

# Transformation of the Sudanese establishment for a New Sudan

B. Yongo-Bure, Kettering University

## ABSTRACT

Any viable development strategy of Sudan has to address the fundamental issue of the Sudanese political economy. This is the issue of political and economic marginalization of the majority of the population. The concentration of power, wealth, and other privileges in Sudan in favor of those elites who claim Arabness, has led to the African vs Arab divisions spreading to the North. These divisions can never be eliminated by mere appeals to nationalism or religious commonality, but through the initiation of a credible program of socio-economic restructuring of the existing establishment. This requires *effective decentralization* and *equal participation* in the central government. The pseudo-federalism and pseudo-democracy of the past have to give way to new political, economic, social, and cultural structures. The central political, military, and civil services must mirror the diversity of the country at all ranks. The lower tiers of government should have their own economic, cultural, and civil institutions for promoting their own development. The electorates at the lower levels of government must be the sole determinants of the leadership at the various levels, without central government interference. Rural development will greatly reduce poverty, raise incomes, and create a large domestic market for an all-round self-sustaining economic development. A strategy for a balanced regional industrialization, in a common market, must be devised; and this requires the involvement of all levels of government and experts from all sectors of Sudanese societies.

## Introduction

The call for a New Sudan is now common in Sudanese political discussion. But there appears to be no common vision of what the New Sudan would look like and what it involves to achieve. Although the process of creating a new Sudan is multi-faceted and long-term, those in authority have the responsibility of leading the country towards it with credible and transparent action programs. While legal and political justice and equality will initiate the processes, in the long-run, socio-economic transformation will be a major component of both the programs and processes.

The existing marked regional and interpersonal disparities in Sudan predates the colonial period. They were greatly reinforced during the colonial period and throughout

the post-colonial period, even up to today. In terms of socio-economic transformation of the current unjust Sudan, it must first be accepted to all stakeholders in Sudan that the marginalization of the majority of Sudanese has been created simultaneously with the concentration of wealth and power in the country. The rich and powerful in Sudan were created during the periods of foreign adventures and rule in what became present Sudan.

These privileged Sudanese took-over the reign of power after independence and have used the resources of the country, both domestic and external, to reinforce their dominance. For the realization of a New Sudan that encourages voluntary unity, the dominant groups have to accept to share power and resources with the marginalized, or the enlightened members of their communities have to wrestle power from their grip, and together with the marginalized, use that power for the socio-economic transformation of the country for the good of all its peoples. Short of the initiation of a credible, viable, and irreversible process of transformation of the existing Sudan, the country will surely disintegrate.

### **Simultaneous Wealth and Power Concentration and Marginalization**

~ Trade links with Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries since the times of the Sennar and other Sultanates. Ivory, slaves, and gum Arabic were among the major exports.

~ During the colonial period, trade was further developed with the building of railways, steamer services, communications, irrigated agriculture (Sennar Dam, Gezira Scheme, Baraka and Gash Flush Schemes, Jebel Aulia Dam, pump schemes.

Urban centers developed: Khartoum, Khartoum North, Omdurman, Atbara, Wad Medani, Port Sudan, El Obeid, etc.), education, health, etc.(Gordon College).Port Sudan in

addition to the old port of Suakin.

~ The colonial regime favoured religious leaders, tribal leaders, merchants (traders)- access to irrigation schemes, real estate, education, and civil service, officer corps in the security forces, etc.

~ The pattern of unequal development before and during the colonial period continued after independence, even up to today.

### **The 1946-1960/61 Public Sector Investment Programs**

Gordon College developed to a university (University of Khartoum), Managil Extension of the Gezira Scheme, pump schemes increased, Guneid Sugar Scheme, Agricultural Bank of Sudan and increased mechanization of agriculture especially in Gedaref (encroaching on Beja traditional agricultural and grazing land), Industrial Bank of Sudan, Real Estate Bank, Bank of Sudan lending to irrigated agriculture only.

~ Nile Waters Agreement with Egypt, 1959 and the building of the Aswan Dam on the Nile with the artificial lake flooding Nubian territory on the Sudan /Egypt border.

### **The Ten-Year Plan,1961/62-1970/71**

~Continuation of the major projects of 1946-1960/61 period.

