

## Kiir and Bashir: brothers in oil

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September 30, 2012 - Sudan and South Sudan signed on Thursday a battery of eight agreements covering oil and other economic concerns, border security, monitoring and demarcation, the status of nationals in the other state, and trade next to other outstanding post-secession issues, and crowned the set with a global cooperation agreement worthy of the signatures of the two presidents, Kiir and Bashir. The governor of Khartoum Abd al-Rahman al-Khidir made sure that a jolly crowd welcomed President Bashir at the airport upon his return on Friday. The crowd, reported the press, insisted that the President deliver a speech after the spell of stick waving, and so he did. He spoke buoyantly of the 'real' start of peace between the two countries and a new era of cooperation and mutual benefit, pipeline-mediated and along a 'soft border' blocked to weapons and ammunition and open to the movement of people and goods. President Bashir told the crowd that he had a personal conversation with President Kiir after the signing ceremony and felt assured that his 'brother' Salva was sincere about implementing the agreements in good will. In his speech at the ceremony President Kiir also referred to his Sudanese counterpart as a 'brother'.

The brilliant South Sudanese essayist Stella Gaitano correctly identified the function of the 'brother' mannerism in Sudanese political discourse as a gesture of exclusion, the mark of the alien in the national corpus. She made the comment shortly before the independence of South Sudan in a warning to the people of Darfur when she noticed that the mainstream press had stripped the South Sudanese of the qualification and shifted its use to Darfurians. As a Khartoum-raised ethnic South Sudanese Stella lost her Sudanese citizenship with the secession of South Sudan, and wrote passionately about the experience of the double hijra of the South Sudanese in (north) Sudan, in her words "from a second class citizen to a first class foreigner". Presidents Bashir and Kiir negotiated a settlement between two states, a categorical difference that sets the Addis Ababa summit agreements apart from the lengthy scriptures of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), but nevertheless a formal one. In fact, the baggage of the CPA is all around. The terms of the compromise remain the same: a trade-off between oil and security. Khartoum and Juba renegotiated the wealth-sharing formula of the CPA to correspond to the new sovereignty map of the territories under their control and capped the deal with the redeployment of their armies away from the border and the invitation of monitors to verify the process and record violations.

The tactics involved in this recalibration of power relations are paradigmatic. Juba tabled the Abyei card with a declaration that a deal without Abyei was no deal at all, and Khartoum successfully retouched the dispute over Mile 14, a border area between South Sudan's Bahr al-Ghazal and Sudan's Darfur, to glow like an Abyei in the making. To its domestic audience and to the mediation the government of Sudan marketed Mile 14 as a 'national hymen' immune to compromise, the last piece in the jigsaw puzzle of security arrangements. It even invited 'notables' from the Rizeigat community in the area to present their case to the African Union High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP). When President Bashir and President Kiir arrived in Addis Ababa for their summit talks the negotiation teams had already hammered out the agreements that matter as it were. Abyei was left out in keeping with tradition; this time however with a new counterweight, Mile 14. What the two presidents agreed upon at the finishing line of the negotiations, with the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) hustling them along, was a mutual and consensual trap, material for renewed conflict down the road if need arises. President Bashir rejected the AUHIP's Abyei proposal, a referendum plus package, but agreed to shove the entire file to the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC), and simultaneously planted a secondary Abyei on the border. Mile 14 was granted special status in the security arrangements; the two sides agreed to withdraw their forces from the entirety of the twenty three kilometres long strip as compared to the ten kilometres of the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone (SDBZ) on either side. The administration of the area was 're-traditionalized'; the status quo of "joint tribal mechanisms for the resolution of disputes" between the Dinka Malwal of Bahr al-Ghazal and the Rizeigat of Darfur was to be maintained, said the security arrangements agreement. What this implies is the export of the Juba-Khartoum power game to this border area in the same fashion that Abyei has become an experimental ground for relations between the two countries. Neither side of course lacks experience in empowering proxy punchers to bruise the other as expediency requires. If the Dinka Malwal and the Rizeigat have managed to soften the border between them they are now invited to 'nationalize' the border under the injunction of the state.

The unwritten clause of the security agreement is presumably what Sudan's Minister of Defence said to Radio Omdurman on Friday. He stated that the security arrangements determined specific modalities for dissociation between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the forces that once constituted its 9th and 10th divisions in South Kordofan and the Blue Nile i.e. the bulk of the fighting force of the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement in North Sudan (SPLA/M-N). The text of the 27 September security agreement makes no mention of the SPLA/M-N but it does renew the commitment of the parties to the 10 February 2012 memorandum of understanding on non-aggression and cooperation where they pledged "the cessation of harbouring of, or support to rebel groups against the other State". The SPLA/M-N now faces almost the same challenges that the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) had to grapple with after Ndjamen and Khartoum arrived at a settlement late in 2009 that ended a long season of proxy war between them. Ndjamen expelled the late Khalil Ibrahim, founding chairman of

the JEM, from its territory, and Sudan ordered Chadian rebels out of the country. Juba might not act all that dramatically but is very likely to pressure the SPLA/M-N to downscale its ambitious negotiation position. Yasir Arman, the SPLM-N's secretary general, claimed in a statement released on Friday that the rebel movement controls more than forty per cent of the border, and is thus entitled to a say in the establishment of the SDBZ. "There is a need for cooperation with the SPLM-N", he stated, and the "SPLA/M-N are ready to cooperate". Yes, indeed. I wonder if President Kiir calls Yasir a brother.

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