling the country. Sudan lacks a single, cohesive, and legitimate institution, perhaps with the exception of SAF, notwithstanding the INF/NCP incessant attempts to politically infiltrate its ranks and obliterate its national identity, which could manage a peaceful transition of power. Perhaps the recent confrontation in Heglig has restored, even if temporarily, SAF's national image. In other words, Sudan's weak state institutions, its complex political configuration, the absence of a unified counterweight to the NCP dominance at the centre, the lack of unity of cause and methods between the political forces, and an unfolding political polarization between the various contenders for power render the line between regime overthrow and state disintegration very thin. Thus, under these circumstances, regime fall, and the resultant power vacuum, could trigger a wild scramble for power by the multiple armed actors for control of Khartoum, and other parts of the country, a process that would be near impossible to restrain or reverse.

IV.2 Regime change is imminent and inevitable. To begin with, the beleaguered regime in Khartoum is already under pressure on political, economic, and multiple military fronts, and increasingly concerned about prospects of an Arab Spring-like uprising, which is no longer denied by key figures in the ruling party, particularly in view of the mounting economic crisis, and in the wake of South Sudan's January 2012 decision to halt oil production. Thus, the regime is subjected to increasing pressures from its own grassroots membership and in the ranks of the Islamic Movement, which brought it to power, and from the opposition political forces, in addition to the regional and international community. Moreover, most of the political forces are poised for regime change, as well as a broad spectrum of Islamists, including those who are affiliated either with the NCP or the PCP, and those who are not attached to either of the two, albeit lacking agreement on a shared agenda, vision, and program, or even on the means of change.

IV.3 Moreover, it is not political parties that topple authoritarian and repressive ruling regimes, but it is the people that have always shouldered the responsibility of overthrowing dictatorships through popular uprisings. Our own experience in 1964 and subsequently 1985 clearly demonstrates that political parties join the revolution only when the fall of the incumbent regime is imminent. In both cases, however, these very political parties returned to power and harvested the fruits of the uprising by adopting a narrow partisan agenda and tailoring the political system to fit their own image, therefore, failing to address the country's accumulated problems from a national perspective, especially the expansion of the civil war zone to include, for the first time, areas located in the geographical North. The adoption of exclusionary and narrow-minded policies by the successive post-independence governments have contributed to making Southerners hateful of the North and disenchanted with unity of the country. These feelings were aggravated by the breach by all central governments of every charter and agreement, or drafted peace accord, reached with South Sudanese starting with the Juba Conference 1947, the Declaration of Independence 1955, the Round Table Conference 1965, Addis Ababa Agreement for Autonomous Rule 1972, and the Al-Mirghani-Garang Agreement 1988. However, these forces have a popular following to contend with, while they are now witnessing an observed internal dynamism and reform in response to the grassroots' demands for a participatory and inclusive decision-making process.

IV.4 Also, the Arab Spring has provided us with a couple of important lessons to draw from. First, the best organized forces are the ones that win by assuming the lion's share of power, following the downfall of the incumbent regime, to the chagrin of the "revolutionary" forces. Second, in Libya, Syria, and Yemen, the popular uprisings preceded the involvement of armed insurgents. Third, a participatory constitution-making process, for laying the foundation of an inclusive governance framework, is imperative and key for building the new political dispensation.

IV.5 To reiterate, the perpetual governance crisis in the Sudan, in essence, lies in the Sudanese elites' historical failure, especially those who controlled the reins of power, whether military or civilian, to articulate a clear vision and a robust strategy for a consensual national project around which to build the Sudanese modern state. Thus, the opposition forces themselves have become part and parcel of the crisis. The Sudanese political class has failed in initiating a comprehensive, open, and serious dialogue towards building a national alternative, drafting a consensual constitution through an inclusive and participatory process that reflects Sudan's multiple diversities, and constructing a political system premised on peaceful exchange of power that puts an end to the fighting and war between the Sudanese peoples.