~ Roseries Dam at Damazine and extension of mechanized farming to Southern Blue Nile. Displacement of Funj (Ingessina) people. This was intensified in the 1970s and 1980s with the Bread Basket Strategy projects.

~ Mechanized Farming Corporation allocating mechanization schemes that can qualify for loans from the Agricultural Bank of Sudan. Land allocated by local authorities is ineligible for loans from the Agricultural Bank of Sudan.

~Khasim el Girba Dam on the Atbara River and the New Halfa Irrigation Scheme for the

resettlement of the displaced Nubians by the lake resulting from the Aswan Dam Scheme adversely affected the indigenous pastoral inhabitants of the territory (Beja) who were never cared for in the planning of the scheme.

### **The Five Year Plan, 1970/71-1974/75 (later amended and extended to 1976/77)**

- ~ Original plan emphasis on capacity utilization of existing schemes.
- ~ Amended plan emphasis shifted to new projects with abundance of Arab petrodollars as well as Western Aid and Technology. Major projects included Rahad, El Suki, and Kenana Irrigation Schemes, all concentrated in Central Sudan.
- ~ Sudan was to become the Bread Basket of the Arab World.
- ~ Further expansion of mechanized farming: Gedaref (Beja land), Damazine (Funj land), Habila (Nuba land), Renk (South). The owners of the mechanized schemes are from the Arabized elites who are absentee landlords, mainly merchants and retired civil and military officers. Allocated by the Khartoum based Mechanized Farming Corporation and financed by the Agricultural Bank of Sudan. Mechanized farming greatly contributed to desertification and hence, the famine of the mid-1980s.
- ~ Sudan Development Corporation invested in Central Sudan.
- ~ Deterioration in the economy because old projects were collapsing while the new ones did not materialize.

### **The Six-Year Plan, 1977/78-1982/83**

- ~ Most of the Bread Basket projects were to be implemented during this period.
- ~ Mechanized farming was again emphasized with adverse consequences on the indigenous peoples of Gedaref, Damazine, Habila, Renk, etc.
- ~ The ruling elites were blind to the emerging economic crisis resulting from past

inappropriate policies and corruption.

~ Economic crisis became clearer in the first year of the Six-Year Plan (1977/78)

~ Original plan was discontinued and Three-Year Rolling Public Sector Investment Programs were substituted for the Plan (1978/79-1980/81, 1981/82-1982/83, and 1982/83-1984/85).

~ Sudan's debt crisis became very clear. IMF Structural Adjustment Programs from 1978 to the end of the Nimeri's regime.

~ Privatization favored the Sudanese establishment, both during and after Nimeiri's regime. The Bashir regime has continued the same pattern at an extremely high level; even with oil all of which is extracted from the periphery.

~ The Bashir regime has concentrated its resources on infrastructure and housing in Khartoum, wealth and power in the Northern region where the ruling groups either come or originate from. The bulk of the national resources have been concentrated in killing of the marginalized for complaining for their rights.

~ Hence, the pattern of wealth and power concentration on one hand, and marginalization on the other, continues in Sudan. As long as this pattern continues wars will continue in Sudan.

### **Policy Framework for Restructuring**

~ A responsible, non-sectarian government in the center that represents all Sudanese.

To change this pattern of dominance and marginalization, power in Khartoum has to be **effectively restructured** to represent all sectors of the Sudanese population.

~ The state and local authorities have to be **really autonomous**, with **resources to promote their own independent development** programs. The Nakuru Draft of the CPA wealth sharing protocol is preferred to the Naivasha one.

~ Free education for children of all peasants and the other poor. The rich should either directly pay fees or pay an educational tax. A specific percentage of proceeds from natural resources, such as oil and gold, must be devoted to education and health services.

~ National universities should take equal number of students from all states; while state universities, from poor regions, should have in-state intakes of 75-80 percent for the first ten years of their full establishment.

~ The devising of a strategy of balanced regional industrial development.

~ Rural development, planned at the local level and funded jointly by the central, state, and local governments.

Short of transforming the existing establishment, Sudan will continue to bleed and eventually disintegrate, regardless of whether a military or an elected sectarian government is in charge in Khartoum.

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# Regional Disparities in Sudan