IV.6 Therefore, the real challenge facing the armed movements, and the rest of forces of change, at this critical historical juncture, does not lie in the question of regime "overthrow", but in the "building" of a convincing and an inspiring "alternative", capable of rallying the Sudanese people around it, thus averting the fall of the Sudan itself.

IV.7 Indeed, the late Dr. John Garang was aware that building a workable alternative is a prerequisite for overthrowing the regime. To quote at length from one of his speeches *"Everybody is convinced that the NIF must go. So, the regime must go, the question is: what do we replace it with? The way forward is to consolidate the NDA because we must have a structure to replace the NIF, so that it becomes a viable alternative, a structure that will be convincing to, in the first place the Sudanese people, in the second place to our neighbors, and, in the third place, to the international community. This is because the mind wonders; you don't want the NIF, but what would you put in its place? What is the alternative? It is a legitimate question.*

When you say; it is the SPLM/A, they say: but this is a southern movement; it is too far to the south, it cannot rule in Khartoum. It is a legitimate response and it is true that the SPLM/A cannot establish a government in Khartoum. You say it is the Umma and DUP, they say but they were in power yesterday and they do not have the capacity. You say: it is the so-called "modern forces", they say; but who are they? Thus, the mind is puzzled and the way out of this is not the individual groups, no matter how they may believe in themselves, they are necessary but no single organization is sufficient on its own".
(ElwathigKameir (ed.) 1998 John Garang: *The Vision of the New Sudan: Questions of Unity and Identity*, COPADES, Cairo, Egypt, p. 58)

IV.8 The question to consider is: under the current political realities, would overthrowing the regime take us on the road towards the ultimate objective of building the Sudanese citizenship-state and do we believe that we have a viable alternative as defined by the late Dr. John?

IV. The Last Chance for Preserving the Unity of the Sudan: The Imperative of a Political Settlement

V.1 Since its political independence in 1956, Sudan has witnessed the rise of armed ethnic and regional protest movements that have resulted in great human suffering and the largest number of refugees and displaced peoples in Africa. These protest movements have challenged the legitimacy of the Sudanese independent states, led by the elites from the north-riverain areas that assumed hegemony over power in the centre. The Sudanese state and the policies of the ruling elites, hitherto, have excluded the vast majority of the Sudanese people from governance and, therefore, their marginalization in the political, economic and social fields. This exclusion provoked armed resistance from wide sectors of the people who are not participants or stakeholders in the very governments that claim their representation. These movements are not only currently demanding equal citizenship rights, but are also calling for the recognition of special rights including claims to land, autonomous government, and the maintenance of their respective ethno-national identities. Thus, the post-colonial state has failed to devise a policy of inclusive citizenship with the capacity to transcend existing racial and

ethnic categories through a national framework for unity. (Amir Idris, "Rethinking Identity, Citizenship, and Violence in Sudan", *Int. J. Middle East Stud.* 44/2012)

V.2 The national crisis of armed political violence in Sudan requires a political solution, which in turn calls for redefining and restructuring the Sudanese state in a way that would make the managing of, and coexistence between overlapping identities possible in the context of building the citizenship-state premised on the equality of citizens in rights and obligations and equality before the law and the Constitution, regardless of gender, race, sect, tribe, religion, or social class. First and foremost, this calls for radical restructuring of power in the centre in a manner that takes into account the interests of all the Sudanese people, especially those of marginalized regions and impoverished socio-economic groups, including both those who took up arms or those who opted for peaceful opposition, while promoting a decentralized power structure by redefining the relation between Khartoum and the regions with a view to devolving more federal powers to the regions, and applying the principle of affirmative action, thus allowing just power and wealth sharing arrangements.

V.3 Therefore, I believe that we must, as an urgent priority, discuss and consider all the options available, including stopping the war and reaching a politically just and negotiated settlement, as a prerequisite for change towards building the Sudanese citizenship-state. After all, all the Sudanese political forces, and the regional and international community, have endorsed negotiation as a political tool for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. In fact, this is in line with the latest resolution of the AU Peace and Security Council on the conflict in the Two Areas, which was adopted, on 24 April 2012. The resolution reiterates the "AU's conviction that there can be no military solution to the conflict in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, and stresses therefore the urgent need for a political and negotiated solution, based on respect for diversity in unity". Indeed, when the late Dr. John was criticized for talking with the Inqaz regime, he countered with, "My tongue is part of my armament, so why would I deprive myself from that form of armament". However, reaching a just and sustainable peaceful settlement, by necessity, calls for:

V.4 First, to immediately embark on drafting new constitutional arrangements in the context of a consensual, inclusive, transparent, and participatory process that brings on board all the political and civil forces to meet the will and aspirations of the Sudanese people in their multiple and diverse components. This is necessary as a precondition for achieving a lasting political solution to the armed conflict in all parts of the country, and as a final opportunity to construct the building blocks of a state based on democracy and the peaceful exchange of power, disengage the party from the state and its institutions and separate between the legislative, executive and judicial powers, and ensure the freedoms and guarantee the independence and national character of the armed forces and civil service. Perhaps the NCP is aware that it is not capable on its own, or together with its allies, to accomplish this historic mission in light of the party's total monopoly of the legislature and the rest of the state institutions, and may think of drawing on the experiences of the Islamists in the Arab Spring countries, especially in Egypt and Tunisia.

V.5 Second, it is imperative to address and approach the treatment of the armed conflict in all regions, especially in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, on its own merit as a pure national Sudanese question, rather than squeeze it in the discourse of the conflict with the state of South Sudan, or look at it from the narrow lenses of security arrangements. The peoples of these two areas joined the SPLM/A at a time when Sudan was united, and while the Movement was founded on a national vision that espoused the unity of the country on new bases, thus attracting large sections of supporters from the geographical North. The fighters from the two regions continue to struggle in the name of a just and legitimate cause for the last thirty years. They are neither fighting a war by proxy, nor are they accountable for the decision of South Sudanese to secede and form their independent state, which has barely completed its first year, but will remain Sudanese nationals seeking equal citizenship rights. The NCP, holding the pinnacle of power with complete control of the state institutions, should by no means lock itself in, or mechanically interpret, the texts and procedures of the CPA that obliges the SPLA to deploy its forces south of the 1956 borderline without regard to such a large number of combatants who originally belong to the Sudan, or ask the government of South Sudan to forcibly disarm them. Indeed, there is a difference between following the right procedure and doing the right thing, especially since the issue in essence has to do with the nation and the cohesion of its components. History will not forgive those who elevate or applaud the text over its essence.

V.6 Third, the need to approach the armed insurgency in Sudan in isolation from the raging conflict with the State of South Sudan does not mean, in any way, turning a blind eye to the inevitability of establishing a strategic, organized, and institutional relation (that is a structured relationship) between two independent states, epitomized in the construction of two economically and politically viable entities through building on the historical interdependencies between the North and the South in the economic, social, and political fields, with a commitment to the core values and the prerequisites necessary for such a relationship.

V. Conclusion

VI.1 The ultimate objective, however, is to build a broad national platform that constitutes a viable alternative to the regime, a task that would require wide participation and an open and serious dialogue amongst, and between, the various Sudanese political forces, which does not exclude any one, and to agree on the necessary mechanisms needed to achieve national consensus on common national denominators.

VI.2 It is the last chance for the NCP, by virtue of its hegemony over the state and power, and especially due to its failure in meeting the terms and provisions, and the faithful implementation of the CPA and the achievement of sustainable peace following the secession of the South, to spare the country the risk of disintegration and fragmentation, when the writings have become clear on the walls. In fact, I see no reason for the apprehension expressed by some of the party's leaders of another CPA, as long as the main objective is to maintain the unity of the Sudan, while drawing lessons from Naivasha and its errors and firmly fill the gaps. Indeed, the problem has never been in the text or the spirit of the Agreement, perhaps except in the imagination of the Just Peace Forum.

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